



**Services for the Unemployed
End of Programme Review
2000 – 2006**

This report was prepared by:

Clare Duffy, Research & Evaluation Officer, OAK Partnership,

email; info@oakpartnership.com

Michael Kenny, Lecturer, National University of Ireland Maynooth, NIRSA Associate,

email; michael.kenny@nuim.ie

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--|
| BTWEA | Back to Work Enterprise Allowance |
| CBYI | Community Based Youth Initiatives |
| CD | Community Development |
| EASA | Edenderry Addressing Substance Misuse |
| EDDS | Edenderry District Disability Society |
| FYC | Family, Youth and Community Support Measure |
| HSE | Health Service Executive |
| HSP | High Support Process |
| KCP | Kildare Community Partnership |
| KELT | Kildare European Leader Teoranta |
| LDSIP | Local Development Social Inclusion Programme 2000 - 2006 |
| LEADER | Partnership Rural Development Programme |
| MRDTF | Midland Regional Drugs Taskforce |
| NDP | National Development Plan |
| OES | OAK Employment Services |
| SCOPE | System for Coordinated Programme Evaluation |
| VEC | Vocational Education Committee |

Table of Contents

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Chapter 1 - Introduction | 3 |
| Chapter 2 - Aims and Methodology of the Research..... | 7 |
| Chapter 3 – Literature Review..... | 10 |
| Chapter 4 – Services for the Unemployment Model of Programme Delivery and Progression Pathway | 20 |
| Chapter 5 – Interagency Collaboration..... | 35 |
| Chapter 6 – SUE Outputs and Results 2002 - 2006 | 41 |
| Chapter 7 – Impact Assessment of SUE 2003 – 2006..... | 51 |
| Chapter 8 – Conclusions and Challenges for the Future..... | 55 |
| Chapter 9 – Recommendations..... | 59 |

Chapter 1 - Introduction

As part of the completion of its work in the North West Kildare / North Offaly area, OAK Partnership have commissioned a review of the Partnerships work for the period 2000 – 2006. The recommendations of the review will play a key role in informing the work of the Local Development structures to emerge from the process initiated by the Minister for Community Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs to realign local development structures and social inclusion programmes into one single county-based structure.

This section outlines the background to the report, provides an overview of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme and details the Services for the unemployed (SUE) Measure.

1.1. Background to this Report

In 2005, minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, announced a national strategy for cohesion of the community and local development structure on a county wide bases. Since this announcement, the relevant local development agencies in County Offaly (OAK Partnership, Tullamore Wider Options, West Offaly Partnership and Offaly LEADER) and County Kildare (OAK Partnership, Kildare Community Partnership and KELT) are engaged in a negotiation and planning process which will culminate in the establishment of a new organisational structure for the local development sector. In preparation for the new county wide structures, OAK Partnership have undertaken a review of the Partnerships contribution towards the objectives of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) during the period 2000 – 2006. This review includes three strands;

- An overall review of OAK Partnership
- Review of the Family, Youth and Community Support Measure
- Review of the Services for the Unemployed Measure.

This report will specifically examine the approach and achievements of the Services for the Unemployed (SUE) Measure.

1.2. The LDSIP and the Services for the Unemployed Measure

Pobal (formerly ADM) is an intermediary company established by the Irish Government and the European Commission to promote social inclusion, reconciliation and equality and to counter disadvantage through local social and economic development. As part of the 2000 – 2006 National Development Plan, Pobal has responsibility for the LDSIP, with the programme implemented locally by 38 Area-based Partnerships, 31 Community Based Partnerships and two Employment Pacts.

The overall objective of the LDSIP is:

'To counter disadvantage and promote equality, social and economic inclusion through the provision of funding and support to Partnerships and Community Groups that adopt a partnership approach to tackling issues on the basis of comprehensive, integrated local development plans, designed to counter social exclusion and to equitably target the opportunities and benefits of development to the most disadvantaged individuals and groups within their areas'.

LDSIP Guidelines 2000 – 2006.

While actions funded by the LDSIP involve integrated responses to the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion, they are grouped into three areas of activity¹:

Measure A: Services for the unemployed

Measure B: Community development

Measure C: Community-based youth initiatives

Target Groups

The following disadvantaged individuals and communities are specifically named amongst the target groups of the LDSIP:

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| The long-term unemployed | Young people at risk |
| The underemployed | Disadvantaged women |
| Lone parents | Disadvantaged young people |
| Substance misusers | Travellers |
| Asylum seekers and refugees | Older people |
| Low-income farm household's | Disabled people |
| Ex-prisoners and ex-offenders | Homeless people |
| Disadvantaged communities | |

1.3. The Services for the Unemployed Measure

The Services for the Unemployed Measure supports individuals in accessing suitable and sustainable employment opportunities through targeting actions in the areas of guidance, education, training, work experience, job placement, enterprise, self-employment and social economy (now Community Services).

¹ Since 2003 OAK Partnership have combined Measure B and C to form the Family, Youth and Community Support Measure.

In addition, Partnerships undertake initiatives in conjunction with strategic partners and mainstream providers. These include the operation of outreach initiatives, job clubs, employment and training, mentoring and enterprise and social economy initiatives. These initiatives provide progression pathways locally for individuals.

The specific objectives of the Services for the Unemployed Measure on which the review is based include²;

- To improve the options within the labour market, of the long-term unemployed and those most distanced from the labour market through specifically targeted services, including pro-active targeting and outreach to marginalised groups who require intensive support and interventions;
- To identify, nurture and support individuals, groups and communities in accessing suitable, gainful and sustained employment and self employment, through education, training, work experience, job placement, enterprise and the social economy;
- To support and develop an enterprise culture, including community enterprise and a social economy;
- To add value to the effective delivery of mainstream programmes through the provision of linkage and co-ordination affecting the long-term unemployed and the socially excluded
- To put in place mechanisms to ensure local initiatives inform and strengthen policy development.

In delivering on the objectives the following principles are involved:

- Targeting resources to individuals and groups who experience the most extreme poverty and social exclusion;
- Actively promoting equality in particular equality between women and men to achieve a more just and equal society;
- Applying community development approaches and principles to achieve the participation and full involvement of disadvantaged groups and communities in planning and decision making at every level;
- Promoting meaningful partnership to increase co-operation, co-ordination and effective decision making to address needs identified;
- Supporting integrated and multi - sectoral responses to exclusion that recognise the social and economic dimensions of exclusion;
- Developing mechanisms for mainstreaming lessons learned at local level and maximising their contribution to the policy making process.

² ADM, 'Local Development Social Inclusion Programme Guidelines 2000 – 2006'.

Core Principles in Providing Services for the Unemployed

- That services are available and accessible
- That Services are provided free of charge
- That there is a commitment to active involvement of users/target groups
- That services begin with the needs identified by unemployed people themselves
- That services are flexible and locally based
- That services promote equality of opportunity, access and outcome.

Adapted LDSIP Guidelines 2000 - 2006

1.4. Future Programme - NDP 2007 - 2013

Under the National Development Plan 2007-2013 €417 million will be provided, over the period of the Plan, under the Local Development Social Inclusion Sub-Programme, to support locally-based social inclusion measures. The Sub-Programme will have a particular focus on supporting people and communities suffering disadvantage and exclusion through a wide spectrum of locally promoted actions. The alignment of local, community and rural development organisations leading to unified county-structures will enable the provision of the services to all persons, irrespective of their place of residence, with equal access to the services available including employment, education and training opportunities.

Similar to the LDSIP 2000-2006, the Sub-Programme under this Plan will aim to promote social inclusion and will contribute to achieving objectives under the 'National Action Plan for Social Inclusion'. The sub-programme will involve the provision of funds and support to unified Partnership companies to promote social inclusion at local level. The new programme will have national coverage and will continue to target the most disadvantaged areas, groups and individuals, particularly those experiencing cumulative disadvantage. Local actions delivered by the Partnership companies will complement and add value to other services for disadvantaged communities and people.

Chapter 2 - Aims and Methodology of the Research

2.1. Overall Aim of the Research

This research forms part of OAK Partnership's evaluation and monitoring programme, which aims to capture the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of the Partnership's work and to inform the implementation and strategic development of the LDSIP at a local and national level.

More specifically, the study aims to examine the initiatives and approaches developed by the Services for the Unemployed Measure, to assess the impact of this work in supporting the communities of North Offaly and North West Kildare and to identify key lessons learned during the period 2003 – 2006.

2.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the review are to:

1. Review all national and local area evaluation reports undertaken within the Services for the Unemployed Measure and present the salient findings.
2. Examine the range of education, training, employment, enterprise and farming supports, services and initiatives offered by the Measure.
3. Examine the level of interagency collaboration and its impact on service development and delivery.
4. Assess the quantitative and qualitative achievements of the Measure.
5. Examine how Services for the Unemployed Measure has adapted its structure and strategies to respond to changing client needs and assess the impact of the Measure in supporting priority target groups.
6. Examine the way in which organisational learning has developed over time and how lessons have been implemented.
7. Develop key recommendations based on the learning of the Services for the Unemployed Measure that will inform the future development of employability initiatives in Counties Offaly and Kildare.

2.3. Methodology

The research has involved a range of secondary and primary research sources, including a review of relevant literature, an analysis of SCOPE data, focus group discussions and consultations with the Employment Services Working Group, Board and staff of OAK Partnership.

Literature Review

During 2000 – 2006 a wealth of research and evaluations regarding Services for the Unemployed have been undertaken both nationally and locally. However these reports tend to

examine issues in isolation meaning that a collective learning approach cannot be applied. The first step in the research therefore was to undertake a review of all relevant research and publications and present their salient findings.

Analysis of SCOPE Data

Developed by Pobal, Systems for Coordinated Programme Evaluation (SCOPE) is an integrated approach to programme monitoring and evaluation, capturing the quantitative dimensions of the LDSIP Programme. The system was used to explore progression outcomes for Services for the Unemployed clients during the period 2003-2006³ and examined the profile of target groups, the range of supports provided and achieved outputs.

Focus Group Discussions

Two focus group discussions were undertaken to capture a range of views on the work, achievements and learning of the SUE Measure. A focus group with representatives of key agencies was undertaken to assess the role of the various agencies in supporting the work of SUE Measure and to examine the level of interagency collaboration developed. A focus group of SUE Measure staff was also held. The group examined the achievements of the SUE Measure, its strengths and weaknesses and identified challenges to be considered for the future.

Consultation with the Board of Directors and Employment Services Working Group

The researchers meet with the Board of Directors on three occasions during the review and on two occasions with the Employment Services Working Group.

Interview with Manager and Staff of OAK Partnership

In-depth interviews were held with the Manager of OAK Partnership and with key staff of the SUE Measure including the SUE Coordinator.

³ The period 2003 – 2006 was used as data entry to the Scope system was considered unreliable before this date.

2.4. Report Format

This report consists of 9 chapters and is presented as follows:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 2 – Aims and Methodology of the Research

Chapter 3 – Literature Review

Chapter 4 – Services for the Unemployment Model of Programme Delivery

Chapter 5 – Interagency Collaboration

Chapter 6 – SUE Outputs and Results 2002 - 2006

Chapter 7 - Impact Assessment of SUE 2003 – 2006

Chapter 8 – Conclusions and Challenges for the Future

Chapter 9 – Recommendations

Chapter 3 – Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

This literature review seeks to outline, analyse and synthesise the various reports undertaken within the SUE Measure during the period 2000 - 2006, both from a national perspective (undertaken by Pobal), and locally through the studies carried out by OAK Partnership. This review will contribute to the development of a more unified understanding of the SUE Measure. By synthesising the research outcomes, common findings can be extracted and framed within the context of the Measure.

3.2. Table 1: Research and Evaluation Studies SUE Measure 2000 - 2006

| Commissioned by: | Report Title | Author | Date |
|------------------|---|--|------------------|
| Pobal | Assessing the Impact of the Services for the Unemployed Measure | Anne Eustace & Anne Clarke (Eustace Patterson) | 2006 |
| | Low Income Smallholder Initiative - Good Practice Guidelines | Kathleen Fahy / Niamh Gaynor | 2004 |
| OAK Partnership | Participant Evaluation of the Joblink Programme | Clare Duffy | 2007 |
| | First Chance Programme Evaluation | Clare Duffy | 2005 |
| | OAK Employment Service Evaluation Report 2000 – 2003 | Dr. Phyllis Murphy | 2003 |
| | Business Development Programme – Participant Evaluation | Clare Duffy | 2003, 2004, 2005 |
| | Evaluation of Services for the Unemployed Enterprise Support Services 1997 – 2002 | Niall Heenan | 2003 |
| | An Evaluation of the Offaly Smallholder Development Service 1997 – 2003 | Clare Duffy | 2003 |

3.3. Overview of Research and Evaluation Studies

Pobal Research

Assessing the Impact of the Services for the Unemployed Measure (Eustace Patterson Ltd, 2006).

The study aimed to assess the impact of the SUE Measure from a quantitative and qualitative perspective, to inform the strategic direction of employment services initiatives and to fulfill a reporting requirement for the Regional Assembly Monitoring Committees. The research examined progression outcomes for clients of the SUE Measure, using both labour market outcomes and social inclusion indicators. The researchers also assessed the strategies adopted under the LDSIP and examined the experiences and progression outcomes of two client samples – a ‘caseload sample’ of 861 clients from 16 Partnerships (including OAK Partnership) and a ‘tracking sample’ of 84 clients drawn from the same 16 Partnerships. Clients from the tracking sample were interviewed on a one-to-one basis over a nine month period in order to track their short term progression and to assess qualitative impacts.

Smallholder Initiative - Good Practice Guidelines 2004

This report involved an examination of work undertaken by nine rural Partnerships and Community Groups (including OAK Partnership) who manage and implement the Low Income Smallholder Initiative (LISHI) at local level. The aim of the research was to synthesise the findings from the nine LISHI case studies highlighting the backgrounds and key features of the Initiative and work towards identifying a model of good practice. The report presented conclusions and recommendations at local and national level.

OAK Partnership Commissioned Research

OAK Employment Service Evaluation Report 2000 – 2003 (Dr. Phyllis Murphy, 2003)

The evaluation provided an overview of the development of OAK Employment Service Measure from its establishment in 1998, an assessment of progress made during 2000 – 2003 and set out recommendations for the Measure for the period 2003 – 2006. Specific objectives included: to evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the current range of supports services and initiatives which make up the Employment Service; to formulate a series of recommendations which will form the basis of an updated strategic plan for the OAK Employment Service and to document the key elements of the service as a contribution to learning at a national level in relation to the delivery of rural employment services.

Evaluation of Services for the Unemployed Enterprise Support Services 1997 – 2002 (Niall Heenan and Associates, 2003).

The evaluation report assessed the effectiveness of the Enterprise Support Service programme, delivered by OAK Partnership. More specifically research objectives included: to consider the role and effectiveness of Enterprise Services staff in providing an advisory service to clients; to assess the value of the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance; examine the effectiveness of the Business Development Programme in providing Business Skills Training; assess the effectiveness of the Financial Assistance Fund in providing seed capital for new businesses; examine the linkages that have been achieved between OAK Partnership and other relevant agencies and to identify areas where the Enterprise Service could be improved.

An Evaluation of the Offaly Smallholder Development Service 1997 – 2003 (Clare Duffy, 2003).

This study was a joint initiative involving OAK Partnership, West Offaly Partnership and Teagasc and sets out the case for the Offaly Smallholder Development Service (OSDS), demonstrating what has been achieved and how the services of OSDS have evolved to meet the needs of County Offaly smallholders. The research also identified models of good practice which have been developed by OSDS and which have contributed to the success of the service in County Offaly.

First Chance Programme Evaluation (Clare Duffy, 2005)

The First Chance Programme was designed to meet a broad range of soft skill needs identified by OAK Employment Service in working with clients under the High Support Process. This was a mechanism to assist FAS Placement Officers and LES Mediators to put in place agreed interventions for targeted clients to assist them in removing barriers to employment. The evaluation assessed the extent to which the First Chance Programme has helped participants from marginalised backgrounds participate more equally in mainstream training and employment opportunities.

Participant Evaluation of the Joblink Programme (Clare Duffy, 2007).

As part of OAK Partnerships ongoing review and performance monitoring procedures, an evaluation of the Joblink programme was carried out during April 2007. The evaluation involved consultations among existing programme participants, both through group discussions and one to one interviews. The goal of the evaluation was to capture the experience of Joblink participants and examine the design, delivery, outcomes and relevance of Joblink in meeting their training and career needs.

Evaluation of the Business Development Programme (Clare Duffy, 2003, 2004, 2005).

Participant evaluations of the Business Development programme have been carried out periodically throughout 2003, 2004 and 2005 on completion of each programme. A SWOT analysis and facilitated discussion process was used for this evaluation. This encouraged greater participation and elaboration among the group. As well as evaluating the programme success, these sessions focused on generating suggestions as to how the programme could be improved for the incoming group of participants.

3.4. Table 2: Summary of Research Findings

| Report | Focus | Key Success Factors | Key Findings |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Assessing the Impact of the Services for the Unemployed Measure (Eustace Patterson Ltd, 2006).</p> | <p>Assessment of the SUE Measure and tracking the progression outcomes of a sample of clients.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A person centred, holistic, integrated approach to identifying and meeting clients' needs. 2. Being flexible, independent, locally based, friendly and non-bureaucratic. 3. Knowledge and understanding of the local organisational landscape and the development of networks and effective working relationships. | <p>Client –level strategies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a). Targeting and outreach strategies will have to be further developed to meet the needs of new target groups. (b). Working with communities will require working with other service providers to address the needs of disadvantaged areas. (c). There is a need for referral strategies, case-working mechanisms, strategies that promote 'joined-up thinking' and inter-agency co-operation. (d). Levering funds and resources from other organisations is critical if the full range of client needs are to be met. (e). Networking with employers as potential partners and sources of funding for initiatives and to ensure that training or work experience is relevant. (f). Need for improved client after-care support drawing on referral processes, networks and links with other organisations and employers. <p>Programme-level strategies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a). Programme should retain a core component that aims to progress individual clients towards labour market outcomes. (b). The measure SUE needs to continue to interact with and complement other initiatives both within the LDSIP and externally. (c). Need for continued innovation and leveraging of resources. (d). Need to inform policy for the enhancement of mainstream services. (e). Need to address rural challenges including the needs of farm families, provision of transport and local enterprise. (f). Performance indicators should more specifically reflect the broad focus and impact of the SUE Measure. <p>Organisational Level Strategies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a). Horizontal structures, both internal and external need to be further developed and formalised at local and national level. (b). There is considerable scope for the partnerships to strengthen |

| Report | Focus | Key Success Factors | Key Findings |
|--|--|--|---|
| | | | <p>the potential for shared learning across organisations.</p> <p>(c). Partnerships need to further develop and expand the range of strategic alliances that they are currently engaged with.</p> <p>(d). Need for participation strategies to ensure the representation of clients in decision based structures.</p> <p>(e). Development of strategic links with employers to raise awareness and develop after care strategies in the interest of better serving the particularly vulnerable groups.</p> |
| <p>Low Income Smallholder Initiative - Good Practice Guidelines.</p> <p>Kathleen Fahy / Niamh Gaynor</p> | <p>Sets out a model of good practice based on the collective experiences of nine Low Income Smallholder Initiatives.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partnerships have played a fundamental role in identifying and understanding the needs of low-income farm families. 2. The Rural Resource Worker (RRW forms the public face of the LISHI) and is pro-active in publicising the initiative, drawing participants in, ensuring on-going support to smallholder households and in building trust and confidence among LISHI participants. 3. The LISHI has proven particularly successful in targeting low-income smallholder families that other support services appear to have by passed. 4. Rather than targeting the farmer as an individual, LISHI targets the household as a whole. The impacts of the Initiative are spread out among all household members and contribute to the integrated development of the rural area and its community. 5. There is much evidence of tangible economic benefits of LISHI to local areas. Such benefits range from an increase in existing farm income to an | <p>LISHI – National Level</p> <p>(a). Need to support local implementing groups.</p> <p>(b). Development of qualitative indicators within the context of existing LDSIP indicators could be used to measure and monitor the social as well as economic aspects of the Initiative.</p> <p>(c). Need for continued work in developing linkages with other relevant organisations including Teagasc, EQUAL, LEADER, DSFA and the Rural Social Scheme.</p> <p>(d). The Rural Development Advisory Group of Pobal have a key role in creating a strategy for mainstreaming post-2006.</p> <p>LISHI – Local Level</p> <p>(a). Roles and responsibilities of the different structures need to be clear to all members and should include representation from the RRW, relevant local statutory agencies, the community and voluntary sector, and the target group.</p> <p>(b). Needs analysis should be carried out and fed into planning meetings to respond to emerging needs and to the constantly changing operational environment.</p> <p>(c). Initiatives should continue to seek out and target the most marginalised households in the rural community.</p> <p>(d) Initiatives should ensure that its local structures facilitate and support the involvement of the target group in local decision-making.</p> <p>(e). The importance of linkages both internally and externally should be a key feature of the LISHI and in particular add value to existing</p> |

| Report | Focus | Key Success Factors | Key Findings |
|--|---|---|---|
| | | <p>increase in off-farm income.</p> <p>6. A key strength of LISHI has been in the positive social effects on the self-esteem and confidence of smallholders.</p> <p>7. For the first time in many areas the LISHI has brought together all key stakeholders from the agricultural sector including statutory agencies, farming organisations, and community representatives.</p> | <p>programmes, and create synergies with partner organisations.</p> <p>(f). A long-term developmental approach should be used in helping farm families identify sustainable solutions.</p> <p>(g). Initiatives should utilise existing monitoring systems (such as SCOPE) but also develop complementary systems to ensure that LISHI participant's details can be appropriately accessed.</p> <p>(h). Local groups should pursue the mainstreaming of the programme at local and regional level by feeding the lessons and impacts of LISHI regularly to stakeholders on their Boards and through relevant structures</p> |
| <p>Participant Evaluation of the Joblink Programme 2007</p> <p>Clare Duffy</p> | <p>Examined the design, delivery, outcomes and relevance of Joblink in meeting participants' training and career needs.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confidence Building and Personal Development: Joblinks focus on one to one interaction with participants has been valuable in the confidence building and personal development of the group. 2. Group Support: An important element of the programme is the support network developed within the group. 3. Training Modules: Participants thoroughly enjoyed many of the training modules delivered during the programme. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a). The Partnership should adopt a holistic approach to client recruitment. Recruitment days could be hosted whereby clients can be informed of all programmes available and select the one most suited to their needs. (b). Joblink must be adapted to reflect the changing profile of participants. (c). Work placement employers should only be used if they can offer participants some prospect of employment after completion of the work placement. (d). Participants should have access to accurate, comprehensive and impartial information relating to further training and employment options. (e). Career path planning should be provided to each participant in the months prior to completion of Joblink. |
| <p>First Chance Programme Evaluation</p> <p>Clare Duffy 2007</p> | <p>Assess extent that First Chance helped participants participate more fully in mainstream and employment opportunities.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Programme facilitator. 2. Participant involvement in programme design. 3. Group Support. 4. Location. 5. Skills development. 6. Confidence building & self esteem. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The success of First Chance is dependent on having a facilitator who has the experience and skills to work with the group. (b) Allowing participants to design the Programme around their particular areas of interest kept the group interested and motivated throughout the ten weeks. (c) The dynamics of the group is an important determinant of the Programmes success. |

| Report | Focus | Key Success Factors | Key Findings |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>OAK Employment Service (OES) Evaluation Report 2000 – 2003 Dr. Phyllis Murphy</p> | <p>Overview of the development of OES, an assessment of progress made during 2000 – 2003 and set out recommendations for the Measure for the period 2003 – 2006.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Model of delivery- flexible outreach strategy and a progression pathway. 2. Professional staff team 3. Service understands the complex needs of its target group. 4. Service presents a multi-dimensional response mechanism involving all relevant agencies. 5. Partnership with other service providers. 6. Availability of ancillary supports. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Planning group should be appointed to identify resources needed mainstreaming of OES. (b) Learning transfer seminar for the exchange of information and experience across agencies. (c) Sub group to support men’s participation in education. (d) Consultation with local employers to establish employers’ skill needs. (e) Restructurings of the Partnership’s work including the expansion of Community Development and pre-development work; establishment of separate structure for education and training provision; further develop the focus of OES to strengthen its capacity to improve the employability of the target group. (f) Outreach and mediation – maximise cooperation and linkage with community development actions. (g) Develop a structured staff support system. (h) Develop an effective way of recording qualitative data. (i) Ongoing consultative evaluation especially with regard to client feedback. |
| <p>Business Development Programme (BDP)– Participant Evaluation. Clare Duffy</p> | <p>SWOT analysis of BDP focused on generating suggestions on programme improvements.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moving business from ‘idea’ to development stage. 2. Assisting participants to develop a personalised business plan. 3. Support of programme tutors. 4. Group support network. 5. Provision of one to one mentoring. 6. Confidence building and personal development. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) One to one mentoring is an essential component of the BDP and should be offered in all modules. (b) Incorporation of practical work time into training days. (c) Programme content should be tailored to suit the individual needs of each participant. |

| Report | Focus | Key Success Factors | Key Findings |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Evaluation of Enterprise Support Services 1997 – 2002. Niall Heenan 2003.</p> | <p>An evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the Enterprise Support Service programme.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Role and effectiveness of staff. 2. Value of the BTWEA (Back To Work Enterprise Allowance). 3. Effectiveness of the BDP. 4. Effectiveness of the financial assistance provided. 5. Linkages with external agencies. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Need to place a greater emphasis on follow-up support for clients. (b) Establishment of Enterprise Network. (c) Development of links with County Enterprise Board. (d) Need for greater promotion of enterprise services. (e) Need for personalised training programme and one to one mentoring to reflect the diversity of client needs. |
| <p>An Evaluation of the Offaly Smallholder Development Service 1997 – 2002. Clare Duffy</p> | <p>Documented the evolution of OSDS and sets out the case for the Service. The research also identified models of good practice which have been developed.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The model of partnership and linkage between OAK, West Offaly Partnership (WOP) and Teagasc, has enabled the service to reach those most in need through shared resources. 2. The commitment of the Development Worker. 3. Recognition of the diverse needs of smallholders requiring multidimensional responses. 4. The advocacy role undertaken by the Service. 5. The provision of ancillary supports e.g. employment services, training, counselling. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) OSDS should continue to be funded by the Partnership companies until such time as the service can be mainstreamed. (b) Commitment to focusing the service to farm families who are most severely disadvantaged. (c) Rename the Service to avoid stigmatising farmers. (d) Need for greater promotion of the Service. (e) Need for a framework agreement between the funding organisations. (f) Establishment of a Countywide Working Group. (g) Need for systems for documenting and recording client information. (h) Support for the mainstreaming of OSDS. (i) Development of greater collaboration across Partnership Measures. |

3.5. Emergent Themes

An analysis of the research findings set out in Table 2, reveal that certain key success factors and findings are common across many of the studies that have been undertaken. These emergent findings include;

Success Factors

1. The Partnership's success in *identifying and understanding* the complex range of client needs.
2. The *person centered, integrated and holistic approach* to responding to clients needs.
3. The Partnership's ability to offer *flexible, independent and locally based* support services.
4. The model of *collaboration and linkage* that has been developed between the Partnership and stakeholders.
5. The ability of the Partnership to *provide a package of supports* and ancillary services.
6. The *commitment* of Partnership staff in meeting the clients needs.

Key Findings

1. There is an ongoing need for *effective referral strategies* between the Partnership and stakeholders and the promotion of 'joined up thinking' and *interagency co-operation*.
2. Development of *strategies for the mainstreaming* of initiatives that have demonstrated practical benefits for client progression.
3. Need for the establishment of *performance indicators* which reflect the broad focus and impact of the SUE Measure.
4. Need for ongoing *networking and partnership with employers* to ensure targeted training and work placement options.
5. Need for improved *after-care support* for clients that draw on links with external organisations and employers.
6. There is a need for greater collaboration and *shared learning* across the Partnership Measures.
7. Recognition of the *changing profile of client's* requiring support and the need for more individualised training options.

Chapter 4 – Services for the Unemployment Model of Programme Delivery and Progression Pathway

4.1. OAK Employment Service

The framework for the development of OAK Employment Service (OES) was provided in the OAK Partnership Area Action Plan 1996 – 1999. Within this plan, the serious marginalisation of those who are long-term unemployed was identified as an issue of major concern in relation to local development. Issues such as low levels of education and skills among the unemployed, transport difficulties, limited availability of jobs (especially those that would match the profiles of the local unemployed population), and the limited availability of accessible and suitable education and training options were particularly highlighted. In response the Partnership set out two priority actions: Firstly, to tackle specific local issues relating to unemployment and secondly, actions to achieve more focused redeployment of State resources currently available in the area. In line with these priorities a detailed Area Action Plan was prepared by the Partnership and formed the basis for the Partnership's work for the period 1996 – 1999. A key focus of this work was to provide a structured and targeted response to the needs of those most marginalized from labour market opportunities within the Partnership area.

With this focus in mind the Partnership (with the support of FAS, Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) and other relevant agencies) began to develop a pilot Local Employment Service Network (LESN) which would provide basic employment services to all unemployed people, while targeting particular supports at those most distant from the labour market. In November 1997, a Local Employment Support worker was recruited with responsibility for the provision of a mediation service for unemployed people, preparing clients for employment and establishing links with employers. The Support Worker was also to establish and coordinate outreach services for unemployed people throughout the region. As a result, in April 1998, OAK Employment Service was established by the OAK Partnership with support from FAS. FAS initially provided two Community Employment workers to the service. Later due to increased demand, FAS allocated a Placement Officer to be based full-time in the Employment Services office in Edenderry. As the service developed FAS also part-funded the position of a front desk receptionist and paid half the leasing and overhead costs of the office.

Early outcomes indicated the value of this approach. The Partnership therefore proposed to further develop the OAK Employment Service by establishing a formal LESN that would provide substantially greater resources for delivery of the service to unemployed people throughout the region. However a change in Government policy on the rollout of the LESN in rural areas meant that OAK Partnership's application could not be considered, as it was the

Governments policy to locate LESN's only in urban centres. In the absence of LESN funding, the Partnership continued to develop OAK Employment Service as part of the LDSIP Services for the Unemployed Measure. The Partnership's strategy during the term of the 2000 – 2006 Action Plan was to ensure that access of opportunity was provided for the people of the area by the relevant statutory agencies working in partnership with the community and social partners. The action plan highlighted the vital role of OAK Employment Service in working with the long-term unemployed and socially excluded to improve their employability.

During 2008 the OAK Employment Service celebrated its tenth birthday. The Service continues to operate from a central office in O'Connell Square, Edenderry, where staff provide information on a wide range of employment, education and training options, as well as a range of confidential services, including one-to-one career guidance, job mediation, counselling and after-placement support for long-term unemployed people. The service is staffed by a Coordinator, Mediator and Information Worker. The office also continues to provide a base for a FAS Placement Officer.



4.2. Services for the Unemployed Measure Objectives 2004 - 2006

The OAK Partnership reviewed the SUE Measure on an ongoing basis and presents the following objective for the 2004-2006 period:

1. To establish an Employment Support Working Group to facilitate co-ordinated planning and delivery of employment services, the development of joint initiatives, outreach and referral mechanisms, and effective monitoring of supports to priority target groups in the OAK Partnership area.
2. To provide an integrated and holistic progression pathway for long term unemployed men and women in the OAK Partnership area using a co-ordinated inter-agency approach.
3. To provide comprehensive job seeking skills training and employment support for priority target groups, while pro-actively pursuing current and future employment opportunities in the area.
4. To provide training and mentoring to long-term unemployed men and women engaging in self-employment, and to facilitate networking and business promotion opportunities.
5. To seek the implementation of the recommendations of the Partnership's Enterprise Task Force, with a particular emphasis on the establishment of a Community-Based Enterprise Centre.

4.3. Training and Employment Programmes

In addition to the support, mediation, referral and counselling services offered by OAK Employment Services, the Services for the Unemployed Measure also offered clients a suite of training and employment options matched to their progression needs. This progression pathway is based on the understanding that unemployment is not only a labour market issue but also needs to be set within a social inclusion context and which has a clear insight into the life circumstances, barriers and support needs of its target group. While referral to existing education and training provision remain a core part of the service, the experience of OAK Employment Service has pointed to the need for the development of a range of complementary training and development programmes which could meet the particular needs of its most marginalised client base.

Identification and analysis of these needs have enabled the OES to develop a series of programmes intended to form a continuum of progression options for its target groups. As such, four key ***progression programmes*** are currently offered by OAK Employment Service. They are:

- i. Foundations for Employment
- ii. Computer and Office Skills Training
- iii. Joblink
- iv. Business Development Programme

In addition to the four progression programmes, SUE also offers clients **specialist training courses**. During the period 2003 – 2006 these have included:

- i. First Chance
- ii. You-Turn Programme
- iii. Failte Ireland Training Courses
- iv. Employment Preparation Courses

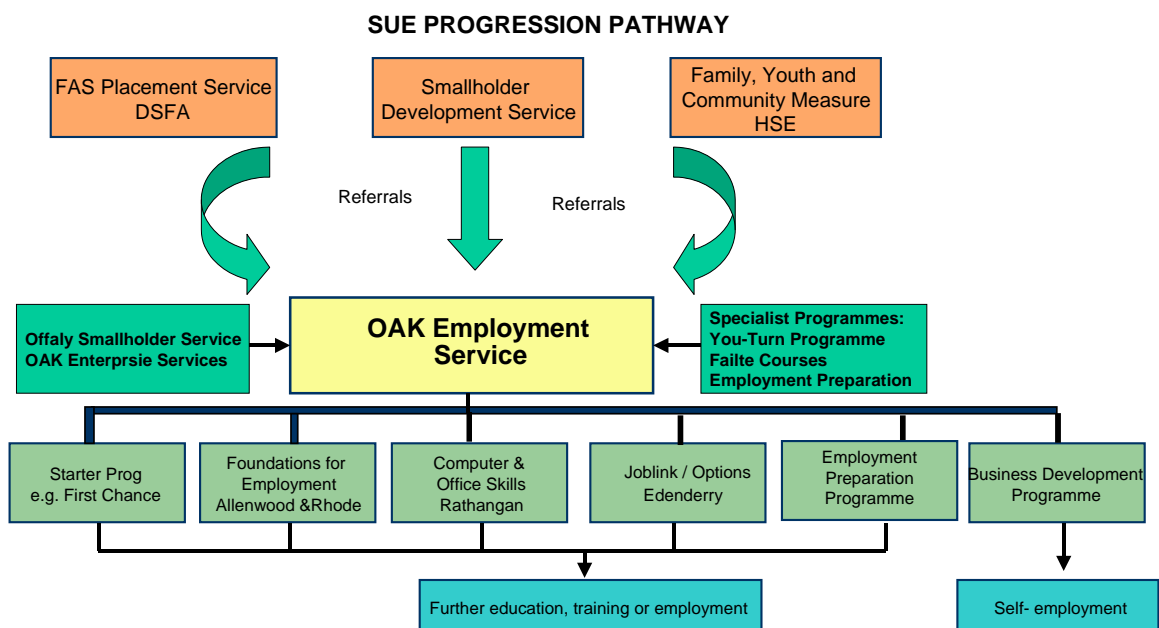
Two further **sub strand services** exist within the SUE Measure:

- i. Offaly Smallholder Development Service
- ii. OAK Enterprise Service

Client Referrals

Clients are typically referred to OAK Employment Service through the FAS Placement Office, the DSFA, the Smallholder Development Service, HSE and the Partnership’s Family, Youth and Community Support Measure. Client’s can also visit the OES office directly without referral.

The services to the unemployment progression pathway is summarised in the following.



4.3.1. Progression Programmes

The following section summaries the progression programmes offered through the SUE Measure.

First Chance Programme

- Level:** Starter Programme
- Focus:** Bespoke training designed by participants to meet their individual soft skill requirements. On completion of phase one of the First Chance Programme, participants can choose to undertake FETAC Level 3 & 4 training in practical areas of interest.
- Target Group:** Unemployed men and women who need support in overcoming the barriers preventing their participation in training and employment opportunities. Parent's returning to education.
- Duration:** Initial First Chance Programme – 10 weeks
Follow-on Programme – 15 weeks
- Location:** Edenderry, Co. Offaly and Rathangan, Co. Kildare.
- Progression:** Further education, training or employment.

Overview

The First Chance Programme was developed in 2005 to meet a range of soft skill needs identified by OAK Employment Service in working with clients under the High Support Process. The high support process is a mechanism to assist FAS Placement Officers and LES Mediators to put in place agreed interventions for targeted clients to assist them in removing the barriers affecting client's ability to progress to training, education or employment options. First Chance was initially developed as a ten-week soft skills training programme, however a fifteen-week follow-on programme was also developed in response to participant's request for further FETAC level training. Both the initial and follow-on programmes were delivered in centres in Edenderry (14 participants / 7 follow-on) and Rathangan (10 participants/ 7 follow-on) on three mornings per week. The initial programme content is determined largely by the participants themselves who select a range of specific areas in which they are interested. The primary focus is on the development of 'soft' or personal skills. This is achieved by means of an action learning approach where participants are engaged as a team in learning and applying new skills with a view to a specific output. The Programme consists of a combination of creative/ fun activities and self-development exercises. These include Personal Development, Computer training, Bog Oak Crafts, Cookery and Arts & Crafts. The First Chance follow-on programme places a greater emphasis on the delivery of FETAC level 3&4 training modules including maths, computers and communications.

Foundations for Employment

Level: Foundation level

Focus: The focus of the programme is on removing the barriers, particularly educational, which are preventing participant's progression.

Target Group: Early school leavers or those who feel they lack basic educational skills.

Duration: 44 weeks

Location: Allenwood, Co. Kildare & Rhode, Co. Offaly.

Progression: Further education, training or employment.

Overview

The Foundations for Employment programme is a Local Training Initiative (LTI) delivered in Allenwood, Co. Kildare and Rhode, Co. Offaly. The programme is a joint initiative supported by OAK Partnership and FAS. The focus of Foundations for Employment is on removing the barriers, particularly educational and personal barriers that are preventing participant's progression. The programme is aimed at people who have left school without a solid foundation in education and who now wish to improve their basic skills while also developing a realistic career path plan. Modules include basic english and maths, communications, personal skills and computers. In addition, the programme also prepares participants for employment and offers mentoring in job orientation, work preparation skills, lifeskills, career path planning as well as access to guidance and counselling services.



Computer and Office Skills Programme

Level: Foundation to intermediate level

Focus: The aim of the programme is to provide unemployed participants with an opportunity to acquire IT, office and personal skills to secure office based employment or progression to further training.

Target Group: Unemployed men and women who wish to pursue office based employment.

Duration: 26 weeks

Location: Rathangan, Co. Kildare.

Progression: Further education, training or employment.

Overview

Located in Rathangan, Co. Kildare, the Computer and Office Skills Training Programme is an Local Training Initiative (LTI) designed to equip students with the necessary skills to secure office-based employment. Delivered over a 26-week period, modules include computer applications, office skills training, personal development, job search, interview skills, ECDL training and practical work experience. Due to changes in the profile of trainees referred to the programme by FAS (who in many cases have substantial barriers to progression) new elements are introduced to address specific needs. There is a shift in focus from the delivery of ECDL training to personal and vocational skills development programmes alongside basic IT skills. One to one guidance and support is in-built in the programme reinforcing its client centred approach, and offering support not available elsewhere in the area. The Computer and Office Skills Training Programme also provide the local community with access to secretarial services, which has been beneficial to both the local business community and to the participants who gain valuable work experience. Furthermore, the provision of secretarial services has meant that the programme has developed a means of self-financing.



Joblink

Level: Intermediate to advanced level

Focus: Acts as a final step towards employment for participants through the provision of advanced training, interview preparation and work placement.

Target Group: Men and women who have completed basic skills training and who wish to take up employment.

Duration: 52 weeks (10 weeks training and 16 work placement).

Location: Edenderry, Co. Offaly.

Progression: Further education, training or employment.

Overview

In recognition of the difficulties experienced by many long-term unemployed people who had completed training programmes (CE, training initiatives, etc.) and were ready to take up employment, a proposal was submitted by OAK Employment Service in 2001, to FAS Midland Region for a special Community Employment Scheme called *Joblink*. OAK Partnership received approval for the scheme and commenced the Joblink Programme in October 2001.



The principle objective of the programme is to act as the final bridge into employment by refining participant's readiness for the workplace through intensive training, skills assessment and work experience. The programme offers a 10-week training course, followed by in-company employment placement of up to 16 weeks. The Joblink Coordinator, who visits participant while on work experience, provides on-going support. There are fifteen places allocated to the Joblink Programme with further recruitment taking place as existing participants move into employment.

Topics included in the ten-week training period cover a range of personal development skills and include: Self-awareness, Confidence, STEPS (Steps to Excellence for Personal Success), Career Directions, Coping with Change, Stress Management, Communication Skills, Assertiveness Training, Conflict Management, Developing a Healthy Life-Style, Personal Presentation, The World of Work, Task/Time Management, Problem Solving Skills, Safety in the Work Place, Job Finding Skills.

Business Development Programme

- Level:** Advanced level
- Focus:** Offers advice, mentoring, training and financial assistance to participants who wish to become self-employed.
- Target Group:** Long term unemployed men and women who wish to become self-employed.
- Duration:** 26 weeks
- Location:** Edenderry, Co. Offaly.
- Progression:** Self-Employment

Overview

The FAS sponsored Business Development Programme is a business skills training programme (including group and individual mentoring sessions) providing essential training and information on all aspects of self employment such as book-keeping, financial management, marketing, market research, sales, communications, taxation and preparing a business plan. OAK Partnership also acts on behalf of the DSFA to administer the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA). The Business Development Programme is delivered over a 26-week period comprising one full day session per week with an additional day and a half allowing participants to undertake course work from home, while the remainder of the week is spent developing their business.

4.3.2. Specialist Training Programmes

In addition to the suite of programmes forming the progression pathway, OES have also delivered a range of ad-hoc courses, designed to meet the distinctive needs of particular sub-groups of clients. Since 2003 these courses have included:

You-Turn Programme

The You-Turn Programme was funded under EQUAL was designed to assist participants to develop career path plans suited to their individual skills, interests and personality. This career guidance programme focused on empowering participants with self-knowledge, guiding them in their goal setting, and supporting them in the implementation of their individual career path plan. You-Turn was delivered to participants of the LTI programmes in centres in Allenwood and Rathangan.

Failte Ireland Courses

Edenderry has experienced an unprecedented level of population growth and infrastructure development in recent years. The planned Downshire Development will be a shopping centre, cineplex, DIY store, pub, hotel, leisure centre, crèche and a medical centre. This scale of development has had significant implications for Edenderry and the training needs of its

population. In response, OAK Employment Services in conjunction with Failte Ireland delivered three separate ten-week training courses to persons wishing to avail of the employment opportunities in the hotel, restaurant or licensed trade. These courses included:

- **Bar Service Skills:** Delivered to 20 participants in Edenderry during April - June 2005, the course aimed to prepare participants for work in the hotel and bar trade. Training modules included Customer Service, Cash Handling, Glassware, Bar Food Service and Manual Handling.
- **Cookery Skills Training:** Delivered during October-December 2006 the Cookery Skills Training Programme was based in Edenderry and was completed by 20 participants. Modules included: Vegetable Preparation, Health and Safety, Roasting, Grilling and Frozen Foods.
- **Food and Wine Service Training:** Delivered to 17 participants from across North Offaly and North West Kildare, the Food and Wine Service Training course was delivered over a ten week period running from April to June 2007 in The Stand House Hotel in the Curragh. The course prepared participants for work in hotel and catering. Modules included: Aspect of Service, Cutlery, Crockery, Silver and Banqueting Service.

As a result of the collaboration between Failte Ireland and the OAK Employment Service an outreach training centre was located in the Midway Hotel Daingean from which three national Skills Certificate Programmes are delivered. To date these centres have only been located in cities such as Dublin and Cork.

Employment Preparation Programmes

The Employment Preparation Programmes are a series of part-time six-week programmes delivered to address a number of issues that frequently act as barriers to clients in securing and maintaining jobs. The programme includes training in CV preparation, interview skills, personal presentation, working with colleagues and superiors without conflict, time and stress management. In addition the Employment Preparation Programmes address other issues of concern to clients including Social Welfare payments, taxation and eligibility for various Back to Work schemes. The first Employment Preparation Programme commenced in June 2007 and was completed by 11 participants. A second programme was completed in August with 9 participants and a third programme commenced in September with 12 participants. All programmes are delivered in Edenderry.

4.3.3. Sub-Strand Services

Offaly Smallholder Development Service

The needs of low-income smallholders became apparent nationally during the implementation of the Local Development Programme (LDP) 1996-2000. Whilst smallholders were not an original target group of the LDP, Rural Partnerships and Community Groups found that farm families were becoming increasingly marginalised and their needs were not being met through existing support mechanisms. It was concluded that a specific targeted approach was required as part of the LDP and in response the Low Income Smallholder Initiative (LISHI) was established. A Coordinator was employed in 1998 to facilitate and support the initiative. The LISHI fills a gap in existing service provision for an increasing number of non-viable low income socially excluded farm households. It provides appropriate facilitation and support to households in adapting to a changing economic reality and aims to complement the services of mainstream agencies.

Nationally there are 25 Rural Resource Workers (RRW) employed by Partnerships and Community Groups within the LDSIP. In the years 2002 to 2006, 9012 men and women were supported under the Initiative. These supports include improvements in the viability of their farm enterprise and/or to start-up an alternative/new enterprise. They have also been supported into education and training and into the labour market.

The mission statement of LISHI is⁴:

“To work with Rural Partnership and Community Groups within the context of community development and social inclusion to develop innovative models of working with low income farm households through developing and piloting integrated intervention strategies in conjunction with relevant stakeholders that will lead to policy and practice change; improved economic potential and quality of life for the maximum number of farm households.”

Offaly Smallholder Development Service

Offaly Smallholder Development Service (OSDS) is a cross county Initiative jointly operated by OAK Partnership, West Offaly Partnership and Teagasc. In 1996, OAK Partnership and West Offaly Partnership identified the importance of agriculture in their catchment areas and the serious effect that the loss of employment in Bord na Mona and the ESB had on those smallholders farming land with mostly dry stock and suckler herds. A county-wide Small Farm Service with an advisor providing information and advice on farm management and off-farm opportunities was established and managed by a Small Farm Service Advisory/Management Committee.

⁴ ‘The Low Income Smallholder Initiative: A guide to good Practice’ Pobal 1998.

Initially the focus of this service was on providing information and assistance in relation to agricultural practices, schemes and farm related activities. However over the last number of years the emphasis of OSDS has shifted from an agricultural advisory approach to a broader based focus, enabling farm families to improve the economic viability of their farms and improve their quality of life. The service is managed by a committee consisting of the Managers of the three funding organisations - OAK, West Offaly Integrated Development Partnership, and Teagasc, which meet on an ad-hoc basis to address issues as they arise. In addition, an Advisory/ Management group exists, consisting of representatives from a number of local agencies and farming organisations, smallholder clients, and the OSDS Smallholder Development Worker.

Objectives of the Offaly Smallholder Development Service:

- To increase household income and quality of life through awareness and promotion of income supports, with a particular focus on maximising the number of farm participants on Farm Assist together with Back to Work and Return to Work type programmes;
- To develop a profile of potential employers and identify opportunities available to smallholders through training programmes;
- To establish Purchasing Groups which will assist in overcoming the difficulties experienced by smallholders when purchasing inputs and also help to build cohesion among the target group;
- To develop intervention strategies for rural women on smallholdings to develop their skills and opportunities;
- To establish locally based Advisory/ Management groups making the service more accessible for existing and potential clients.



Minister Eamon O'Cuiv, TD, pictured with Clare Duffy, partnership staff, board members and smallholder clients at the launch of the Offaly Smallholder Development Service Review Report

4.4.2 OAK Enterprise Service

An important aim of the LDSIP's services for the unemployed measure is to '*support an enterprise culture and enterprise development, including community enterprise and the development of the social economy*'⁵.

The enterprise support work of the OAK partnership evolved from mainstream enterprise initiatives through its focus on disadvantage and in supporting individual into self-employment or enterprise. This is achieved through training and education, mentoring, networking, and after care as well as the provision of grants towards start-up. Since 2000 OAK Partnership has initiated a range of initiatives aimed at promoting enterprise development and job creation in the North Offaly/North West Kildare region. The following section provides a brief outline of the initiatives implanted during the period 2000 to 2006.

Enterprise Task Force

The principal factors that determined the designation of the OAK region as an area of disadvantage were the high levels of long-term unemployment and the low levels of educational attainment among the adult population. These statistics related history of economic activity in the region where the Labour was traditionally dependent on Bord na Mona and the ESB. During the 1990s the economic landscape of the Partnership was marred by the rationalisation of the ESB and Bord na Mona, and the closure of Rhode Generating Station and Croghan Briquette Factory. During this time traditional employers such as Edenderry Shoe Company and Avon Arlington also closed. Despite Ireland's booming economy the OAK area had not benefited from industrial development and people continue to commute to Dublin, Leixlip, Naas, Mullingar, and Tullamore for employment. A trend among young people was to migrate to sources of employment thus threatening the sustainability of many rural areas.

Given their concerns about these trends, the Board of Directors of OAK Partnership agreed in December 1999 to establish an Enterprise Task Force. The main objectives of the task force were:

- To research and identify enterprise development opportunities.
- To consider the current workspace availability in the area and research work space requirements for the foreseeable future, particularly for the small-business sector.
- To lobby for accessibility to/from the area via a high quality road network linked to the national primary routes.

The Enterprise Task Force operated from 1999 to 2004 during which time a number of positive outcomes were delivered, including:

⁵ ADM Local Development Of Social Inclusion Programme Guidelines, 2000-2006

- The establishment of the FAS Call Centre (Callnet) in Edenderry with the capacity for 30 full-time jobs.
- The approval of funding by FAS for the employment of an enterprise worker to support the implementation of the Task Force recommendations.
- The commencement and discussion with the ESB & Bord na Mona on their future involvement in the socio-economic development of the OAK Partnership area.
- The development of Alanwood Enterprise Park by the local community with the support of the ESB, and the announcement by the ESB of a €3 million fund for the development of enterprise in Rhode.

Edenderry Community Enterprise Centre

An important role for the Enterprise Task Force was to consider workspace availability in the OAK area and to establish future work space requirements, particularly for the small business sector. A survey carried out by the Task Force during 2000 showed that 19 enquiries were made for workspace from small, start-up enterprises, all of which had their potential of generating significant employment opportunities for the local population. The research findings also indicated that this type of demand could not be catered for through current workspace availability. In addition, any planned future industrial developments were designed with larger businesses in mind, with premises ranging from 2000 ft.² or above. In response to the findings of the Task Force, OAK Partnership successfully applied to Enterprise Ireland for feasibility study funding under its Community Enterprise Centre Grant Fund. OAK Partnership appointed Amey Irish Facility Managers Ltd to undertake the preparation of a study to establish the feasibility of building and operating the community enterprise centre in Edenderry⁶. In 2003, following the feasibility study, the Enterprise Task Force submitted a proposal to Enterprise Ireland for development funding. However the application was unsuccessful. In the absence of funding the partnership continued to work towards the development of the enterprise centre and in 2007 completed the purchase of a one-acre site from the IDA. Following the acquisition of the site the partnership appointed Amey Irish Facility Managers to undertake a second application to Enterprise Ireland for capital and management development funding. At the time of writing this review the outcome of this application was still pending.

ESB Development Fund

The establishment of a ESB development fund for the encouragement of new enterprise is also supported by the OAK Partnership through its membership of the new development company. The partnership also provides executive services to support the actions of this development company since established in 2004.

⁶ Amey IFM: Feasibility Study of Building and Operating a Community Enterprise Centre in Edenderry. 2003.

Other Services

Under the Services for the Unemployed Measure, OAK Enterprise Service offers a range of assistance to long term unemployed people who wish to become self-employed. Through advice, mentoring, training and, where appropriate, financial assistance, OAK Partnership provides the supports that are necessary if clients are to successfully overcome the obstacles they face in making this transition. The supports offered include:

- **One to one advice and mentoring:** Clients are supported through one-to-one meetings with the Enterprise Coordinator and experienced business mentors. These mentors help clients to think strategically on issues such as marketing, research, financial planning, taxation and pricing.
- **Business Development Programme:** OAK Enterprise Service provides a 26 week comprehensive Business Development Programme for potential entrepreneurs, during which time they receive advice, guidance, information and training on all aspects of self employment.
- **Business Plan:** All clients who participate in the Business Development Programme are assisted in the preparation of a Business Plan, which they can use to secure financial assistance from banks or investors.
- **Administration of DSFA's Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme:** The Partnership Enterprise Service acts on behalf of the DSFA to assess applicant's suitability for the BWEAS.
- **Financial assistance:** Under the LDSIP, OAK Partnership can provide financial assistance to new businesses. This can be used to meet part of the expenses for agreed purchases.
- **Assistance with applications to support agencies:** Organisations such as the County Enterprise Boards, can assist enterprise clients. The OAK Partnership Enterprise Coordinator offers assistance to clients in their applications for support from ancillary agencies.
- **Enterprise Network:** An Enterprise Network was established by the Partnership to provide a forum for business owners in North Offaly and North West Kildare to share ideas, provide a support network for persons experiencing similar challenges, provide access to experts on topics of interest and to widen the contact base for entrepreneurs to develop their business.

The Enterprise Services Programme is delivered through the Enterprise Coordinator.



Chapter 5 – Interagency Collaboration

5.1. SUE Collaborative Partners

The success of the implementation and progression of the SUE work programme is dependent upon collaboration and cooperation with a number of key agencies and Government Departments, committed to the achievement of shared goals. Representatives from these agencies make up the Employment Services Working Group.

| Membership of the Employment Services Working Group | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| FAS | Health Service Executive |
| Department of Social and Family Affairs | Teagasc |
| VEC (Offaly and Kildare) | County Enterprise Board |
| Leader Company | Voluntary / Community representatives |

The development of integrated partnership relationships at a local level has given rise to many models of effective collaborative working. Over the years the OAK Partnership's SUE Measure has moved away from ad hoc cooperation between local partners towards more systematic methods/ protocols, the generation of valuable local data, and the development of client-based solutions.

Areas of Interagency Collaboration

Collaboration with SUE's social partners can be summarised into five areas:

1. Joint Working

Joint working has become a central feature in the provision and delivery of Services for the Unemployed initiatives. The collaborative involvement of the Partnership with agencies also involved in supporting those at risk, has enabled the provision of services that any one of these partners could not have achieved alone. Such joint working is based on partners sharing common goals, maximising available resources and recognising the unique role and strengths of each organisation. The following brief examples demonstrate effective models of joint working developed by the SUE Measure and support agencies.

- **FAS High Support Process:** In 2003, FÁS introduced a new High Support Process (HSP) for jobseekers who are suffering personal barriers to employment and are identified under the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) as 'Non Progression Ready'. Under the HSP, FAS referred clients to OAK Employment Service for appropriate support. OES Mediators then met with each client individually to assess their particular needs and difficulties. Following this assessment, OES offered clients

a programme of supports most suited to meeting their individual needs. The First Chance Programme was initially designed to meet some of these needs.

- **Smallholder / Teagasc Crossroads Programme:** Since 2004 the Offaly Smallholder Development Service has been involved in the successful co-delivery of the Teagasc 'Planning Post Fischer' and 'Options Programmes' in outreach locations across Offaly and North West Kildare. During the delivery of these programmes, the Partnership became aware that a significant number of farm families were experiencing challenges that required a more targeted approach to help them to maximise their farm incomes and improve their quality of life. In 2006, the Smallholder Task Group, consisting of representatives from OAK Partnership, West Offaly Partnership and Teagasc, launched the 'Crossroads Programme' – an innovative coaching and mentoring programme aimed at assisting smallholders to tackle barriers to change and implement a range of actions through ongoing one to one supports. The Teagasc Options Programme is delivered as a stand-alone module within the Programme. The achievements of the Crossroads programme have been exceptional and has had major life changing implications for the 80 farm families who have participated to date.

2. Working Protocols

An important collaborative outcome of the work of SUE and their social partners has been in the achievement of greater inter-agency cooperation through the development of common protocols. Significant changes have been achieved in relation to how organisations interact and co-operate with each other. This has had a positive impact in terms of enhanced and structured area based service provision for those who are unemployed. The development of such working protocols has also served to minimize duplication of work undertaken by organisations and eliminated gaps in service provision.

An example of this protocol is the OAK Partnership/FAS Employment Services Working Protocol.

- **OAK / FAS Employment Services Working Protocol:** A semi-formal working protocol has been established between OAK Partnership and FAS's Employment Services. As joint initiatives or working arrangements are developed between FAS and OAK Partnership. Protocols are agreed with regard to roles and procedures to ensure smooth, seamless working relationships. The outcome is enhanced opportunities for clients to progress towards desirable training and employment outcomes.

3. Pilot Initiatives

Partnership companies are unique in that they are often the first point of contact for marginalised groups within the community. Their local presence means that SUE staff are ideally placed to understand and respond to the emerging need of their clients. Because the long-term unemployed are not a single homogeneous group, a diverse range of supports and ancillary services are required to meet their needs. Clients range from those who may be job ready to those who require significant one to one support, mentoring and training. The intensity of the support required means that social partners such as FAS and DSFA frequently collaborate with the SUE Measure to develop pilot initiatives that will provide these supports to clients. An example of where such collaboration has taken place is in the First Chance Programme.

- **First Chance Programme:** In response to their work with High Support Process (HSP) clients referred from FAS, OES identified the need for a dedicated starter training programme to meet the soft skill needs of HSP clients and to offer them the support and guidance needed to ease the transition into training or employment. Working with FAS, OES designed the First Chance Programme that was initially delivered to 9 High Support clients in Edenderry and later to 24 High Support clients in centres in Rathangan and Edenderry. FAS and DSFA co-funded the programme costs and DSFA provided participants with a payment for their attendance. Such was the success of the First Chance Programme in both locations that a second phase of the programme was delivered to 14 participants.

4. Case Work - Client Support and Referrals

In order to maximise effectiveness of agency work with clients OES, FAS and DSFA engage in referral and case conferencing with regard to individual clients. This case system, operated through the Employment Services Working Group, reduces fragmentation and/or duplication of services and facilitates efficient, flexible and holistic responses to client needs. An example of integrated case work is the Fir Project.

- **Fir Men's Project:** In 2005, OAK Partnership identified the progression of long term unemployed men as a priority action. In a collaborative arrangement between SUE and DSFA, long term unemployed men registered with the DSFA were referred to OES. Having meet with each client individually, OES in conjunction with FAS established the Fir Project to engage unemployed men in practical training that would help them move towards employment. In 2007 a new Men's Programme was launched in Edenderry to engage with younger men, aged 18 – 30 who had been unemployed for some time. The Men's Programme is now in its second phase with a current group of 12 participants.

5. Area Planning

North Offaly and North West Kildare is a region marked by significant social and economic issues. The closure of the Bord na Mona plants in Allenwood, Edenderry and Rhode in the 1980's and 1990's had severe implications on the economic prosperity of the area. High unemployment, the continued trend of early school leaving and subsequent social issues has affected the area significantly. In more recent years however, the area has undergone considerable economic and industrial regeneration. New residential developments have seen the population soar while the Downshire Development should create hundreds of new jobs. In an effort to ensure that Partnership clients can avail of these new opportunities, SUE has collaborated with FAS, Failte Ireland and DSFA to provide appropriate training programmes to meet the future employment needs of the area. Examples of these programmes are the FAS Retail Sales Training course and the VEC Back To Education Initiatives.

- **FAS Retail Sales Training:** Following consultation with SUE staff on priority training needs in Edenderry, FAS delivered a Retail Sales Training course in 2006 to assist new retail outlets in the recruitment of suitably qualified personnel. The 28 week course was delivered to 20 participants.

- **VEC Back to Education Initiatives:** OES played a key role in influencing VEC's strategy for the delivery of BTEI training programmes in the region. Because OES work closely with clients they are ideally placed to understand first hand the training needs of clients. Based on this collaboration, Offaly VEC has delivered numerous education programmes in the area including childcare, computerised accounts and special needs assistant courses. OES clients are also referred directly to the VEC for participation on these programmes.

6. Community Employment Monitoring

The Community Employment (CE) Programme is the principal vehicle through which the state supports the provision of temporary employment for long-term unemployed people. It aims to help participants to develop skills and gain work experience that will enable them to access the open labour market. A local CE Monitoring Committee has been established as part of the National CE Framework Agreement. The Committee provides a forum for collaboration and consultation between FAS, OAK Partnership and Community representatives on CE provision in the area and recommends CE applications to the National Monitoring Committee.

Table 3: Summary of Interagency Support

Table 3 provides a summary of agencies who provide support for the provision of services and staff costs within the SUE Measure.

| Service | | Support Agency | Staff * |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|
| OES / FAS Office | Information, guidance, mediation and referral regarding jobs, education and training courses, social welfare / employer incentives | OAK / FAS | Coordinator Mediator Information Officer** |
| FAS Programmes | Externally Contracted e.g. Retail Sales, Security, Caring, Computer Application | FAS | N/A |
| Three OES Local Training Initiatives | Two Foundation Education Programmes and one Computer Skills Programme – outreach | OAK / FAS | 3 Coordinators* 3 Assistant Coordinators* |
| Two Community Employment Schemes | Business Development, Joblink | OAK / FAS | 2 Coordinators* |
| Smallholder Development Service | Maximise on and of farm income | OAK / Working group/ Teagasc | Smallholder Development Worker** |
| VTOS / BTEI | Programmes to meet identified needs e.g. Special Needs, Computerised Accounts, etc. | VEC | N/A |
| Counselling Services | Clients experiencing barriers to progression | DSFA | Contract Counsellor * |
| Engagement / Predevelopment | First Chance Programmes, Men's Project | OAK / FAS / DSFA / VEC / HSE | Contracted training consultants* |
| Employment Preparation Programmes | Intensive job seeking / work orientation Programme | OAK / DSFA / FAS | Contract training consultant* |

* Staff funded by external agency

** Staff position co- funded by external agency and OAK Partnership

Table 4: Interagency Linkage and Collaboration

A central aspect of the work of OAK Partnership is the establishment and implementation of initiatives that address client needs. The structures through which these initiatives are administered often rely on formal collaborative structures between the Partnership and other relevant stakeholders. Table 4 provides a summary of this collaboration and details the committees/ structures through which SUE staff link with relevant stakeholders.

| AGENCY | STRUCTURE FOR PARTNERSHIP | AREAS OF CO-OPERATION, LINKAGE AND LEVERAGE |
|--|--|---|
| FAS | CE Monitoring Group Employment Support Working Group JI. Mgt Committee | Monitoring of CE provision in OAK area. Funding of BDP, Joblink, Foundations for Employment, Rathangan Computer and Office Skills Programme, Introduction to Enterprise, FIR Men's Project & First Chance project with High Support Process clients. Managing Agent for JI Prog for 28 employees. |
| Dept. of Social , Community and Family Affairs | Back To Work Enterprise Allowance Evaluation Committee Employment Support Working Group | Supported by Business Development Programme Coordinator. Approvals for Back To Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme. Support for First Chance Projects with High Support Process clients. Recruitment of participants for Edenderry Men's Project. Funding of Employment Preparation Programmes. |
| Health Service Executive | Supplementary Welfare | Collaboration in supporting Supplementary Welfare clients with OES. |
| Vocational Education Committee | Offaly Outreach Education Project English Classes | SUE Coordinator represented on the Offaly Lifelong Learning Committee. Board member Offaly Outreach Education Project. Provision of English Tuition to non-nationals and Literacy / Numeracy to First Chance Programme. |
| County Development Board | Offaly County Development Board | Participation by Employment Services Coordinator on Implementation Teams for the County Strategic Plans. |
| TEAGASC | Offaly Smallholder Development Service | Co-funding Smallholder Development Worker position with West Offaly Partnership. Joint management of initiative with Teagasc who provide premises and technical back up. |
| County SIMS Committee | Kildare SIM Working Group | Collaboration with SUE staff re joint training. |
| Enterprise Board | Offaly CEB Kildare CEB | Participate on Employment Support Working Group. Financial support for BDP. Participate on Employment Support Working Group. |

Chapter 6 – SUE Outputs and Results 2002 - 2006

This section draws on local data collected using the SCOPE system and explores progression outcomes of OAK Partnership's SUE Measure during the period 2002 – 2006. It examines the profile of target groups, and progress towards achieving LDSIP targets.

6.1. Profile of Overall Caseload

According to SCOPE data, the annual caseload for OAK Partnership's SUE Measure averages approximately 602, with a cumulative total of 3,014 clients between 2002 and 2006, of whom 67% were female. Over 81% of those who became clients during this period were unemployed (see Figure 1). The proportion of the caseload who are long term unemployed for more than 1 year has averaged approximately 19% during 2002- 2006 while those unemployed for greater than 3 years has averaged 8%.

Figure 3 shows the growth in the SUE caseload during 2002 – 2006 and reflects the 2003 shift in the Partnership's approach to provide a more intensive range of supports to those SUE clients who are most in need. The graph illustrates this dip in the caseload in 2004 however thereafter begins to rise steadily and in 2006 the number of clients supported by SUE (692) was the highest for the period.

During 2002 – 2006 SUE's caseload has gradually become more diverse with growth in target groups such as low-income farm households, immigrant communities, lone parents, disadvantaged young people and disabled persons (see Figure 4 for trends in relation to several of these target groups). Some of these target groups e.g. migrant workers were only named as a target group during the course of the programme (in 2006 migrant workers accounted for 11% of SUE's total caseload). The caseload also includes a range of groups which fall outside national initiatives such as the National Employment Action Plan. The caseload therefore includes women returning to work after a long absence, carer's, seasonal workers etc. Figure 5 breakdowns the 2006 caseload by target group.

Figure 1: SUE: Employment Status of Caseload on Entry 2002 - 2006

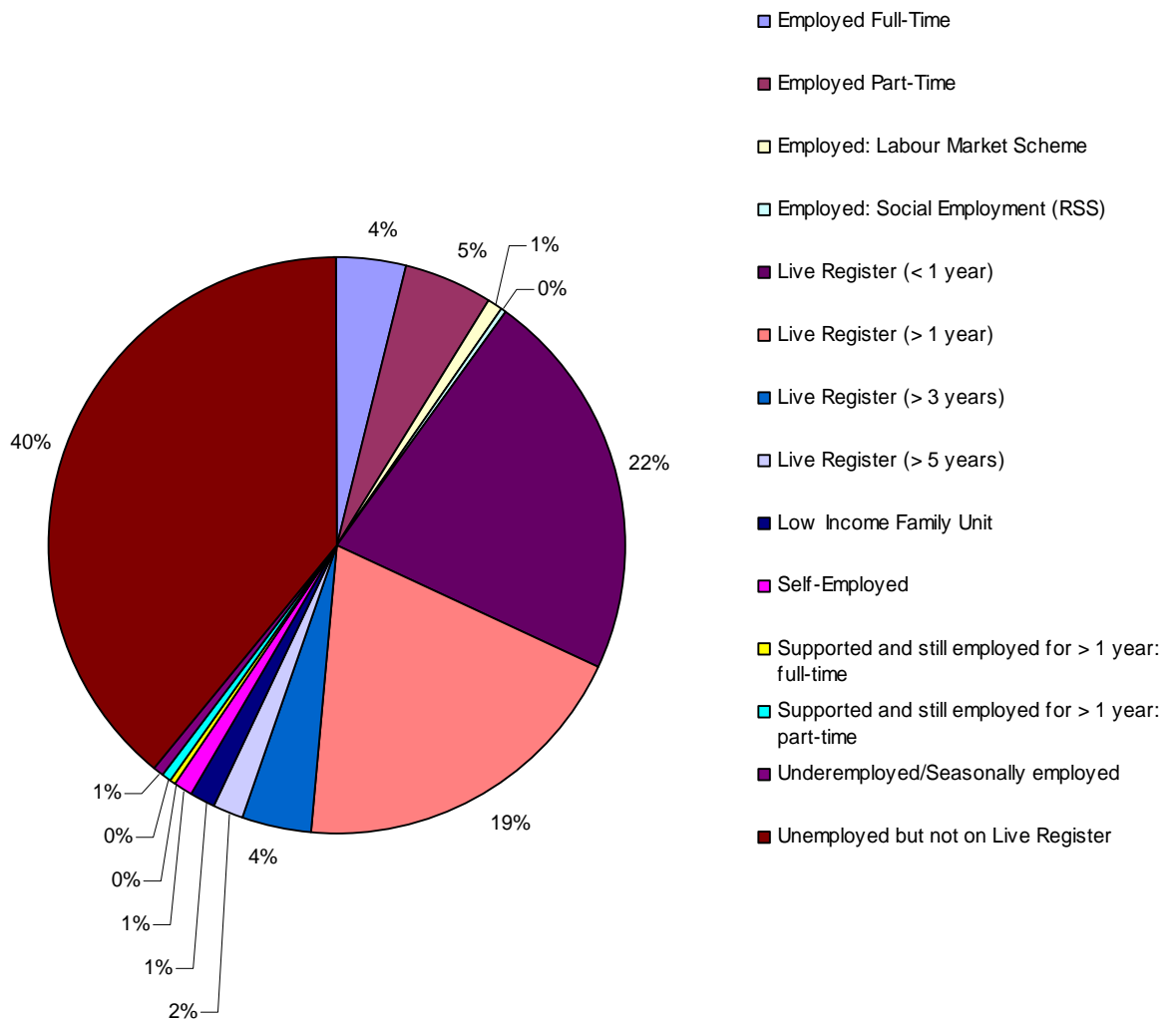


Fig 2: Breakdown of Caseload Category 'Unemployed but not on Live Register' (Fig. 1)

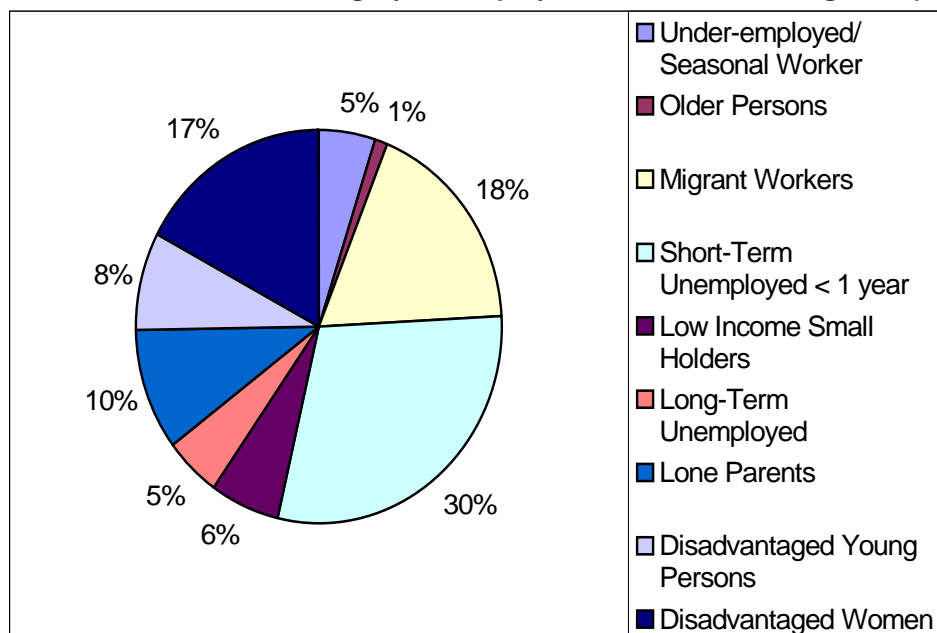


Figure 3: Growth in SUE Caseload 2002 – 2006

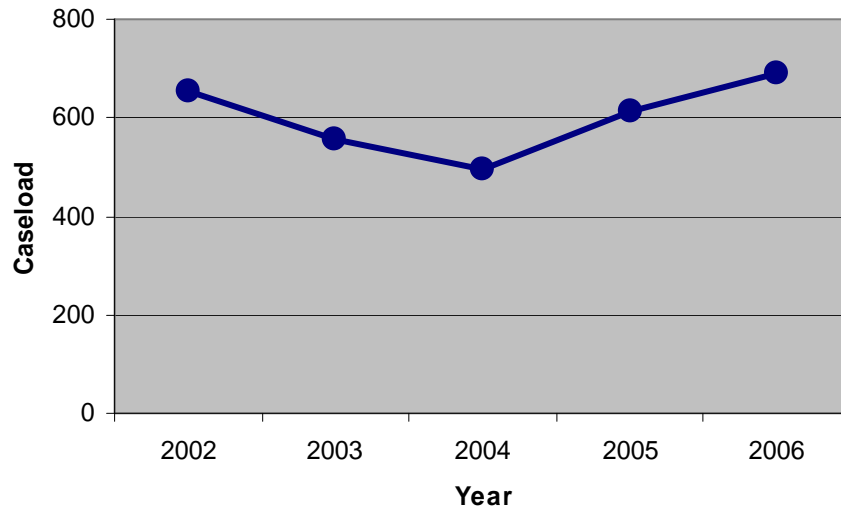


Figure 4: Growth in Selected Target Groups as a Percentage of SUE Caseload 2002–2006.

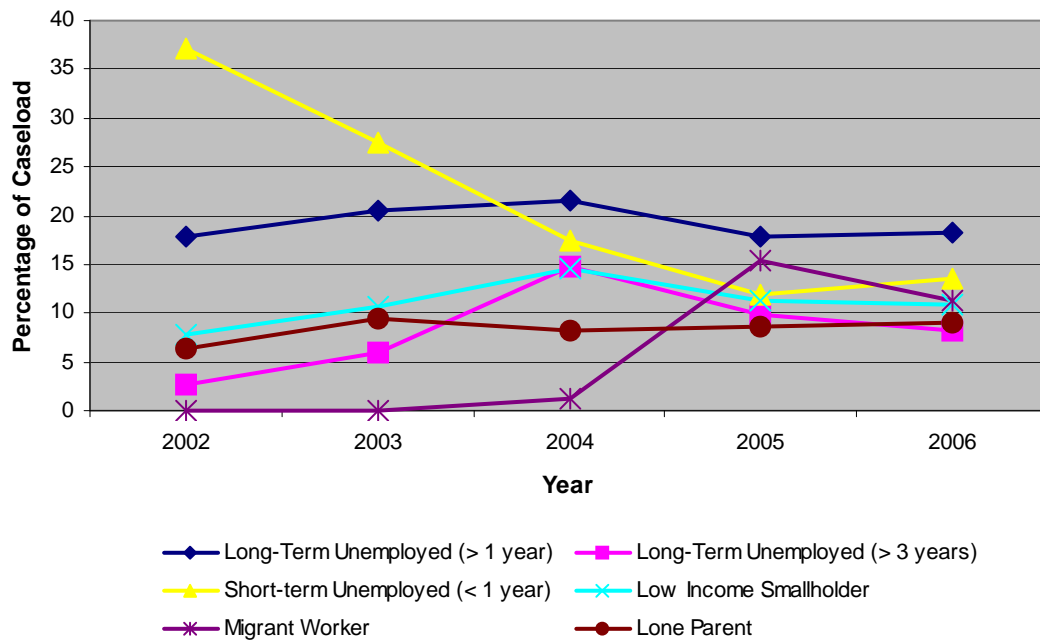
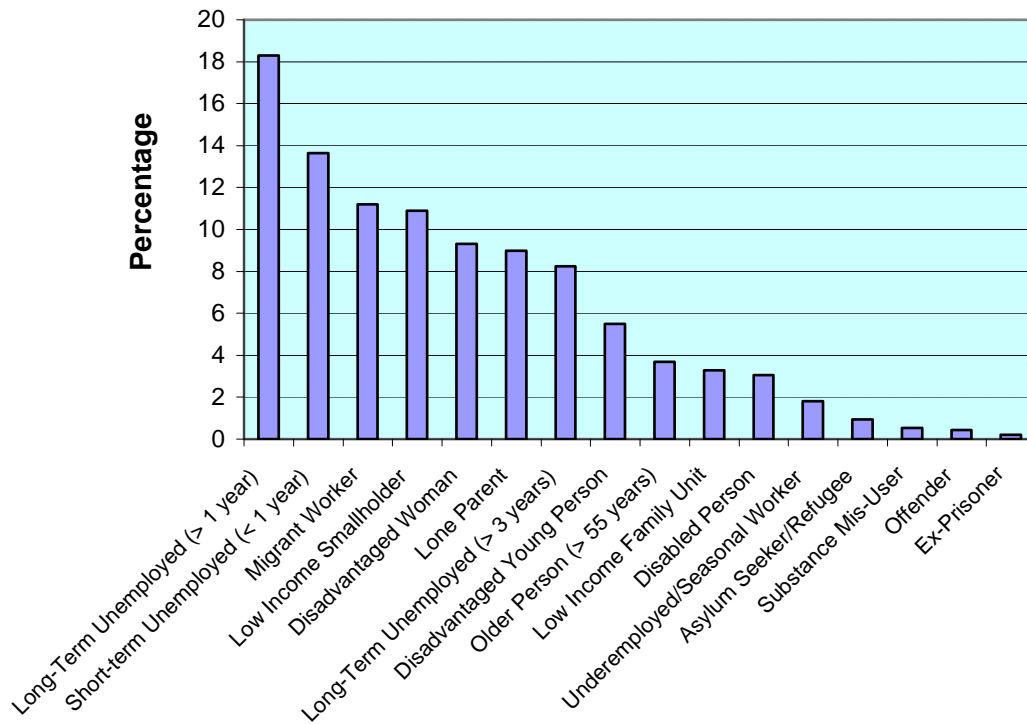


Figure 5: SUE Caseload by Target Group 2006



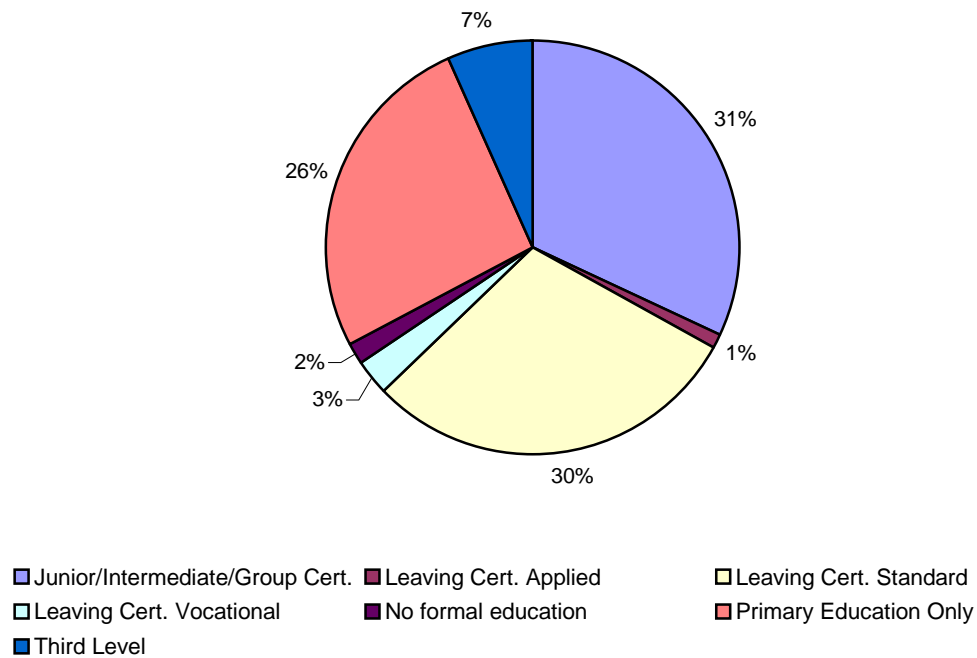
Note: Many individuals supported by SUE Measures experience multiple forms of disadvantage and may be categorised in a number of target groups.

Almost 60% of the caseload of OAK Partnership's SUE Measure left school before completing the leaving certificate, with 26% having only primary level education, while almost 2% have no formal education. Only 7% of clients have further or higher level education (See Figure 6).

When coming to the Partnership, many clients are not at a stage when they are ready to access mainstream training or employment. They typically need a phase of intensive support to address immediate constraints, which can be as diverse as physical health, depression, substance abuse, lack of motivation and/or self-confidence issues.

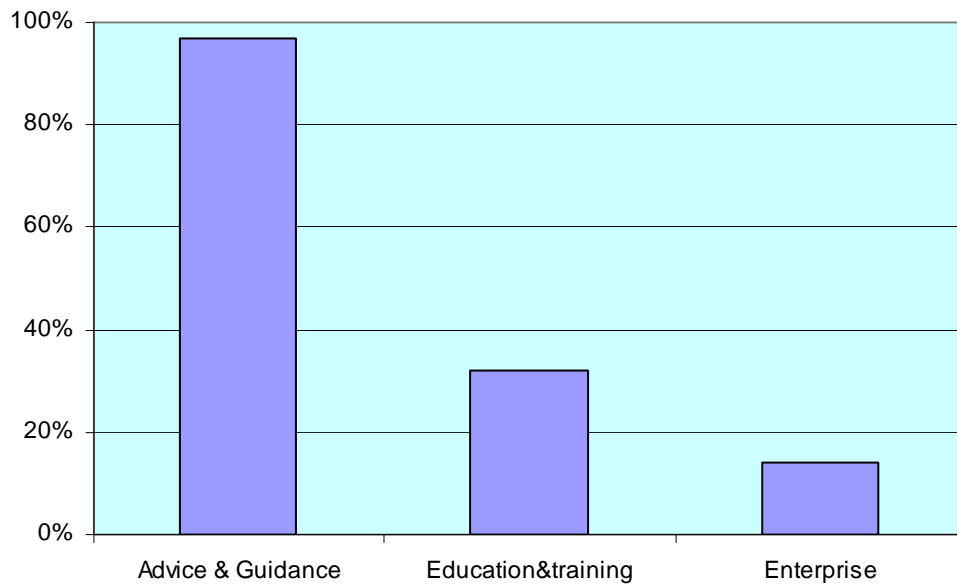
Between 2002 and 2006 almost all clients (97%) received some form of advice and guidance. Almost one-third received support with training or education and 14% received enterprise support (see Figure 7).

Figure 6: SUE Education Status of Caseload on Entry 2006



Note: Traineeships, apprenticeships, FETAC / NCVA and further education were less than 1 percent.

Figure 7: SUE Supports Provided to Caseload 2002 - 2006



Placing clients into employment does not appear as a support in figure 7 as it does not have the support code in the SCOPE model. However, for the period 2002 to 2006, 908 clients of the SUE measure were placed in employment. Table 5 provides a summary of the job placements provided.

Table 5: Job Placements for the Period 2002 to 2006

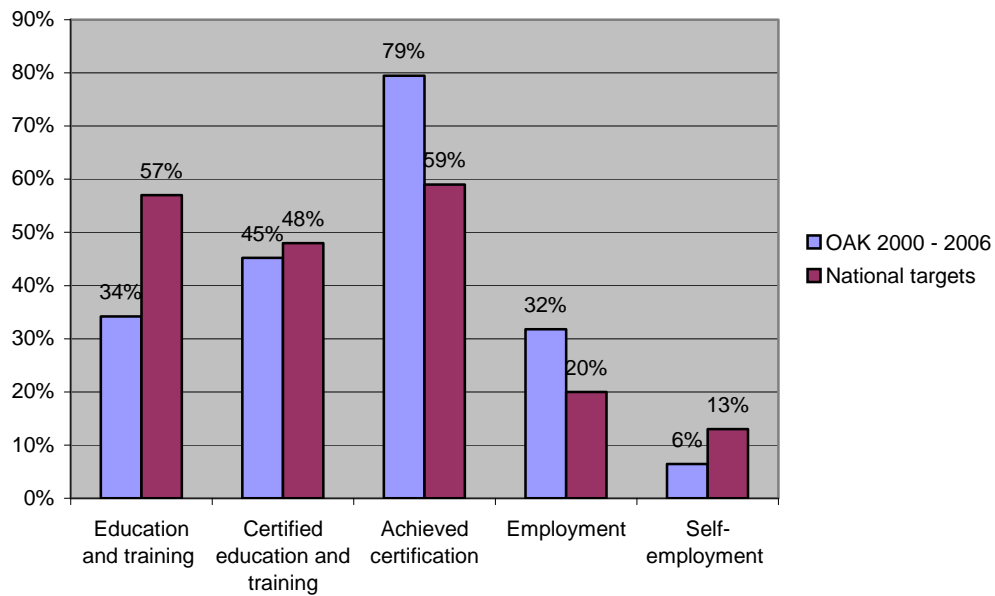
| Job Placement | Female | Male | Total |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| Full-time | 191 | 112 | 303 |
| Labour market scheme | 166 | 68 | 234 |
| Part-time/short term | 130 | 47 | 177 |
| Work experience | 80 | 10 | 90 |
| New enterprise start up | 52 | 52 | 104 |
| Total | 619 | 289 | 908 |

6.2. Achievement of Targets

Targets were agreed for SUE Measure at the NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit⁷ and the Regional Assemblies for the LDSIP 2000 – 2006. Figure 8 shows SCOPE data on the proportion of the caseload over the period 2000 – 2006 that achieved progression into employment, self-employment, education and training – relative to the programme targets set for the end of 2006. 32% of all clients over the period 2000 – 2006 progressed into employment (of whom 67% were female), significantly above the 20% end of programme target. The Measure's performance was also particularly strong in the number of clients who received certified training and education at 79% (of whom 97% were female), well above the 59% target set. The number of clients who participated in education and training (34%) however fell significantly below the 57% target. An analysis of SCOPE data shows that this may be due to under-reporting in the early years of the SCOPE system. The number of clients supported into self-employment was also below target at 6%, almost half the end-of-programme target of 13%. In this case however females make up the smaller proportion of clients at 37%.

⁷ The N.D.P./C.S.F. Evaluation Unit is the key body involved in evaluation of the National Development Plan (N.D.P.) and Community Support Framework (C.S.F.) for Ireland 2000 - 2006. The Unit is an independent under the aegis of the Department of Finance.

Figure 8: 2000 – 2006 Result Outputs Against End of Programme Targets



6.3. Impact Assessment– Survey of Clients

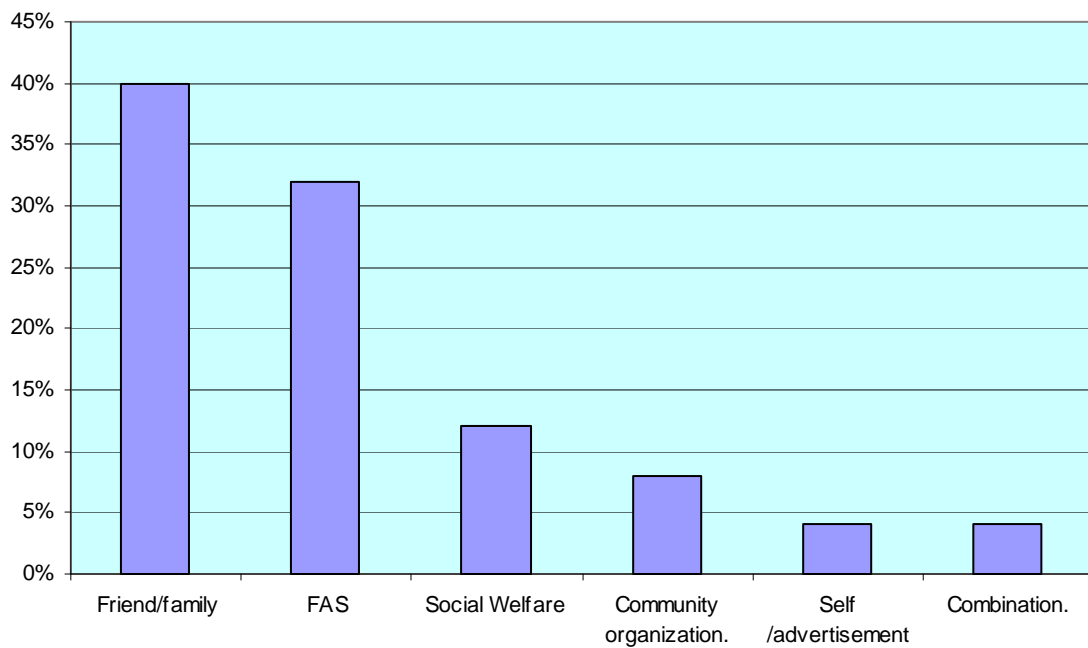
In 2005 Eustace and Patterson undertook a study on behalf of Pobal which assessed the impact of the SUE Measure of the LDSIP⁸. This section provides a summary of the results of an analysis of 54 questionnaires returned in response to a postal survey of clients of OAK Partnership, undertaken as part of the Eustace Patterson study.

Motivation for Using SUE Services

Respondents were invited to say what had prompted them to approach OAK Partnership for support in the first instance. The results show that a high percentage (40%) were prompted through a personal recommendation by a friend or family member. Almost one third (32%) said that they were referred by FAS and 12% were referred by Social Welfare.

⁸ Eustace Anne, Patterson A: *Assessing the Impact of the Services for the Unemployed Measure*. June 2006.

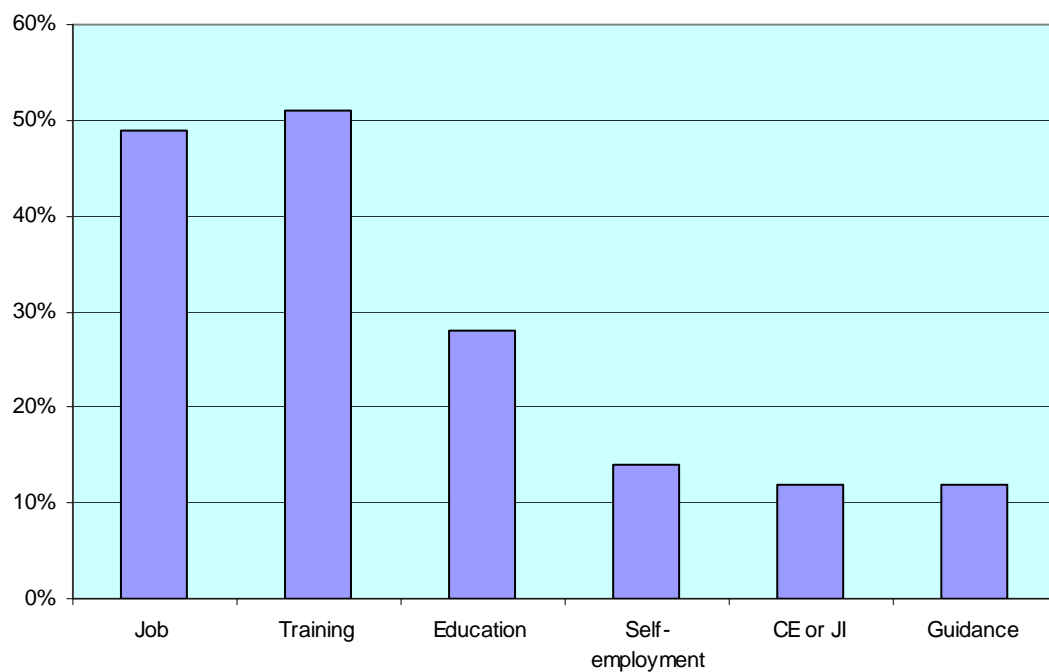
Figure 9: Motivation for Using SUE Services



Client Needs

Respondents were invited to describe what their needs were when they first approached OAK Partnership for support. The results show that 49% were seeking employment, 51% were looking for training, 27% were looking for educational support, 14% sought enterprise support, 6% were looking for CE or JI and a further 12% needed advice and guidance.

Figure 10: Client Needs



Impact of Support on Clients

Respondents were asked whether their needs had been met by the OAK Partnership. The results show positive impact to date. The majority (63%) indicated that their needs were fully met, 31% had some of their needs met and 6% indicated that their needs had not been met. Half (50%) indicated that were still receiving support from the Partnership at the time of the survey. This may explain why some respondents noted needs still to be met. It also validates the length of time and necessary support that some clients require in order to progress to employment.

The vast majority of respondents (96%) indicated that the service and support received had made a positive difference to their lives. It is interesting to note that the greatest impact reported was on personal development, behavioural and life style aspects e.g. confidence building (56%), self-motivation (50%), skills development (42%), education and training (30%) and contact with others (52%). The majority (78%) indicated that the service and support that they have received made a difference to their lives in a combination of ways. Table 6 presents the full set of differences made to lives of respondents.

Table 6: Impact of Support Received on Lives of Clients (n=50)

| Difference Made to Lives of Respondents | Percentage 'Yes' |
|---|------------------|
| Improved self confidence | 56% |
| More contact with people | 52% |
| More motivated | 50% |
| Skills development | 42% |
| Find suitable training or education | 30% |
| Got a CE place | 28% |
| Improved quality of life | 24% |
| Improved Income | 24% |
| More involved in their community | 24% |
| Improved family life | 22% |
| Got part time work | 20% |
| Got a full time job | 18% |
| Better able to structure to their lives | 18% |
| Work Experience | 16% |
| Support to start my own business enterprise | 10% |
| Funding | 6% |

Employment

Of those respondents who had achieved employment, the majority (62%), indicated that their current employment is better than their last. 20% indicated that it was worse and 6% said it was the same. 12% stated that they were in their first job. This suggests that there was progression in the quality of employment achieved by respondents.

In terms of salaries/wages the majority (73%) of respondents indicated that they were currently earning between €7.65 and €13 per hour and 13% were earning between €13 and €20 per hour. A small percentage (3%) was earning below the minimum wage and 7% were earning over €20 per hour.

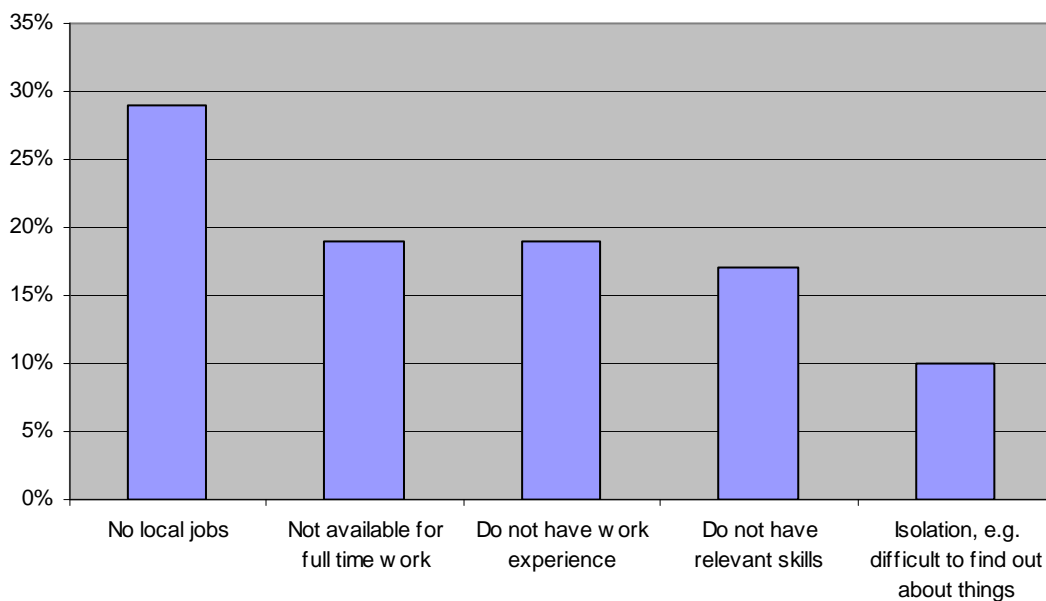
Table 7: Current Wage Bands

| | |
|--|-----|
| Below the minimum wage (i.e. less than €7.65 per hour) | 3% |
| Between €7.65 per hour and €13 per hour | 73% |
| Between €13 per hour and €20 per hour | 13% |
| Over €20 per hour | 7% |
| Other | 3% |

Difficulties Experienced By Clients

Respondents were asked to state whether they had experienced any difficulties getting employment, self-employment/ business or education/training since 2003. Less than half (46%) indicated that they had experienced difficulties. Twenty-two (42%) indicated that they had experienced a combination of difficulties.

Figure 11: Difficulties Experienced By Clients



Chapter 7 – Impact Assessment of SUE 2003 – 2006

In order to assess the qualitative impact of the Partnership's SUE Measure, the review included a series of focus group consultations with staff and agencies as well as one to one interviews with the Programme Coordinator, Partnership Manager and agency representatives. This section examines the collective findings of these consultations.

7.1. SUE Achievements 2003 - 2006

1. Effective Employment Services Working Group

Following a review of the Partnerships work in 2003, a new Employment Services Working Group was formed. The Working Group built on the Partnership's strong relationship with local agencies to plan/co-ordinate employment and training supports for long term unemployed people. The working group also further improved the quality and effectiveness of the work of the Employment Service for the benefit of the most marginalised. The Employment Services Working Group has met four times per year since it was established in 2003.

2. Ability to Identify and Respond to Emerging Client Needs

The Partnership's Employment Service has used it's local presence within the community as a means of understanding the emerging needs of their target groups and have responded to these needs through innovative employment programmes, training initiatives and research studies. During 2003 – 2006 research reports have included an examination of the challenges affecting one-parent families, an assessment of the needs of smallholder farm families and an assessment of the impact of the SUE Measure on client groups. Employment programmes such as the Fir Men's Project was initiated in response to the Partnership's first hand experience of the need for a dedicated programme to support the progression of long-term unemployed men. Failte Ireland training courses were also provided to Partnership clients in response to the range of employment opportunities available as a result of recent infrastructural developments in Edenderry. OAK Partnership's work with enterprise clients have also shown a need for industrial space to be made available and the Partnership has made an application to Enterprise Ireland for funding towards the development of an Enterprise Centre in Edenderry.

3. Streamlining of Partnership Programmes

The development of new forms of employment and innovative training initiatives has been a positive step towards achieving greater flexibility and diversity in employment options. New forms of employment such as the Options Programme, and training initiatives such as First Chance, have been made possible with the support of key stakeholders. To ensure the continued relevance and quality of SUE programmes, the Partnership's Employment Service has continually streamlined their programmes ensuring uniform standards of delivery and

certification, relevance to changing client groups and the ability to respond to different client needs. The OES showed its flexibility to adapt while continuing to be client-centred. This process creates more coherent and integrated structures, and facilitates improved delivery and reporting.

4. Effective Staff Team

The Employment Service is fortunate to have developed a strong and competent team of staff who are committed to providing high quality employment, training and enterprise supports to their clients. The Employment Services team consists of eleven staff delivering a range of services including computer skills training, foundations for employment training, smallholder support services, enterprise supports, advice and guidance and mentoring and counselling. Staff have been supported by the Partnership in upgrading their skills through further education and training, with many of the SUE team having completed specialist training in Adult Guidance and Counselling, Integrating Literacy, Equality Studies, Training and Development, Counselling Skills and IT. Collaboration across the SUE Measure is also encouraged through regular team meetings hosted quarterly.

5. Enterprise Network

Established by OAK Enterprise Service, the Enterprise Network exists to encourage people to succeed in entrepreneurship, enterprise or self-employment. The Network meets twice per year to provide an ongoing programme of speakers and activities to increase participants' knowledge/ skills base and motivational levels. It gives people already in business, or considering starting up, the opportunity to share experiences; create and foster an entrepreneurial culture and to provide a forum for the exchange of contacts to increase members' business contacts. To date nine-network meetings have been hosted with over one hundred entrepreneurs and business owners in attendance. Topics have included Self-assessment, Marketing, Credit Control and Sales Techniques.

6. Number of Clients Receiving Certification

During the period 2000 – 2006, the SUE Measure supported 329 adults to achieve certified education and training. This equates to 79% of adults participating in education and training and is significantly greater than the 59% target set and the actual achieved output nationally of 52%⁹.

7. Linkage and Collaboration with Key Stakeholders

The level of interagency collaboration and linkage between the Partnership and key stakeholders has been critical in ensuring that the SUE Measure have the necessary resources to offer the range of training, education and employment options needed to support clients' progression. Collaboration with FAS and DSFA have resulted in the provision of

⁹ SCOPE 2000 - 2006

funding towards the cost of leasing office space, staffing, childcare, travel and counseling. Linkage with these and other agencies such as Offaly and Kildare VEC's and Failte Ireland have ensured that the training needs of clients are met through targeted and timely courses and initiatives. SUE have placed a priority on leveraging funds in order to improve the range of supports and services available to the unemployed

8. Advocacy Role of SUE

In addition to promoting the services of SUE, staff also provide information, referral and support on issues related to health, housing, education, employment, entitlements and social services through a single point of contact. This advocacy role has become a distinctive characteristic of the Partnership's work and enables clients to access a range of services and information sources. In areas of the Partnership's work such as the Smallholder Initiative, interagency referral and advocacy is critical. The presentation of the service through a single individual or contact found is a core element in its success. As the public face of the service, and through a pro-active, engaging and flexible approach, the Rural Resource Worker has succeeded in bringing both the Low Income Small Holders Initiative (LISHI), LDSIP supports and services of other agencies/programmes to marginalised households. For many smallholder households, the engagement with the Rural Resource Worker represents a less confusing way of dealing with a complex array of statutory bodies thereby assuring access to an integrated package of supports.

Aspects of SUE's Work which have Emerged as most Important

- 1. Building the capacity of those who are unemployed through predevelopment:** The approach used by SUE Measure ensures that the target group is at the *center* of the development process. SUE's pre-development work is designed to build the capacity of those who are unemployed, to provide motivation, to increase target group participation, and to foster a sense of ownership and involvement in the development process.
- 2. Proactive outreach:** Proactive out reach targets resources on the most *marginalised areas* in the community and on individuals who have not benefited from mainstream services. Best results came from groups that had a proactive outreach service that was community-led, and used neighbourhood or community-based facilities. Examples included using local centres such as the Fairgreen Centre to host First Chance programmes and hosting discussion groups of smallholders in local community centres.
- 3. Recognising the individual needs of clients:** The Partnership recognizes that *no two clients are the same*. To ensure that each clients needs and expectations are met, SUE staff and mentors meet with individual clients before deciding what progression pathway

is best suited to them. Partnership programmes also reflect this individualised focus, with many courses providing one to one advice and guidance to each participant.

4. **Having the flexibility to respond to clients needs:** While the Partnership is in a unique position to understand the needs of its clients, the SUE Measure is also fortunate enough to have the *flexibility and autonomy* to respond to needs. While the Employment Service does not have the financial resources available to other LESN's, its status as a Rural Employment Service means that it can respond to clients needs in a more flexible and proactive way.
5. **Involving participants in programme design:** The Partnership has adopted a '*bottom up*' approach in the design of many of its courses. By allowing participants to design the course content and select the modules they are most interested in the Partnership has empowered participants to feel a sense of ownership and has increased their motivation and interest.
6. **Providing a holistic model of support:** In responding to the support needs of the unemployed a *holistic model of support* is required which takes into account the complex reasons for unemployment. The Employment Service helps clients overcome these barriers by addressing individual, social and financial obstacles and local area problems as an integral part of their work programme.
7. **Joint working and interagency collaboration:** The success of the Employment Service is dependent upon *collaboration and cooperation* with key stakeholders and Government Departments. The fostering of effective partnership relationships with agencies also involved in supporting those at risk has enabled the provision of services that any one of these partners could not have achieved alone. Such joint working is based on partners sharing common goals, maximising available resources and recognising the unique role and strengths of each organisation.
8. **Understanding that employment is not always the end goal:** Not all clients of SUE are job ready and for many, their engagement with the OAK Employment Service is an important first step in their journey towards improving the quality of their lives. By understanding that employment is not always the end goal, the OAK Employment Services can offer clients predevelopment programmes which will build the capacity of clients to avail of the mainstream supports offered by agencies such as FAS and DSFA.

Chapter 8 – Conclusions and Challenges for the Future

8.1. Conclusions

Findings from the literature review, the SCOPE impact assessment and the qualitative results of stakeholder consultations show a high degree of success within the SUE Measure in providing integrated approaches to identifying, nurturing and supporting individuals, groups and communities in accessing suitable and sustainable employment options. In fact, the Partnership has outperformed the national performance targets set with regard to supporting clients to achieve certified education and training and securing employment. In addition, results have highlighted widespread psycho-social benefits for clients with almost all clients who participated in the Eustace Patterson longitudinal study indicating that the service and supports received had made a positive difference to their lives with the greatest impact being on personal development, confidence levels and self-motivation.

Following the review of OAK Partnership's structures in 2003 and the formation of the *Family Youth and Community Support Measure* and the *Services for the Unemployed Measure*, the challenge was to integrate the actions of the Partnership across these new Measures to provide increased opportunities for individuals and communities. The SUE Measure has met this challenge, spreading its influence beyond its original labour market focus to include a strong social inclusion and community development ethos. Findings of the review have shown that it is not possible to support clients towards employment or training, without addressing other issues within their lives. As such predevelopment initiatives have become central to the Partnerships SUE approach. On completion of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme in 2006, the SUE Measure has contributed greatly to meeting the objectives of the Partnership and those of the overall Programme.

Key success factors in the implementation of the SUE Measure are echoed throughout all methodologies employed in the review and can be summarised as:

Key success factors in the implementation of the SUE Measure

1. The Partnership's ability to **identify, understand and respond** to the complex range of client needs through **flexible and locally based** support services.
2. Ensuring the **needs of the unemployed are central** to the development process.
3. Targeting resources to the most **marginalised areas** in the community and on **individuals** who have not benefited from mainstream services.
4. The model of **collaboration and linkage** that has been developed between the Partnership and key stakeholders at all levels.
5. The ability of the Partnership to **provide a holistic package of supports** and ancillary services.
6. The Formation of a strategy designed to **evolve in line with a changing environment** to remain effective and relevant to client needs.

8.2. Challenges for the Future

As the Partnership marks the end of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme and moves toward 2016, it is necessary to consider how to further enhance and strengthen the impact of a future social inclusion programme at a local level and to acknowledge the many challenges which lie ahead.

The process of **'cohesion' of community and local development structures** currently underway under the auspices of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is an exciting time for the Partnership. However, a particular concern of the SUE Measure is ensuring that there continues to be a strong focus on social inclusion, training, employment and on supporting and promoting the voice of the most marginalised in the new structures as they evolve. The cohesion process brings with it the need for the Partnership to form new links with strategic partners and develop countywide work plans for both Offaly and Kildare. While the SUE Measure has gained vast experience in responding to the needs of the unemployed in its ten years, there is now a sense of 'starting over'. The Partnership is now responsible for ensuring that SUE measure experience is used to continue to address emerging challenges in innovative and collaborative ways.

While a key strength of the SUE Measure in recent years has been the formation of strong working relationships with strategic partners, the **development of integrated approaches**, both internally and with external organisations, continues to play a fundamental role in meeting the needs of clients. This not only includes continuing to work with organisations such as FAS, and DSFA, but also means that links with organisations such as the HSE and the VEC's must be further developed and strengthened. The Partnership must also work with collaborative partners to ensure that interventions are sustainable and long term in their focus. In addition, **greater inter-measure collaboration** and linkage must be encouraged internally across both the FYC and SUE Measures. With the blurring of boundaries between both and the increasing need for community development approaches within SUE, mechanisms for referral, consultations and linkage must be established.

The **changing profile of clients** engaging with the Employment Service is a major challenge for the Partnership. An analysis of the profile of unemployed people in the North Offaly & North West Kildare region shows that certain groups of people continued to experience severe difficulties in accessing employment even during a period of substantial employment growth. The distinguishing feature of those who are currently unemployed is their severe marginalisation, social deprivation and the predominance of persons with very low levels of educational and skill levels. However, very often accompanying these low educational and skill levels is the presence of literacy difficulties, demoralisation, physical and mental health problems and problems related to addiction. Overcoming these issues and assisting clients to

become job ready or even access mainstream services is a challenge that the Partnership continues to face.

The changing profile of clients accessing the Employment Service is also affecting the ongoing **relevance of employment and training programmes**. With many of the clients of SUE being affected by social, mental, or literacy issues, the SUE model of programme delivery established to support client's progression from initial contact to employment is becoming increasingly difficult to implement. In recent years the OAK Employment Service is challenged with providing a tailored progression pathway for each individual client. In addition, programmes such as Joblink, which traditionally represented the final step into employment, is now finding that many participants on the programme are not job ready. Addressing the range of psychological and social issues affecting clients, and having the resources to implement tailored programmes is a challenge which requires the ongoing collaboration and support of key stakeholder organisations.

The vulnerability of persons from different cultural and ethnic groups in Ireland is widely recognised. Those at particular risk of social exclusion include asylum seekers, refugees, and migrant workers. The enormous growth in the numbers of migrant workers residing in the OAK catchments area is demonstrated in chapter six of this review. Migrant workers made up the third largest group of clients who engaged with the Employment Service in 2006. The **training and employment needs of migrant workers and ethnic minority groups** needs greater priority in any future social inclusion programme. The provision of English language training, community support services and cultural integration measures must be put in place and adequate resources provided.

The competitiveness of Ireland as a base for international industry is being jeopardised by low cost economies such as Eastern Europe and Asia. This puts Irelands low skilled workforce at **risk of unemployment** as industries chose to relocate in an effort to cut costs. While not currently a target group of the LDSIP, those at risk of unemployment are likely to emerge as an important group within any future social inclusion programme. There is an urgent need to upgrade and develop the competencies of low skilled workers in response to this risk and to develop comprehensive and coherent life long learning strategies and initiatives.

The socio-economic and demographic landscape of North Offaly and North West Kildare has changed dramatically since OAK Employment Service was established in 1998. The population of the region has increased by over 43% during this time – more than two and a half times that of the national growth rate of 17%. The SUE Measure has responded to this **rapid population increase** by providing training centres in outreach centres throughout the region and tailoring initiatives to meet client needs. However, **limited childcare, transport and employment opportunities** continue to make it difficult for the Employment Service to support client progression. Challenges for the future include ensuring that adequate

affordable childcare is available for parents wishing to return to work or education, creating access to training and employment opportunities both within and outside of the locality, the promotion of enterprise development, and the creation of employment opportunities.

The high number of clients supported by OAK Employment Service since its inception is the result of the hard work, commitment and co-operation not only of Partnership staff but also of the Board and the Employment Service Working Group and their inclusive representation of state agencies, social partners, elected representatives and the community sector. However, in a vastly changed and ever changing economic and social environment, the concept of 'community' and indeed the reality of community is not what it was when this Programme commenced. Society, the family unit and by extension, our communities, are now much more diverse. Any future social inclusion programme must ***adapt to this new diversity*** in as full and inclusive a way as possible.

New challenges are emerging every day in our communities and these differ within and between counties, within and between rural and urban areas, and even within and between neighbourhoods. Some of the issues faced at the beginning of the last NDP are still present while others have come to the fore. We must be aware that our economic, social and cultural achievements can easily be lost if we do not continue to address emerging challenges in innovative ways.

Chapter 9 – Recommendations

This section sets out recommendations for the future development of employment service strategies. Recommendations are presented at the client, Partnership and programme level.

9.1. Client-level Strategies

A broad range of integrated strategies will continue to be required to meet the need of clients into the future. These include:

i. Targeting interventions at specific target groups

The profile of target groups named within the LDSIP, including the long-term unemployed and the underemployed, has changed dramatically during the period of the Programme. Those who have remained unemployed during this period of substantial employment growth are characterised by their severe marginalisation, low education levels and personal issues. The Partnership's SUE model of programme delivery is no longer, on its own, adequate to meet the diverse needs of these clients. The progression pathway established through the Partnerships suite of programmes has become increasingly focused on first step target interventions for specific client groups. The aim is to enhance the client's capacity to access mainstream options. The Partnership must adapt to address the changing needs of the long term unemployed and the underemployed by focusing resources on predevelopment and community development strategies that engage these client groups. It must also focus on developing enterprise initiatives as realistic progression options for those who will not readily progress into the open labour market in the short term.

ii. Responding to Emerging and New Target Groups

Throughout the duration of the LDSIP new target groups, such as those at risk of unemployment, migrant workers and ethnic minorities, have emerged as persons at risk of experiencing social exclusion. The Partnerships are being challenged to develop new and innovative ways to target and make contact with migrant workers who are not connected to the local social infrastructure. The most effective methods of contact will require outreach predevelopment targeting, one to one contact and language skills. Initiatives that could be undertaken across both the FYC and SUE Measures, include:

- Provide baseline data on the numbers and needs of migrant workers and their families.
- Organise information evening on the rights and entitlements of migrant workers.
- Organise a weekly evening queries clinic for migrant workers with clear and precise information in a language that they could understand.
- Initiate Intercultural, sporting and community development initiatives.
- Employ a Migrant Resource Worker to support migrant workers and their families.

iii. Access to Information for the most marginalised groups

A comprehensive information and referral service has been established through the OES office. Those most in need of the information tend not to access public services such as OAK Employment Services or are unaware of its relevance to meeting their needs. While short-term strategies have been developed in recent years to engage with these client groups a more integrated strategy, involving all measures and agencies, needs to be developed in the long term to meet the holistic information needs of the client group.

iv. Motivating Clients to Move from Welfare to Work

Current Government policy and the welfare system can contribute to unemployed persons inability to achieve social and financial independence. The partnership must use its experience in working with clients to influence policy development and welfare reform. Client should be made aware of the various progressive programmes that exist to support those on social welfare so that they can make the transition from personal welfare payments to active participation in employment.

v. Supporting Smallholder Farm Families

The Offaly Smallholder Development Service has played a vital role in supporting farm families in Co Offaly and has been effective in increasing household income and quality of life through targeted outreach and intervention strategies. The individual needs of farm families now extends beyond those of just farming, and requires local development responses that involve the intensive support of the Rural Resource Worker. In order to maximise its effectiveness the Offaly Smallholder Development Service needs to continue to incorporate other approaches that address issues such as community development, training, welfare, rural transport, childcare and enterprise development actions. While the Offaly Smallholder Development Service has been held as a model of good practice in how it evolved to meet these needs, efforts must be made to ensure that the Rural Resource Worker and the Service to the Unemployed Measure have the necessary resources and support to continue their good work in this area.

vi. Client After Care Support

Findings from national and local research studies on the SUE Measure have shown that client after care support is an issue. A more systematic and comprehensive process of client after care and follow-up should be developed. Results from Eustace and Patterson's assessment of SUE in 2006 have shown that follow-up can be effective both as a support and also as a preventative intervention. Inviting clients to meet with mentors six months after completing a course or making a follow-up phone call can provide a boost for clients who are doing well. For those clients who may be experiencing some difficulties, this contact represents an opportunity to reassess needs and to provide supplementary support to getting them back on track towards their progression goals. It is important that any after-care support draws on

referral processes, networks and links with other organisations and where appropriate, employers, to maximise positive outcomes for clients. Such aftercare supports are time intensive and do require increased staffing resources.

9.2. Partnership-level Strategies

i. Cross Measure Collaboration and Social Advocacy

Collaboration across the Partnership measures needs to be further developed and formalised. This will require greater integration of programmes and more cross-functional team working between FYC and SUE staff. It is increasingly the case that addressing client needs requires a range of skills and resources that cut across both the SUE and FYC measures. In such cases, the Partnership should adopt a client centred approach (rather than measure centred), surrounding the client with the range of supports they need to make the transition from welfare to work, training or education. This cross-functional team working also extends to external organisations through the Partnership's social advocacy role¹⁰. The Partnership works with the broad range of statutory and non-statutory service providers relating to a range of sectoral issues including welfare, training, education, enterprise and employment. As an advocate for social change the Partnership should fully involve the various different local partners, whose responsibilities lie in these areas, in the design and implementation of policies and practices to support the work of the Services for the Unemployed Measure.

ii. Promotion of SUE services

OAK Employment Service should adopt an intensive marketing campaign throughout the Partnership area to raise awareness of the services and supports it offers. In addition to providing information through church bulletins, local media, newsletters and passive information points, meetings should be held with community and voluntary groups to raise awareness of the role of the Partnership in providing routes into employment and self-employment for target groups. Information sessions should also be provided with state agencies and other service providers to ensure interagency referral and collaboration. Experience has shown that the most effective means of promoting the SUE to the most marginalised is through engagement initiatives within their own communities and, through the networks built up, to work with the households and communities.

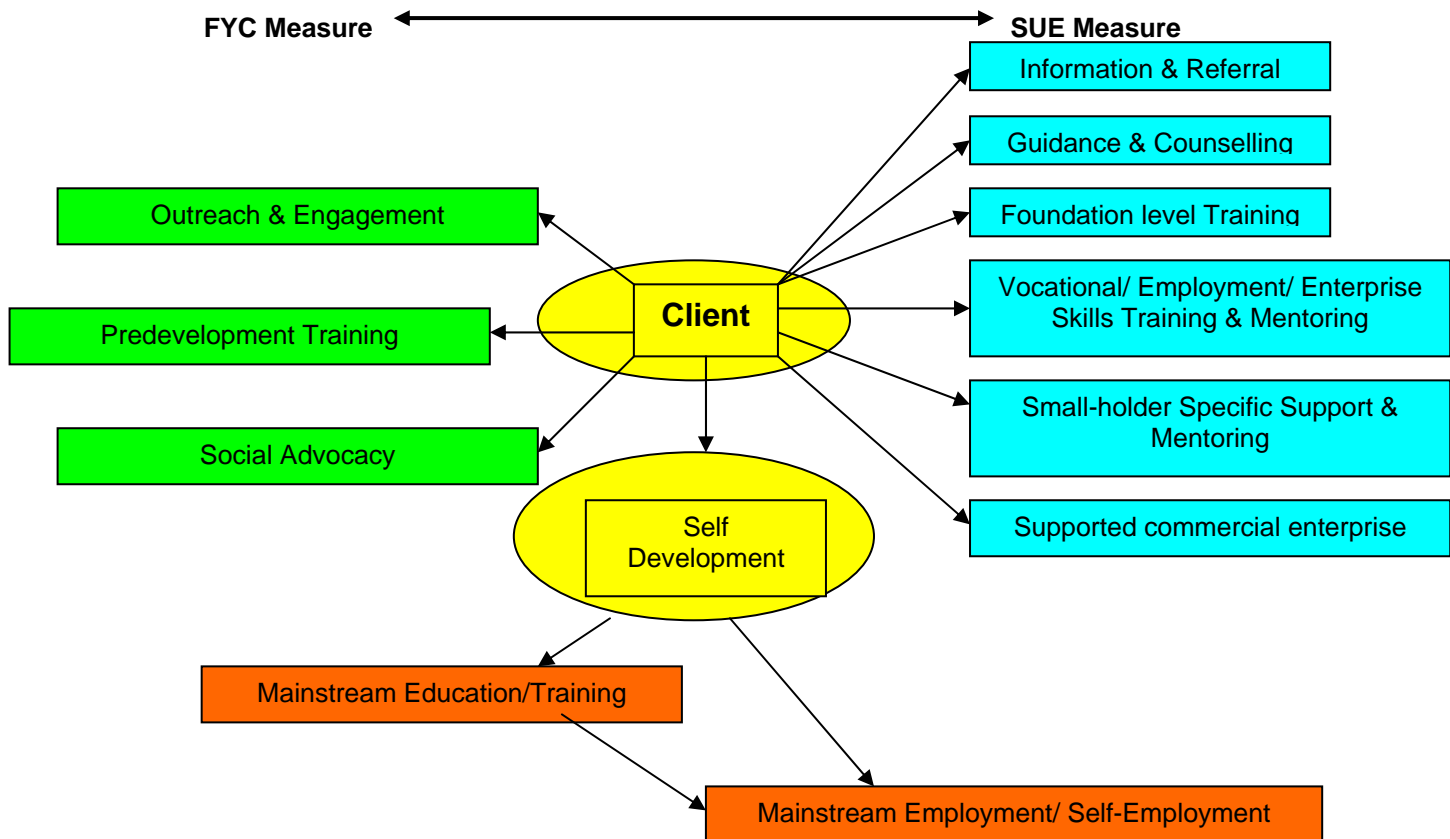
iii. Tailoring Progression Pathways

The Partnership's SUE model of programme delivery has constantly evolved to meet the needs of clients. However during the period of the LDSIP the socio economic landscape of the OAK region and the profile of SUE clients has changed so dramatically that it is now necessary to tailor the progression pathway for each individual client. In more and more cases it is necessary to provide clients with one to one support and tailored progression

¹⁰ Advocacy: A Review. Dorothy Atkinson, 1999. Joseph Rowntree foundation.

options. This need for client centred support and individualised training is resource and time intensive and requires the support of all stakeholders. It is proposed that within the new social inclusion programme the delivery of SUE supports will reflect this individualised approach and would be structured around the model presented in figure 12 (i.e. predevelopment work, foundation level training, vocational level of training, supported commercial enterprise and mainstream employment).

Figure 12: Framework for Cross Measure Team-working and Social Advocacy



iv. Inter-agency Working

In order for inter-agency protocols to operate effectively, it is essential that performance indicators and common goals are agreed. This understanding is necessary to ensure that all agencies are working towards a shared agenda. At present, there is a divergence between the quantitative performance indicators of some agencies and those of the Partnership. As it becomes increasingly necessary to offer clients individualised supports, it is more important to ensure that agreement is reached among agencies on common performance indicators.

v. Enterprise Creation and Development

While the Partnership has continued to provide expert training and mentoring through the Business Development Programme, findings from the research have shown that a weakness of the SUE Measure has been the need for further pro-action in creating enterprise development and employment opportunities within the region. The Partnership's initiative for a community enterprise centre would go some way towards the provision of incubation units for small start-up businesses. In addition there is also an immediate need for the creation and development of supported commercial enterprise and employment opportunities¹¹.

9.3. Programme-level Strategies

i. Performance Indicators

Performance indicators must reflect the broad focus and impact of the Services for the Unemployed Measure. The current set of SCOPE indicators captures outcomes related mainly to labour market performance. However the suite of indicators needs to expand to capture the other social inclusion outcomes, including:

- Training and education impacts, e.g. participation in uncertified training, improved capacity to participate in and complete certified training, return to education, progression to further or higher education.
- Psycho-social impacts, e.g. increased capacity to participate in mainstream programmes, improved confidence levels, greater motivation, increased contact with others and stronger social networks, better family life and improved quality of life.
- Financial impacts, e.g. appropriate referral helping to reduce debt or obtain entitlements, better income through employment, eligibility for BTWA/BTWEA, access to or receipt of financial assistance towards education or enterprise, developing off-farm income.

ii. Merging LDSIP Measures into a Single Strand Programme

To strengthen the integrated and holistic approach that is required to support partnership clients it is suggested that in future the social inclusion programme should not be divided into three distinct measures as was the case in the LDSIP. Rather the three measures (Services for the Unemployed, Community-Based Youth Initiatives, and Community Development) should be merged into a single strand programme, thus strengthening coordination and cross-measure collaboration into the implementation of social inclusion actions at a local level¹².

END

¹¹ www.speedpak.ie is an example of a supportive commercial enterprise. Speedpak is a successful company originally established in 1995 by the Northside partnership (a local development company) in conjunction with the business community in Dublin's northside.

¹² In 2003, following a review of the Partnership's work, OAK Partnership merged the Community-Based Youth Initiatives and the Community Development Measures to form a single Family, Youth and Community (FYC) Support Measure