

Assisting Unemployed People move from Social Welfare to Work is a practical Resource Guide designed to assist Partnerships and ADM Funded Community Groups in their work with unemployed people and employers. While the Guide comprises of three elements or modules which are stand alone documents, there are strong linkages between the modules. We hope Partnership and Community Group staff who work with unemployed people will find these documents useful in their everyday work.

The Resource Guide aims to assist Partnerships and Community Groups to promote the services they provide and the work they do with unemployed people. Many Partnership and Community group staff will be aware of much that is included here, but if the feedback from staff working with unemployed people is accurate, information which is readily identifiable as well as clear and concise should be a useful resource in furthering this important work. If you have any comments or suggestions we would greatly appreciate it if you could contact us.

This module – Looking for Work and Rights at Work is designed to assist both Partnership and ADM funded Community Group staff that

work with employers and staff who work in organisations within Partnership areas such as Centres for the Unemployed and local Resource Centres.

This Module consists of:

- A Resource for Partnership and Community Group staff indicating sources of information on job vacancies that are accessible for unemployed people, practical steps in applying for jobs and making the most of interview opportunities
- A Guide for Partnership and Community Group staff outlining entitlements and rights of people who take-up work

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1. Looking for Work



Research indicates that despite the relative tightening of the labour market in recent years, many jobs in Ireland are still not being publicly advertised but are filled through 'word of mouth' and other personal contacts. Unemployed people very often find they do not have access to these types of personal information networks and therefore have to work all the harder to access information on available vacancies. These difficulties can be compounded for many unemployed people by a lack of awareness of the range of supports and practical help and information available to assist people both in accessing information on job opportunities and in applying for jobs.

This element of the module has been designed as a resource for staff who provide information, advice and/or support on job seeking to unemployment people. The Module will be particularly relevant to staff who may be either new to the Partnership/

Community Group or new to this area of work. It is hoped that more experienced staff will also find the module to be of benefit in their work. Aspects of the Module may also be used as a practical resource for unemployed people themselves.

The following aspects of Looking For Work are covered:

- 2 Sources of information on job vacancies that are accessible for unemployed people
- 3 Practical steps in applying for jobs
- 4 Ways of making the most of interview opportunities

2. Job Vacancies: Sources of information and supports available to unemployed people

The following sources of information and advice have been drawn up with a perspective on the needs of the unemployed person. The list is not exhaustive and it is recognised that many Partnership and Community Group staff will already be familiar with many of these sources.

The Local Employment Service (LES)

The Local Employment Service's primary goal is to assist long-term unemployed people to secure employment. The LES also provides Mediator and Guidance services. Mediators work with local employers with a view to matching the skills and experience of job seekers with the recruitment needs of employers. Guidance Counsellors provide information about training and further or second chance education. LES's may also operate local Contact Points where unemployed people can access information or make an appointment to see a Mediator or Guidance Counsellor. Local Employment Services tend to be (Partnership) area specific and therefore do not exist in all parts of the Country.

Local Centres for the Unemployed / Resource Centres

Local Centres for the Unemployed/Resource Centres are independent, community based organisations that offer a range of services to unemployed people. The Centres provide services and supports that assist people in finding employment. Many Centres also provide welfare to work information and

advice. In terms of jobs seeking supports, the Centres may provide information on local job vacancies and assist with CV preparation and letters of application. A number of Centres for the Unemployed also run Job Clubs.

Jobs Clubs

Jobs Clubs can be an effective way of supporting unemployed people to return to work. Job Clubs are primarily concerned at helping people who are 'job ready' with skills and training relevant to local employer needs or people who may have recently become unemployed. The aim of the Jobs Club is to bring a group of unemployed people together under the guidance of a Jobs Club Leader who provides the necessary support and advice to participants on improving their job seeking skills with a view to accessing employment opportunities. Jobs Clubs also help to build confidence and provide many of the resources needed for an intensive job search.

Further information on Jobs Clubs is available from local FÁS Offices.

Local Social Welfare Offices

The Department of Social and Family Affairs run an Employment Support Unit where Job Facilitators provide information and advice to help people explore employment options. Further details are available from local Social Welfare Offices or directly from the Employment Support Services on (01) 704 3165.

FÁS Offices

The network of FÁS offices around the country provide job seekers with a range of information and support. Unemployed people may access the services of a FÁS Placement Services Officer who will provide one to one advice and information on local employment, training and education opportunities. Most FÁS offices will also have Vacancy Boards for displaying information on both local and national vacancies. The Job-Bank online computer service assists job seekers to research employment opportunities and labour market programme vacancies; access information on training courses or place a CV on the system to be viewed by potential employers. The Job-Bank can also be accessed through the FÁS website - www.fas.ie. FÁS also use AERTEL to advertise training and employment opportunities. A computerised career decision making package which can assist clients in their career paths by providing a list of suggested job types appropriate to the individual is also available.

Other sources of information on job vacancies include local and National Newspapers and Recruitment Agencies

3. Practical Steps in Applying for Jobs

Gathering Information

Prior to applying for an advertised position, it is essential that the person has a good understanding of the nature of the job and the employer's requirements in terms of the skills and abilities needed to do the job.

Recruitment policies, procedures and practices vary from one employer to another. Some employers will have comprehensive information in the form of job descriptions and person specifications. Others may have little or no additional information beyond that contained in the initial job advertisement. Many people who are long-term unemployed often feel intimidated by this type of 'official' recruitment literature and may be discouraged from applying. With appropriate support and guidance however most

unemployed people will overcome any initial reticence about this aspect of the recruitment process.

Job Descriptions and Person or Candidate Specifications play an important role in the recruitment process. In general, applicants who demonstrate a close fit between their skills and experience and those required by the employer are more likely to be invited for interview. Many unemployed people may not have had recent work experience or opportunities to evaluate or practice their skills. However, with appropriate guidance, it should be possible to build a comprehensive skills profile of the individual. In this regard, the value of training courses, experience gained in the home or through voluntary work should not be underestimated.

CV Preparation

Applicants are normally requested to either complete an application form or to submit a CV with a covering letter. Prior to applying, it is strongly recommended that prospective applicants contact the employer to request any further information that may be available on the job itself. This will ensure that the applicant has as complete a picture as possible about the job itself and the organisation. It will also demonstrate to the employer that the applicant is serious and interested in the job. Applicants who do not request further details when such details are available put themselves at a disadvantage from the outset.

The CV should be constructed in such a way as to demonstrate to the employer that there is a match between the skills and experience of the job seeker and the employer's requirements. The CV should demonstrate that the applicant has:

- ❑ The skills and experience needed for the job
- ❑ The personal qualities for the position
- ❑ An understanding of the requirements of the job

The CV should be:

- ❑ Kept short – preferably not more than two A4 pages
- ❑ Clear and easily read
- ❑ Typed and well laid out with wide margins and clear section headings that are organised in a logical way
- ❑ Relevant to the position being applied for

When completed, it is always worthwhile checking that the relevant skills, experience and key points in the CV are easily identifiable.

A template for a CV is set out below:

Personal Details

Name

Address

Telephone Number or Contact Number

Date of Birth (Optional)

Employment History

List all jobs chronologically starting with current or most recent employment

Include start/finish dates

Job title and brief description of duties highlighting the tasks most relevant to the job being applied for

Any relevant voluntary work experience

Training/Education (as appropriate)

Begin with the most relevant qualification/course

Include any relevant training programmes

Hobbies/Interests

List hobbies or interests (may be discussed at interview)

Referees

Preferably two — one being current or most recent employer (as appropriate)

Covering Letter/Letter of Application

The covering letter may be used either as a short introduction to the applicant's CV or as an opportunity to demonstrate how the applicant meets any specific selection criteria

for the position. In circumstances where the employer has compiled a Person Specification for the post, it is important that the applicant addresses the individual skills and experience criteria laid down in the specification. The letter of application should be sufficiently comprehensive to demonstrate to the employer that the applicant meets the job or selection criteria for the post and that he/she is enthusiastic and interested in the position. When drafting the letter of application, the individual should stress what their particular role and responsibilities were with any previous employer rather than simply describe what the employer did.

Application Forms

Some employers (usually larger ones) request applicants to complete an application form rather than submitting a CV. Application forms tend to seek precise or specific information or pose certain questions of the applicant.

Prior to completing the Form, applicants are advised to:

- Read it carefully
- If possible, photocopy the form and do a rough draft prior to filling in the original
- Adhere to the employer's requirements eg. to use a particular colour (usually black)
- Answer every question or if the question does not apply mark it N/A (Not Applicable)

4. Making the Most of Interview Opportunities

Whereas recruitment advertising is the process of attracting applicants for a vacancy, selection is the process of choosing the successful candidate. A well drafted CV may lead to an interview, the individual's performance at the interview will ultimately determine whether they get the job. Employers will normally give reasonable notice of interviews – this may be by letter or a phone call. Employers will often ask the person to confirm that they will be attending for interview. It is important that candidates confirm that they will be attending. Similarly, if for any reason the person is no longer interested in the position, the employer will usually appreciate being notified of this.

When invited for interview, it is recommended that the applicant verifies the exact location. Whilst employers will likely hold interviews at their premises, some employers however use external venues such as hotels to hold interviews. Depending on the job, interviews may be formal with an interview board, or informal with one or two people. Good practice dictates that, where possible, interviews should be conducted by more than one person and that interview panels should be gender balanced. This is usually easier to achieve in larger organisations. In smaller owner-manager organisations it may not be unusual for one person to conduct job interviews.

Prior to Interview

Candidates should:

- Research the organisation
- Be punctual
- Find out as much as possible about the job
- Dress appropriate to the job/organisation
- Anticipate possible questions

During Interview

Candidates should:

- Listen carefully to the question and ask for clarification if the question is not understood
- Focus on the question – if possible avoid giving irrelevant information
- Give examples of achievements and illustrate how they meet the key skills and experience required for the job
- Be honest – if a candidate is unfamiliar with an issue/topic, she/he should say so rather than attempt an answer which may ultimately be detrimental to the candidate
- Ask relevant questions
- Try to relax and maintain eye contact
- Not worry if some Interview Panel Members are taking notes as this may be a requirement of the organisation's recruitment and selection policy

Following interviews, if successful the employer will likely wish to take up references prior to offering the position or alternatively offer the position subject to receipt of references.

Good recruitment practice would dictate that the employer should notify both the not-shortlisted and the unsuccessful candidates following interview. This is particularly important as unemployed people may be asked by the local Social Welfare Office to provide evidence of job searching in the context of current genuinely seeking work requirements. Some employers may also offer feedback on interview performance. If the employer does not offer feedback, it may be worthwhile for candidates to request it for future reference.

5. Rights at Work

When a person takes up employment, she/he is entitled to a range of statutory employment rights. Some of these rights apply immediately whereas others apply after the individual has worked for a specified minimum number of hours and/or weeks. There have been many changes in employment legislation in recent years. These changes have come about both as a result of new national employment legislation and European Employment Legislation being enacted into Irish Law.

This document gives an overview of the main statutory employment rights that apply to people who are either about to or who have recently taken up employment. The list is not exhaustive.

Written Statement of the Principal Terms and Conditions of Employment

Any person who works for another person in return for remuneration (payment) can be said to be in a contractual relationship. There is no legal requirement for the contract to be in writing. However, under the Terms of Employment (Information) Act 1994, an employer must issue to employees a written statement of the principal terms and conditions of employment within two months of the employee starting work. The written statement must include: the name and address of the employer; the name of the employee; the title of the job; the start date, and in the case of a temporary contract the anticipated end date; the hours of work; the rate of pay and whether payment is weekly or monthly; period of notice; holiday entitlement and any other terms and conditions eg. in relation to paid sick leave, pensions etc.

NB. The above list is not exhaustive.

The National Minimum Wage

The National Minimum Wage Act 2000 provides for a minimum hourly rate of pay for most adult employees. The current adult rate is €6.35. A reduced rate is payable to workers aged under 18.

Itemised Payslip

The Payment of Wages Act 1991 requires employers to issue itemised payslips to employees.

Equality Legislation

The Employment Equality Act 1998 prohibits employers from discriminating against an employee or prospective employee on the grounds of gender, marital or family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller Community.

Equal Pay

The Employment Equality Act 1998 also requires employers to provide equal pay for equal work or work of equal value ie. a woman must not be paid less than a man for doing the same job.

Minimum Rest Periods

The Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 provides for a maximum working week of 48 hours including overtime averaged out over four months or longer by agreement. The Act also provides for a daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours in each 24 hour period; an unpaid rest break of 15 minutes after four and a half hours have been worked and an unpaid rest break of 30 minutes after six hours have been worked which may include the first break. A number of groups are exempt from the Act including Gardai, doctors in training and workers engaged in sea fishing and other work at sea. Other groups and industries are also exempt from the minimum rest period provisions of the Act including ambulance and fire services, the security industry, tourism, agriculture and waste collection.

NB. This list is not exhaustive

Public Holidays

The Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 list the following days as Public Holidays - New Year's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Easter Monday, the first Monday in May, the first Monday in June, the first Monday in August, the last Monday in October, Christmas Day and St. Stephen's Day. Good Friday is not a public holiday although many organisations close for the day.

For Public Holidays, employees are entitled to one of the following - a paid day off on the day in question; a paid day off within a month of that day; an extra day's annual leave or an extra day's pay. These arrangements apply irrespective of whether the employee normally works on the day on which the Holiday falls. Part-time employees qualify for Public Holiday entitlements provided they have worked at least 40 hours during the five weeks ending on the day before a Public holiday.

Annual Leave

The Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 provides for most employees to have at least four working weeks' annual leave for each leave year. Staff who have worked for less than a year are entitled to a proportionate entitlement.

Maternity Leave

The Maternity Protection Act 1994 and the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (Pregnant Employees) Regulations 1993 set out the main provisions that apply to pregnant employees. Under the regulations, all pregnant employees, regardless of the length of employment or hours worked, are entitled to 18 weeks statutory maternity leave. Statutory maternity benefit may be payable providing the employee has made the required number of PRSI contributions. Employees are also entitled to return to work after maternity leave.

Parental Leave

Parental Leave is a separate entitlement to Maternity Leave and is available to both parents/adoptive parents. **The Parental Leave Act 1998** provides for, amongst other things, 14 weeks unpaid leave for employees in respect of children (aged five or under) born or adopted on or after 3rd December 1993. Normally, the employee must have worked for the same employer for at least one year in order to qualify for the full entitlement.

The **Parental Leave Act** also provides for **force majeure leave** up to three days with pay in any one year (subject to not more than five days in any three year period) where the employees presence is indispensable because of an injury or illness of a child, spouse or partner, sibling, parent or grandparent.

Sick Pay

There is no statutory entitlement to sick pay. However, many employers make some provision for the payment of staff who are absent as a result of illness.

Trade Union Membership

The Irish Constitution guarantees the right of individuals to form associations and unions and the dismissal of employees for trade union membership or activities is prohibited under **the Unfair Dismissals Act 1977**. Being a member of a particular union does not mean that the Employer will automatically recognise that trade union.

Health and Safety

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989 imposes duties on employers to ensure the safety, health and welfare at work of their employees. The Act requires employers to: publish a safety statement; provide adequate training and instruction and to consult employees on health and safety issues. Employees also have duties under the Act. These include the duty to take reasonable care and to co-operate with their employer.

Useful Contacts:

The INOU

Tel: 01 856 0088

The Equality Authority

Tel: 01 417 3336 Lo Call 1890 245 545

The Employment Section - Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Tel: 01 661 4444

The Employment Appeals Tribunal

Tel: 01 661 4444

Office of the Rights Commissioners

Tel: 01 660 9662

Dismissal

The Unfair Dismissals Act 1977 gives protection to employees against unfair dismissal. Under the Act, dismissal for certain reasons is automatically unfair eg. on the grounds of pregnancy or on the basis of the other grounds set out in the Employment Equality Act (see above).

Redundancy

Under **the Redundancy Payments Act 1967-1979**, employers are required to pay compensation to employees who lose their jobs by reason of redundancy. The amount of the payment is related to the employee's age, length of service and wages (up to a weekly maximum of €507.90). To be eligible for a redundancy payment, the employee must satisfy a number of conditions including being aged between 16 and 66 years and have worked continuously for the employer for at least two years.