



RECRUITMENT FROM THOSE NOT IN EMPLOYMENT

A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR PROMOTING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

RECRUITMENT FROM THOSE NOT IN EMPLOYMENT

While there is evidence of labour shortages in some sectors of the economy, there are still many people in the community who are not in employment but who are seeking work.

It is worth noting that employment disadvantage does not impact equally on all sections of the community. For example those in our community with a disability are almost three times more likely to be out of employment than those without a disability. Those from ethnic minority backgrounds also suffer from employment disadvantage as do women returning to the labour market and lone parents who are likely to be concentrated in lower paying and lower status jobs. More generally, those who live in areas where there is evidence of a range of social disadvantages are more likely to be out of work.

The Commission advises employers to follow the advice in the equality Codes of Practice and to recruit widely when filling vacancies. Particular steps are sometimes required to assist those not currently in employment back into the labour market, and the equality legislation permits this.

Under fair employment and race relations legislation it is lawful for employers to give preference to people who have not been in employment for a defined period of time when applying to fill vacancies. This means that reserving specific job vacancies for unemployed persons or only recruiting from individuals who have not been in employment for a period of time is possible. Other examples of what would be allowed under this legislation include, waiving particular qualification or experience requirements or guaranteeing job interviews for people who have not been in employment such as those on benefits, school leavers, unemployed graduates or women entering or returning to the labour market.

Furthermore disability legislation allows employers to treat applicants with a disability more favourably than those without a disability. Employers can, for example, ring fence certain jobs so that they are only open to disabled people, or they can offer placement opportunities to disabled people which may lead to permanent jobs. Employers may also

avail of training for work programmes which guarantee a disabled person a permanent job on successful completion of a structured training programme.

The information and case studies in this booklet are aimed at providing employers with examples of how various support organisations and programmes can help them to facilitate those out of employment back into the labour market. Some of the support organisations are focused on particular groups of individuals, perhaps those with a disability or lone parents, while other organisations are focused more generally on those not currently in work. The information provides evidence of the very practical support and assistance that may be provided by these organisations to employers, and in turn the successful recruitment of key workers by employers. There are many such organisations working in communities throughout Northern Ireland and this guide provides an overview of the work of a small number of these organisations. Employers may also independently recruit from those not in employment.

Commission staff are happy to meet with employers to provide advice in relation to the legislative provisions as well as to offer advice or support to those organisations that aim to facilitate those not in employment back to work. Contact details are provided at the back of this booklet.

WORKABLE (NI)

'Workable (NI)' is a programme, organised by Department for Employment and Learning, aimed at providing flexible support to meet the needs of disabled employees and their employers.

The programme offers a package of support including onsite and offsite training, mentoring, access to expert advice and an experienced support worker.

Disability Action advises that the programme is an excellent opportunity for employers to recruit valuable workers in the knowledge that any advice or assistance they need will be freely available.

Alan (not his real name) is the first person to be placed in employment under the new arrangements. Disability Action worked with Alan for a number of years supporting him in seeking employment and has maintained contact with him since he has found employment. His employer, welcomed the support available under Workable, and recommends the programme to other employers.

RNIB

Access to Work Programme

RNIB offers a range of services to clients who are blind or partially sighted.

This is Kelly's (not her real name) story.

Kelly, who is partially sighted, contacted the RNIB looking for advice in applying for a position as a Fraud Deterrent Officer in a call centre. Kelly had previous call centre experience but the tasks of this job involved using new computer packages and had an emphasis on IT.

RNIB offered support in a number of ways: The RNIB Technology Officer recommended to the employer the specific equipments needed for Kelly to carry out the tasks of the job. A magnification software package, a large screen monitor and a large print keyboard were all

recommended and the employer received financial assistance in purchasing this equipment through the Access to Work Programme. The RNIB Employment Officer also provided the employer with advice on the layout of the workplace, including the lighting, taking into account Kelly's visual impairment.

The result of this was that the employer felt confident in employing Kelly and Kelly also felt that the job and environment had been successfully adapted to make it possible for her to do the job.

GINGERBREAD (NI)

Creating Equal Opportunities for Lone Parents

The charity Gingerbread NI was established in 1978 by a group of lone parents to provide advice and support to lone parents. A number of Gingerbread initiatives to support lone parents into employment are listed below.

'Possibilities' Gingerbread's newest initiative employs a fully qualified life coach to work with participants to improve their skills and confidence while undertaking work placement opportunities with local employers. Next Retail Ltd has used this programme and was delighted with the placements.

'Choices' through this initiative, lone parents select an accredited course at their local College and also begin a work experience placement. Support with fees, childcare and travel costs is provided through Gingerbread. Up to sixty employers a year have been providing placements for over fifteen years and the response has been positive.

'Marks and Start', is a further initiative where lone parents are offered employment preparation training followed by work experience within a Marks & Spencer store. The work experience is supported by coaching from a shop floor 'buddy'. This initiative has been made available in five stores in Northern Ireland. This is a highly innovative project which pools the resources of Gingerbread and Marks and Spencer to provide opportunities for lone parents to gain the skills and confidence necessary in order to return to work.

EMPLOYER'S FORUM

West Belfast and Greater Shankill

The Employer's Forum, an initiative established as a result of the Task Force Reports in West Belfast and the Greater Shankill, is financed and led by the private sector and is committed to the social and economic regeneration of West Belfast and the Greater Shankill. The Forum aims to encourage the matching of education and training programmes with current and forecasted skill requirements and employment needs in the area. A cross section of employers have been working with the Forum in sectoral clusters each led by a key employer.

Engineering Cluster

Bombardier Aerospace has been working with Springvale Training and Impact Training as a route for recruitment of adult apprentices. Following application and interview successful trainees undertake three years of training leading to qualifications at NVQ level 3. In this community based programme no educational criteria are specified, unlike the normal apprenticeship intake where educational requirements are demanded as a precursor to entry. However all trainees must be capable of reaching NVQ Level 3. To date 45 individuals from the Task Force area have been recruited into Bombardier Aerospace via this initiative.

Construction Cluster

Lagan Group lead this cluster which supports the recruitment of apprentices, business links with local schools and the return of long-term unemployed to work. Following an initiative with local Job Assist centres some clients made application for "live" vacancies with companies in the Construction Cluster and three clients were successful in obtaining employment. To date 46 formerly unemployed individuals have now moved into employment with the cluster employers.

Call Centre Cluster

Halifax Plc leads this cluster which has worked with the Department of Employment and Learning, Employment Services Board and the Job Assist Centres to develop customised pre-employment training programmes for people wishing to get into employment. Approximately 40 formerly unemployed individuals are now in call centre employment as a result of this initiative.

Health Cluster

Royal Hospitals Trust leads this cluster. Along with Colin Care Health, a voluntary healthcare organisation, the cluster is piloting an initiative entitled Workforce Buddies. The programme aims to improve retention of new recruits who were formerly unemployed. Mentors provide in-work support to enable a successful transition to employment. Existing employees gain accreditation as mentors at NVQ Level 3.

GEMS NORTHERN IRELAND

Gems Northern Ireland was established in 2002 to help long term unemployed people access employment opportunities arising from the regeneration of the Gasworks and Laganside sites.

GEMS NI has developed a range of tailored solutions to support unemployed people and employers. This includes one-to-one careers information advice and guidance, assistance with job search application forms and interview skills, and in-work support, job coaching/ mentoring.

The pre-employment programmes are linked to employers' recruitment requirements. GEMS helps employers fill vacancies by training unemployed people to the standard required for the job and helping them to improve their self-confidence. They also provide specialist careers information, advice and guidance for unemployed people who do not have English as their first language. This includes language for work classes to help migrant workers to acquire English language directly related to work. Their 'Flexible and Tailored Language in Work' classes provide support for employers to improve the performance of their businesses by helping their employees who do not speak English as their first language to improve their English language skills. This course deals with areas such as professional communication, grammar, technical jargon, health and safety and other specific workplace issues and is scheduled to minimise disruption to business.

THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES BOARD

Job Assist Centres

The Employment Services Board for West Belfast and the Greater Shankill is responsible for a number of programmes and policies for tackling employability and long term unemployment. One of the initiatives is the establishment of Job Assist Centres throughout West Belfast and the Greater Shankill. The Job Assist Centres aim to enhance the employability of their clients and advance them into employment. The Job Assist Centres assists those most distant from job readiness to overcome the barriers to employability.

The Job Assist Centre on Belfast's Shankill Road has been working proactively assisting clients back into employment. A member of the centre's staff first met Kathy (not her real name) whilst giving out leaflets in the local area. Kathy decided to visit the centre to see what it had to offer.

Kathy had not been in regular employment since leaving school with no accredited qualifications. Kathy had regular weekly meetings with her mentor from the Job Assist Centre and over a number of weeks overcame various barriers to considering employment.

In September 2004 Kathy began a computer course which led to her first accredited qualification. In February 2005 after almost a year of mentoring Kathy had made significant personal progression. Over many weeks filling in application forms and practicing interview techniques Kathy got her first real interview. Kathy was successful in securing work as a housekeeper for one of Belfast's biggest cleaning contractors. Kathy is currently still employed and loves the freedom and responsibility of securing the post.

SOUTH TYRONE EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME (S.T.E.P.)

Community Development and Training

S.T.E.P. is a community Development and Training organisation based in Dungannon, Co Tyrone. Operating since 1997, the organisations key function is to empower individuals through provision of training, advice and support to participate fully in the socio-economic community. Over the years, the organisation has been involved in projects assisting those “most-at-risk” attain skills which in the long-term assist them with improved employability, such groups include women returners to work, adults with essential skills needs, people with disabilities, ex-prisoners and more recently non-English speakers. S.T.E.P. runs one of the pioneering Migrant Worker Support Projects in Northern Ireland which has increased its catchment of work in both Community Development and Training to regional level.

English for Speakers of Other Languages classes across Northern Ireland, S.T.E.P. attempts to bridge the gap between skills and language for many Migrant Workers assisting in their employment opportunities. S.T.E.P.’s Migrant Support Centre has assisted over 500 people apply for National Insurance Numbers and Interpreter and Translation Service employs over 200 Migrant Workers on sessional basis for Interpreting and Translation contracts.

One such example is Anhelita (not her real name) from Latvia, Anhelita speaks Russian, Latvian and English and has been in Northern Ireland for over 2 years. After studying at University in Latvia Anhelita found it very difficult to get work to match her skills in the UK. She has worked with S.T.E.P. as an Interpreter. Anhelita continues:

“When I first arrived in the UK, I have been working in a nursing home for 8 months, but it wasn’t really job I wanted. Then I went to Job Center and they told me that S.T.E.P. was looking for interpreters. I was really happy and lucky to find the job I wanted and because of my Bachelor degree S.T.E.P. took me at once to the 2nd level. I think S.T.E.P. gives great opportunity for the interpreters with skills and education to work by their profession”.

AN MUNIA TOBER

An Munia Tober is a support organisation for members of the travelling community. It has been providing support for a young traveller woman who, following support from the organisation, has obtained a position on a part-time basis as a cadet with the Fire and Rescue Service. She is also doing some volunteering work for An Munia Tober helping other members of the travelling community.

Another young traveller woman has obtained employment with the organisation's support in a local playgroup. This young woman is now pursuing a formal qualification at a local Further Education College.

STEPPING STONES NI LTD

Stepping Stones NI Ltd was established in 1996 to provide adults with learning disabilities with accredited training towards supported employment. The Company is comprised of local business people, parents and carers of people with learning disabilities and representation from Down Lisburn Trust.

Within Stepping Stones NI Ltd the STEP Towards Employment Programme provides the support and guidance for adults with learning disabilities to develop their work skills enhancing employability.

Since June 2006 Gordon (not his real name) a trainee on the programme, has completed his NVQ Level 1 Kitchen Portering and has gained paid employment in McDonalds. Gordon successfully completed the OCN accredited Independent Travel Training programme delivered at Stepping Stones NI Ltd and now he uses public transport to travel to and from work. Gordon now lives a much more independent and fulfilling life because of the skills and confidence he has gained while on the STEP programme.



CONTACTING THE EQUALITY COMMISSION

If you need help or advice or would like to find out more about the Equality Commission and its work, contact us at -

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You can also use Typetalk to contact us.

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