



CONFERENCE REPORT

Wynn's Hotel, 30th November 2017

Best Practice in the Delivery of Employment Services



Foreword

John Stewart INOU Co-ordinator



I am pleased to present this report arising from the INOU's conference – Best practice in the Delivery of Employment Services held at Wynn's Hotel, Dublin on 30th November 2017. The Conference was a key event in our 2017 calendar which marked the 30th anniversary of the founding of the organisation.

Ireland experienced a severe economic downturn in 2008/2009. Unemployment rose relentlessly and the country experienced a return to mass emigration, in particular amongst young people. The economic crisis presented huge challenges for people who lost their jobs, who were unable to secure employment, for people who were unemployed before the downturn and for organisations delivering services and supports to unemployed people. Thankfully, in recent years there have been some positive developments in relation to employment and unemployment. The number of people who are officially registered as being unemployed has fallen considerably and job creation has increased significantly.

Unemployed people have made huge efforts to find work and employers are offering employment opportunities to unemployed people, including many people who were long-term unemployed. Employment services are also playing a key role in supporting and assisting unemployed people to get back to work.

Notwithstanding these positive developments, unemployment remains a reality for tens of thousands of people. Our Conference was a unique event which brought together a wide range of local, national and international policy experts and practitioners, key Civil Servants, representatives from INOU member organisations and other groups, unemployed people, representatives from Intreo, the Local Employment Service, the JobPath providers and Employer representatives. The Conference focused on the strategies and approaches that work best in terms of supporting unemployed people to access employment opportunities and the critical role that the employment services play in this regard. The Conference provided an opportunity for listening, learning, sharing ideas and discussion and debate on what works well and what truly constitutes best practice in the delivery of employment services.

The Conference also provided an opportunity for delegates to hear about the work carried out by the



INOUE over the last three years in researching unemployed people's experience of the State's Employment Services. The Conference was supported by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection as part of the agreed work plan with the INOU under the Department's funding for the organisation in 2017.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ann Fergus, INOU Chairperson for chairing the Conference, Minister Catherine Byrne for delivering the opening address and all of the speakers, particularly Brita Borg from the Swedish Public Employment Service and her colleague Pia Lunöe. I would like to also thank all the people who gave an input at the workshops, the workshop facilitators, note takers, registration staff and everyone who had an involvement on the day. I would also like to thank everyone who attended the Conference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'John Stewart'.

John Stewart
Co-ordinator

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Conference Conclusions

Best practice in the delivery of Employment Services



In her opening remarks, Minister of State, Catherine Byrne said that it is important that employment services support people to find the work, training and education that provides the best fit for them.

The Conference provided a unique opportunity for professionals from employment services and those working in related areas, to listen, share ideas and experiences and discuss and debate what works well and what could usefully be changed. We have brought together a range of recurring themes and tenets from the conference, including key principles in providing an Employment Service and best practice from the Swedish Ung Komp programme.

- ***People want to work***

Throughout the day from Minister Byrne advising that 'it is useful to focus on the concept that a person wants work', a number of Speakers, Panellists and Participants highlighted that the vast majority of unemployed people want to work. John Stewart, INOU Coordinator advised that the INOU research highlighted that the unemployed people met through the project were looking hard to find work or relevant training and education options.

- ***Employment Services need to better support people who are further distanced from the labour market***

As Ann Fergus, INOU Chairperson noted 'there is a very good opportunity now, as the economy recovers and the country's finances improve, to prioritise working with people who remain unemployed to provide the necessary and sustainable supports to get people to work'. A focus is needed to identify suitable pathways to work for a range of people including young people with lower educational attainment and those who lost their jobs in the recession. This should include providing a more intensive and appropriate career guidance and coaching process to those individuals who are finding it difficult to progress. Brita Borg and Pia Lunöe, Swedish Public Employment Service,

advised that it was not a lack of interest that resulted in people not attending engagements with their services, but rather a lack of hope.

- ***Importance, value of having work***

The importance and value of having a job and the self-worth that accompanies employment was another Conference recurring theme. The corollary – how unemployment deeply affects not only the person themselves, but those that they live with was also noted. It was highlighted that sustained unemployment leads to a lack of hope and the impact of poverty and exclusion in neighbourhoods and families is very real.

- ***Policy Framework for operating employment services and broader economic context***

There is a strong need for clarity in regards to ensuring effective oversight of the policy framework that the employment services are operating in. This includes providing clarity as to the role that the Labour Market Council, which oversees Pathways to Work, should play. Similarly, Bríd O'Brien, INOU Head of Policy and Media enquired how do we give full effect to the European vision for 2020 whereby we create an Ireland that is smarter, more inclusive and more sustainable, an Ireland where people who are further and most distanced from the labour market will be fully supported to find the best work, training and education options for them.

John Conlon, Assistant Secretary, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) advised that the Department is looking to build its engagement capacity with employers. John acknowledged that there will be a greater challenge particularly with smaller employers. John said that, in addition to people who are unemployed, it will also be important to support not just people on the Live Register, but a range of others, including people in low income employment.

There is an opportunity to focus on the quality and not solely on the quantity of jobs being created. John Sweeney, Labour Market Economist

highlighted that the OECD has made the quality of jobs and the inclusiveness of labour markets defining features of good national performance in its new Jobs Strategy. John also commended the National Skills Strategy for committing to ensure that unemployed jobseekers are skilled to 'find the best possible jobs', while noting the skills threshold to entry-level jobs is rising and referred to the 'surprisingly demanding nature' of many so-called 'low skilled' jobs.

- **Public Employment Services (PES) fully available to the public**

Ensure that the Public Employment Services fully operate as employment services that are open to the public: including people not on a social welfare payment, people in receipt of any social welfare payment, and those in employment, in particular people in low paid and precarious employment.

Employment Service: Key factors in providing a quality service

- ✓ An underlying belief in the capacity of individuals using the service, while recognising that this might require significant resources to provide the optimum service to the individual.
- ✓ Build trust – the importance of trust and engagement was highlighted as a critical aspect of the service especially in the initial contact.
- ✓ Clear communication – that the communication within the Employment Service and between the Service and individuals is as clear and comprehensive as possible.
- ✓ Ensure greater consistency of service and ensure staff continuous professional development – it was highlighted that the quality of service provided appears to overly depend on the individual Employment Services Officer.
- ✓ Employment Services need to ensure that the longer-term interest and potential of every unemployed person is taken into account and that they support their unemployed clients in finding the best possible jobs.
- ✓ Provide accurate comprehensive and key welfare to work information – the complexity of the social welfare system is such that it is important that employment services develop

greater knowledge and expertise in the welfare to work continuum.

- ✓ Requirement for good initial assessment.
- ✓ An activation approach tailored to meet the needs of the individual, focussing on a person's skills, interests, personality, qualifications, contacts, location, values and motivation. As Mick Creedon, Ballymun Job Centre advised 'it is important that the public employment services deliver the type of service that people want'.
- ✓ Ensure a partnership approach between the individual and the employment service.
- ✓ Build and develop close relationships with employers. It was noted that both matching the person and ensuring the skills fit and job readiness of candidates are very important for employers.
- ✓ Better cooperation and collaborative working. Develop good interagency links with relevant support agencies, including having regular meetings, particularly employment services working closely with other employment services, the Education and Training Boards and a wide range of organisations locally.
- ✓ Ensure the availability of wrap around supports and that where people are further distanced from the labour market, progression should not mean employment only. Helen Johnston, NESC proposed a 'direction of travel and distance travelled' measure, which would be a very useful area for further research.
- ✓ Measuring quality in the services is important and that the PES are well managed services underpinned by quality assurance processes and committed to evaluating impact and capturing good data.

Sweden: Best Practice from the Ung Komp programme

- ✓ Provides a template for developing a holistic, multi-competence team based Employment Service.
- ✓ Multi-competence, co-located team with very significant collaboration within the team.
- ✓ Team meets once a week to discuss cases and find new pathways for young unemployed people.

- ✓ Importance of maintaining dialogue and that the team is always available to each other and to participants.
- ✓ The multi-competent team's approach is a holistic one that focusses on the person's whole-life situation, rather than a narrow employment or education based approach. This includes ensuring that the team is the link to addressing a person's housing situation, and, if applicable, their use of drugs, alcohol or gaming habits.
- ✓ For the staff, the importance of patience and endurance was emphasised.
- ✓ Very important to build a good base with the person and this takes 2-3 meetings, which involves an Employment Officer and one other Staff member.
- ✓ A key aspect of the programme is personal support, to help their clients with whatever support they require..

Additional instances of what works

- ✓ One employment service highlighted that joining the local Chamber of Commerce has been very useful.
- ✓ Employment services sharing their success stories with employers and making it as easy as possible for the employer to 'buy' into the service.
- ✓ A Conference delegate advised that a number of the employment services and relevant agencies in their area meet on a voluntary basis once a month, with a specific employment related theme e.g. healthcare, tourism.
- ✓ One of the Conference delegates noted that, in relation to one of their Employment Service Officers who deals with people who are longer term unemployed, 'taking their time with people' has resulted in very high progression rates.

Barriers preventing people from taking-up work and engagement

- Transport costs
- Childcare
- Income
- Accommodation
- Rural isolation
- Lack of an adequate public transport system

It was also reported that opportunities were being lost to promote and market key employment services, particularly in the initial letter of invitation to attend the Group Information Sessions. It would be useful, for instance, in addition to providing information on how employment services are able to assist people, to include brief bulleted information on the available back-to-work supports.

Training and Education

- ✓ Better literacy, numeracy and other basic skills.
- ✓ Importance of involving employers in developing training programmes.
- ✓ Need for greater change to ensure the curriculum remains up-to-date with labour market needs, 'on the job' training and pathways back to education.
- ✓ It is important that education, training and personal development are measured appropriately.
- ✓ Need for tailored training courses.
- ✓ Provision of significant supports during training.
- ✓ Ensure there are routes to acquiring necessary skills through apprenticeships, traineeships and other dual-education programmes in further education and training.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Ann Fergus INOU Chairperson



Ann welcomed the participants to the Conference. Ann said that the Conference marked the 30th anniversary of the founding of the INOU. Ann noted that the two key objectives for the INOU are as important today as they were when the organisation was founded. These are 'decent jobs for all' and 'maintaining a proper living standard while dependent on a Jobseekers payment'.

Ann highlighted that, even when our unemployment levels reached historically low levels, the people who were most marginalised were left behind. There is a very good opportunity now, Ann added as the economy recovers and the country's finances improve, to prioritise working with people who remain unemployed to provide the necessary and sustainable supports to assist people to obtain work.

Ann noted that unemployment deeply affects not only the person themselves, but those that they live with and Ann added that sustained unemployment leads to a lack of hope and the impact of poverty and exclusion in neighbourhoods and families is very real. Ann reiterated the need for sufficient supports for unemployed people.

Ann ended by thanking Minister Byrne for standing in for Minister Doherty who was unable to attend the event.



Opening Address

Catherine Byrne TD, Minister of State at the Department of Health



Minister Byrne advised that the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP), Regina Doherty TD was unable to attend due to a special Cabinet meeting and sent her apologies. Minister Byrne added that she was delighted to step in on behalf of Minister Doherty.

The Minister agreed with the Chairperson's remarks about the need to support people who have not had the opportunities to benefit from the recovery. It was vital, the Minister added that people are supported to find the work, training and education that provides the best fit with the person. The Minister talked about the importance and value of having a job and the self-worth that accompanies employment. The Minister outlined that some people who are on the Live Register might more suitably be in receipt of other payments, including disability payments.

Minister Byrne advised delegates that the Government and Departments will continue to consult and engage with the INOU and recognises the important role of the organisation. The Minister highlighted the reconfigured services advising that these are more integrated as they bring together both the employment services and benefits. The earlier engagement and improved payment processing times have resulted in high levels of customer satisfaction with the service. The Minister added that from her own constituency work, there appears to be a more personal interaction between the staff in Intreo offices and people using these services than might have been the situation previously. The Minister gave an example of a young man from Ballyfermot who had been unemployed for a long period of time and who advised the Minister that he had been dealt with and listened to as a human being for the first time in a long time at the local office.

The Minister advised that there are many people engaged in further education which is great, but that it was important that we provide those who might be less academically inclined but more skilled with their hands, for instance, the opportunities that they need. This is an area that we need to rebuild, the Minister added and gave an example of two young people who were involved in a programme building sailing boats.



The two young men had never been employed previously and one mentioned that he would like to do catering. The scheme had provided the person with a clearer sense of what they want, the Minister added and it is important that employment services provide people with the opportunities to develop.

The Minister said that it is useful to focus on the concept that the person wants work. One example that the Minister gave was where a person took up a JobBridge place when they were in their forties, despite opposition from others, and found the placement very useful in restoring their sense of self-worth. The Minister advised that they are now working again and added that when programmes and services work well they provide people with the necessary supports and motivation.

The Minister acknowledged the ongoing consultative engagement with the INOU and advised that a number of the recommendations listed in the Report on the Intreo Service have been taken on board and implemented. The Minister added that the Department and Government need the assistance from the INOU and others gathered today, to ensure that the learning from people working on the ground informs the delivery of the services.

The Minister advised that a Working Group is being announced today looking at how it might be possible to give a chance to young people involved in criminal activity that is at the lesser end of the criminal continuum.

The Minister advised that many men and women lost their jobs when the Construction industry crashed in 2008/9. The Minister said that we need to ensure that people in this situation are supported back into employment, or back into their communities if they have withdrawn from them. It was also very important, the Minister added that we involve young people and that we identify suitable paths for them.

The Minister reported that Minister Doherty is looking forward to meeting with the INOU at the conclusion of the Report. Minister Byrne concluded her presentation on a personal note. The Minister advised that she did not want to leave education but was forced to. The Minister added that no one has any right to tell a person that they can't aspire to be what they want. We might need help, the Minister concluded, to achieve these aspirations, but we need to ensure that those aspirations are supported.



Response

John Stewart INOU Co-ordinator



John Stewart thanked Minister Byrne for her excellent speech and for her incisive insights into how unemployment affected people and the value that work brings to people's lives. John advised that he would like to acknowledge the financial support from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection both generally and specifically in relation to the event today and the wider Employment Services Research Project.

John added that there has been a very significant improvement in job creation over the last five years and advised that the INOU would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the key players in this regard. John said that unemployed people themselves had made huge efforts to get back to work. John added that the work that the INOU undertakes, and specifically in relation to the research of unemployed people's experience of the employment services, very clearly demonstrated that the vast majority of unemployed people want to work. John said that the availability of jobs was the key. John advised that employers had made an important contribution in terms of recruiting unemployed people and that he was also very glad to have an opportunity to acknowledge the work of the full range of employment services together with other services and supports that have assisted unemployed people to take-up work.

John said that, notwithstanding the positive developments in recent years, there still remained a very significant number of people who are unemployed and who need services and supports. John added that people who were long-term unemployed experienced particular barriers. John advised that the Best Practice in the Delivery of Employment Services Conference provided the opportunity to examine how the employment services can better support people who are very distant from the labour market; what has worked so far – what has made the difference for unemployed people; what is working in other countries and the importance of imaginary ideas

and innovative solutions that are tailored to the individual.

John also clarified that the purpose of the Conference was not to pitch one type of employment service against another, but rather to provide a unique opportunity to listen, share ideas and experiences and discuss and debate what works well and any necessary changes. John said that the organisation very much appreciated Minister Byrne attending at short notice and expressed the hope that the recommendations that emerge from the Conference will help inform the on-going development of policy and practice in relation to the delivery of first class employment services for unemployed people and other people looking for work.



Setting the Context: A Policy Overview

Bríd O'Brien INOU Head of Policy and Media



Brid echoed a point raised by Ann in her opening address, that serious consideration must be given to the people who were left behind even during the height of the boom and that on-going investment and supports are required. Brid highlighted the welcome reduction in the numbers of people who are described as unemployed, but added that the current figure of 6.4% is well above the figures reached previously in the early to mid-noughties, when unemployment was between 4 and 4.5%.

Brid advised that the headline unemployment figures often mask a significantly higher figure: as they do not include people who are out of work but have not looked for work in the last month; and / or others who are unable to take-up work in the next two weeks. Brid highlighted a range of barriers that may be preventing people from accessing work, including discrimination, age, family circumstances, a lack of skills, childcare or transport.

The reduction in the number of training and education places may also be an issue, Brid advised in preventing people from being able to take-up better, more sustainable jobs.

Brid reported on Pathways to Work 2016-2020. Brid said that Pathways to Work, in addition to focussing on people in receipt of a Jobseeker's payment, will also extend labour market activation to other groups. Brid advised that groups named in the Action Plan for Jobs, Action 131, included lone parents, people with a disability and Qualified Adults, and that the action refers back to Pathways to Work policy.

Brid highlighted that one of the challenges for the State, is how to appropriately engage with people in receipt of payments where attendance or not at events, supports etc. does not impact on their payment, as is the case with Jobseekers payments. Brid added that this will require a different method of engagement, an active inclusion approach, which would also be relevant in the



delivery of services to people who are long-term unemployed.

Brid advised that the integration of services and supports are very important and enquired about how well existing employment services work together. Brid also enquired about what role the Labour Market Council, which oversees Pathways to Work, will play. Brid asked another important policy question - Where does the Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work meet? Underpinning all of this Brid added is how do we ensure that real and sustainable pathways to decent work exist for people who are not in work or who are in low paid, precarious employment.

Brid advised that it is very useful that 'active inclusion' is named as a Strategic Goal in the Further Education and Training Strategy, and it would be welcome to see this approach used in other policy developments. Brid highlighted how the State found it very difficult to respond to the unemployment crisis which hit in 2008/9. One useful initiative was the Springboard programme, which catered for unemployed people who had a certain level of education and facilitated them to reskill and pursue emerging employment opportunities.

Bríd advised that the challenge facing us is how to give full effect to the Europe 2020 vision whereby we have created an Ireland that is smarter, more inclusive and more sustainable; an Ireland where people who are further and most distanced from the labour market will be able to get a real look-in and access to a decent job.

Bríd pointed to some developments that could assist in this regard. In particular the Public Sector Duty which was introduced in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. Bríd concluded that it would also be very important for socio-economic status to be included as an additional ground in Ireland's equality legislation.



Why Active Inclusion Matters: Placing the Person at the Heart of the Service

Helen Johnston Senior Political Analyst, National Economic and Social Council



Helen referred to a previous report completed by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) on the Developmental Welfare State (2005). Helen outlined the overlapping areas of the Developmental Welfare State, bringing together Services, Income Supports and Social Innovation. Helen explained the tailored universalist approach in the Developmental Welfare State and advised that this is based on high quality services to which there is universal access, but where the actual service delivered is tailored to an individual's specific circumstances.

Helen reported that NESC is currently undertaking work in a Dublin suburb that is experiencing disadvantage. The qualitative research links in with 33 households marginally attached to the labour market; 16 local service provider organisations; 11 local employers; 11 service managers at regional or county level; and 21 Government Departments and stakeholder groups. Helen highlighted the importance of generating trust.

Helen advised that the presentation would focus primarily on the various perspectives from the research that reflected on the nature of the employment services engagement, in relation to Intreo, the Local Employment Service (LES) and JobPath. Some of the responses indicated the importance of trust and engagement, including the importance of the initial contact. Helen also highlighted that how a sanction to a person's payment is applied is important, particularly as building trust is a very important aspect of the service. One of the aspects that Helen noted concerned how to differentiate the services. Helen quoted from a senior Governmental official who advised that two key questions are: what should be the nature of the service and who is best placed to provide that service.

Helen remarked on feedback that highlighted the complex social welfare system with its rules and



eligibility criteria. Helen added that there are different rules for different schemes and noted the feedback which illustrates that this can be constraining. Helen also advised that feedback indicated that there was limited engagement between the employment services and both Qualified Adults and people in receipt of the One Parent Family Payment.

In relation to the depth of the engagement between the Employment Service and the individual unemployed person, Helen noted some feedback to the effect that this can resemble 'speed dating'. Helen also remarked on feedback that illustrated a very significant level of inconsistency in the quality of the services, and that sometimes the quality of service provided appears to depend on the individual Employment Services Officer. Helen highlighted the importance of trust and noted that many people did not trust the service, either as a result of fear of engaging and losing their payment/benefit; or because they have heard of bad experiences from others; or because of power imbalances.

Helen concluded by indicating key guiding principles that could usefully underpin the delivery of employment services and questions to be addressed:

- Be explicit about an organisation's values
- Importance of initial contact and engagement
- Building trust and confidence
- Realistic options for people – some local autonomy?
- Progression – connections
- Additional supports, if required
- Who delivers?
- Broker or referral?



What Works: A Case Study from Sweden and principles to help inform excellence in the delivery of Employment Services

Brita Borg National Project Coordinator and **Pia Lunöe**, Psychologist,
Swedish Public Employment Service



Brita Borg and Pia Lunöe focussed on the innovative programme Ung Komp. They advised that the programme assists young unemployed people aged between 16 and 24 who are in need of comprehensive supports. The programme runs in 19 cities and over 200 employees have supported 10,000 young people since 2015.

Brita and Pia highlighted the key aspects of Ung Komp that have resulted in the delivery of a very successful programme. One very important factor is the multi-competence team which delivers the programme. The team works full-time and is co-located which is very useful. Another related aspect is that there is very significant collaboration within the team. All of the team meet once a week to discuss cases and find new pathways for the young unemployed people on Ung Komp. Brita and Pia highlighted the importance of maintaining dialogue and that the team is always available to each other and to participants. The motto, Brita advised is that 'You never walk alone'. Brita and Pia played a three and a half minute audio-visual piece from one of the participants talking about their Ung Komp experiences.

The multi-competence team's approach is a holistic one that focusses on the person's whole-life situation, rather than a narrow employment or education based approach. This includes ensuring that the team is the link to addressing a person's housing situation; addressing use of drugs, alcohol or gaming habits.

Brita and Pia advised that it was very important to build a good base with the person and this takes 2-3 meetings, which involves an Employment Officer and one other Staff member. This includes planning the first steps towards the goal and to do the planning with the person rather than for the person. Depending on the person's



circumstances, the team works with the person to refer them to the correct authority; to go to a dentist appointment etc.

Brita and Pia highlighted the very positive results from the programme. 70% of the 10,000 people through the programme have been placed in work or education (for at least 6 months). The ethos of the programme attempts to ensure that everyone is made welcome. This and the success of the programme has also resulted in higher trust among clients in the Swedish Public Employment Service (and the programme). For the staff, the importance of patience and endurance was emphasised. Pia and Brita also highlighted that many of the young people who were attending had experiences of failure and disappointment and it is a healthy attitude for them to be sceptical about another service or programme. Pia advised that it was not a lack of interest that lead to people not attending, but a lack of hope. The team follows up closely with the person. Brita advised that the Eguide – developed by the Ballymun Job Centre – has been very useful. Brita and Pia concluded that a key aspect of the programme is personal support, to help their clients with whatever support they require.

What do we need from our Employment Services? Getting the Policy and Practice Right



Panellists: Seamus McGuinness, Economic and Social Research Institute (Chairperson); Brita Borg, Swedish Public Employment Service; John Conlon, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection; Brid O'Brien, INOU; Tony Donohoe, IBEC; Helen Johnston, National Economic and Social Council.

Seamus McGuinness, ESRI, in introducing the panel advised that as the numbers of unemployed people decreases, the key question for the Public Employment Services is how it reaches people who are longer term unemployed or more distanced from the labour market. Seamus added that there is a need for a social inclusion component to the service.

John Conlon, DEASP, advised that the Department, despite meeting many of the challenges in the recent past, has an ongoing need to review the working of its employment services. John acknowledged the need to maintain significant resources to ensure that people who are further away from accessing work will be provided with the necessary supports. John added that as the economy nears full employment there is a danger that resources may be moved to other areas.

Tony Donohoe, IBEC, advised of the 4 Cs – capacity, competency, culture and connectedness. Tony advised that changing culture in organisations is really difficult and in a more complex and complicated activation model, this is quite a challenge. Tony highlighted the Swedish case study as a good live example of connectedness. Tony added that it is noteworthy and concerning that the National Planning Framework which identifies investment priorities for the next 40 years hardly references either the Public Employment Services, Activation, or human capital.

Elaine Harvey, Galway LES, said that the LES engages with employers and enquired of Tony what would be a good 'chat-up' line for employers. What is the

best way for employment services to approach employers, Elaine added. Tony advised that one of the best ways to engage with employers is for employment services to demonstrate their relevance and to explain how they can meet the employers' need. Tony added that, during the huge downturn, the Corporate Social Responsibility putting on the 'green shirt for Ireland' approach would have had some success, but is less likely to work as the economic situation improves.

Niamh O'Reilly, Aontas, advised that it takes time and really good guidance to ensure that adult learners have the opportunity to take-up meaningful career options. Niamh gave an example of a young man who spoke at an Aontas organised event yesterday, who had undertaken a number of training courses, including Anger Management and Personal Development and was now looking to access an Apprenticeship. Niamh said it was vital that employment services and others were able to give the necessary time to support people.

Seamus McGuinness said that organisations may prioritise those who are easier to place.

Helen Johnston, NESC, agreed with Niamh and said that some people are unsure of what work they would like to do and that people may find direction through good guidance. Helen said it would be useful to build good links and relationships between employers and employment services over time. In relation to targets, Helen advised that these were important, but added one key question is how do you measure quality. Helen added that we need to work harder on how we will do this and proposed a 'direction of travel and distanced travelled' measure.

John Conlon, DEASP, advised that the Department is looking to build its engagement capacity with employers. John acknowledged that there will be a greater challenge particularly with smaller employers. John said that, in addition to people

who are unemployed, it will also be important to support not just people on the Live Register, but a range of others, including people in low income employment.

Chris Allen, asked how we ensure this is not a punitive approach, that programmes have real and meaningful outcomes. Chris advised that the Swedish model outlined earlier, illustrates the need for more cohesive supports. Chris added that the line illustrated in a quote from an earlier slide by Helen Johnston 'It's optional but hard to say no' was instructive of much of the engagement.

Mary Stokes, NCGE, advised that there is an evident need for cooperation between all agencies. Mary said that it was very useful that such a wide range of people representing training and education, the labour market and employment services were in attendance at the Conference.

Colin Donnery, Turas Nua, advised that one worrying short term challenge facing the Country is Brexit. Colin also asked for the Panel's view of mid-term challenges such as the changing nature of jobs, which are likely to include greater use of artificial intelligence and robots.

Brid O'Brien, INOU, said that, in relation to Brexit, this has the potential to put a large hole in the recovery which could have a significant impact on those furthest from the labour market and their ability to access sustainable work. Brid said that it is vital that we have very good public employment services, with the relevant services working together. In relation to artificial intelligence, Brid advised that people are working in jobs now that wouldn't have been thought of 20 years ago. Brid added that a key imponderable is how people will be able to get the chance to avail of the new jobs that will emerge.

Seamus McGuinness, advised that the concerns over AI and robots replacing humans working have been going on for years. Seamus added that technological change creates as much work as is lost. Seamus queried why productivity is stagnant.

Helen Johnston, NESC, said cooperation could be difficult. Helen noted that while cooperation

might be more evident both at a top level and on the ground, it can be hard to achieve this in the middle. Helen advised that a key question is 'How can we cooperate better'. Helen also noted that education, pre-school and better supports earlier are all very useful.

John Conlon, DEASP, said that one of the issues is not seeing jobs as the sole focus, that a client focussed service was important. John advised that a key requirement for individuals will be reskilling and John noted that in-work training will be an important aspect in this regard.

Tony Donohoe, IBEC, said that sectors such as the agri-food and others will be affected to a greater degree by Brexit. Tony added that there is a planning and reskilling challenge to ensure we offset much of these affects. Tony noted that in relation to AI and robots, medium skills forecasting is an inexact science. Tony noted the work of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs which outlines what skills will be in demand over the next 5 years or so. In relation to guidance and the employment services, Tony added that he was not certain that we were ensuring that we will be adequately meeting these needs.



Quality Guidance and Knowing Your Labour Market:

How employment services can best support their staff in delivering an effective service for unemployed people



Input: Nuala Whelan, Ballymun Job Centre
Facilitator: Colin Donnery, Turas Nua

Nuala outlined the national employment and unemployment context and the barriers and challenges faced by unemployed people. Nuala advised that in responding to these challenges, employment services should provide a more intensive career guidance and coaching process to those individuals who are finding it difficult to progress. Nuala highlighted the different stages that people may go through when they lose their jobs; the historical development of career guidance, including the key concepts as originally outlined in the early 20th Century – know yourself, know the world and true reasoning (informed decision-making).

Nuala illustrated the Ballymun Job Centre's approach which adopts an activation approach tailored to meet the needs of the individual, focussing on a person's skills, interests, personality, qualifications, contacts, location, values and motivation. Nuala identified the process as one that starts with an initial personalised assessment, leading to a tailored career guidance process, the development of a career plan and the implementation of a career. Nuala added that this may be intensive work requiring a significant number of one-to-one sessions. Nuala noted key indicators through the process as increased self-awareness, improved self-esteem, career self-efficacy and greater resilience in the Labour Market.

Nuala identified key principles of quality guidance in the Public Employment Service. Nuala advised that it was very important that the starting point of the Service is an underlying belief in the capacity of individuals using the service. Nuala added that it was vital that the PES understand, assess and attend to the client's needs by offering a holistic approach. Nuala advised that well trained staff; significant resources for reaching and engaging with unemployed groups; building close

relationships with employers and developing good interagency links with relevant support agencies to support appropriate referrals, were all key aspects of quality guidance. Nuala reported that it is also important that the PES are well managed services, underpinned by quality assurance processes and committed to evaluating impact.

One of the Workshop participants noted Brita's and Pia's presentation on the holistic and multi-competencies Ung Komp service they run and added that it would be excellent to have those links to a psychology service in Ireland. One of the participants from a Local Employment Service advised that joining the local Chamber of Commerce has proved to be successful in both building links and securing job placements.

It was also noted that it is important for employment services to build good relationships with employers and to ensure that services are matching the right person to the job in order to ensure that employers will come back for more staff. Another mentioned that most employers operate on a small scale and like to have a trusted contact. They added that matching the person and the job is very important. One of the JobPath providers advised that they have staff that work directly with employers. One of the participants advised that it would be useful for both employers and unemployed people to register on the JobsIreland website.

One of the Workshop participants advised of the need for quality guidance for Jobseekers. Another noted that it can be difficult to measure career guidance effectiveness and suggested the need to capture good data. One of the participants stated that it is important for employment services to meet clients at the person's own level and to identify and remove barriers where necessary. They also advised of the need for good initial assessment.

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INOUE 30th CONFERENCE

Wynn's Hotel, 30th November 2017



A Workshop participant from Intreo advised that they have a dedicated Case Officer in their office who works with people who may need greater time and support to get back to work. They added that the approach of 'taking their time with people' has resulted in very high progression rates.

A Workshop participant from Ung Komp advised that while many young people say 'I just want a job', it is important to open up possibilities to identify talents. They added that the Eguide tests developed by Ballymun Job Centre are very useful and clients respond well to this.

It was also noted that it is necessary for employment services to build up respect and trust for people who are long-term unemployed. It is very important that the State and services invest in tailored (bespoke) training.

A Workshop participant advised that it is important that employment services personnel are supported through counselling and that a 24 hour employee assistance helpline would be very useful. They added that it is also important that the services work at ensuring good collegial support for one another. It was noted at the Workshop that a wide range of skills are required in order for employment services staff to work effectively; that the work can be emotionally draining and that good quality supervision is required.

One of the participants advised that the Employment Service Officer requires detailed knowledge of Back to Education courses, grants and supports; of how these supports and incentives impact on family, payments etc. and that the courses and grants that are currently available are vital and should be expanded. They added that the client of the service expects, and is entitled to, a very good employment service.



What Employers need from an Employment Service



Input: Kevin Empey, Work Matters
Facilitator: Paul Carroll, Department of
 Employment Affairs and Social
 Protection

Kevin focussed on two key areas – the Public Employment Service, an employer’s view and the workforce and worker of the future. One of the key changes in the service, Kevin noted was the increased number of employment services and the perception of complexity for employers. From an employers perspective, Kevin advised that one of the key questions revolves around specifically what is it that the different employment services are offering and whether it matches the employers needs. Kevin advised that employers might view this as a talent pipeline and/or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); and that in the current labour market, it is likely that there may be a reduced CSR employer emphasis.

Kevin advised that the skills fit and job readiness of candidates is very important for employers and is an area that the Public Employment Service needs to really focus on. Kevin acknowledged that there are pockets of excellent practice in the PES, but this is not consistent across the service.

Kevin noted 3 points for the Public Employment Service to consider – firstly to provide a joined up service and response to employer needs. Kevin noted that in order to ensure this is achieved it will be necessary to maximise local and central resources and to ensure the mechanisms are in place to replicate best practice. Secondly, Kevin reported that it is important to challenge assumptions that employers may have about the service and to sell the service to employers. Kevin advised that the PES should outline exactly how they can help, to share their success stories and to make it as easy as possible for the employer to ‘buy’ into the Service.

A workshop participant from the LES noted that they no longer have an Employer Liaison Officer (ELO) and link in with Intreo’s ELO. They advised

that this will have a negative impact on their future work. The participant added that employers often believe that the LES is a recruitment agency, that they have to pay for the service and it is important to clearly communicate the message of a free service. A number of speakers noted the implications of multiple Employer Liaison Officers and how best to address the question of different agencies working together. It was also noted that if there are less ELOs, then the capacity to engage with employers is reduced.

One of the participants advised that a key worker to assist both employers and people who are unemployed could be useful. Another participant from a Jobs Club noted that many people who use their service are unaware of their own skills, including those leaving education and training provision and employment. They added that there is a lack of feedback across the system that leaves people unprepared for the impact of unemployment and the challenge of finding employment.

One Workshop participant advised that there is a need for greater face to face engagement and that time is taken to properly develop human resources. Another said that it would be great if there was greater progression through potential employment options. They gave an example of a person who started their career as a porter with an organisation and is now an assistant manager.

The lack of consistency across the system was raised at the Workshop and one participant enquired where does the employer go for advice and support? It was suggested at the Workshop that appropriate use of social media could facilitate the building of connections between employment services and employers.

A participant advised that important aspects of an effective employment service include regular meetings across the agencies; maximising the use of resources, though it was acknowledged that this can be difficult given the funding / financial rules. A workshop participant from a community based

organisation noted the impact of the loss of good jobs in their locality; the opportunity to reskill via Springboard+ Level 8 course and the challenge of finding comparable work given that the employer base is narrow in this particular area. They added that their organisation found it hard to link in with employers and noted that there was little follow-up when they held an information session for employers. The person advised that the majority of the jobs available were jobs at or near the National Minimum Wage.

One of the participants highlighted good outcomes in their area and they noted that a significant contributing factor is collaborative, programmatic working. Another noted that a number of the employment services and relevant agencies meet on a voluntary basis once a month, with a specific employment related theme, e.g. healthcare & tourism.

There was a good discussion in the Workshop in relation to how progression is assessed. One of the participants noted that there is a challenge in capturing all the steps in the process and ensuring

that these are measured. This led to a call for DEASP to revisit its current contractual and target based model, which does not facilitate collaborative working.

A participant from a Job Club noted that they have established a very good working relationship with a number of employers and make it a priority to ensure that the person is matched appropriately to the job. A workshop LES participant advised that one aspect that has been important in achieving good results is a single point of contact with employers. Another advised that, from their work, building relationships, word of mouth, visiting, selling and promoting the employment services and their clients to employers have been very positive.

Participants were unanimous in stating that employers do not know about the employer incentives to recruit unemployed people. One of the participants noted that employers are often surprised at the available incentives.



Why Training and Education is essential



Input: Bryan Fields SOLAS
Facilitator: Niamh O'Reilly, Aontas

Bryan Fields, SOLAS, outlined the importance of training and education, noting that the higher a person's level of education, the better chance of getting employment. Bryan advised that low-skilled jobs will continue to exist, but they will require better literacy, numeracy and other basic skills. Jobs and careers (and therefore skill sets), Bryan reported have been changing rapidly for the past 20 years, in addition to the huge changes brought about by technological and globalisation change.

Bryan outlined some significant trends, including precarious work becoming more common; rise of the 'gig' economy; more involuntary part-time work for workers doing lower skill jobs; increased automation and ever-increasing use of the Internet and ICT skills as part of people's work. Brian also highlighted the statistics illustrating the greater education attainment the greater the likelihood of a person being employed, the targets for increasing education attainment in the National Skills Strategy and how the likelihood of further education and training increases as people's educational attainment does.

Bryan also outlined that 10% of workers are in 'elementary occupations' which have the lowest skill levels among occupations and are among the lowest paid jobs as well as among the most precarious. Bryan advised that lower-skilled workers have suffered most from job losses in the current economic downturn and that they are not only the most likely to lose a job, but also the least likely to find a new one. Bryan concluded with a number of key points – training, education and reskilling will matter more throughout people's lives; that training and education should be a lifelong process; the importance of involving employers in training programmes to ensure that skills being developed are needed; greater need for more 'on the job' training and pathways back to education; greater education and training leading to greater

employment opportunities, fulfilment and earnings. In the context of the recent economic crisis, activation strategies involving education and training to counter skills obsolescence due to prolonged unemployment play a particularly crucial role in maintaining the skills of the labour force

A participant noted that one difficulty for employment services in relation to training and education courses is the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP's) employment first approach. They added that only employment outcomes are acknowledged and it is important that education, training and personal development are measured. Another of the participants advised that the focus from the DEASP on short-term training courses is unhelpful.

One of the participants noted that their jobs are dependent on statistics which can have the effect of creating statistic focussed rather than person focussed roles. Another participant advised that specific local conditions are not taken into account when national guidelines are adopted. It was also noted at the Workshop that information on the numbers of graduates in jobs that do not require graduate qualifications is not being utilised.

It was suggested that there is a need for training to ensure that employment services staff, in particular DEASP are trained to meet people 'where they are at'. This is particularly important, the participant added, in ensuring that a quality service is delivered to people who are further distanced from the labour market. Another participant advised that it is very important not to assume what a person is capable of doing and to ensure that there is sufficient time to 'really get to know the person'.

One of the Workshop participants advised that only 20% of people who go to the Education and Training Boards are referred by the DEASP. The issue of ensuring people have sufficient access to childcare was raised and it was pointed out that there is a need for greater and more extensive links to childcare or this will limit people accessing courses. Another barrier that was highlighted at the

Workshop was the lack of internet access in rural areas. One of the Workshop participants advised that this limits people's access to online courses.

It was noted at the Workshop that the tightening labour market is helping to remove some of the barriers to employment faced by unemployed people.

One of the challenges facing education and training providers that was highlighted at the Workshop was that changing the curriculum to stay up-to-date with labour market needs is not straightforward.

A participant noted that educational attainment is increasing over time and this can place added pressures on early school leavers for example. Another participant advised that, in Ireland people's ICT skills are generally lower than many other European countries.

A participant said that it is very useful to involve employers in developing education and training programmes. They added that programmes are more successful when developed with employers.



How Employment Services Can Best Assist Unemployed People Further Distanced From The Labour Market



Input: Deirdre McCarthy
Dublin City Community Co-op
Facilitator: Declan Tanham, EmployAbility Service

Deirdre McCarthy, Dublin City Community Co-op, highlighted the people who statistics show are furthest distanced from the labour market - people who are educationally disadvantaged; communities who experience intergenerational unemployment; people with disabilities; those with health issues, including those with addiction issues; ex-prisoners; Travellers and migrants. Deirdre advised that dealing with a disadvantaged individual, based solely on job activation, and not examining or addressing the other issues will fail. Deirdre added that employment services have to be part of a wider package of supports and interventions. Front line services must work with clients from where they are, not where they are supposed to be and Deirdre argued the first step must be to treat the individual as an individual.

Deirdre noted the closure of community organisations, including Job Clubs, which provided much needed services. Deirdre highlighted key learning from Career LEAP, an innovative educational intervention to help at-risk young adults (18-25 years) develop the social, emotional and cognitive skills necessary for developing career identity and work-readiness; and from the report 'Kickboxing, Kindness and Going the Extra Mile: Good practice for working with NEETS under SICAP'. Learning included: direct face to face outreach work with young people is the only method to successfully reach them; courses have to be of interest and need to be tailored; training needs to be short, sharp and relevant with sufficient preparation time. Deirdre also advised that significant support during the training is needed and mentors and identification of appropriate businesses to work with are key. Deirdre also noted that very often people who are further distanced from the labour market are in chaotic situations and have low resilience. Deirdre

advised that it is important that people have 'lots of second chances'.

In concluding Deirdre stated that examining and addressing practical issues such as transport, childcare, income and accommodation are very important. Deirdre also highlighted the importance of ensuring the availability of wrap around supports and that where people are further distanced from the labour market, progression should not mean employment only.

There was a good discussion at the workshop on the education and training courses that can usefully be developed for people who are further distanced from the labour market. One of the workshop participants advised that it is very important that the courses are ones that clients want rather than what centres think that people would like and need.

One of the issues that was highlighted was rural isolation and the lack of an adequate public transport system. The need for greater transport supports to ensure people can access courses was highlighted.

It was noted at the Workshop that the Swedish programme for young people, Ung Komp, provided a very useful template for developing a holistic, multi-competencies team based employment service. One of the Workshop participants highlighted the very good working relationships with the different agencies in their geographic area and advised that these linkages are beneficial for the service's clients.

One of the participants representing an employment service advised that it is very important that employment services personnel, in their work with people, view people as individuals. They added that people have different learning styles, different responsibilities and different demands on their lives.

A workshop participant advised that a barrier for some people returning to work is that they will

lose their Rent Supplement payment. Another issue highlighted at the workshop is that a number of community based organisations that were providing either information, advice or support in their locality have had their funding cut or removed. Another issue that was raised by a workshop participant was their sense that very little local flexibility exists for DEASP staff to 'deviate from the script'. They added that some flexibility that would take the local situation into account would be very useful.

One of the participants advised that the Intreo offices are not currently equipped to work with people who are long-term unemployed. As a result at times, clients are matched with unsuitable programmes. They added that this can have the effect that clients are not progressing but are going around in circles. It was agreed that this can have a very negative impact on the unemployed person and another participant advised that this can also have a negative impact on the people delivering the service.





Mapping the Journey: Unemployed People's Experiences of the Employment Services

John Stewart INOU Co-ordinator



John advised that the INOU had been engaged in significant work researching unemployed people's experiences of the employment services. John advised that the rationale for this work – which has been rolling out for the past 4 years – has been the huge changes in the way that the Public Employment Service is configured. John added that the project set out to capture the positive aspects of the services, in addition to what is not working well and what might usefully be changed. John outlined the INOU's approach, which was to secure agreement from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection; ensure complete confidentiality; work on a 'no surprises' approach and clear communication and systematic feedback to the Employment Services Managers, senior personnel and DEASP officials.

John reported that the INOU had completed this work with the Intreo and Local Employment Services and that work is well underway in relation to the JobPath employment services. John advised that the process for all services has been to visit two different offices on multiple occasions to talk to unemployed people attending Group Information Sessions; collect contact details; issue invites to focus group meetings; bring people systematically through their employment service journey to date and follow-up at a subsequent focus group meeting. John added that the organisation also conducted telephone interviews with unemployed people to gather their experiences.

John advised that, to date, over the course of the Project, representatives from the INOU met with 1,380 unemployed people; took 786 contact details; held 17 focus groups involving 150 unemployed people; produced 2 reports and distributed 2,250 copies of the INOU's publication *Working for Work*.

John highlighted a number of the findings that resonated across the three different services. John noted the strong evidence of unemployed people engaging with the employment services and that people had identified a clear need and support for high quality employment services. John also advised that the research had highlighted that the unemployed people met through the project were

looking hard to find work or relevant training or education options. John advised that, in the main, people were satisfied with the staff delivering these services. John noted that for people who had been unemployed in the past, the current services were, generally, more positively received.

John advised that the letter of invite to Group Information Sessions was universally disliked across each of the focus group meetings, given the perceived focus on the threat of sanctions. John added that letters of invitation to meetings needed to be constructive and non-threatening and noted that there was a very strong sense amongst the unemployed people that we met that opportunities were being lost to promote and market key employment services. Another aspect that was highlighted was the need for employment services staff to have a greater knowledge and expertise around the welfare to work continuum. John also advised that the project highlighted a general lack of awareness on the part of unemployed people on the nature of the different employment services and the specifics of the service that people were referred to. John also advised that the research highlighted the need for a greater sense of ownership of the Personal Progression Plan; and that the role played by employment services in helping to combat isolation should not be underestimated. John noted that costs and transport concerns were evident, particularly in rural areas.

John advised that the research highlighted the need for a partnership approach between the individual and the employment service; the need for constructive employer linkages and a sophisticated job matching facility. John reported that the research also illustrated the importance of collaborative working and, particularly employment services working closely with other employment services, the Education and Training Boards and a wide range of organisations locally.

John summarised the key principles underpinning a quality Employment Service as communication; relationship building; greater welfare to work information and expertise; and collaborative working.

A Job, any Job or Training

John Sweeney Labour Market Economist



We are at a golden moment, John began, where the strength of the recovery and emerging skills deficits mean we can focus on the quality and not just on the quantity of jobs being created. He argued that new national policies that commit to achieving dynamic and resilient growth outside Dublin; stronger indigenous enterprises; improved skills at every level of the labour ladder; and a more inclusive labour market add up, in effect, to a rewriting of Ireland's economic script.

He noted that even the OECD has made the quality of jobs and the inclusiveness of labour markets defining features of good national performance in its new Jobs Strategy. An inclusive labour market, John said, means we avoid any polarisation between 'a relatively low-skilled, relatively low-paid, customer-facing leisure sector', on the one hand, and 'a relatively professionalised, high-skilled, internationally trading sector', on the other. Among other things, this means not tolerating that parts of our cities and rural areas develop mini labour markets of their own where low skills, low wages and low household incomes lock together ('low skilled equilibria').

John said that it is very important that 'activation' policies not dampen the expectations and ambitions of unemployed people, but support them in wanting to play full parts in the new script that is being written to advance Ireland's economy. Today's policy documents hit most of the 'right notes', he added. Skills are the new currency where getting a decent job is concerned and it important to ensure there are routes to acquiring them through apprenticeships, traineeships and other dual-education programmes in further education and training, and not just through higher education.

It is simply not true, he stated, that going to 3rd level education is essential to landing good jobs in our fast advancing economy. He noted that currently many graduates are in jobs that do not require their level of qualifications. Skills and



'what you can do' matter more than educational attainment on its own, and skills in Ireland have to improve 'across all qualifications and experience levels' to boost productivity and pay on all rungs of the labour market. John commended the National Skills Strategy for committing to ensure that unemployed jobseekers are skilled to 'find the best possible jobs'. He noted that Education and Training Boards are on the front line in helping people in poor quality jobs acquire the skills to get better ones.

John said it was likely that, in the near future, there will be very few low skilled jobs as we now know them. He noted that the skills threshold to entry-level jobs is rising and referred to the 'surprisingly demanding nature' of many so-called 'low skilled' jobs. For example, in research he had been part of, some manufacturing employers considered their General Operatives, generally regarded as at the bottom of the factory hierarchy, to be at the 'expert' level in the skills they exercised. In a widening range of customer-facing service jobs, employers are demanding a higher level of social skills in addition to digital competence. They are acutely aware that customers have become more demanding of service

quality and that this requires training. They also know that how they treat their staff affects how their staff treat customers. So, in services more than anywhere else, John pointed out, productivity and job quality are linked so that the 'jobs pay' for both workers and employers.

John concluded saying employment services need to ensure that the longer-term interest and potential of every unemployed person is taken into account and that they support their

unemployed clients in finding the best possible jobs. This means adopting 'train first' rather than 'work first' as their preferred strategy when drawing up 'personal progression plans' or their equivalent with their clients; and that the employment services providers have an intimate knowledge of, and collaborate closely with, the education and training providers – of whatever hue – who can deliver for their clients.



Delivering a Quality Employment Service

**Panelists:**

Paul O'Toole, SOLAS (Chair); John Sweeney, Labour Market Economist; Karl Milne, Seetec; Chris Kane, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection; John Stewart, INOU; Mick Creedon, Ballymun Job Centre.

Paul O'Toole, SOLAS, welcomed participants to the Panel discussion and plenary session focussing on 'Delivering a Quality Employment Service'. Paul advised that SOLAS oversees the delivery of the Further Education and Training sector, principally through the Education and Training Boards (ETB's). Paul agreed with the two speakers after lunch, John Stewart and John Sweeney: highlighting how skills are a global currency.

Mick Creedon, Ballymun Job Centre, advised that the Job Centre was established in 1986 and manages the Local Employment Service in Ballymun. Mick said that the Centre works in an area of urban disadvantage, where poverty and social exclusion are major issues. Mick added that the Public Employment Service has an important role in addressing poverty and social exclusion. In relation to the impact of artificial intelligence, Mick said that it is difficult to be certain how this will develop, but that it is unlikely to develop evenly across society.

Chris Kane, DEASP, advised that the country has been emerging from a crisis period in our history. Chris noted that the Live Register is steadily falling and that this will provide challenges for Services. Chris highlighted the existing review of employment services.

Karl Milne, Seetec, stated that the country needs flexible and agile Public Employment Services. Karl noted that employers have specific requirements for potential employees and these are changing all the time. Karl added that it is important to draw out the required skills. Karl advised that there is a significant role for Public Employment Services to help people not managing to cope with these changes and to assist the individuals to build solutions.

Declan Tanham, EmployAbility Wicklow, noted that there are a lot of employment and employment related services present today. Declan noted that this was very useful. Declan said it would be very useful if the services were able, in conjunction with the DEASP to co-design the delivery of employment services.

Kevin Empey, Work Matters, said he was heartened to hear John Sweeney's positive script, but asked what the implications are for the workplace of the future and whether the workplace of the future will be sufficiently joined-up.

Chris Kane, DEASP, said that in relation to employment services having a significant involvement in the design and delivery of the services that this occurs through a number of ways, including the DEASP listening to and being informed by the services and various stakeholders.

Declan Tanham, EmployAbility Wicklow, advised that there is a lot of knowledge about what works that the Department could usefully draw upon.

John Sweeney, Labour Market Economist, advised that we are now back to being a normal small advanced economy. John noted the very useful research completed by the Kemmy Business School in Limerick on the nature and prevalence of work contracts in Ireland. John noted that though zero-hours and if-and-when contracts are disturbing for those who have them, very many do not. John advised that one area of the social welfare system that might be usefully looked at, would be to assess whether people might receive greater social insurance related income support in the early stages of their unemployment.

Mick Creedon, Ballymun Job Centre, said he was glad to hear that the DEASP is open to consultation and will be seeking to draw on that experience. Mick said that it is important that the Public Employment Services deliver the type of service that people want.

John Stewart, INOU, advised that there is no shortage of examples of good practice and pilot programmes where excellent outcomes were

achieved. Very often, John added this good practice is not developed on and a key goal should be how we ensure good work is mainstreamed. John acknowledged that it isn't easy to deliver employment services. John added that it is important to acknowledge and recognise the efforts of a range of employment and related services, but added that it is vital that first class employment services are provided.

Paul O'Toole, SOLAS, in concluding the Panel and Plenary session, noted the contributions from earlier speakers and some panellists that advised that while the recovery is good, it is not, as yet, good for everyone. Paul noted that in relation to artificial intelligence and the future of work, he recalled many years ago being informed of paperless offices. Unfortunately, Paul said it seems as if there is three times more paper now, but added that the hope of the digital revolution lives on.



Paul Ginnell, EAPN reported that he had borrowed three of Tony Donohoe's four C's from the morning panel and plenary discussion – culture, connectedness, and capacity as a framework to present some of the key points arising from the day's presentations, workshops, panels and discussions. Paul highlighted the importance of culture and advised that one recurring theme from the Conference is that a person-centred approach which treats people as individuals is a key requirement for employment services. A holistic approach recognising a person's whole life situation, Paul added, coupled with building trust and confidence in the relationships between the service and the individual are also vital in developing a best practice employment service.

Paul noted that how successful outcomes are measured was discussed at various points throughout the day. Paul advised that while it is great if people can find or be supported to find quality work, in other cases where people are further distanced from the labour market, we need to ensure that progression is measured in other areas as well. Paul advised that connectedness is very important in improving the quality of people's lives, through addressing poverty and social exclusion and providing a range of appropriate activation and training services and supports. Paul noted the financial cuts to a significant number of community based services which can impact on a loss of connectedness between the individual and the community.

Paul noted the importance of connectedness in linking key future strategies, including the National Planning Framework and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. Paul added that it is also important for different activation services to be connected. This is important if a person who is unemployed is asked to end their engagement with one employment service at the time that they have developed trust with the service and this can be frustrating for both individuals and the employment services. Paul also asked to what extent are the services working together?

Paul noted the importance of contacts with, and involvement with, employers and asked to what extent is contact information being shared across services. Paul highlighted another of the C's – capacity, as being important. Paul instanced an



example whereby one employment service – the Kildare LES – advised that they joined the local Chamber of Commerce, which has been very useful at a number of levels, including networking and information sharing. Paul noted the importance of the employment services having the capacity to do their job and engaging with people using their services in an effective and person-centred way. From the workshops and discussions, Paul also highlighted the need for quality guidance. Paul added that the holistic, multi-competencies team based approach outlined by Brita and Pia from Sweden in their Ung Komp programme illustrated the advantage of this approach, including the availability of psychological services.

Paul highlighted an issue originally raised by John Conlon during the morning Panel and Plenary Session. Paul noted how John advised that falling unemployment is likely to ensure that it will be very difficult for the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to retain their existing level of resources to address unemployment. Paul also highlighted that feedback from earlier workshops and discussions indicated a need for activation services to engage with the individual, their families and communities to ensure a quality employment service.

Paul concluded by advising that the best way for the employment services to address poverty and social exclusion and inequalities is through connectedness, understanding, a person-centred service and collaborative working.

Closing Remarks

Ann Fergus INOU Chairperson



This has been a very interesting day. I would like to thank all the speakers for their thoughtful and very interesting presentations; the panellists for their input into the Panel and Plenary Sessions; the inputters who expertly presented insightful information at the workshops; the facilitators who kept the workshops focussed and vital; and the Rapporteur for bringing cohesion to the different themes running throughout the Conference.

I would like to thank you all for attending the Conference and for participating so fully throughout the day. I would like to acknowledge the work of the INOU staff for organising the Conference and for providing a fitting event to mark the 30th year of the organisation.



APPENDIX I –Agenda

Best Practice in the Delivery of Employment Services



10.00 Welcome

Ann Fergus, INOU Chairperson

10.05 Opening Address: Catherine Byrne TD, Minister of State for Health Promotion and the National Drugs Strategy at the Department of Health.

10.25 Response

John Stewart, INOU Co-ordinator

10.30 Setting the Context: A Policy overview –
Brid O'Brien, INOU Head of Policy and Media

10.50 Why Active Inclusion Matters: Placing the person at the heart of the service –
Helen Johnston, National Economic and Social Council

11.10 What works – A case study from Sweden and principles to help inform excellence in the delivery of Employment Services – Brita Borg and Pia Lunöe, Swedish Public Employment Service

11.30 Break

11.45 Panel Discussion and Plenary –What do we need from our Employment Services? Getting the Policy and Practice right – Panellists: Seamus McGuinness, Economic and Social Research Institute (Chairperson); Brita Borg, Swedish Public Employment Service; John Conlon, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection; Brid O'Brien, INOU; Tony Donohoe, IBEC; Helen Johnston, National Economic and Social Council.

12.30 Workshops

- **Quality Guidance and Knowing your labour market – how the Employment Services can best support their staff in delivering an effective service for unemployed people**

Inputter: Nuala Whelan, Ballymun Job Centre

Facilitator: Colin Donnery, Turas Nua

- **What Employers need from an Employment Service**

Inputter: Kevin Empey, Work Matters

Facilitator: Paul Carroll, DEASP

- **Why Training and Education is essential**

Inputter: Bryan Fields, SOLAS

Facilitator: Niamh O'Reilly, Aontas

- **How Employment Services can best assist unemployed people further distanced from the labour market**

Inputter:

Deirdre McCarthy, Dublin City Community Co-op

Facilitator: Declan Tanham, EmployAbility Service

1.30 Lunch

2.15 Mapping the Journey: Unemployed People's Experiences of the Employment Services

John Stewart, INOU Co-ordinator

2.30 A Job, Any Job or Training –

John Sweeney, Labour Market Economist

2.45 Panel Discussion and Plenary – Delivering a Quality Employment Service Panellists:

Paul O'Toole, SOLAS (Chair); John Sweeney, Labour Market Economist; Karl Milne, Seetec; Chris Kane, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection; John Stewart, INOU; Mick Creedon, Ballymun Job Centre

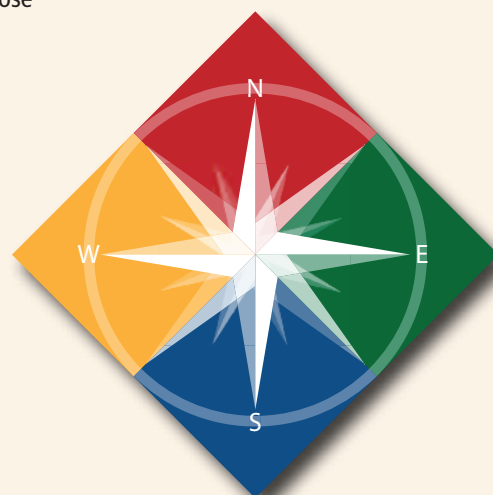
3.30 Workshops

- **Quality guidance and knowing your labour market – how the Employment Services can best support their staff in delivering an effective service for unemployed people**
- **What Employers need from an Employment Service**
- **Why Training and Education is essential**
- **How Employment Services can best assist unemployed people further distanced from the labour market**

4.30 Rapporteur's Report – Paul Ginnell, EAPN

4.40 Conference Closing remarks – Ann Fergus, Chairperson INOU

4.45 Close



APPENDIX II – ATTENDEES

Best Practice in the Delivery of Employment Services



Organisation	First Name	Surname
Aontas	Niamh	O'Reilly
Arklow Jobs Club	Jerry	Dixon.
Ballymun Job Centre	Nuala	Whelan.
Ballymun Job Centre	Mick	Creedon
Business in the Community	Alison	Payne
Cavan/Monaghan EmployAbility	Laura	Caslin
Cavan/Monaghan EmployAbility	Shauna	Reilly
Co. Kildare LES	Clodagh	Judge
Co. Waterford LES	Julie	O'Donnell
Department of An Taoiseach	Lena	Jacobs
Department of An Taoiseach	Gillian	Smyth
DEASP	Chris	Kane
DEASP	John	Conlon
DEASP	Paul	Carroll
DEASP	Lisa	Arnold
Doras Bui	Alison	Benson
Dublin City Coop	Deirdre	McCarthy
Dublin South City Partnership	Catherine	Devlin
Dublin South City Partnership	Nicola	Fogarty
Dundalk LES/Job Club	Martin	Noone
EAPN Ireland	Paul	Ginnell
Eastside and Docklands LES	Jim	Hargis
Eastside and Docklands LES	Henrietta	Kerrigan
Economist	John	Sweeney
EDIC Longford	Breda	Murphy
EmployAbility Bluebell	Roisin	Conlon
EmployAbility Bluebell	Elaine	Mahony
EmployAbility Dublin North	Marie	Murphy
EmployAbility Louth	Catherine	Hughes
EmployAbility West Cork	Olga	Mitchell
EmployAbility Wicklow	Declan	Tanham
ESF	Andrew	Diggins
ESRI	Seamus	McGuinness
Exchange House	Paula	Cullen
Focus Ireland	Catherine	Murphy
Galway LES	Elaine	Harvey
Galway LES	Samantha	O'Toole
General Branch	Peter	Melia
General Branch	Glenn	Bainton
General Branch	Brendan	Carmody
IBEC	Tony	Donohue
ICTU	Frank	Vaughan
INOUE Chairperson	Ann	Fergus
INOUE	John	Stewart
INOUE	Bríd	O'Brien
INOUE NEC	Brendan	Sherlock
INOUE NEC	Joe	Williams
INOUE	John	Farrell

Organisation	First Name	Surname
INOUE	Ray	Brennan
INOUE	Carol	Thornton
INOUE	Tom	McMahon
INOUE	Eileen	Gallen
INOUE	Lorraine	Hennessy
INOUE	Laura	Rossney
INOUE	Michael	Quinn
INOUE	Finbarr	McGlynn
INOUE	Andrew	McDonald
INOUE Vice-Chairperson	Joanne	Farrell
Intreo	Fintan	Hanson
Involve Ltd	Angela	Lennon
Irish Rural Link	Louise	Lennon
Limerick LES	Geraldine	Lambert
Limerick LES	Donie	McGrath
Longford Community Resources	Mary	Mulvey
Longford Community Resources	Rita	Slevin
Longford Community Resources	Fiona	Jannink
Meath Job Club	Jane	McAdam
Meath Job Club	Roisin	McNeill
Meath Job Club	Aidan	Geraghty
Nat. Centre for Guidance in Ed.	Mary	Stokes
NESC	Helen	Johnston
Northside Centre for the Unemployed	Sandra	Ellis
One Family	Valerie	Maher
Representative, Gino Kenny TD	Chris	Allen
Representative, Bríd Smyth TD	Evelyn	Campbell
PDFORRA	David	Noonan
Seetec	Karl	Milne
Seetec	Mouna	Prenty
Seetec	Imelda	Noone
Sligo Job Club	Michael	Downey
Sligo Job Club	Bernie	Davey
Solas	Paul	O'Toole
Solas	Bryan	Fields
Southside LES	Helen	Forster
South West Inner City LES	David	Brown
St. Vincent de Paul	Jennifer	Thomson
Swedish Public Employment Service	Brita	Borg
Swedish Public Employment Service	Pia	Lunöe
The Wheel	Danielle	Martin
Turas Nua	Colin	Donnery
Turas Nua	Aidan	O'Gormain
Turas Nua	Claire	Grennan
Turas Nua	Irene	Turley
Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice	Bernadette	McMahon
Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice	Olivia	McEvoy
Wexford Local Development LES	Mai	Cardiff
Wicklow Partnership	Laurie	Whelehan
Wicklow Partnership	Liz	Dunne
WorkMatters	Kevin	Empey



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