



Delivering a More Inclusive Workplace:
Innovations from Equal

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

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FOREWORD

Creating a more inclusive workplace is a challenge that is increasingly being embraced throughout all employment sectors in our economy.

Most workplaces that have successfully accommodated diversity know that the benefits are far-reaching. Research published this year by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance, in partnership with the Equality Authority, has demonstrated that inclusive workplaces not only boost employee morale and involvement, but there are significant business development opportunities to be gained too.

At the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP) we are very cognisant of the need to promote policies that can help foster more inclusive workplaces. In our National Workplace Strategy (2005), we placed equality and diversity at the heart of our vision for the workplace of the future.

Specifically, the NCPP points to the need to develop policies and structures at national and organisational level, which can support the achievement of inclusive workplaces, as well as a proactive approach to dealing with equality, diversity and flexibility as mainstream business issues.

This resource by the EQUAL Community Initiative is a response to this need. It offers practical and experiential-based advice to employers, employees and unions on how best to achieve inclusive practices across a range of areas.

Through case-studies and shared learning from members of the Inclusive Workplace Network who were involved in creating this resource, employers can learn how to move away from traditional qualification-based recruitment to recruiting staff based on their experience and ability.

Trade unions and employers can also use this resource to identify and implement ways of making the workplace more flexible to meet personal and family demands; while everyone at every level in the workplace can use this resource to see how equality and diversity can be embedded into workplace policies and practices.

Sustaining our economic development requires everyone in the workplace, managers and employees, to adapt. Embracing equality and diversity is critical in ensuring that we can continue to succeed as a competitive and socially cohesive economy and society. In this resource, the EQUAL Community Initiative has given us the tools to help us meet this challenge. Their work and the work of the projects involved deserve to be applauded and congratulated.

Peter Cassells

Chairperson, National Centre for Partnership and Performance

1. Introduction to Delivering a More Inclusive Workplace: Innovations from EQUAL

This handbook, *Delivering a More Inclusive Workplace: Innovations from EQUAL* is based on the experience of the Inclusive Workplace Network, a network of seven EQUAL projects that have operated in Ireland since 2005 developing innovative responses to address labour market inequality and discrimination. The Network has been facilitated by WRC Social and Economic Consultants who act as the Technical Support Structure to the EQUAL programme.

The handbook and accompanying DVD reflect the collective experience and learning emerging from participating projects in relation to their ability to give practical effect to national policy aspirations concerning, for example, making the Irish workplace proactively diverse and increasing the participation of groups of people that are or have the potential to be marginalised or excluded from the labour market.

The activities and achievements of the seven projects have generated a number of practical recommendations in relation to how key actors, including Government Departments, State agencies, social partners, employer and employee representative groups can better give effect to national policy priorities. Some of the entities that might benefit from the innovations and learning outlined in this report include: FÁS Services to Business; the High Level Implementation Group for the National Workplace Strategy; the Small Firms Association; IBEC; ICTU; and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

The report is designed as a handbook, providing an introduction to and overview of the innovations devised and implemented by the seven projects in this Network. Further information on the individual projects, their initiatives and the outcomes secured can be accessed through the following:

- ▶ Annex 1 of this handbook, which provides profiles of each of the participating projects and relevant contact details; and,
- ▶ The accompanying DVD, which includes copies of reports, resources, tools and other products produced by participating projects that relate to the innovations mentioned in this report.

The DVD also includes testimonials from representatives of five employers who worked collaboratively with projects in the Network to implement equality and diversity initiatives in their workplaces. The employers are Bank of Ireland Securities, IBM, Stewart's Hospital, Meteor Mobile and Contract People. The DVD also includes testimonials from two participants who have benefited from initiatives undertaken by their employers.

The handbook is structured as follows:

2. The EQUAL Community Initiative Programme in Ireland;
3. The Inclusive Workplace Network;
4. Overview of Relevant National Policy;
5. Innovations Implemented by the Inclusive Workplace Network;
6. Prerequisites for Realising Policy Aspirations.

The EQUAL Technical Support Structure or projects within the Inclusive Workplace Network, individually or collectively, are available to further discuss any aspect of this handbook.

Contact Details:

Equal Technical Support Structure

Tel: 01 8723100

Email: info@equal-ci.ie

Website: www.equal-ci.ie

Contact details for Network projects are provided in Annex 1

2. The Equal Community Initiative Programme in Ireland

2.1 Aim of Equal Community Initiative Programme

The EQUAL Community Initiative, which is part-funded through the European Social Fund (ESF), *seeks to identify and address fundamental forms of discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market through the development of innovative policies and practices* piloted by the EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs), all of which have a transnational component.

It is important to note that the core identifier of EQUAL is its emphasis on combating discrimination and inequality in the labour market. In that regard, the various actions that are funded typically operate in an existing policy arena (e.g. integrated service provision, work-life balance, lifelong learning) but their particular point of engagement is with a view to ensuring that discriminatory practices are systematically addressed. This may be in the provision of education and training to those aspiring to work or in the recruitment, retention and progression policies at play for those already in work.

2.2 Partnerships in EQUAL

EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs) are **collaborative partnerships** of committed players that pool their efforts and resources to deliver strategic and integrated responses to multi-dimensional issues of inequality and discrimination. The constituent organisations of EQUAL DPs include the social partners, State and semi-State bodies, Government Departments, community and voluntary sector organisations, local authorities, and private companies all working together in pursuit of common objectives.

A total of 21 DPs were funded in Ireland under Round 1 of the EQUAL Community Initiative (end 2001 to Mid 2005) and a further 22 are currently being funded under Round 2 (January 2005 to end 2007).

Collectively, DPs are pursuing a range of sectoral and/or geographic objectives that relate, *inter alia*, to the absorption of non-Irish nationals into

the workplace, education and training provision (including lifelong learning), work-life balance and developing organisational equality infrastructure.

2.3 EQUAL Programme Principles

Work undertaken in the EQUAL programme is governed by a set of six principles. The work of DPs, and their results, are built on and tested through the observance of these principles. The six EQUAL principles are as follows:

1. **Partnership:** partner organisations working together collaboratively to devise and implement responses;
2. **Innovation:** the design and implementation of new and inventive approaches to addressing issues of discrimination and inequality in the labour market;
3. **Empowerment:** the development of strategies to promote and support the active participation of all relevant stakeholders in the innovations;
4. **Thematic Approach:** working in thematic networks at both national and European level to generate critical mass towards engagement in policy and practice;
5. **Transnationality:** the establishment of transnational co-operation agreements with DPs in other Member States to promote and encourage mutual learning across the European Union; and,
6. **Mainstreaming:** DPs are expected to operate strategically with a view to informing and influencing existing mainstream policy and practice in relation to combating discrimination and inequality in the labour market.

2.4 The Structure of EQUAL

The Managing Authority for EQUAL in Ireland is the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment. Day-to-day programme management is contracted to WRC Social & Economic Consultants acting as the Technical Support Structure (TSS) for the programme.

Further information on the EQUAL programme, participating DPs and governing principles is available on the EQUAL website: www.equal-ci.ie

Access to research, reports, tools and other resources produced by Equal DPs is available from www.ideasbank-equal.info

3. The Inclusive Workplace Network

3.1 Aim of the Inclusive Workplace Network

Seven EQUAL projects opted to form the Inclusive Workplace Network with a view to informing and influencing national policy priorities and programmes in relation to promoting a more inclusive workplace. The members of the Network realised that the critical mass of the experience and learning from participating projects would produce valuable demonstration effects and generate other relevant learning on the practicalities of making the workplace more accessible to and accommodating of the varied needs of the increasingly diverse labour force in Ireland. In addition, within the Network, promoters operated to further develop inter-project links and to use the Network as a platform for mutual exchange and learning.

3.2 Projects Participating in the Inclusive Workplace Network

Seven EQUAL projects participate in the Inclusive Workplace Network. They are:

1. Carlow Equal;
2. Equal at Work;
3. Finding A Balance;
4. KWCD Employer Exchange;
5. LIFT;
6. Senior Select Retain and Retrain; and
7. WAM (Willing Able Mentoring) Project.

The innovations being devised and implemented by these EQUAL Development Partnerships are being piloted across a range of economic sectors including, health services, communications, financial services, tourism, national and local level non-governmental organisations and public sector organisations.

Further information on each of the seven participating projects is available from:

- ▶ Annex 1 of this handbook, which provides profiles of each of the participating projects;

- ▲ The accompanying DVD, which has copies of reports, resources, tools and other products produced by participating projects that relate to the innovations mentioned in this handbook.

3.3 Activity and Outcomes of the Inclusive Workplace Network

Individually, projects were involved in developing and implementing innovative responses to a broad range of issues all with a view to promoting a more inclusive workplace for groups of people who are typically excluded from or have marginal participation in the labour market.

These responses include:

- (i) testing competency based recruitment approaches;
- (ii) challenging and changing attitudes and practices in relation to the employment of older people;
- (iii) auditing employment policies and practices and the physical employment environment;
- (iv) providing mentoring supports; and
- (v) piloting innovative working practices and employee supports.

Collectively, the Network projects have demonstrated the ability to realise national level policy aspirations outlined below. In so doing they have generated valuable lessons concerning some of the necessary prerequisites for effectively attracting and retaining marginalised or excluded groups, increasing the quality of working life, promoting workplace innovation, and supporting the development of workplaces that are proactively diverse and responsive to the needs of their employees. Learning has also emerged in relation to the approaches adopted and processes undertaken that can secure effective and sustainable equality and diversity outcomes.

For the most part, the innovations and successes emerging from the Network are directed towards the demand side of the labour market. They include promoting, enabling and supporting the creation of conditions and circumstances that enable workplaces to become more open and responsive to the increasingly diverse profile of the workforce and of contemporary life demands while having due regard to the competitive reality within which they operate. There are also innovations targeted at the supply side of the labour market, for example, the development and delivery of personalised

supports, in conjunction with skills based training, to develop the capacity and competence of marginalised groups to access and participate in the labour market.

The handbook reflects the collective experience and learning emerging from the Inclusive Workplace Network concerning the innovations they promoted and implemented since 2005 and is illustrated by examples from each of the projects involved.

4. Overview of Relevant National Policy

4.1 Promoting a More Inclusive Workplace: Current National Policy Priorities

A priority concern of current national labour market policy relates to creating conditions and circumstances that will support Ireland to maintain its economic position and move progressively towards being a competitive, knowledge based economy with high value jobs. Changing economic priorities for Ireland, changing sectoral and occupational trends, the increased demand for labour and changing demographics (including the increasingly diverse profile of the workforce) are the key drivers of change in relation to labour market policy in Ireland and their significance is reflected in policy documents, for example in:

- ▲ Ahead of the Curve;
- ▲ Tomorrow's Skills: Towards a National Skills Strategy;
- ▲ The National Development Plan 2007-2013;
- ▲ Towards 2016;
- ▲ The National Workplace Strategy; and
- ▲ Creating a More Inclusive Labour Market.

These documents are all relevant in the context of the work of the Inclusive Workplace Thematic Network. Rather than providing an extensive account of the various policy documents here, this handbook will present a summary of key policy priorities that are particularly pertinent in the context of the work undertaken by the Inclusive Workplace Network.

A summary of these policy areas is provided in Box 1 below.

Box 1: Summary of relevant national policy priorities

In relation to promoting a workplace that is open to all groups, the policy documents previously cited have identified that there is a need to:

1. Attract and retain people who are traditionally excluded from the workplace including, people with disabilities, older people, women and migrant workers;
2. Address the opportunities divide so that all workers are afforded adequate opportunities to avail of training and development, and to participate in the workplace;
3. Be proactively diverse in response to the increased diversity in the labour market;
4. Promote workplace innovation;
5. Increase the quality of working life;
6. Develop integrated equal opportunity and diversity strategies to mobilise the potential of under-represented groups; and,
7. Provide sustained supports over time to create a climate for change in workplaces.

People with disabilities, women, migrant workers and older people are identified as being of particular concern.

4.2 The Economic Imperative for Promoting Equality and Diversity in the Workplace

In addition to addressing fundamental issues of inequality and discrimination in the labour market, there is a very real and persuasive business case for promoting equality and diversity in the workplace. For example, the OECD has expressed concern about the possibility of a sharp slow down in economic growth rates if the potential workforce is not fully mobilised¹. At a European level, there is evidence of increased adoption of equality and diversity policies and practices and consequent business benefits have been reported: when asked whether diversity initiatives have a positive impact on their business, 83% of 495 companies responding to a survey across the 25 Member States agreed that they did. Some of the reported results include greater innovation,

¹ OECD, 2005 Ageing and Employment Policies Ireland.

enhanced recruitment and retention rates, improved corporate image and reputation, and enhanced marketing opportunities².

More recently, a report commissioned by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance and the Equality Authority³, found that investment by organisations in initiatives that promote workplace equality and foster diversity has substantial benefits for employees and employers. Organisations reported performance outcomes from investment in equality and diversity across four inter-related areas:

1. Human capital benefits, such as the ability to resolve labour shortages;
2. Increased market opportunities, with access to more diverse markets;
3. Enhancement of organisational reputation to suppliers, customers, existing and prospective employees; and,
4. Changes to organisational culture, such as improved working relations and reductions in litigation.

The accompanying DVD includes comments from various employers participating in innovations implemented by projects in the Network that endorse the approaches adopted and identify clear business benefits that have been derived as a result.

²The Business Case for Diversity Good Practices in the Workplace, European Commission, 2005.

³The Business Impact of Equality and Diversity – The International Evidence, Equality Authority & National Centre for Partnership and Performance, 2007.

5. Innovations Implemented by the Inclusive Workplace Network

5.1 Classification of Innovative Responses

Projects in the Network piloted innovative responses relating to recruitment, retention and progression practices and policies within the workplace. For the purposes of this handbook, the innovative responses piloted by the projects have been classified under the following headings:

- 1.** Valuing ability over qualifications: moving from qualification based to competence-based recruitment and progression;
- 2.** Developing flexible work arrangements;
- 3.** Providing holistic and personalised forms of support; and,
- 4.** Embedding equality and diversity in workplace policies and practices.

5.2 Valuing Ability over Qualifications: Moving from Qualification Based to Competence Based Recruitment and Progression

5.2.1 Barriers presented by traditional recruitment methods

The predominance of traditional qualification based and interview recruitment practices has acted as a barrier to many groups who may not have had the opportunity to gain formally recognised qualifications whether as a result of economic or social disadvantage; unaccommodating physical and learning environments; or other exclusionary contextual, institutional or information barriers operating within the education system. In addition, skilled migrants in Ireland may also experience difficulties arising from non-recognition of their qualifications that can lead to their placement in positions for which they are over-qualified. There is significant learning emerging from the Inclusive Workplace Network in relation to how these barriers can effectively be addressed.

5.2.2 The challenge for the Network

The challenge for some projects in the Network has been to foster a change in employers' recruitment and progression practices to make them more inclusive in nature through the promotion of experiential learning, acquired skills and demonstrated ability to undertake a role

as objective and valid criteria that can be assessed through selection processes designed to accommodate these criteria.

5.2.3 Network responses

A variety of approaches were engaged in by individual projects and a brief description of three of these approaches is presented below.

1 KWCD Employer Exchange: taking a fresh look at recruitment practices

The KWCD Employer Exchange established and resourced an employer-to-employer advocacy network with a view to exchanging and developing good practice relating to the recruitment of long-term unemployed people. Partners in the Exchange include, *inter alia*, the KWCD Local Employment Service, Enable Ireland, The Linkage programme and locally based employers (there are currently 10 employers actively participating in the network). The project surveyed employers, primarily in the Dublin 10 and Dublin 12 areas, to establish their perceptions of the long-term unemployed and the types of supports required to encourage employers to recruit people who have been long-term unemployed. Surveyed employers typically operated in the construction and trades, factory/warehouse operations, transport and distribution sectors.

Survey findings, which informed the development of initiatives implemented by this project, suggested that employers are concerned with establishing demonstrated ability to undertake the role, and having an informal opportunity to assess suitability. For example:

1. 90% of employer respondents would be more likely to employ a long-term unemployed person if they could have them work on a trial basis in order to assess their suitability;
2. 86% of employers reported that they would be more likely to employ a long-term unemployed person if they could meet them informally to assess their suitability;
3. 88% reported that they would be more likely to employ a long-term unemployed person if they had completed work

- experience in another company; and,
4. The most common selection methods used by the employers were one-to-one interviews, CV reference check and word of mouth.

Box 2: Examples of the initiatives implemented in the KWCD Employer Exchange

Alternative recruitment methods and tools developed:

- ▶ **Johnson and Johnson** is developing an alternative method of recruiting for low-skill jobs by identifying competencies required for a position and developing an informal but rigorous process to determine if the candidate for the job possesses the competencies required.
- ▶ **Contract People** is piloting a two-day work based trial for sales and merchandising positions as an alternative to the traditional selection process by interview.
- ▶ The project has developed a highly structured Assisted Interview Pilot for job seekers with a disability.

Employer engagement with the long term unemployed:

- ▶ The managing director of **JMC Van Trans** conducted a series of mock interviews with long-term unemployed people who use the employment services in the KWCD catchment area.
- ▶ **PEI Surgical**, a high-skills medical supplies company, developed and piloted a job preparation course focusing on work ethic, the world of work and CV preparation for long term unemployed adults.

In collaboration with its employer partners, this project has designed and is piloting a range of alternative recruitment methods that can accommodate employer concerns while making the recruitment process more accessible. In addition to piloting changes in their own recruitment methods, employers are also actively participating in structured interventions targeted at the long-term unemployed with a view to informing them about employer expectations, and preparing for and participating in the recruitment process. Box 2 above provides an example of some of the initiatives being developed and implemented by employers in the KWCD

Employer Exchange. In some instances, the impetus for these initiatives came from the employers.

As a result of participating in the KWCD Employer Exchange, and as reflected in the above examples, employers have become much more willing to openly discuss, consider and implement innovative initiatives designed to address credentialist barriers experienced by the target group and to progress towards more inclusive recruitment methods. Employers report that being resourced by locally based agencies or organisations with knowledge and experience in devising effective responses to promote equality and diversity has significantly contributed to the success of their initiatives.

The effectiveness of the KWCD Employer Exchange is reflected in the increased volume of locally based employment opportunities that are managed through the Exchange. Over an 18 month period there has been an increase of:

- ▶▶ 78% in the number of vacancies registered with the Exchange;
- ▶▶ 61% in the number of CV's sent to employers from the Exchange; and,
- ▶▶ 60% in the number of job placements.

The growth of the network of employers from three to 10 over a period of 18 months and the call from participating employers to continue the Exchange after the Equal Programme is further validation and endorsement of the approach employed by the KWCD Employer Exchange.

② **Competency based recruitment and progression**

In Round 1 of EQUAL, **Equal at Work** successfully piloted competency based recruitment for clerical officer positions in Dublin City Council as an alternative to the traditional recruitment process in which the Leaving Certificate or equivalent was a mandatory requirement for application. Two stages are involved here:

1. analysing the clerical officer role and identifying the key

competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) required to undertake the role; and,

2. reviewing all aspects of the selection process to ensure that the process is accessible and that the various competences can be assessed.

Clear communication, consultation and active participation of internal partnership processes were key to the success of this initiative. The project was instrumental in the Department of Environment and Local Government removing the Leaving Certificate requirement for recruitment to local authority clerical officer positions.

In Round 2 of EQUAL, Dublin City Council worked collaboratively with other partners in the **Equal at Work** project to improve the progression rates of general operative and craft employees within the Council. The project produced a step-by-step guide to progressing through the competency based selection process from completing the application form to preparing for and performing at interview. An interview skills training course was also developed to support staff interested in pursuing promotional opportunities.

③ **Integrated training and progression to employment**

As part of the Equal at Work project, senior management in South Dublin County Council championed the provision of a culturally sensitive, FETAC accredited training programme to young Traveller men with the offer of progression to a full time paid position in the Parks Department of the Council upon completion. Key features of the process engaged in here include the following:

- ▶▶ Initial engagement with potential participants was made through local Traveller support groups;
- ▶▶ An informal competency based interview process was used to select participants;
- ▶▶ Psychological contract entered into with trainees: trainees offered a job if they attend and complete the training programme;

- ▶▶ Mixture of FÁS based training and on-site practical work experience provided;
- ▶▶ Trainees were integrated into existing work teams for work experience over the duration of the training programme. Diversity training was provided to existing teams in advance of this;
- ▶▶ Prompt resolution of issues arising during the course of the training period and in subsequent job; and,
- ▶▶ Full-time wage rates were paid to trainees while undertaking the course.

The initiative has successfully challenged the perception that the local authority is closed to employment for Travellers. The programme was successfully completed by eight of the 12 participants. All eight were offered, and seven accepted, full time employment with South Dublin County Council. Continued support was offered in relation to education and training needs after the initial training period.

This initiative has since been implemented in Clare County Council and South Dublin County Council has recruited further participants and is rolling out the training programme in Clondalkin. In addition, Offaly County Council, Cork City Council and Kildare County Council are at various stages in the process of implementing this initiative.

The presence of senior level ‘champions’ of the initiative within South Dublin County Council was reported as instrumental in its success. Securing high level commitment and support is also identified by employers on the accompanying DVD as a key factor supporting the implementation of equality and diversity related innovations in the workplace.

5.3 Developing Flexible Workplace Arrangements

5.3.1 New work practices in the North West

EQUAL resourced a safe space for organisations with a history of complex industrial relations issues to pilot more consultative and

evidence-based approaches to changing established work practices. In the context of implementing new work practices in public sector agencies in the North West, the Finding A Balance project (FAB) revised its timeframe for delivery and undertook some unanticipated activity to address employee perceptions of management imposition; address gaps in accessible and accurate information on employment rights and entitlements; and to gain the employee confidence in introducing the proposed new work practices. This level of trust and willing engagement with the process was maintained by undertaking full internal consultation and having clear lines of communication.

5.3.2 Implementing flexitime, 3+3 working concept and FUNCAMP

The HSE North West, Donegal VEC, Donegal County Council and the Gender Focus Group of Donegal County Council are the promoting organisations of the Finding A Balance project. The project has implemented a number of initiatives in these organisations with a view to promoting more flexible work arrangements for staff, including, FUNCAMP, 3+3 working time concept and introducing flexitime arrangements. See Box 3 below for further details of the initiatives.

5.4 Provision of Holistic and Personalised Forms of Support

The provision of personalised services or supports to excluded and marginalised groups, in line with the NESF recommendation in Creating a More Inclusive Labour Market, has yielded significant outcomes for individual and organisational participants of the Network. Personalised support systems were developed and implemented in the **Carlow Equal**, **Senior Select Retain and Retrain**, **LIFT** and **WAM** projects.

Different forms of mentoring (peer mentoring and on the job mentoring) as well as professional guidance were used successfully as part of holistic recruitment, retention and progression support strategies for marginalised groups. Although employed within the Network in different contexts a mentor is typically characterised as someone who acts as a resource or support to their mentee. They undertake an enabling or facilitative role that promotes the development of the competence and confidence of the mentee to determine and negotiate their own path in relation to accessing and participating in the labour market.

Box 3: Initiatives implemented by the Finding a Balance Project

Finding a Balance successfully introduced a **FUNCAMP** during the summer months for school-going children of employees from the promoting organisations. FUNCAMP operated to full capacity in 2006, its second year of operation, with 270 children availing of the service. 73% of surveyed staff who availed of the FUNCAMP service reported reduced stress levels, which they believe helped maintain the quality of service levels to the public in a time period traditionally associated with significant absences due to staff seeking annual leave over the peak summer months. Employers also reported benefits from the reduced amount of staff seeking annual leave over the peak summer months. In addition, 96% of surveyed staff reported positive socialisation benefits for their children from attending FUNCAMP.

Pilot **flexitime working arrangements** were introduced on a voluntary basis following a wide-scale consultative process in Donegal VEC head office. According to project promoters, this initiative has yielded good work life balance outcomes for staff, efficiency benefits for the organisation, better service to the public and it is anticipated that absenteeism levels will reduce. Practical benefits reported include the fact that Donegal VEC offices are now open during lunchtime, providing a more flexible service to those who find it difficult to access their services during work hours.

The **3+3 working time concept** originated in Sweden and is based on a 6-day cycle of three slightly longer work days followed by three days off. Following extensive consultation with all stakeholders involved, the 3+3 working time concept will be piloted in a hospital catering service, which typically work 10 hour shifts with two hour breaks in the afternoon. This pilot is due to commence in September 2007 and so its impact is yet to be determined, however, a reduction in sick leave is apparent even before the pilot 3+3 is implemented. On this basis it is anticipated that absenteeism will reduce upon full implementation.

The combination of confidence building exercises, aligning job seeker and employer expectations and providing appropriate upskilling with personalised support and guidance through a mentoring type relationship has contributed to the employability of participants from the **Senior Select Retain and Retrain** project and the **Carlow Equal** project. As a result of

adopting this combined approach, the Carlow Equal project reported a 71% rate of progression to employment for older job seekers.

A workplace-based mentoring system has been implemented by the **WAM** project, which aims to provide genuine mainstream work experience opportunities to graduates with disabilities and encourage employers to review their recruitment practices and workplace arrangements. The WAM mentoring model was used as a support mechanism to facilitate integration within the workplace and to highlight organisational policies or practices that may need review. Management, staff and graduate placements all reported positively on the benefits of the mentoring programme. It is reported to have significantly improved the effective integration of candidates while on work placement, qualitatively impacted on the work experience gained while also contributing to improving organisational awareness of how to make effective accommodations for a person with a disability in the workplace. Both the employer and employee perspectives of this particular initiative are presented on the accompanying DVD.

LIFT, which seeks to promote the effective participation of women at all levels of the trade union movement, implemented a mentoring/coaching system, where senior figures in the trade union movement are providing one-to-one supports and coaching to women activists, as part of its strategic leadership development programme. Senior level endorsement of the leadership development initiative has resulted in twice the expected level of participants engaging in the initiative.

5.5 Embedding Equality and Diversity in Workplace Policies and Practices

The systematic integration of equality and diversity within the framework of an organisation's broader policies and practices can act as a solid foundation upon which to build organisational competence in equality and diversity. Initiatives undertaken by Network projects in this regard include the provision of equality and diversity training to management and staff and the systematic review of organisational policies and practices.

5.5.1 Equality and diversity training

The **KWCD Employer Exchange** organised and resourced equality

and diversity workshops for employers in their catchment area. Workshops were organised at a time and location suitable for employers. Topics covered were driven by employer needs and include equality proofing, provision of assistive technology, accommodating diversity within the recruitment process, and promoting work life balance in the workplace. The project promoted opportunities for peer support and advice and this was also a key feature of the workshops. As a result of their responsiveness to employer needs, over a one year period there was a 60% increase in the number of employers attending workshops. Details are provided in Box 2 (page 19) about some of the alternatives to traditional recruitment approaches that are being piloted by these employers.

The **Carlow Equal** project initiated contact with employers in the area through representatives from the project partner organisations, for example, Carlow County Enterprise Board and the local Chambers of Commerce. The Carlow Equal training focused on raising awareness of equality and diversity issues across the nine grounds in equality legislation with a particular focus on issues affecting older people and people with disabilities. To date, the project has provided this training to over 100 owner managers, managers or staff. With current expressions of interest the project expects that up to 200 people will have benefited from this training by the close of the project.

5.5.2 Reviewing workplace policies and practices

Nine employers participating in two projects from the Network sought to improve their equality and diversity systems by undertaking a systematic review of organisational practice and policies.

Three employers participating in the **Carlow Equal** project were funded under the Equality Authority's Equal Opportunities Grant Scheme to develop their organisations employment equality policy. There are two stages to the review undertaken under this scheme: the first involves developing and agreeing an employment equality policy through a consultative process; this is followed by the provision of training to ensure management and staff understand all aspects of the

policy and its practical application in the workplace. The General Manager of the Talbot Hotel, Carlow, reported a reduction in staff turnover, increased employee satisfaction and an increase in bottom-line profitability as a result of this initiative.

Six participating employers from the **Equal at Work** project, including, Meteor Mobile and Stewart's Hospital, secured funding from the Equality Authority's Equality Review and Action Plan Scheme to undertake a systematic and comprehensive review of existing employment policies and practices operating in their workplaces with a view to addressing real and perceived barriers to recruitment, retention and progression. Although the Equality Authority's grant scheme has been in operation for a number of years a limited number of equality reviews have been undertaken to date.

In brief, the equality review process has three discrete steps as follows:

1. Undertaking either a comprehensive or partial review of organisational practices, policies and procedures;
2. Developing an Action Plan on foot of the findings emerging from the review that includes equality related objectives, targets and a realistic timeframe for implementation; and
3. Assessing implementation of the Action Plan (this usually takes place 18-24 months after the action plan is introduced).

In a comparative analysis of the equality review process⁴ undertaken in the six organisations, management and staff reported positive benefits as a result of undertaking the review process and would encourage other organisations to follow their lead. Some of the reported benefits include:

- ▶ greater awareness of equality issues among the workforce;
- ▶ fairer and more systematic recruitment practices (and in turn the potential to recruit from a wider pool of candidates);
- ▶ the opportunity to enter different markets and increase efficiency and profitability as a result of valuing diversity in the workplace

⁴The Equal at Work report of the comparative analysis of equality reviews is due to be published in October 2007.

(and responding appropriately to the diverse needs of clients and customers from a wide range of backgrounds); and

- ▶ the potential to reduce recruitment and training costs as a result of lower staff turnover (brought about by responding positively to equality and diversity issues).

5.5.3 Significant findings of the comparative analysis of equality reviews

Significant findings from the comparative analysis undertaken are included in Box 4 below.

Box 4: Some of the significant findings from the comparative analysis of equality reviews

- ▶ The 'state of readiness' of the organisation has a significant bearing on the potential to maximise the benefit from the process. The value of an equality review to an organisation would seem to be greater where there is existing commitment to equality and diversity and the organisation is seeking practical tools to make progress. The report recommends establishing the 'state of readiness' as a necessary first step before initiating any review process and that, where necessary, the organisation be supported through capacity building to progress to a state of readiness;
- ▶ Pre-existing partnership processes within the workplace were important facilitators of the equality review process and the subsequent implementation of recommendations;
- ▶ A committed and senior level internal champion who is seen to be driving the process forward from start to finish was seen as key; and
- ▶ Maintaining the momentum from the initial review and action planning stages throughout the implementation stage is integral.

In addition to the findings noted above, EQUAL project co-ordinators, who liaised closely with organisations undertaking the review process, also reported that the terminology used has a significant bearing on the organisation's perception of the process: negative connotations were associated with the term 'equality audit', whereas the term 'equality review' was perceived as being less invasive and more constructive.

Again, employers report that being resourced and facilitated by external agencies with experience and expertise in promoting equality and diversity in the workplace proved significant. This is also reflected in employer comments on the accompanying DVD.

5.5.4 Relevant resources and tools

Projects in the Inclusive Workplace Network, and in the broader EQUAL programme, have developed tools or resources that can support employer efforts to embed equality and diversity within the workplace and to further the development of organisational equality competence.

Acknowledging that possible legal implications may cause employer reluctance to openly discuss and engage in a process of reviewing their employment policies and practices, the Westmeath Equal project developed the **Equality and Diversity Healthcheck**⁵. This is a self assessment tool that can assist employers in determining the relative position of their current policies and practices with reference to recognised good practice standards. The Equality and Diversity Healthcheck is referenced as a resource in the guidelines for achieving the FÁS Excellence Through People standard. This self assessment tool could prove useful in the context of establishing the state of readiness of an organisation for an equality review process.

Decision Path⁶ is a bespoke web based system, developed for Eircom through the Equal at Work project, that is designed to support HR practitioners to ensure consistency in the practical application of workplace policies.

A Postgraduate Diploma in Equality and Diversity in the Workplace, accredited at level nine within the National Framework of Qualifications, was developed by the **Carlow Equal** project. This programme is targeted at human resource practitioners.

⁵The Equality and Diversity Healthcheck is available on the accompanying DVD or from <http://www.ideasbank-equal.info>

⁶Further information on Decision Path is available through the Equal at Work Project. Contact details are listed in Annex 1 of this handbook.

In addition to the innovations implemented by individual projects in the Network noted above, the Inclusive Workplace Network has also highlighted a number of prerequisites that need to be in place in order to better deliver improved recruitment, retention and progression outcomes within the workplace for excluded or marginalised groups. These prerequisites are identified in the following chapter.

6. Prerequisites for Realising Policy Aspirations

6.1 Consensus on Prerequisites Needed

Consensus emerged within the Network that a number of prerequisites must be in place in order to deliver improved recruitment, retention and progression outcomes in the workplace for those groups who are marginalised or excluded from accessing or participating and progressing within the labour market. These prerequisites are conditions that need to be in place to enable initiatives to happen and be effective.

Before identifying the individual prerequisites, it is important to note that the experience of the Network has demonstrated the interlinked nature of the prerequisites and their potential to be mutually reinforcing. Network experience also indicates that ensuring that these prerequisites are met can have a qualitative impact on the outcomes secured.

The prerequisites identified are:

- 1.** Adopting an integrated strategic approach;
- 2.** Adopting a collaborative partnership approach; and,
- 3.** Securing and maintaining stakeholder buy-in.

6.2 Adopting an Integrated Strategic Approach

The NESF report, *Creating a More Inclusive Labour Market*, acknowledges that integrated equal opportunity and diversity strategies can help mobilise the potential of under-represented groups in the labour market as well as improve competitiveness of firms. This has been reflected in the experience of the network. Promoters have found that it is essential to adopt an integrated approach, that is, **developing a multi-stranded and mutually reinforcing approach tailored to meet the needs and expectations of all relevant stakeholders in a coherent and supported way over time**. This also means ensuring that an equality perspective is incorporated into the fabric of the organisations structures, systems, and procedures so that it becomes an integral aspect of organisational planning, development and organisational resource management; and that **equality in the workplace is promoted or perceived as a business wide concern** and not the preserve of the HR function.

For example, the **LIFT** project's aim to implement a strategic leadership initiative emerged at a time when the trade union movement was assessing its role and relevance in contemporary Ireland. The project ensured that its objective, to improve the under-representation of women at leadership levels, was aligned with the strategic goals of ICTU and was incorporated into its strategic planning. In addition, the project used the business case as a lever to gain high level support for and participation in initiatives implemented by the LIFT project in the trade union movement.

6.3 Adopting a Collaborative Partnership Approach

The delivery of an integrated approach to improving recruitment, retention and progression within the framework of a **collaborative and competence based partnership approach** has qualitatively impacted on the outcomes secured and has supported the sustainability of those outcomes.

As mentioned earlier, partnerships in the Network are cross sectoral and comprised of a broad range of actors. What has proved significant for the development and implementation of innovations by the partnerships (as also reflected in comments on the DVD) is that they have **worked collaboratively with and have been resourced by agencies or organisations that have the knowledge, experience and skills in relation to the particular issue being addressed** and so can inform the development and implementation of initiatives, for example:

- ▶ the participation of AHEAD, (the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability) in **WAM**; and
- ▶ the involvement of Age Action Ireland (the national independent organisation on ageing and older people) in **Senior Select Retain and Retrain**.

However, it is not simply the fact of working in partnership that is required. The network has identified a number of features that can lead to effective partnerships, that is partnerships that can achieve their stated aim and objectives⁷. These features are listed in Box 5 below.

⁷ Further elaboration of the key features of effective partnerships, which emerged from a study of partnership undertaken in the EQUAL Programme, will be available in a report to be published in November 2007. This will be made available on the EQUAL website: www.equal-ci.ie and the IdeasBank website www.ideasbank-equal.info

Box 5: Features of effective partnerships

1. Working on a collaborative basis:

What is key here is that the individual partner organisations are pursuing a common goal rather than working together to further the goals of individual partners. Partners collaborate to develop and agree a common aim and set of objectives and to devise and implement an action plan with time bound targets in order to achieve those aims.

2. Consensus based decision making:

Projects in the Network believe that consensus based decision making is essential. Projects report that this has had the effect of reinforcing the collaborative nature of the engagement and promoting collective ownership.

3. Formalising roles and responsibilities:

All projects in the Network, and in the broader EQUAL programme, have formalised partnership agreements that clearly state what the roles and responsibilities of individual partners are and what their resource inputs are. The partnership agreements also include a code of conduct/practice and an equality statement.

4. Resourcing the management and operation of partnership:

Network projects report that the existence of a dedicated budget and personnel to enable the partners to give effect to their common aim and objectives has been a significant factor in their success.

5. Commitment to partnership:

In all instances, the partnerships are comprised of partners that chose to work together. Partner organisations may have varying degrees of experience in the area concerned but all are characterised as having an interest in and willingness to promote innovations that can lead to a workplace that is proactively diverse, flexible and responsive to the needs of its employees. In addition, where the individuals representing the partner organisation have the authority to commit to and deliver upon decisions made by the collective partnership this has facilitated the implementation of change.

In addition to the cross-sectoral partnership approach highlighted above, both the Equal At Work and Finding A Balance projects identified the existence of internal partnership processes in the workplace as facilitators in implementing initiatives in the workplace. The partnership structures were comprised of

staff, management and trade union representatives. In their experience, endorsement of the proposed 'plan' by these partnership structures was significant in generating support from peers in the workplace for the initiatives in question. These projects also report that internal partnership processes were integral in the process of securing stakeholder buy-in.

6.4 Securing and Maintaining Stakeholder Buy-in

It is generally accepted that the approach to and management of the change process is central to the success of initiatives aimed at changing policy, practice or attitudes. Based on the experience of the Network, a key element of negotiating successful change management is creating a 'safe space' or a non-threatening environment where all relevant stakeholders feel comfortable developing and implementing innovations in the workplace, whether these are in the form of adopting a new approach to recruitment, implementing flexible work arrangements, or reviewing employment policies and practices.

In the context of the work of this network, the stakeholders involved include:

- ▶ owner managers,
- ▶ organisation management,
- ▶ employees,
- ▶ employees representatives,
- ▶ union representatives,
- ▶ job seekers,
- ▶ social partners, and
- ▶ other agencies working with the various target groups involved.

In particular, the **visible commitment and support of high level management**, employers, or owner-managers and, as relevant, union officials was central to enabling the partnerships in the network to promote the perception and reality of a more inclusive workplace that accommodates diversity and promotes equality.

As stated above, in all cases when seeking to gain stakeholder buy-in projects were operating within a defined and formalised plan of action with clearly stated aims and objectives. The approach adopted varied but the result of securing and maintaining stakeholder buy-in was essential to furthering the

aims of the individual projects. The following is an example of the approaches adopted:

- ▲ To secure the buy-in of local employers, the **Carlow Equal Project** employed a development officer, provided one-to-one supports to employers, and provided external expertise where required to address employer issues. Within the project, a dedicated structure was established with responsibility for guiding the project's work in relation to securing and maintaining employer participation in the project. As a result, the project secured the active participation of 27 employers in the Carlow area and has provided equality and diversity training to over 100 individuals from a broad range of companies.

- ▲ The **KWCD Employer Exchange** had an independent facilitator attend all meetings to ensure all partners had an equal voice and equal opportunity to contribute. The project was responsive to employers needs: meeting times and venues were changed to accommodate their needs, user friendly and accessible communication systems were established. The KWCD Employer Exchange has grown from three to 10 employers since its inception.

The EQUAL Technical Support Structure or projects within the Inclusive Workplace Network, individually or collectively, are available to further discuss any aspect of this handbook.

Contact Details:

Equal Technical Support Structure

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Website: www.equal-ci.ie

Contact details for Network projects are provided in Annex 1

Annex 1. Profiles of Participating Projects

The following set of profiles provided by projects participating in the Inclusive Workplace Network includes:

- ▶ the project aim;
- ▶ a list of constituent partners;
- ▶ an outline of the project's main activities;
- ▶ a list of products produced; and,
- ▶ contact details for further information.

Where possible, project products are available on the accompanying DVD or on IdeasBank www.ideasbank-equal.info



1. Carlow EQUAL

Aim:

To create a labour market in Carlow that is accessible, accommodating and inclusive of older people.

Partners:

- ◀ Cando Community Partnership;
- ◀ Carlow Access Movement;
- ◀ Carlow Chamber of Commerce;
- ◀ Carlow County Enterprise Board;
- ◀ Carlow Jobs Club;
- ◀ Carlow Leader Rural Development Co. Ltd.;
- ◀ Carlow Local Authorities;
- ◀ County Carlow VEC;
- ◀ Department Social & Family Affairs;
- ◀ FÁS; and,
- ◀ SIPTU.

Outline of Main Activities:

Carlow EQUAL Employment Programme is an interagency project which began when individual agencies in Carlow recognised that older people (categorised as those aged 40 years or older) in the locality were experiencing difficulties when attempting to access training and employment opportunities. As a response to this, these organisations came together to address, for the first time through a multi-agency approach, inequalities and discriminatory practices encountered by older people seeking training and employment.

The Carlow EQUAL Employment Programme recognised that any response to the labour market situation of older people in Carlow needed a two pronged

approach: on the one hand was the need to up-skill and assist older people to secure employment opportunities and on the other hand was the need to engage and work with employers to address the issues of ageism, discrimination and inequalities in the workforce.

The Programme encourages employers to engage in pro-active equality based employment practices towards older people, informs employers of the positive aspects of employing older workers and raises the profile of the older worker so local employers recognise their employment potential. By promoting the value of diversity in the workplace with employers and other key agents the Programme builds the case for implementing "age management" strategies and works with employers to develop policies and procedures in relation to recruiting, retaining and progressing older workers within their organisations.

The Programme also aims to combat inequalities facing older people wishing to avail of training and employment opportunities. It is the first time older people have been collectively targeted in relation to the local labour market and their skills and interests matched to employers' needs. The combination of flexible, carefully timed and locally delivered activities together with the provision of practical and financial supports such as transport, childcare/eldercare facilitates the older worker to access training and employment and therefore this highly innovative approach will mean that real needs are being addressed.

Products Produced:

1. *An Analysis of the Labour Market in County Carlow; Opportunities & Trends 2005-2007;
2. Diversity Matters! (DVD);
3. *Valuing Diversity is one of our Values (Poster);
4. Postgraduate Diploma in Equality and Diversity in conjunction with Carlow College;
5. Living and Working in a Diverse Ireland DVD and FETAC accredited on-line system (being launched in November 2007).

**These products are available on the accompanying DVD or can be downloaded from www.ideasbank-equal.info*

Contact Details:

Further information on any of the initiatives undertaken by this project or products listed above is available from the following:

Name:.....Annette Graham

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Website:www.carlowequal.ie

EQUAL AT WORK

A DUBLIN EMPLOYMENT PACT INITIATIVE

2. *Equal at Work*

Aim:

To improve access to employment through open HR policies and practices, impacting across the private, public and community sectors of the Dublin labour market.

Partners:

The *Equal at Work* partnership is composed of 52 organisations from the public, private and community sectors, including the following:

- ◀ CIPD and five large private sector companies (Eircom, Jury's Inn, Meteor Mobile, EBS, Irish Life and Permanent);
- ◀ The HSE and five hospitals and public health institutions (St. James, Children's Hospital Temple St., Connolly Memorial Hospital, AMNCH (Tallaght), Stewart's Hospital, and HSE Dublin North);
- ◀ Trade unions SIPTU, IMPACT as well as ICTU and employers' bodies;
- ◀ Local Government Management Services Board as well as Dublin City and South Dublin County Councils;
- ◀ Over 20 various community and voluntary organisations and representative NGOs (including, INOU, National Learning Network, Ballymun Job Centre, several local partnerships and employment services, etc.); and,
- ◀ National agencies and training institutes (including FÁS Services to Business, National College of Ireland and National Learning Network).

Outline of Main Activities:

Equal at Work is an initiative of the Dublin Employment Pact that brings together over 50 organisations working in partnership to create a more equal and a more accessible labour market in the Dublin region.

The project has identified the different HR dynamics that operate in the public, the private and the community sectors, and for this reason has organised the project into four sectoral "clusters" – the Private Sector Cluster (five large private sector companies), the Health Sector Cluster (five hospitals and HSE area organisations),

the Local Authority Cluster (two local authorities), and the Community Sector Cluster (12 community sector organisations, along with trade unions etc.).

The 14 projects in these four clusters focus on adapting, improving and introducing innovations to the policies, cultures and structures that restrict access to and progression in the workplace. The projects benefit people who experience inequalities and discrimination in the labour market as well as employers facing problems with recruitment, retention, progression and skills shortages.

Project actions range from equality reviews of a company's complete HR policies and practices, to the development of inter-cultural working teams in a major hospital, to trade union organisation of the community sector. The project has produced a range of publications, toolkits, HR strategy tools, web-based resources, training models and other resources.

In completing the project at the end of 2007, Dublin Employment Pact is happy that the project has exceeded its greatest expectations and achieved quite a powerful impact across the Dublin labour market HR scene.

Products Produced:

1. Information Pack (on all project actions under Equal at Work).
2. *Improving Labour Market Placement Rates of Disadvantaged Groups in Dublin (analysis of current strategies and practices by Farrell Grant Sparks 2006).
3. Interview Skills Pack (for local authority outdoor staff seeking promotion through competency based interviewing) – Pack and Toolkit.
4. *Opening Pathways for Travellers to Employment in South Dublin County Council – Model of strategy (publication).
5. *Pay, conditions & HR Practices in the Community Sector (Hibernian Consultants).
6. Irish Times Special Report (4 pp.) – Dublin Employment Pact Equal at Work (24th May 2007).
7. Employers' Resource Bureau for the Community Sector (website www.erb.ie with monthly ebulletin updates on HR policy and practice for the community sector).
8. Equality Reviews and Action Plans in six major employments.
9. Comparative Review of Equality Audits implemented in six major

employments under the Dublin Employment Pact Equal at Work Project (SRC Consultants).

10. Recruitment and awareness raising materials for trade union organisation of the community sector.
11. *Information materials and promotional literature for formation and development of the Community Sector Employers Forum.
12. *Women into Non-traditional Employment – Lessons from North and South. Two studies commissioned by the WINS/Equal at Work Project Partnership (by Ursula Barry and Michael Potter, with an introduction by Grainne Healy).
13. Diversity Matters – 30min video documentary on the work of the six Health Sector projects under Equal at Work.
14. Supporting Older Workers in the Workplace: A Booklet from the Equal InterFair Transnational Partnership (coordinated by Grainne Healy).
15. Strategies for Workplace Equality – The outcomes of the Equal at Work Project (Hibernian Consulting) – (Evaluation Report currently under work).
16. *Clerical Officer Job Analysis.
17. Decision Path: bespoke web based system to assist HR practitioners in the application of workplace policies.

**These products are available on the accompanying DVD or can be downloaded from www.ideasbank-equal.info*

Contact Details:

Further information on any of the initiatives undertaken by this project or products listed above is available from the following:

Name: Philip O'Connor
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Website: www.dublinpact.ie



3. Finding a Balance

Aim:

To implement innovative working practices within the partner organisations with a view to influencing policy change at local, national and European level.

Partners:

- ◀ Health Services Executive (HSE) West;
- ◀ Donegal Vocational Education Committee (VEC);
- ◀ Donegal Gender Focus Group of Donegal County Development Board (DCDB); and,
- ◀ Donegal County Council (DCC).

Outline of Main Activities:

The project is managed by a steering committee representative of each partner organisation. Project implementation is facilitated through a smaller operational sub group drawn from the steering committee. In addition to working together on common actions, each partner also implements actions specific to their own organisation.

Project progress has taken place within the context of European Employment policy, the National Workplace Strategy and the National Social Partnership agreement.

- ◀ Key project structures developed at overall project level and across all partner organisations;
- ◀ Project profile developed via project brochure, launch, newsletters - FAB News,

poster, FAB calendar 2007 and presentations to internal and external stakeholders;

- ◀ Work Life Balance (WLB) benchmarked within each organisation using a WLB diagnostic tool, developed by the Dublin based Work-Life Balance Network in EQUAL 1;
- ◀ WLB training/capacity building implemented across all partner organisations;
- ◀ Pilot sites selected, in accordance with agreed criteria, across all partner organisations. The process of engagement in all pilot sites is based on a 10 stage process;
- ◀ Questionnaire developed for the purpose of researching the current situation re WLB and assessing WLB needs within FAB partner organisation pilot sites;
- ◀ Summer Scheme - FUNCAMP 05/06 - which aimed to impact on workplace retention during the summer months, ran for three weeks in July 05 and July 06. 270 children benefited. The FUNCAMP evaluation report (based on research with participants and managers) shows a trend towards a decrease in annual leave for the FUNCAMP period;
- ◀ A Flexitime pilot is currently being implemented in Donegal County Council;
- ◀ WLB Action plans developed within 5 HSE West pilot sites. Negotiations are currently taking place re piloting of 3+3⁸;
- ◀ Framework of supports developed and implemented within HSE West: networking events for WLB teams within each of the 5 pilot sites, Peer group learning for pilot site managers and capacity building/training workshops for senior managers;
- ◀ Transnational partnership established and developed with five EU member partners;
- ◀ FAB project definition of Work-Life Balance devised in which diversity is a key principle.

Work-Life Balance involves adjusting the working environment to enable a diverse workforce to have a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work, which is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business, clients and society.

⁸The 3+3 concept originated in Sweden and is based on a 6 day cycle of three work days and three free days. The days are slightly longer (10 hours), while working days per year are fewer. Benefits reported include reduced stress and sick leave, and increased productivity, health and well being.

Contact Details:

Further information on any of the initiatives undertaken by this project is available from the following:

Name:.....Breege Doherty

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Website:.....www.findingabalance.org



4. KWCD Employer Exchange

Aim:

The aim of the project is to bring together a group of employers from the Dublin 12 area and other 'travel to work' areas in Dublin West, in a network for exchange and development of good practice relating to recruitment of long-term unemployed (LTU).

Partners:

- ◀ KWCD Local Employment Service;
- ◀ The linkage Programme;
- ◀ Enable Ireland;
- ◀ Department of Social & Family Affairs;
- ◀ Contract People;
- ◀ Johnson and Johnson;
- ◀ PEI;
- ◀ John Sisk and Son; and,
- ◀ Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children.

Project Description:

The KWCD Employer Exchange is a unique initiative in the Dublin 12 area that has a Development Partnership made up of high profile employers such as Contract People, John Sisk and Sons, Johnson and Johnson, Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children and PEI. This is the first time that an employer-led initiative of this nature has happened in Ireland. It encourages employers to focus on the barriers that face those most marginalised in accessing the workforce. The project identified the following target groups as having the greatest difficulty in accessing employment: persons with disability, ex prisoners, and those discriminated on grounds of age and gender.

Existing recruitment practice in many companies create barriers for both skilled and low/non skilled positions. Through discussions with employers and conducting research on current recruitment practice and gauging what employer

perceptions of the target group actually are it has enabled the DP to develop and pilot some alternatives to the traditional methods of recruitment. The employers have challenged the recruitment method used by most, i.e. the traditional interview, and piloted alternatives to this that focus on the person, their life experience and their motivation and enthusiasm for the job.

One of the key achievements of the project is its success in engaging employers. This was done by providing regular employer workshops on topics that were of interest to employers but also by promoting best practice in recruitment and selection. This also gave the project a channel to promote its actions and encourage employers to become more actively involved. Contact was also made through mailshots, company visits and cold calling. As a result of this, actions that were not originally part of the plan were developed by the employers e.g. Employer programme for preparing target group for jobs and mock interviews.

The project has been innovative in its approach and through successfully working with high profile local employers has been able to engage employers who may not have previously considered getting involved in EU projects.

Products Produced:

1. *Ability on Your Doorstep;
2. *Recruitment and Selection: The Right Approach;
3. *Preparing a CV;
4. *Guide to Work Experience;
5. *Preparing for Interviews;
6. *Guide to Employer Engagement (a second edition of this guide will be available by end 2007);
7. *Employers Perceptions of the Long Term Unemployed.

**These products are available on the accompanying DVD or can be downloaded from www.ideasbank-equal.info*

Contact Details:

Further information on any of the initiatives undertaken by this project or products listed above is available from the following:

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5. *LIFT (Leadership Initiative for Females in Trade Unions)*

Aim:

The overall aim of the LIFT Programme is to support organisational change and develop skills targeted towards addressing the under-representation and participation by women at leadership level in the trade union movement.

Partners:

- ◀ Institute of Public Administration (IPA);
- ◀ Irish Congress of Trade Union (ICTU); and,
- ◀ National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP).

Outline of Main Activities:

A key objective for the LIFT Programme has been to connect with women and men in new and innovative ways to support improved participation and progression for women and to facilitate the delivery of personal and organisational development programmes for sustainable trade union organisation.

LIFT sets out to facilitate the empowerment of women into leadership roles within trade unions by providing professional development opportunities through coaching, mentoring and training interventions and by providing networking opportunities to women and men within the movement.

Primary research to examine the attitudes, perceptions, policies, practice and views within trade unions and those factors that may inhibit women's progression to leadership and senior levels, informed approaches to developing and implementing leadership development programmes targeted at current leaders and senior-level women within the movement. These programmes are supplemented by organisational change strategies and provide an open forum for

trade union leaders to reflect, discuss and engage on strategic issues that are critical for the future sustainability and growth of the trade union movement.

LIFT Modular Workshops set out to equip a senior cohort of women with the skills, attributes and competencies required for effective leadership and to enable them to take up leadership roles and included an analysis of the nature and challenge of leadership and of women leaders for effective trade union organisation.

Secondary research was also commissioned to explore the validity and relevance of trade unions to existing and potential members to inform the changes required in 'repositioning' the movement to engage a wider audience. Supportive networks were developed, as part of programme activity, to promote the personal development and growth of women within the movement and to shape and inform trade union agendas for organisational change. These networks also provide a mainstreaming forum for project outcomes.

The success of LIFT has led to the extension of the programme to Northern Ireland.

Products Produced:

1. Promotional DVD highlighting the benefits of trade union membership and participation for women – *'Women and Trade Unions – Stronger Together'*.

Contact Details:

Further information on any of the initiatives undertaken by this project and the DVD produced is available from the following:

Name:.....Danyanne Quemper

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Senior Select Retain & Retrain
experience has a future

6. Senior Select Retain and Retrain

Aim:

The aim of this project is to explore new ways of supporting the development, recruitment and retention of older workers through local partnerships involving older workers and job seekers, employers and recruitment agencies, and to disseminate the results in order to influence future employment policies and practices.

Partners:

- ◀ Age Action Ireland;
- ◀ Contact Recruitment;
- ◀ FÁS;
- ◀ Irish Congress of Trade Unions; and,
- ◀ Partas.

Outline of Main Activities:

To develop an effective working partnership through which the individual partners bring their collective experience and competence to bear and engage with other relevant actors in order to further policy and practice in relation to the employment of older people.

The project objectives are:

- ◀ To research the issues affecting the current and future participation of older workers in employment;
- ◀ To identify employer attitudes, behaviours and experiences of employing older people and to identify the experience, attitudes, and behaviour of older workers and employment agencies in relation to current and future participation of older workers in employment;

- ◀ To develop local partnerships involving older workers and job seekers, employers, recruitment agencies and trade unions to explore new ways of supporting the development, recruitment and retention of older workers at local level;
- ◀ To design, develop and implement a range of interventions with a view to influence the recruitment and retention of older people;
- ◀ To provide evidence with a view to influencing policy and practice in relation to the recruitment, employment and retention of older people;
- ◀ To disseminate and mainstream the project results to influence policy and practice and to combat ageism in the labour market; and,
- ◀ To actively participate in an international programme under EQUAL.

A number of focus groups were held to identify, understand and document the experiences of older workers in the workplace and of older jobseekers presenting to agencies and employers for interview, with a view to contributing towards the project's research programme and assisting in the development of programmes of interventions to address the needs of participants.

The Choices@50+ programme was developed in response to the needs identified in the focus groups. Elements of the programme include:

1. Recovery And Revitalisation, a one day workshop for recently displaced employees;
2. Career Development Review, a one day workshop for employees;
3. Getting Back Into Work, a one day workshop for returners to work;
4. Group Coaching; and,
5. Self assessment and awareness.

The project, in conjunction with Chambers Ireland, commissioned the Labour Force Survey 2006, a piece of large-scale national quantitative research carried out in order to identify employer attitudes, behaviours and experiences of employing older people.

Research was carried out with employment agencies in order to identify and understand their attitudes, behaviours and experiences of addressing the requirements of employers and of interacting with older jobseekers, and a report was prepared.

A report was also prepared which summarised and analysed existing research and policy on older workers at both national and international levels.

Products Produced:

1. Choices@50+ career development programme;
2. *Promoting Choices for Older Workers in Ireland: an introduction to the current context;
3. *Older Workers in Ireland;
4. *Labour Market Survey;
5. *Employing Older Workers;
6. *Employment Agencies Report.

**These products are available on the accompanying DVD or can be downloaded from www.ideasbank-equal.info*

Contact Details:

Further information on any of the initiatives undertaken by this project or products listed above is available from the following:

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7. WAM (Willing Able Mentoring) Project

Aim:

The main aims of the project are to foster attitudinal change, to raise awareness and a deeper understanding of the inherent barriers faced by graduates with disabilities in the labour market. At the same time the project seeks to lay the foundation for inclusive labour mainstream practices that will guarantee wider access and sustainability for all graduates with disabilities.

Partners:

- ◀ AHEAD;
- ◀ Aisling Foundation;
- ◀ Bank of Ireland;
- ◀ Department of Finance;
- ◀ Dublin City University;
- ◀ FÁS;
- ◀ Gandon Enterprise;
- ◀ GET AHEAD;
- ◀ Hamilton Osbourne King;
- ◀ IBM Intl Ltd.;
- ◀ Irish Life & Permanent; and,
- ◀ National learning Network.

Outline of Main Activities:

It is very often the case that graduates with disabilities, with little or no experience of the work environment, find it very hard to get that first step on the career ladder. Exactly why this occurs is what the WAM Project is attempting to uncover.

WAM, an EU funded initiative has at its helm a Development Partnership (DP) made up of twelve organisations: six employers and six other organisations who, between them bring to the table, a vast wealth of experience and expertise in the areas of disability, education and training.

WAM is in essence a pilot survey, action based research, which uses the mechanism of a structured mentored work placement to explore what are the existing barriers, real or perceived, to the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. The strength of the project is that it has beneficial effects on both groups (participating employers as well as participating graduates).

Graduates with disabilities gain valuable mainstream paid employment experience which will hopefully benefit their future careers while employers get the opportunity to assess their own internal recruitment and selection procedures regarding the employment of people with disabilities.

Products Produced:

1. WAM Employer Pack - (due for publication in September 2007). This pack will include the following:
 - ▶ WAM Mentoring Model Template (Ground Rules for Mentoring, Guidelines for Mentors, Guidelines for Mentees and the Mentoring Contract);
 - ▶ Recruitment & Selection Guidelines;
 - ▶ Needs Assessment Process (Forms 1, 2 & 3);
 - ▶ Health & Safety Guidelines (Personal Evacuation Plan);
 - ▶ Guidelines (Intervention, Sample Work Action Plan and Early completion.
2. *Evaluation of First Round of Supported Placement;
3. Evaluation of Second Round of Supported Placements (due for completion in December 2007);
4. Project Evaluation (due for completion in early 2008).

**This product is available on the accompanying DVD or can be downloaded from www.ideasbank-equal.info*

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