
Supporting People from Marginalised Communities into Employment

Report by The Open Doors Initiative

Prepared by Professor Thomas M. Cooney | SEPTEMBER 2020





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Foreword

Diversity means hiring difference rather than choosing the people whom you find 'comfortable' and who mirror your own experience and background. It means working against conscious and unconscious bias, educating yourself and proactively finding merit in people different to you.

Inclusion means recognising intersectional identities – the sum of the whole person – that greatly improve the workplace with the different perspectives they bring to an organisation. You recognise the value of that person, equal to all others who work for and with you, and you treat them as equal in all respects.

This is all more than box ticking – it is equality. And people can see when these are truly held values in a business as opposed to being mere lip service.

This open mindset regarding employment is needed now more than ever, particularly given employee restrictions that COVID-19 has recently generated. The business community also needs Government support to help create a diverse workforce and the Open Doors Initiative is working as a conduit to achieve greater levels of employability for marginalised groups.

This report looks at the barriers to employment for marginalised people and identifies several recommendations which could help them into work in a coordinated and targeted way. This report by Prof Thomas Cooney aims to create a basis for developing these ideas and identify what supports are required to support marginalised groups in terms of labour market activation.

It highlights the multitude of organisations that operate in this space, the complexity of the welfare support system, the diverse array of overlapping programmes available to support labour market activation and the lack of coherent national strategies that could offer structure and clarity. Both providers and recipients of the support measures struggle to fully comprehend the most suitable pathway to employment that might be available to marginalised groups and so the effectiveness and efficiencies of the supports are diluted.

Armed with this information, we intend to engage with industry, government and NGOs to promote an employment ethos of greater diversity and enable more people to secure a pathway to work. This is the start of a major collaborative undertaking to ensure that no one gets left behind.

We hope that many more businesses, organisations and government will collaborate with us to bring diversity to the fore in employment and support people from marginalised groups to fill positions on merit. By achieving this ambition, everybody will benefit.

Oliver Loomes
Chair, The Open Doors Initiative

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 crisis dramatically altered the economic landscape of Ireland and it has caused abnormally high rates of unemployment from which it will take a long time to recover. Given the uncertainty of these times, business people are unsure about the impact that job displacement will have on their current training, internship and job placement programmes. Furthermore, it has been speculated by many economic commentators that marginalised communities (e.g. refugees, youth and people with disabilities) will suffer disproportionately higher rates of unemployment in the months ahead, which are exacerbated by barriers they already face. The ambition of this report is to tease out how the employment support sector can best assist people from marginalised communities back into employment during these challenging times.

It is clearly evident from the research that this is a hugely complex area and that it involves a multitude of policies, government departments / agencies, organisations, programmes and welfare benefit offerings seeking to address a diverse assortment of potential and existing recipients without the existence of a clear and coherent national umbrella strategy. Making sense of the complexities and web of supports is highly challenging with many providers and recipients of such supports claiming that they cannot identify the most suitable pathway to employment that might be appropriate to specific situations. This report provides a brief synopsis of the main organisations, training and employment supports, and welfare benefits available to people who are unemployed, along with the challenges they face. It makes series of recommendations to overcome these.

In the 2016 Census, there were 176,445 persons with a disability in the labour force giving a labour force participation rate of 30.2%, compared with a rate of 61.4% for the overall population. Furthermore, Ireland had one of the lowest employment rates for people with disabilities in the EU. While securing employment is a significant challenge for people with disabilities, retaining the job is also of considerable concern but is much less discussed. The major challenges to securing and retaining employment include issues such as:

- The welfare benefit trap
- Accessibility
- Inadequate workplace environment
- Misplaced fear by employers of legal challenges
- Insufficient disability support services

In April 2016, there were 347,233 non-Irish nationals in the labour force with a participation rate of 73.9%. EU nationals had the highest participation rate at 76.8%, whereas it was 64.3% for those from countries outside the EU. While the unemployment gap between immigrants and natives in 2017 was smaller in Ireland than the European average, African nationals experienced much higher levels of unemployment than other communities. The major challenges that refugees face when seeking employment include issues such as: limited language proficiency; poor knowledge about the national systems; lack of relevant qualifications, references and work experience; employers not recognising overseas qualifications; and a lack of accessible, relevant advice and guidance for refugees.

Executive Summary

The number of people aged 15-19 years old in Ireland in 2016 was 302,816 and the number of people aged 20-24 years old was 273,636. Figures for June 2020 (excluding Pandemic Unemployment Payments) show that the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for persons aged 15-24 was 12.8% (general unemployment rate was 5.6%). Some of the principal challenges facing marginalised youth in securing employment include: a lack of required qualifications, skills and experience; poor coping and interpersonal skills; peer pressure and low levels of personal motivation; low levels of self-confidence; and employers discriminating against youth.

In conclusion, the report offers the following recommendations: build dedicated online hubs; design and implement national strategies; promote entrepreneurship; secure ring-fenced funding; increase government percentage of diverse hiring; create a dedicated recruitment portal for employers/employees; establish a large-scale mentoring programme; undertake a skills audit of people in Direct Provision and with disabilities; and maximise access to hardware, WIFI and training in Digital Skills. By implementing these recommendations, Ireland can offer people of all backgrounds equal opportunity to maximise their economic and social potential.

Introduction

About The Open Doors Initiative¹

The Open Doors Initiative works with industry, government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to improve employment opportunities for specific marginalised groups. This is the first time that this particular cross-section of industry, government and NGOs have come together to address employment issues for marginalised people in this manner. The marginalised groups addressed are: (1) Refugee, asylum seekers and migrants; (2) Young people from marginalised backgrounds; and (3) People with disabilities. The Open Doors Initiative supports these marginalised groups in accessing training, work experience, mentoring and employment. Many of these activities are led by people with lived experiences in migrant, youth and disability issues and the Open Doors Initiative wishes to grow that expertise directly within the communities they are assisting.

By working with other organisations to create new government and private sector schemes, the Open Doors Initiative strives to increase opportunities for marginalised groups in workplaces possessing an inclusive ethos. The Open Doors Initiative empowers employers to be disability and culturally confident by imbuing acceptance and awareness in their organisations so that they can assist marginalised people into progressive career paths. Furthermore, the Open Doors Initiative also brings value to employers by creating current employee pride and satisfaction with their workplace, increasing a more lateral thinking and creative workforce, widening the pipeline of talent available, ensuring that their customer and client base see them as a truly inclusive employer who embeds these values as part of their company goals. The Open Doors Initiative works with companies to create training and education programmes, design internships and placements, assist in recruitment, on-boarding and retention, and advise on all aspects of diversity and inclusion, both with the participant and other employees using schemes such as mentoring.

Purpose of the Report

Given the economic challenges caused by the COVID-19 crisis, this report examines existing employment patterns for the three target groups and investigates the supports currently offered across the country to aid their ambitions to secure employment. Therefore, the objectives of the report are to:

- Provide current statistical data regarding each of the three target groups
- Provide a profile of each of the three target groups
- Analyse existing policies relating to each of the three target groups
- Identify the distinctive challenges that each group faces in terms of labour market activation
- Offer recommendations regarding potential areas of opportunity for action by the Open Doors Initiative

The report provides information regarding the current employment situation for the three target groups which will enable informed discussions to take place and detailed plans to be proposed.

Funding for the project has been provided by [Positive 2 Work Skillnet](#) who support initiatives focused on building employment opportunities for marginalised groups.

1 - <https://www.opendoorsinitiative.ie/>

Introduction

Background Context

The banking crisis of 2008 in Ireland led to a deep economic recession. Over the next four years, the Irish economy struggled and unemployment rates rose each year, peaking at 16.0% in 2012². However, the economic growth that Ireland has experienced since 2012 has been remarkable with a decline in the rate of unemployment occurring each year. Statistics from Eurostat (2020)³ highlighted that having gone below the EU average in 2016 for the first time in many years, the gap between the rate of unemployment in Ireland and the average rate within EU countries continued to widen every year between 2016 and 2019 as Ireland's rate of unemployment maintained its movement downwards. According to CSO (2020)⁴ data, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December 2019 was 4.8%, down from 5.5% in December 2018. This unemployment rate of 4.8% was the lowest recorded in Ireland since January 2007. Meanwhile, the rate of inactivity (e.g. retirees) has mirrored the EU average between 2012 and 2019, remaining under 30% across those years.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis in March 2020 led to the country into a lockdown situation and according to CSO (2020) data, the rate of unemployment suddenly (and artificially) soared to 28.2% (if all claimants of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment are classified as unemployed). The unemployment rate in May was 26.1% and in June the new COVID-19 Adjusted Measure of Unemployment indicated a rate of 22.5%. Once all businesses are allowed to reopen and the Pandemic Unemployment Payment is no longer available, then the rate of unemployment is expected to decline substantially. However, many economic experts believe that it will be some time before Ireland will return to the rates of unemployment experienced prior to the COVID-19 crisis. What is unknown is how high will be the rate of unemployment when the country settles back into a routine existence and how many months / years will it take to bring unemployment rates below 5% again. Furthermore, experts also cannot predict how marginalised groups will be affected by increased rates of unemployment but many economic commentators believe that they will suffer disproportionately in comparison to the broader population.

2 - <https://www.opendoorsinitiative.ie/>

3 - https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Employment_rates_and_Europe_2020_national_targets#EU_Member_States_compared

4 - <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/labourmarket/monthlyunemployment/>

Introduction

Research Methodology

The methodology utilised was primarily based upon desk research due to the nature of the content required for the report, the existence of substantial amounts of relevant information through accessible documents and websites, and restrictions of movement relating to the COVID-19 crisis. Additionally, six in-depth interviews were undertaken with relevant experts as the researcher believed that there was a requirement to gain supplementary insights through appropriate expertise. The material gathered from the desk research provided the following information:

- Statistical data profiling each group and their levels of participation in the job market
- Updates on policy frameworks relevant to the target groups, dedicated strategies that had been developed and government departments responsible for each target market
- Updates on inclusive employment programmes and relevant regulatory measures
- Brief overview of recent policy actions for each target group

Following the desk research being completed, six expert interviews were then undertaken on the week beginning July 13th. Each interview was undertaken using Zoom and lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to enable greater understanding of the data generated from this research methodology. The combination of primary and secondary research ensured that any information garnered through the desk research could be verified through the in-depth interviews and any intelligence presented could be deemed to be current. However, it should be noted that while every effort was made to ensure that the information was correct at the time of writing, certain data may have altered from the time of publication. Also, due to the multitude of organisations and programmes concerned with this study, it simply was not possible to name all involved.

The report identified a multiplicity of organisations supporting unemployed people, but understanding which organisation and what support is most appropriate to a person's needs can be quite challenging due to the complex nature of the welfare, employment and training ecosystems. This section identifies the main organisations involved in offering support and seeks to map out how they interact with each other⁵.

Education and Training Boards (ETBs) - established in 2013, they were constituted from the former Vocational and Educational Committees (VECs) and FÁS Training Centres. ETBs manage and operate second-level schools, further education colleges and a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes. Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) is the national representative association for the 16 ETBs.

EmployAbility - is a nationwide service providing employment support services for people with a health condition, injury, illness or disability. Each jobseeker is assigned a Job Coach, who through a series of one-to-one meetings will assist and support a jobseeker to secure employment. EmployAbility Services are funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP).

Intreo - is a single point of contact for all employment and income supports and is part of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). Intreo provides unemployed persons with: employment services and income supports in one place; expert assistance and advice on employment, training and personal development opportunities from a dedicated Case Officer; and a focus on their individual needs to help a person enter or re-enter the workforce. There are 125 Intreo centres located across the country.

Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE) - is a federation of unemployed people, unemployed centres, unemployed groups, community organisations and Trade Unions. The INOUE represents and defends the rights and interests of those who want decent employment, plus it promotes and campaigns for policies to achieve full employment for all.

Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) - was established in 2010 to represent all 49 Local Development Companies (LDCs). ILDN is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development (through Pobal) and it is also supported by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. ILDN is supported through the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, plus the members of ILDN pay an annual subscription fee to support the work of the organisation.

JobsIreland.ie - is Intreo's free online job advertising and recruitment service for job candidates and employers.

5 - The information provided in this section is generally taken from the websites of the relevant organisations

Local Development Companies (LDCs) - are known by different names throughout Ireland including: Local Area Partnerships, LEADER Partnerships, Integrated Development Companies, as well as the more obvious Local Development Company. The LDCs deliver the Rural Development Programme LEADER, Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), Rural Social Scheme, Tús, Local Employment Service, Job Clubs, Rural Recreation Programme, The Walks Scheme and social enterprise programmes across Ireland. The LDCs also deliver a range of other initiatives where funding is available to enhance the development of communities through enterprise, training, activation, educational, health and community supports. In total, there are over 180 different programmes being operated by LDCs, with each one operating an average of 20+ distinct programmes.

Local Employment Services (LES) - were set up throughout the country in response to the need to help long-term unemployed people find jobs. A mediator will work with a person in developing their CV and job-seeking skills. LES guidance counsellors can provide a person with information about training, further education and second-chance educational programmes that may be of benefit to them. There are 58 offices in the country, but these are not evenly distributed as some areas have none available. The Local Employment Services are usually provided through Local Development Companies (LDCs) and funded by DEASP.

National Learning Network (NLN) - provides a range of flexible training courses across 41 centres for people who have experienced a setback, have had an accident, a mental health issue, an illness, injury or have a disability and extra support needs.

Pobal - was established in 1992 to provide management and support services to 28 programmes in the areas of Social Inclusion and Equality, Inclusive Employment and Enterprise, and Early Years and Young People. Pobal administers these programmes on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, as well as the Department of Health/HSE and a number of EU bodies.

Seetec - is a privately-owned business which began delivering employability and skills programmes in 2015. It has 50 offices and provides the JobPath programme on behalf of DEASP across the northern half of the country. Seetec is paid by DEASP to work with both the jobseeker and employers to identify employment opportunities.

SOLAS - was established in 2013 and it is responsible for funding the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and other bodies engaged in the provision of further education and training programmes. SOLAS also administers the Irish apprenticeship system and it is the designated intermediate body for the European Social Fund Programme for Employment, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020. Eligible further education and training programmes are co-funded by the Irish Government, the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and these co-funded programmes include ETB Training for the Unemployed, Adult Literacy, Back to Education Initiative, Community Training Centres and Youthreach.

Skillnet Ireland - established in 1999 and funded from the National Training Fund (NTF) through the Department of Education and Skills (DES). Skillnet Ireland is national agency responsible for the promotion and facilitation of workforce learning in Ireland and funds over 50 industry representative groups, supporting over 15,000 companies and 50,000 trainees annually. The organisation funds learning networks that provide subsidised training to companies and employees, and free training to job-seekers, through a number of key programmes. In particular, the Employment Activation Programme provides training and work placements for those seeking employment or those seeking to re-enter the workforce.

Turas Nua - is a privately-owned business and it has 29 offices. Turas Nua delivers the DEASP JobPath scheme in the Southern counties of Ireland. Turas Nus is paid by DEASP to work with both the jobseeker and employers to identify employment opportunities.

Many other organisations are also involved in supporting employment for marginalised communities, but it was not possible to deliver a comprehensive listing in this brief reporting of the situation. Additionally, government responsibility for helping unemployed from marginalised communities into employment would involve a variety of ministries such as the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Education and Skills, Department of Justice and Equality, Department of Rural and Community Development, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

CASE STUDY 1 - Dublin South City Partnership⁶

Dublin South City Partnership (DSCP) is a Local Development Company which addresses issues of disadvantage, unemployment and social exclusion across a large part of south Dublin city. The area has a population of over 125,000 and incorporates a diverse range of communities. DSCP delivers the following programmes: Community Development; Adult Education; Young People (16-24); Children and Families; Employment Supports; Enterprise Supports; Tús Programme; Local Employment Services; and Ability Programme. An important part of the DSCP brief is to work in partnership with various community and state agencies. Accordingly, they support a range of community groups on issues such as disability, older people, interculturalism, social regeneration and neighbourhood development. DSCP is funded from multiple sources including: Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection; Department of Rural and Community Development; Pobal (e.g. SICAP, Ability, Tús); EU Structural Funds; and the European Social Fund. The SICAP-funded work of DSCP is overseen by the Dublin City Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) which was established in July 2014. The LCDC consists of representatives from Dublin City Council, other State agencies and social and economic partners, and support for the LCDC is provided by the Community and Social Development section in Dublin City Council.

6 - <http://dublinsouthcitypartnership.ie/>

The array of training and employment supports available to unemployed persons is quite numerous and trying to understand the nature of the various offerings can be challenging. This section seeks to briefly explain the principal supports that a person might access should they be unemployed⁷.

Ability - provides supports to over 2,600 young people with disabilities aged between 15-29 years old. It focuses on projects aimed at young people with disabilities and is designed to assist in their transition from school to further education, training and employment.

Back to Education Initiative - provides part-time further education courses mainly for people who have not completed the Leaving Certificate or an equivalent qualification. It gives individuals the opportunity to combine learning with family, work and other responsibilities.

Community Employment (CE) - is designed to help people who are long-term unemployed (or otherwise marginalised) to get back to work by offering part-time and temporary placements in jobs based within local communities. Participants can take up other part-time work during their placement. After the placement, participants are encouraged to look for permanent jobs, based on the experience and new skills they have gained while on a Community Employment scheme. The CE programme is administered by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). Community Employment sponsors are voluntary organisations or public bodies that manage CE schemes at a local level. **Community Services Programme (CSP)** - supports community businesses to provide local services and create employment opportunities for marginalised people. It provides funding support to community companies and co-operatives. It focuses on communities where public and private sector services are lacking, either through geographical or social isolation or because demand levels are not sufficient.

FIT (Fastrack to Information Technology) - provides targeted information technology training for people who are getting certain social welfare payments. Courses include office administration, web design, broadband communications and PC maintenance.

Further Education and Training (FET) - offers a wide variety of life-long education options to anyone over 16 years of age. This includes apprenticeships, traineeships, post leaving certificate (PLC) courses, community and adult education, as well as core literacy and numeracy services. FET courses are provided at Levels 1 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ).

Job Clubs - provide a service to assist jobseekers to enter / re-enter employment through the provision of individualised supports, a 'drop in' service, CV preparation and formal workshops. The Job Club service enables jobseekers to take positive steps towards realising their career plans and to explore and follow-up employment opportunities.

⁷ - Much of the information for this section is taken from www.citizensinformation.ie and websites relating to the individual programmes

JobPath - is an employment activation service provided to people who have been on the live register for more than 12 months and are trying to secure and sustain full-time paid employment or self-employment. Two private companies employed by the State (Turas Nua and Seetec) have been contracted to operate the scheme.

JobsPlus - is an employer incentive which encourages and rewards employers who employ jobseekers on the Live Register. Employers are paid an incentive monthly in arrears over a 2-year period. It provides 2 levels of regular cash payments, €7,500 and €10,000 respectively.

LEADER - is administered at a local level by 29 Local Action Groups (LAGs) who operate on administrative or county boundaries and are made up of local representatives from the community, public and private sector. Each LAG is responsible for selecting and awarding LEADER funding to projects within their geographical area. A project must be aligned with the priorities of the Local Development Strategy (LDS). The LDS is a 5-year plan that was developed by the LAG, in conjunction with the rural community, to support the sustainable development of the area. Grant aid is provided to projects under the following priorities/themes: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation; Social Inclusion; Rural Environment.

Skills for Work - provides training and educational opportunities for those in part-time or full-time employment. It helps people to improve the basic skills they need in the workplace such as literacy, numeracy and IT skills. Skills for Work is delivered by the Educational and Training Boards (ETBs). Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) - provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between marginalised individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies. The programme is managed at a local level by 33 Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs), with support from local authorities, and actions are delivered by Programme Implementers (PIs). PIs work with marginalised communities and service providers using a community development approach to improve people's lives.

Springboard+ - provides free higher education places for unemployed people. A person can keep their social welfare payment for as long as they are entitled to it while they are participating on a Springboard course.

Tús - is a community work placement scheme providing short-term working opportunities for unemployed people. The work opportunities are to benefit the community and are provided by community and voluntary organisations in both urban and rural areas. The Tús initiative is managed by the LDCs and Údarás na Gaeltachta for DEASP.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) - is operated through local ETBs and is aimed in particular at unemployed people who are early school-leavers. It gives participants opportunities to improve their general level of education, gain certification, develop their skills and prepare for employment, self-employment and further education and training.

Wage Subsidy Scheme - gives financial support to employers who employ people with disabilities. The scheme is a workplace support for employers from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP).

The Work Placement Programme (WPP) - provides 9 months' work experience in the private, public, community and voluntary sectors for graduates and other unemployed people. The placements are for a minimum of 25 hours per week.

Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) - supports long-term unemployed young people back into the workplace. YESS aims to give young people the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment, while on a work placement in a host organisation. A person must be aged 18-24, unemployed and getting a qualifying social welfare payment for at least 12 months.

Youthreach - provides two years integrated education, training and work experience for unemployed early school leavers without any qualifications or vocational training who are between 15 and 20 years of age. There are almost 6,000 places available nationwide under the Youthreach umbrella and the majority of these places are provided by ETBs in over 100 Youthreach centres.

This listing provides a brief summation of the principal training and employment supports available to unemployed people from marginalised communities. However, many other programmes are also available to support such communities, but it was not possible to deliver a comprehensive listing in this brief reporting of the situation.

Social Welfare Supports

The social welfare system in Ireland is divided into three main types of payments. These are: Social insurance payments; Means-tested payments; and Universal payments. Social insurance payments are given to people who satisfy specific social insurance contribution conditions (PRSI conditions), in addition to the necessary circumstantial conditions. Means-tested payments are designed for people who do not have enough PRSI contributions to qualify for the equivalent social insurance-based payments. Universal payments are paid regardless of a person's income or social insurance record and are dependent on the claimant satisfying specific personal circumstances. This section simply lists the main benefits available to people who are unemployed. A person who becomes unemployed may qualify for any of the following supports⁸:

- Back to Education Allowance
- Back to Work Enterprise Allowance
- Back to Work Family Dividend
- Daily Expenses Allowance (Direct Provision Allowance)
- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Jobseeker's Transitional Payment
- Covid 19 PUP (can be combined with Back to Education)
- Jobseeker's Benefit
- Part-time Job Incentive Scheme
- Short-Term Enterprise Allowance
- Supplementary Welfare Allowance
- Training Support Grant
- Working Family Payment
- Youth Employment Support Scheme
- Rural Social Scheme

Dependent upon what unemployment benefits listed above that a person with health concerns may receive, they may also claim one or more of the following benefits:

- Blind Pension
- Carer's Allowance
- Disability Allowance
- Disability Awareness Support Scheme
- Domiciliary Care Allowance
- Health and Safety Benefit
- Home Caring
- Illness Benefit
- Injury Benefit
- Medical Care Scheme
- Partial Capacity Benefit
- Invalidity Pension
- Personal Reader Grant
- Reasonable Accommodation Fund
- Supplementary Welfare Allowance Supplements
- Treatment Benefit Scheme
- Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant
- Make Work Pay Benefit
- Mobility Benefit (Dept of Health)

The type of support that a person may claim is dependent on their PRSI contributions and their specific circumstances (e.g. type of disability), so each person will be assessed on an individual basis. They may also be eligible for other welfare supports (e.g. Rent Allowance) that are not included in this list.

⁸ - Much of the information for this section is taken from www.citizensinformation.ie and <https://services.mywelfare.ie/en/topics/out-of-work-payments/>

People with Disabilities

Definition

One of the issues that frequently arises when addressing matters relating to disability is the lack of agreement regarding its definition. There are multiple understandings of the term 'disability' and the many variations are frequently caused by context. Even agreement on the types of disabilities is not readily found since they may be categorised under headings such as Physical, Developmental, Cognitive, Sensory, Emotional and Intellectual Disabilities. In Ireland, the CSO 2016 Census⁹ identifies a person with a disability as someone with one or more of the following long-lasting conditions:

- Blindness or a serious vision impairment
- Deafness or a serious hearing impairment
- An intellectual disability
- Difficulty with learning, remembering or concentrating
- A condition that limits basic physical activities
- Psychological or emotional condition
- Other disability, including chronic illness

The Equality Acts (Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018)¹⁰ outlaw discrimination on the grounds of disability. These Acts use a wider definition and cover past as well as current disability:

- The total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body
- The presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness
- The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body
- A condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction
- A condition, disease or illness which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour

In terms of a consistent approach to this report, the definition adopted is that provided by the Disability Act (2005)¹¹. This Act was introduced to ensure the greater participation of people with disabilities in society and it defines disability as:

"A substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the Irish State or to participate in social or cultural life in the Irish State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment."

According to the Royal College of Nurses (2020)¹², the medical model of disability views people as being disabled, impaired and different, and that their needs should be addressed by medical and other treatments to help 'fix' them. This model has largely been replaced by the social model of disability which views society as being responsible for the barriers it places to the aspirations

9 - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp9hdc/p8hdc/p9tod/>

10 - See for example <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/21/section/2/enacted/en/html>

11 - <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/14/enacted/en/html>

12 - <https://rcni.com/hosted-content/rcn/first-steps/social-model-of-disability>

People with Disabilities

and progress of people with disabilities. These barriers can be environmental, attitudinal or organisational and are the obligation of society to address. Meanwhile, a person's environment, which includes the supports they have and the physical or social barriers they face, influences the scale of the challenges that they encounter in everyday life. This report views disability from a social model perspective and seeks to identify pathways to enable people with disabilities to maximise their economic and social potential.

Statistics

The following are the key statistics relating to people with disabilities in Ireland according to the CSO Census 2016¹³:

- There was a total of 643,131 people in Ireland who stated they had a disability, accounting for 13.5% of the population.
- In 2016, 311,580 (48.4%) people with a disability were male, while 331,551 (51.6%) were female.
- 6.7% of the population aged under 20 had a disability, 10% below 45 years of age, 20% below age 60, while 49.5% of the population aged 75 and over had a disability.
- The following is the breakdown of types of disabilities (some people reported multiple types):
 - Blindness or a serious vision impairment (8.5%)
 - Deafness or a serious hearing impairment (16.1%)
 - An intellectual disability (10.4%)
 - Difficulty with learning, remembering or concentrating (24.4%)
 - A condition that limits basic physical activities (40.9%)
 - Psychological or emotional condition (19.2%)
 - Other disability, including chronic illness (46.1%)
- Amongst people with disabilities aged 15 to 50, 13.7% had completed no higher than primary level education, compared with 4.2% of the general population.
- People with a disability aged 15 to 50 were less likely to complete third-level education, with 37% educated to this level, compared with 53.4% of the general population.
- There are 17,654 people with disabilities who are self-employed and have employees (13,118 male; 4,536 female)
- There are 34,461 people with disabilities who are self-employed and have no employees (26,198 male; 8,263 female)
- Of self-employed with employees, 8,158 have a difficulty with pain, breathing or any other chronic illness or condition, while 7,373 have a difficulty that limits basic physical activities (such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting or carrying)
- A 2017 ESRI report¹⁴ examined the employment transitions of people with disabilities and found that among those of working age, 82% had worked at some stage in their life, but 35% had been without work for more than four years.
- An OECD / European Union country report for Ireland (2018)¹⁵ revealed that Ireland had one of the lowest employment rates for people with disabilities in the EU (26.2 % compared to 48.1 % in the EU in 2017).

13 - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp9hdc/p8hdc/p9d/>

14 - Watson, D.; Lawless, M. and Maître, B. (2017). Employment transitions among people with a disability in Ireland: an analysis of the Quarterly National Household Survey, 2010-2015. ESRI, Dublin.

15 - OECD/European Union (2018). Inclusive Entrepreneurship Policies: Country Assessment Notes - Ireland, 2018. OECD Publishing, Paris.

People with Disabilities

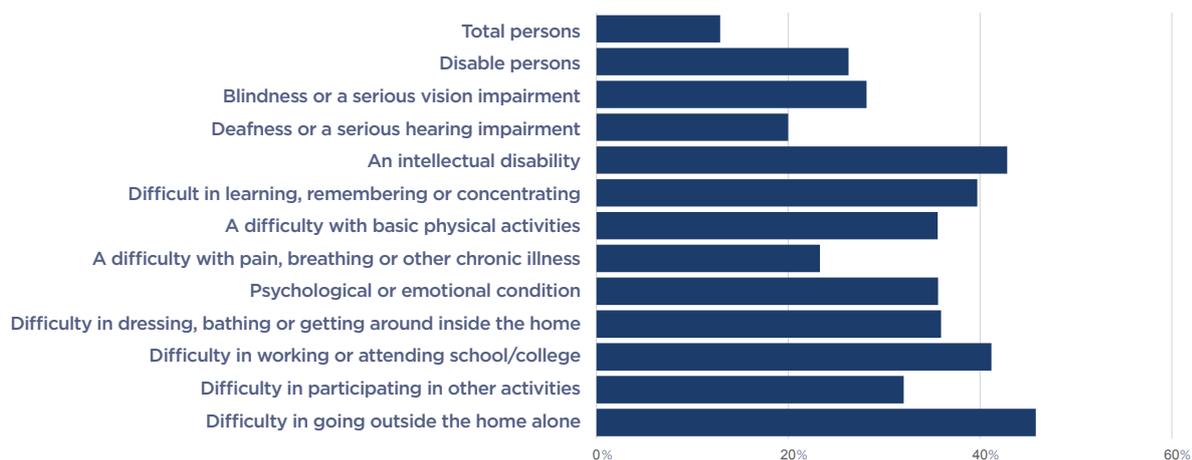
These statistics help profile the size and nature of the community that constitutes people with disabilities and highlights that the rates of education are lower for people with disabilities than found with the general population. It should also be noted that the majority of people who have a disability were not born with that disability, as most disabilities are acquired¹⁶. People can also acquire more than one disability as they age. At 18, about half of people who have a disability have more than one disability. By 85, 4 out of 5 people who have a disability have more than one disability and 55% have four or more disabilities.

People with Disabilities

Labour Market Activation

According to CSO (2016)¹⁷ statistics, the rate of unemployment amongst people with disabilities was 26.3%, over twice the 12.9% rate for the population as a whole. There were 176,445 people with disabilities in the labour force giving a labour force participation rate of 30.2%, compared with a rate of 61.4% for the overall population. Among the total population in the 15-64 age group, labour force participation rates were 78% for men and 65.9% for women, while for people with disabilities the rates were 51.1% and 42.2% respectively. Those with deafness or a severe hearing impairment had the highest participation rate in the labour force at 58.4%. Those with difficulty going outside the home alone had the highest rate of unemployment at 45.8%, while those experiencing deafness or a serious hearing impairment had the lowest unemployment rate at 20% (see Figure 1). The CSO data found that from the ages of 20 to 34, the number of female workers with a disability exceeded their male colleagues, but from age 35 onwards the number of male workers exceeded female workers in both number and proportion of disabled workers.

Figure 1 – Rates of Unemployment by Type of Disability (CSO, 2016)



A CSO (2017)¹⁸ report found that unemployment places “disabled people more at risk of suffering the negative impacts that are commonly associated with unemployment; for example, reduced financial stability, stress, lower levels of mental and physical health”. An ESRI (2017)¹⁹ study highlighted that 82% of people with a disability either currently were at work or had worked in the past, but people with disabilities were more likely to exit rather than enter employment and the odds of employment entry are nearly 4 times lower for people with a disability. The report suggested that any strategy addressing unemployment for people with disabilities should both increase the capacity of those not at work to get jobs and ensure that those currently at work can retain their jobs. The report argued that without specific interventions, however, the percentage of people with a disability in employment is unlikely to increase.

“The other major priority for me in the coming year will be Strategic Priority 6, which is titled ‘Engage Employers’. Huge work has been done, and is being done, to address the issue of employment of people with disabilities in the public sector. The private sector has, to a very considerable extent, opted out. There are many good and responsible employers and the NDA funded Employers Disability Information Service (EDI) has done verifiably good work in this area. I have to say that I believe, however, that for every employer willing to consider employing a person with a disability, ten look the other way”.

- Fergus Finlay, ‘Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities Report’ prepared by the Chair of the Implementation Group in respect of Year Three (2018)²⁰

17 - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp9hdc/p8hdc/p9d/>

18 - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wbn/thewellbeingofthenation2017/wk/>

19 - Watson, D.; Lawless, M. and Maitre, B. (2017). Employment transitions among people with a disability in Ireland: an analysis of the Quarterly National Household Survey, 2010-2015. ESRI, Dublin.

20 - http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Report_of_the_Chair_of_the_Comprehensive_Employment_Strategy_Implementation_Group_2018.pdf/Files/Report_of_the_Chair_of_the_Comprehensive_Employment_Strategy_Implementation_Group_2018.pdf

People with Disabilities

Existing Policies and Programmes

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted in 2006. Ireland signed the Convention in 2007 and further to its ratification in March 2018 it entered into force from April 2018²¹. In 2004, the Irish Government launched a National Disability Strategy which sought to tie together law and policy in the area of disability. The Disability Act 2005 was introduced by the Department of Justice which placed an obligation on public bodies to be proactive in employing people with disabilities. In 2007, the National Disability Authority (NDA) published A Strategy of Engagement: Towards a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities, while the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021²² was launched in 2017.

The Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024²³ was published by the Irish Government in 2015 as a mechanism to address the significant gap that exists in the rates of employment between people with and without disabilities. The strategy's six strategic priorities were identified as: (1) Build skills, capacity and independence; (2) Provide bridges and supports into work; (3) Make work pay; (4) Promote job retention and re-entry to work; (5) Provide co-ordinated and seamless support; and (6) Engage employers. Strategic Priority 6 (Engage Employers) stated that *"Employers will be supported and encouraged to employ people with disabilities, to support job retention and to facilitate return to work after the onset of a disability"*. A review of this strategy is produced each year by the National Disability Authority (NDA) and it is the principal guideline for government towards increasing the participation of people with disabilities in the labour market.

EmployAbility is the main government agency assigned to help people with disabilities to secure employment and they have 25 offices located throughout the country²⁴. EmployAbility provide an Employment Facilitator who supports clients with career planning, job searching, interview preparation, on-the-job support and development within the role to be able to work independently without support. The National Learning Network²⁵ is part of the Rehab Group and it delivers over 140 accredited vocational training programmes at levels 3, 4, 5 and 6 on the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework, many of which also include work experience. Ability²⁶ is a pre-activation programme managed by Pobal for young people with disabilities which enables them to participate in education, training and employment. The programme is being delivered by 27 LDCs around the country. People with disabilities may also be eligible for other Pobal-based programmes (e.g. Community Services Programme), but such opportunities will be dependent upon the nature of one's disability and the availability of relevant programmes that is accessible in terms of geographic location. Organisations such as the Equality Authority and the NDA have published useful resource packs to help organisations to recruit and retain people with disabilities into their workforce.

21 - <http://nda.ie/Disability-overview/Legislation/UN-Convention-on-the-Rights-of-Persons-with-Disabilities.html>

22 - Department of Justice and Equality (2017). National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021. Government of Ireland, Dublin

23 - Department of Justice and Equality (2015). Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024. Government of Ireland, Dublin

24 - See list of locations at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/28d5a6-list-of-employability-organisations/>

25 - <https://www.rehab.ie/national-learning-network/>

26 - <https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/ability-programme/>

People with Disabilities

Supports are also available to employers who are employing a person with a disability. The Reasonable Accommodation Fund is available which offers financial support comprising of the Workplace Equipment and Adaptation Grant, the Personal Reader Grant, the Job Interview Interpreter Grant and the Employee Retention Grant. The Disability Awareness Support Scheme provides funding for private sector employers to arrange and pay for disability awareness training for staff who work with a colleague who has a disability. The Wage Subsidy Scheme provides financial incentives to employers, outside the public sector, to employ certain people with disabilities who work between 21 and 39 hours per week. This listing is not comprehensive, but it outlines the type supports available.

People with Disabilities

Barriers to Employment for People with Disabilities

As previously highlighted, Ireland has one of the lowest employment rates for people with disabilities in the EU (26.2% compared to 48.1% in the EU in 2017). Although the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024 was launched in 2015, some interviewees for this study argued that the implementation of the strategy is under-resourced and little significant progress has been made to date in terms of improving employment numbers. There is also real concern that people with disabilities will be disproportionately affected if businesses begin laying people off due to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, plus some people with disabilities may be unable to return to work due to the nature of their disability.

People with disabilities face numerous additional and distinctive barriers when seeking to secure meaningful employment and AbilityFocus²⁷ identified some of the major barriers as follows:

1. Accessibility barriers in built environments. This includes transport, products and services.
2. Lack of awareness of disability in the workplace leading to misrepresentation and stigma.
3. Welfare systems which discourage people from entering employment.
4. Inadequate provision of workplace adjustments. It was argued by interviewees that the system for securing grant aid and subsidy schemes in Ireland is not fit for purpose.
5. Insufficient disability support services and a lack of inter-agency liaising.
6. Non-inclusive education and vocational training leading to lower levels of education and training among people with disabilities.
7. Lack of structured support for younger people with disabilities when making the transition from school to work.
8. Low level of capacity of publicly funded bodies to effectively support people with disabilities.
9. Lack of wholesale commitment from some public bodies towards government initiatives such as the Comprehensive Employment Strategy and National Disability Inclusion Strategy, leading to a lack of compliance with employment quotas.
10. Lack of awareness / confidence on how to include people with disabilities in the workplace.
11. Misplaced fear by employers of legal challenges by employees with disabilities if employment does not work out.
12. Misplaced fear of insurance issues when hiring a person with a disability.
13. Inaccessible work premises and work tools, including ICT.
14. Lack of support for persons with disabilities to secure and maintain employment.
15. Lack of information and support for companies considering employing people with disabilities.
16. Societal views of disability heavily stigmatised.

People with Disabilities

While securing a job is one issue, another big problem is job retention since that was mentioned by several interviewees. Also mentioned was that there was no senior government Minister responsible for disability, although this changed with the announcement in July 2020 of Roderic O’Gorman TD as the new Minister for Children, Disability, Equality and Integration. Furthermore, it was noted by some interviewees that EmployAbility (the agency responsible for supporting people with disabilities into employment) does not have a branding strategy or national network under which all 25 offices are coherently promoted. Finally, Social Justice Ireland²⁸ suggested that *“consideration should be given to reforming the current situation in which many such people face losing their benefits, in particular their medical card, when they take up employment. This situation ignores the additional costs faced by people with a disability in pursuing their day-to-day lives. For many people with disabilities the opportunity to take up employment is denied to them and they are trapped in unemployment, poverty, or both”*. Enhanced efforts are urgently required to change the current employment situation.

28 - <https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/policy-issues/work-and-people-disabilities>

Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants

Definition

The movement of people across international borders continues to grow as people either choose or are forced to leave their country of birth. The UN Migration Agency (2020)²⁹ projected that in 2019, the number of migrants globally reached an estimated 272 million, 51 million more than in 2010. The UN further noted that the number of forcibly displaced people topped 70 million, with almost 26 million refugees, 3.5 million asylum seekers and over 41 million internally displaced persons. Given such trends, understanding the different meanings of the terms ‘migrant, refugee and asylum seeker’ is critically important in distinguishing between these communities.

The UN Migration Agency (2020)³⁰ defined a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of: (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) the length of the stay. However, others have suggested that migrants might be defined by three different methods: by foreign birth, by foreign citizenship, or by their movement into a new country to stay temporarily or to settle for the long-term. Gilmartin (2019) highlighted how these three different understandings of the term can influence how migrants are counted and noted that the Irish 2016 Census calculated 535,475 non-Irish nationals, 810,406 people born outside Ireland and 888,899 who had lived outside Ireland for a year. The lowest number is 11.2% of the total population, while the highest number is 18.7% of the total population³¹.

The 1951 Refugee (Geneva) Convention defines a refugee as: *“someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion”*³². The definition of a refugee in Irish law can be found in Section 2 of the Refugee Act 1996 and it mirrors Article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention. According to the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) in Ireland, refugee status is granted if an applicant meets the requirements set out in the above definition. ORAC also highlighted that a person who is recognised as a refugee is entitled to work or operate a business and to access medical, social welfare and education services on the same basis as Irish citizens³³. The Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) was abolished on December 31st 2015 and responsibility for the investigation of applications for international protection was transferred to a new International Protection Office (IPO) within the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS).

The UNHCR (2020)³⁴ has stated that an asylum-seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed and that every year, around one million people globally seek asylum. According to Amnesty International (2020)³⁵, an asylum-seeker is someone who is seeking international protection abroad, but has not yet been recognized as a refugee. In Ireland, it is the responsibility of the Department of Justice to receive and decide applications for asylum under the terms of the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Accordingly,

29 - <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/migration/index.html>

30 - <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/migration/index.html>

31 - <https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2019/0405/1040849-who-is-a-migrant/>

32 - <https://www.unhcr.org/afr/what-is-a-refugee.html>

33 - <http://www.orac.ie/website/orac/oracwebsite.nsf/page/refugeestatusdetermination-criteriaforthegrantandrefusalofasylum-en>

34 - <https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/asylum-seekers.html>

35 - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/#:~:text=An%20asylum%2Dseeker%20is%20a,asylum%20is%20a%20human%20right>

Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants

applications for refugee status are submitted directly to the International Protection Office (IPO) and this is only possible for a person who is already in Ireland. Non-governmental organisations such as the Irish Refugee Council offer support and advice to people in the protection process or who have been granted status.

Statistics

Gathering data relating to refugees can be difficult due to different interpretations of the terms. The Annual Report on Migration and Asylum (2018)³⁶ provides the most recent overview of trends in the area of migration and international protection in Ireland. The report also provides a detailed overview of the migration system in Ireland and critical information regarding current developments. The figures below are taken from this report, with some additional data coming from the publication Monitoring Report on Integration 2018³⁷:

- In April 2016, there were 535,475 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland, a 1.6% decrease on the 2011 figure (544,357).
- The proportion of the population who were non-Irish nationals had also fallen from 12.2% in 2011 to 11.6% in 2016.
- A total of 8,225 citizenship certificates were issued in 2018. This compares with 8,200 certificates issued in 2017.
- Persons with dual-Irish nationality increased by 87.4% to 104,784 persons in 2016. The largest proportion was Irish-American, which accounted for 16.8% of all dual nationalities, followed by Irish-UK (14.7%) and Irish-Polish (8.8%).
- There were 142,924 non-EEA nationals with permission to reside in Ireland in 2018, compared to 127,955 at the end of 2017.
- The top ten nationalities, accounting for 60% of all non-EEA persons, were: Brazil (16%); India (15%); United States of America (9%); China (8%); Pakistan (4%); Nigeria (3%); Philippines (3%); Malaysia (2%); Canada (2%); and Mexico (2%).
- A total of 13,398 employment permits were issued during 2018, an increase of 17.9% over the 2017 total of 11,361. As in 2017, India was the top nationality, with 4,313 permits.
- The net inward migration for non-EU nationals at April 2019 was estimated to be 19,400.
- The number of newly arriving immigrants decreased year-on-year to 88,600 at April 2019 from 90,300 at April 2018. Non-EU nationals represented 34.5% of that total at end of April 2019.
- The number of visas (both long stay and short stay) issued in 2018 was 119,608.
- A total of 3,673 applications for international protection were received in 2018, an increase of 25% from the 2,926 applications received in 2017.
- A total of 163 deportation orders were effected in 2018, while 202 third country nationals availed of voluntary return.
- During 2018, 42 applications were received under the Start-Up Entrepreneur Programme (STEP) and 19 were approved. This contrasts with 158 applications and 32 approvals in 2017.
- A total of 420 applications were received under the Immigrant Investor

36 - Sheridan, A. (2019). Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2018: Ireland. ESRI, Dublin

37 - McGinnity, F.; Fahey, E.; Quinn, E.; Arnold, S.; Maitre, B. and O'Connell, P. (2018). Monitoring Report on Integration 2018. ESRI, Dublin

Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants

Programme (IIP) in 2018. A total of 45 applications were approved, 3 refused, 15 withdrawn and the remainder carried over into 2019. By the end of 2018, over 700 applications to the value of over €500 million had been approved through the IIP.

- During 2018, a total of 3,673 applications for international protection status were submitted to the International Protection Office (IPO). These figures include relocation cases from Greece under the EU relocation programme. This was an increase of 25.5% over the 2,926 applications for refugee status submitted to the IPO in 2017. Ireland's applications accounted for 0.5% of the EU total of 647,165,181 applications in 2018.

Overall, the statistics suggest that the rate of immigration into Ireland is slowing down and that the proportion of immigrants as part of the overall population is decreasing. The statistics also suggest that there is increasing diversity in terms of country of birth for immigrants coming to Ireland and there is also increased integration occurring through citizenship and dual nationality.

Case Study 2 – Irish Refugee Council (Women's Employment Programme)³⁸

The Women's Employment Programme assists new arrivals to navigate Ireland's employment systems. The Irish Refugee Council provide women with pre-employment training in a peer-supported environment, as well as employment-readiness support including English language training, one-to-one mentoring and supported work experience and volunteering placements. Empowering women with this support better positions them to retain stable employment in an area reflective of their skills, experience, education and interests. By April 2020, the programme had supported 62 women to prepare for a return to employment and 24 women had secured either full or part-time employment, including some who had set-up their own businesses, with the remainder continuing their training or education in pursuit of better career prospects for the future.

38 - <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/womens-employment-programme>

Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants

Labour Market Activation

An OECD/EU (2015)³⁹ report highlighted that employment leads to financial independence and reduces the risk of poverty and social exclusion, plus it also facilitates immigrants' integration into society. According to the CSO 2016 Census⁴⁰, there were 347,233 non-Irish nationals in the labour force in April 2016 with a participation rate of 73.9%. EU nationals had the highest participation rate at 76.8%, whereas it was 64.3% for those from countries outside the EU. Male participation among EU males was 82.8% as opposed to 70.9% for females, while for those from outside the EU, the male participation rate was 71.8%, compared with 56.5% for females. The principal sector for immigrant employment was the accommodation and food service sector, while the next largest sector was the information and communication sector. McGinnity et al (2018)⁴¹ determined that the unemployment gap between immigrants and natives in 2017 was smaller in Ireland than the European average, with both groups experiencing an unemployment rate of approximately 7%. A significant proportion of immigrants are studying in Irish universities and therefore are not seeking permanent employment.

McGinnity et al. (2019)⁴² noted that the most disadvantaged group is African nationals, who have much lower employment and activity rates than other immigrant groups. The African employment rate is 45% compared to an average of 70% for non-Irish nationals. Kingston et al. (2013) suggested that the severe disadvantages suffered by Black African individuals may be due in part to the fact that many Black Africans in Ireland are refugees. This means they would have spent an extended period of time excluded from the labour market (and from participation in Irish society) as asylum seekers in the Direct Provision system, leading to a scarring effect on their future employment prospects. O'Connell (2018)⁴³ also highlighted the negative impact of the Direct Provision system, but suggested that racial discrimination amongst employers may be an additional influencing factor.

It should be noted that previous ESRI Integration Monitor reports have shown that non-Irish nationals were hit harder by the 2008-12 recession than Irish nationals, in terms of both employment and unemployment rates. This may become a concern again if unemployment rates were to rise due to the COVID-19 crisis. A surprising statistic was the lower than expected rate of self-employment among immigrants. McGinnity (2018) ascertained that the Irish had a self-employment rate of 14.7% in 2017, while the non-Irish had a rate of 8.1%. Of the non-Irish in self-employment, UK nationals had a rate of 19.0%, EU-West was 6.6%, EU-East was 5.9% and Non-EU 5.9%. Given that the EU (excluding UK) and non-EU rates were relatively similar, issues such as government policies and permit requirements for non-EU nationals would not appear to be an issue.

39 - OECD/European Union (2015). Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In. OECD Publishing, Paris/European Union, Brussels

40 - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp11eoi/cp11eoi/lfnmfl/>

41 - McGinnity, F.; Fahey, E.; Quinn, E.; Arnold, S.; Maitre, B. and O'Connell, P. (2018). Monitoring Report on Integration 2018. ESRI, Dublin

42 - McGinnity, F.; Grotti, R.; Groarke, S. and Coughlan, S. (2018). Ethnicity and Nationality in the Irish Labour Market. Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and ESRI, Dublin

43 - O'Connell, P.J. (2018). Why Are So Few Africans at Work in Ireland? Immigration Policy and Labour Market Disadvantage. UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy (Geary WP2018/16), Dublin

Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants

Existing Policies and Programmes

The Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland (2015)⁴⁴ has argued that the introduction, development and implementation of Ireland's immigration system generally occurred without a policy or legislative vision and that the system has not kept pace with the demand for labour. This report found that immigrants suffered employment issues such as exploitation, low pay trap, poor levels of progression and difficulties upholding their employment rights when threatened with or becoming undocumented. In terms of legislation, Ireland is party to the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and is also a signatory to the EU Dublin Regulation (EC 343/2003)⁴⁵. The principal piece of domestic legislation dealing with refugees and asylum seekers is the Refugee Act 1996, which entered into force in November 2000. This Act incorporated the 1951 Geneva Convention into domestic law and it provided for the establishment of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC), as well as the Refugee Appeals Tribunal, and it sets out a framework for the determination of asylum applications. The Migrant Integration Strategy⁴⁶ has been developed as the Government's response to the challenge of promoting integration in the context of increased diversity in Ireland. Theme 5 of the strategy addresses 'Employment and Pathways to Work' and Actions 38-47 detail what measures Government will take to support this ambition.

Within the Department of Justice and Equality, the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI) has a mandate to develop, lead and co-ordinate migrant integration policy across other Government Departments, agencies and services. Also located within this government department is the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) which was established in 2005 to provide a one-stop-shop for asylum, immigration, citizenship and visa services. The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) is responsible for co-ordinating the provision of services to both asylum seekers and people granted international protection in Ireland. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is responsible for employment permits. There are nine employment types under which an application might be considered and these are: Critical Skills Employment Permit; Intra-Company Transfer Employment Permit; Exchange Agreement Employment Permit; Dependant/Partner/Spouse Employment Permit; Contract for Services Employment Permit; Sport & Cultural Employment Permit; General Employment Permit; Reactivation Employment Permit; and Internship Employment Permit. Furthermore, there are different types of work visas permitted which are Stamp 1, 1A, 1G, 2, 3, 4 and 4S. Each Stamp offers a different status and criteria under which a person is allowed to work. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection is responsible for the provision of welfare benefits to immigrants, but any entitlements are very much linked to the nature of their visa. If a person has refugee status or subsidiary protection, then they are entitled to apply for social welfare payments on the same basis as an Irish citizen. An asylum seeker is entitled to direct provision which includes bed, breakfast, lunch and evening meal, plus each person in direct provision gets a Daily Expenses Allowance (formerly called a Direct Provision Allowance). Since July 2018, asylum seekers can apply for permission to work. If they meet the eligibility criteria, then they will receive permission to access employment and self-employment and this is valid for 6 months.

44 - MCRI (2015). Workers on the Move: Past Lessons and Future Perspectives on Ireland's Labour Migration. MCRI, Dublin

45 - <http://www.orac.ie/website/orac/oracwebsite.nsf/page/refugeestatusdetermination-legalframework-en>

46 - Department of Justice and Equality (2017). Migrant Integration Strategy. Government of Ireland, Dublin

Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants

There are a number of organisations that help immigrants with their employment rights, including the Irish Refugee Council, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, Community Law and Mediation the Migrant Rights Centre. Business in the Community Ireland (BITC) offers a programme called EPIC (Employment for People from Immigrant Communities) which works with immigrants and refugees to help them integrate into Irish society. BITC also runs the programme RISE which is suitable for recently arrived refugees (or refugees who have been in Ireland for longer but have not worked for a long time) and for asylum seekers who are eligible for work permits⁴⁷.

Barriers to Employment for Refugees

It was interesting to note in the earlier data that the rate of unemployment for immigrants in Ireland was very similar to the rates for people born in Ireland. However, the situation is different for refugees and asylum seekers as they face additional barriers when seeking meaningful employment. Indeed, refugees who do manage to enter the labour market are frequently under-employed and are more likely to enter employment beneath their level of skills/qualifications in the low- or un-skilled sector. A report by the London Metropolitan University (2005)⁴⁸ found the following were the principal barriers to refugees securing meaningful employment:

1. Limited language proficiency
2. Lack of confidence
3. Poor knowledge about the national systems (particularly the employment system)
4. Lack of relevant qualifications, references and work experience
5. Experiencing poor health due to stress and anxiety
6. Family responsibilities
7. Lack of childcare (particularly for women)
8. Welfare benefit trap
9. Employers not recognising overseas qualifications
10. Lack of accessible, relevant advice and guidance for refugees

The report also found that the unemployment rates among refugees and asylum seekers can be differentiated in terms of a range of other factors, such as length of stay in a country, level of educational qualification and gender.

McGinnity et al. (2019) identified three types of challenges facing immigrants in securing employment in Ireland. The first type is government policies as any EU national may move to Ireland and take-up employment without restriction, but non-EU nationals are subject to managed migration policies that rely on the employment permit system to meet skill shortages, mostly in highly-skilled occupations. The second type relates to personal characteristics which may include educational qualifications acquired abroad not being recognised as equal to Irish qualifications, work experience acquired abroad being less appreciated than work experience in Ireland or an immigrant may not be fluent in speaking English. The third type of challenge is discrimination by employers based on nationality or ethnicity. These different types of challenges are not unique to Ireland, but they help explain the additional and distinctive challenges that non-EU nationals endure when seeking employment in Ireland.

47 - <https://www.bitc.ie/business-action-programmes/business-action-on-employment/are-you-a-jobseeker/>

48 - London Metropolitan University (2005). Challenging Barriers to Employment for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in London. The SEQUAL Development Partnership (DP), University of Surrey, Guildford

Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants

A further barrier highlighted by interviewees for the study was the location of the Direct Provision centres. Many are located in remote areas that requires multiple bus rides to bring a person to their place of work. The long commute for low pay may not be an attractive employment proposition for a refugee and this may cause them to reject the opportunity. The Direct Provision centres frequently have poor access to the internet and slow broadband speeds which makes remote work very difficult from a practical perspective. Some interviewees also highlighted other barriers such as skills atrophy after a period without work, lack of knowledge about rights in the workplace, lack of knowledge about how to apply and interview for positions, and cultural differences. Additionally, many employers are unaware that refugees can work if they meet certain criteria, plus the permission document that refugees receive is printed on paper and does not have the same look as the plastic card that they would receive with other visas. Finally, many refugees have skillsets or home-country entrepreneurial experiences that have not been transferred into their host country, but they could be encouraged if suitable role models were identified from within their community.

Marginalised Youth

Definition

There are many different understandings of the term 'youth' and also to the term 'marginalised youth'. The United Nations (2018)⁴⁹ defines youth as those persons between the ages of 15-24, while the African Union Charter defines youth as ages 15-35. Understanding the terms marginalised also has various interpretations with Schiffer & Schatz (2008)⁵⁰ defining marginalisation as “a process by which a group or individual is denied access to important positions and symbols of economic, religious, or political power within any society”. The European Commission⁵¹ identified marginalised youth as: “young people that are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more of the situations and obstacles which prevent young people from having effective access to formal and non-formal education, transnational mobility and participation, active citizenship, empowerment and inclusion in society at large”. The OECD (2017)⁵² recognises marginalised or disadvantaged young people as those who face risks in different areas that multiply and reinforce each other. The young people become further marginalised when these risks lead to further deprivation and when there are few or no effective policies in place to prevent or to remedy the negative consequences once they have occurred. The OECD report suggests that policy can target two groups:

- Youth at risk: young people who are exposed to risk factors, but who have not yet suffered negative well-being outcomes (they require preventive measures).
- Deprived youth: young people who already experience deprivation in one or more dimensions of well-being as a result of their exposure to risk factors (they require second chance programmes).

Table 1 (below) identifies the many different risk factors that youth face in terms of their well-being and how they might lead to marginalisation.

Individual	Family/Household	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Gender • Ethnicity/Race • Migration • Disability • Mental health/low self-esteem • Poor nutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty/scarcity • Poor household amenities • Parental education • Single parenthood • Early parenthood • Lack of parental support • Lack of parental control • Domestic abuse/violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: urban/rural, administrative area (district, province or region) • Access/quality of schools • Unsafe/poor neighbourhoods • Negative peer influences • Infrastructure and public services (health, SRH, information and communication technologies) • Social and cultural norms (gender, early marriage)

In Ireland there is no agreed definition of the term 'marginalised youth', but Molcho and Mullins (2018)⁵⁴ suggest that it those who experience less favourable access of opportunities to participation relating to: education; healthcare; social events; community events; employment; and financial resources. This understanding of the term would be broadly accepted as being appropriate for this study.

49 - United Nations (2018). Youth 2030: The United Nations Youth Strategy. United Nations, New York.

50 - Schiffer, K., & Schatz, E. (2008). Marginalisation, social inclusion and health. Amsterdam: Foundation Regenboog AMOC & Correlation Network.

51 - European Commission (2013). Erasmus+ Guide, 2013. European Commission, Brussels.

52 - OECD (2017). Evidence-based Policy Making for Youth Well-being. OECD Publishing, Paris.

53 - OECD (2017). Evidence-based Policy Making for Youth Well-being. OECD Publishing, Paris.

54 - <https://socialcareireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Michal-Molcho-Molcho-M-Mullins-L-Marginalised-children-in-Ireland.pdf>

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Statistics

Given the intricacies involved in defining youth, gathering data relating to marginalised youth can also be challenging. The following are the key statistics relating to young people in Ireland according to the CSO Census 2016⁵⁵:

- The number of people aged 15-19 years old was 302,816 (male was 154,908; female was 147,908).
- The number of people aged 20-24 years old was 273,636 (male was 137,584; female was 136,052).
- Table 2 highlights the principal economic status of persons aged 15-19 and 20-24.

Table 2 - Principal Economic Status	15-19	20-24
All	302,816	273,636
At work	18,494	120,881
Seeking first job	6,083	10,693
Unemployed, having lost or given up previous job	8,216	23,036
Students	266,809	107,979
Home duties	722	5,255
Retired	237	299
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	1,626	4,147
Other	629	1,346

- Just under one in six of those aged 18-24 in Ireland in 2016 was neither in employment nor in education and training (the NEET rate).
- The EU average NEET rate was 15.2% and varied from a low of 6.1% in the Netherlands to 26% in Italy.
- The NEET rate in Ireland for males aged 18-24 was 16.3%, above the rate for females of 15.5%.
- Young people in the EU⁵⁶ with a low level of education were almost four times as likely to be neither in employment nor in education and training as those with a high level.
- In 2019, the share of young people in the EU who were NEETs was lowest in cities (14.8%) and highest in rural areas (18.1%), with towns and suburbs reporting a NEET rate (17.4%) that was between these two extremes.

55 - www.cso.ie

56 - https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_or_training#The_transition_from_education_to_work

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The Department of Children and Youth Affairs published its strategy in 2015 and it contained the following statistics relating to youth⁵⁷:

- Just over 90% of young people completed second-level education in 2014, with half progressing into third-level education, and a fifth into vocational training.
- 12,246 young people were referred to the Garda Youth Diversion Programme in 2012.
- In 2014, 23.9% of young people aged 15-24 years were unemployed. The trend is down from almost 80,000 on average in 2009 to 47,000 on average in 2014.
- In 2013, 14% of young people aged 15-24 years were living in consistent poverty.

An OECD (2014)⁵⁸ report argued that reducing NEET rates is a great challenge for governments, as youth who remain jobless for long periods typically come from more marginalised backgrounds, have low levels of educational attainment and are in many cases inactive in the labour market.

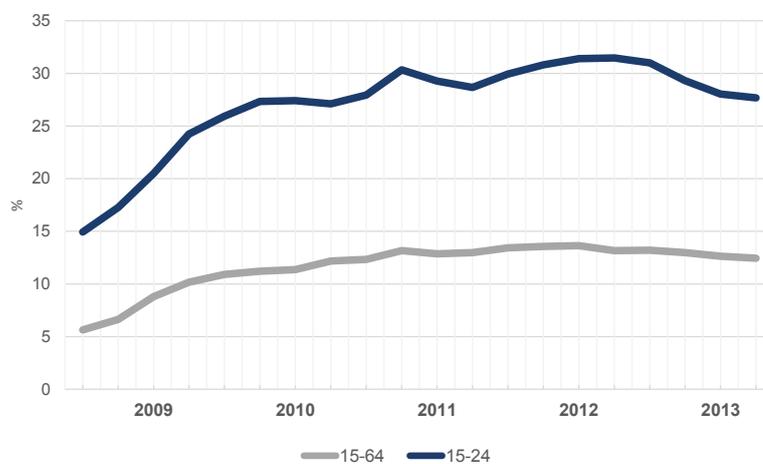
57 - Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015). National Youth Strategy 2015-2020. Government Publications, Dublin.
58 - https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/neet-youth-in-the-aftermath-of-the-crisis_5js6363503f6-en

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Labour Market Activation

Unemployment for young people in Ireland was below EU averages prior to the 2008-12 recession. This feature of the Irish labour market could be explained by a strong economy with low overall rates of unemployment, high participation rates in third-level education and a historic tradition of emigration (or at least working abroad for a number of years). In the years leading up to 2008, the NEET (not in education, employment or training) rate in Ireland was below the average OECD rate, averaging around 11%. Between 2006 and 2011, the Irish NEET rate more than doubled from under 11% to over 22%. Figure 2 demonstrates how unemployment rates disproportionately affected 15-24 year olds between 2009-13 following the economic crash of 2008.

Figure 2 - Unemployment Rates Ireland 2009-13 (OECD, 2013)⁵⁹



In more recent times, the rate of unemployment for young people has declined. CSO (2020)⁶⁰ figures for June 2020 show that the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for persons aged 15-24 was 12.8% (in May 2020, the youth unemployment rate in the EU was 15.7%). The unemployment rate was 14.1% for males and 11.4% for females, but it should be noted that these figures do not take account of the COVID-19 payment paid to people temporarily made unemployed due to the pandemic. However, the highest share of employees earning the National Minimum Wage (NMW) or less was in the 15-24 years age group with 54.7% and this was up from 50.0% a year earlier. Employees whose highest level of education was secondary education (lower and higher) accounted for 64.9% of all employees who reported earning the NMW or less in Q4 2019⁶¹.

Just under one-in-six of those aged 18-24 in Ireland in 2016 was neither in employment nor in education and training (the NEET rate). The EU average NEET rate was 15.2% and varied from a low of 6.1% in the Netherlands to 26% in Italy. The NEET rate in Ireland for males aged 18-24 was 16.3%, above the rate of 15.5% for females. Ireland is one of the few countries in the EU in which youth born outside the country do not have higher NEET rates than native-born youth. Those with low education levels fare particularly badly in Ireland as 65% of youth who dropped out of school before completing upper secondary school are NEET

59 - OECD (2013). OECD Economic Survey of Ireland. OECD Publishing, Paris.

60 - www.cso.ie

61 - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/lfsnmw/lfsnationalminimumwageestimatesq42019/>

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compared to just 13% of those with a third level degree, one of the largest gaps across the OECD⁶². Research also shows that people will more likely stay in school longer if their parents are more highly educated and it is also related to their socio-economic status. In terms of recidivism, persons under 21 who serve a prison sentence are three times more likely to reoffend than those aged over 50. The recidivism rate for persons under 21 was 72.3% in the 2012 cohort⁶³ and 73.1% in the 2011 cohort. According to the Irish Youth Foundation⁶⁴, in Ireland in 2019, the estimated foregone total earnings of those not in employment, education or training was €3.24 billion.

Existing Policies and Programmes

According to the OECD (2014)⁶⁵, Ireland has a dense network of institutions at national and local levels whose remit concerns youth education, employment and inclusion. The report suggested that there was a need to *“reduce fragmentation in service delivery by mapping the existing programmes and the different pathways they can take at the local level. Identify and address barriers to joint working, strengthen the role of existing linkers and brokers and agree on leadership of the youth employment agenda at local level”*. This section teases out the main policies, programmes and organisations supporting marginalised youth seeking employment⁶⁶.

Government responsibility for helping youth transition from education to employment would primarily involve the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Education and Skills, Department of Justice and Equality, Department of Rural and Community Development, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. The National Youth Strategy 2015–2020⁶⁷ is the guiding document for youth affairs and it has its basis in The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People (2014–2020). However, this strategy does not identify specific goals regarding reducing youth unemployment, but mentions can be found in a variety of government strategies emanating from different government departments (e.g. Regional Enterprise Plans). Ultimately, there is no singular strategy that addresses youth employment in Ireland and Social Justice Ireland (2020)⁶⁸ has suggested that Government should introduce a Youth Employment Strategy that builds on the European Commission Youth Employment Support package to ‘bridge jobs for the next generation’⁶⁹.

One of the most important programmes targeted at marginalised youth is Youthreach which provides young people with opportunities for basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience. The programme is aimed at unemployed early school leavers aged 15 to 20. The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) is a special range of courses designed to meet the education needs of unemployed people who are early school-leavers. It targets people over the age of 21 who have been getting unemployment payments or signing for credits for at least 6 months. The Work to Learn programme brings business, government and non-profit organisations together to give socially excluded young people paid work-experience opportunities that result in improved orientation towards education, increased perseverance,

62 - <https://www.oecd.org/ireland/sag2016-ireland.pdf>

63 - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-prir/prisonrecidivism2011and2012cohorts/>

64 - <https://iyf.ie/skills-employability/>

65 - <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/Youth-Local-Strategies-Ireland.pdf>

66 - Much of the information for this section is taken from www.citizensinformation.ie and websites relating to the individual programmes

67 - Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015). National Youth Strategy 2015–2020. Government Publications, Dublin.

68 - <https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/policy-issues/time-youth-employment-strategy>

69 - https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1193

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confidence and work readiness. Work to Learn is a work experience programme for young people who have struggled in mainstream education and who are at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. The programme employs a youth work approach to support marginalised young people in developing self-esteem, finding pathways to work and strengthening their engagement in mainstream education. The Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) supports long-term unemployed young people back into the workplace. To qualify, a person must be aged 18–24, unemployed and getting a qualifying social welfare payment for at least 12 months. It is primarily targeted at young people who may have issues with a family history of unemployment, low levels of education or skills, housing insecurity or homelessness or a history of substance abuse. They may also be eligible for SICAP programmes.

The principal organisations involved in assisting marginalised youth transition into employment are the Youthreach Centres, ETBs, LDCs and a plethora of voluntary youth work organisations operating at a local level. There is also input from advocacy organisations such as the Irish Youth Foundation, Foroige, Youth Work Ireland and the National Youth Council of Ireland. While national supports are available across the country, local supports would be highly dependent upon where a person is based.

Barriers to Employment for Marginalised Youth

Carcillo et al. (2015)⁷⁰ highlighted that NEETs are far from a homogeneous group both within and across countries: younger NEETs do not have the same needs and expectations as older ones; NEETs from low-educated families face specific educational challenges; young parents often need additional childcare support; those with health problems need specific interventions that combine medical and employment support; and those living alone do not have the same motivations as those living with their parents. A detailed investigation by the McCreary Centre Society (2014)⁷¹ of the barriers to employment for vulnerable youth identified the following challenges:

- Lack of required qualifications, skills and experience
- Poor coping and interpersonal skills
- Peer pressure and low levels of personal motivation
- Low levels of self-confidence
- Employers discriminating against youth
- Restricted job opportunities
- Transportation challenges (especially in rural areas)
- Lack of suitable role models
- Difficulty accessing job postings and employment programmes
- Childcare responsibilities (particularly women)
- Negative government care experience
- Experiencing poverty, poor health conditions or disability
- Legacy of criminal record or in conflict with the law

The report by the McCreary Centre Society (2014) highlighted that youth with government care experience were more likely than those who were never in care

70 - Carcillo, S.; Fernández, R. and Königs, S. (2015). NEET Youth in the Aftermath of the Crisis: Challenges and Policies. OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, Paris.

71 - McCreary Centre Society (2014). Negotiating the Barriers to Employment for Vulnerable Youth in British Columbia. BC Centre for Employment Excellence, Vancouver.

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to have experienced obstacles because they had a criminal record. Also, youth who had stayed in a custody centre were more likely to report not getting the support they needed to find a job than youth who had never been in custody. Youth who identified as having behavioural, mental health, and/or substance use challenges were more likely than their peers without such challenges to have experienced obstacles to employment. NEETs are a very diverse group with deep issues that require substantial levels of individual support. During the COVID-19 lockdown, supports for marginalised youth became more difficult to maintain and so previous good work in developing employment skills with young people may have lost momentum.

Case Study 3 – Ballyhoura Development NEETs Initiative⁷²

Ballyhoura Development is a community-led Local Development Company operating in the East Limerick and North Cork region. It was established in 1989 and it currently delivers over 30 programmes, focusing on three key goals of: Community Development; Economic Development; and Environmental Development. One of its most successful programmes is the Ballyhoura NEETs Initiative which targets 15-24 year olds who are unemployed. The programme is funded by SICAP and it pays for a Youth Engagement Programme Worker, Driver Theory and Life Skills Advisor Support. Attending the programme is a major development for many of the participants involved and the first step towards engagement is identifying an interest-based course that a participant might wish to attend. Life coaching takes place on a one-to-one basis and peer guidance is also encouraged. Reinforcing positive messages and empowering young people to take ownership of their careers are critical objectives of the programme, although that may be challenging on occasion since the young participants are frequently struggling with stress and anxiety which may be caused by various personal or family sources. Ballyhoura Development proactively promote their programme through door-to-door activity in targeted geographical areas, plus through interaction with local schools to identify early school leavers and by working with numerous external agencies. Ballyhoura Development provides integrated supports and multiple interventions with 49 participants availing of their help in 2018.

72 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_5OE4fXiMw and <https://www.ballyhouradevelopment.com/>

Recommendations

In July 2020, the Government of Ireland announced the July Jobs Stimulus⁷³ which specified a wide range of measures that the government was introducing to “get Ireland’s businesses back on their feet and get as many people as possible back to work quickly”. These measures included a €200 million investment in training and education, skills development, work placement schemes, recruitment subsidies, and job search and assistance measures to help people get back to work, especially young people. Given the context of this evolving situation, identifying recommendations that may already be in planning creates exceptional challenges. Furthermore, implementing these recommendations to support people from marginalised communities into employment requires the participation of a wide range of stakeholders who will have their own set of organisational goals. While many recommendations were offered by interviewees for the study and identified through the desk research, the principal recommendations for those involved in the employment support sector are listed here.

1 - Build Dedicated Online Hubs - the biggest challenge providers and recipients of support services face is understanding the vast array of information, organisations, programmes and welfare benefits that exist for each group. There is a need for a dedicated knowledge hub for each of these areas similar to the Employer Disability Information website (see Case Study 4 below) which unfortunately is not active at this time. Similar websites need to be established for Refugees and for Youth, preferably with one organisation taking responsibility for hosting and managing all three websites.

Case Study 4 - Employer Disability Information (EDI)⁷⁴

Employer Disability Information was established in 2015 and was funded through the NDA as part of the comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities until 31st December 2018. The website sought to provide employers with an expert peer source of advice and information on employing staff with disabilities, with a view to enhancing the confidence and competence of individual employers to employ, manage and retain staff with disabilities. The service was managed by a consortium of employer organisations (Chambers Ireland, IBEC and ISME) and it offered the following supports: (1) dedicated phone line; (2) web-based information resource; (3) dissemination of information relating to employment of people with disabilities; and (4) networks and fora for employers to share experiences and good practice.

PLEASE NOTE: The following message was on the website when viewed on July 24th 2020: *“Unfortunately The EDI project has concluded operation as of January 31st [2019]. The website still contains all resources”*.

2 - Design and Implement National Strategies - given the existence of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024, similar national employment strategies are needed for both Refugees and Youth. It is quite surprising that such strategies do not already exist given the scale of the challenge involved (especially regarding NEETs) that would help co-ordinate all of the activities and organisations involved in this area.

⁷³ - <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/5654a-july-jobs-stimulus/>

⁷⁴ - <http://www.employerdisabilityinfo.ie/>

Recommendations

3 - Promote Entrepreneurship - each of the three target groups have substantial entrepreneurial capability and yet no national strategies or tailored programmes have been designed to enable people from these marginalised communities to pursue self-employment as a career opportunity. Cooney and Aird (2020)⁷⁵ proposed a cost-effective funnel approach in their report Pathway to Entrepreneurship for People with Disabilities in Ireland which could be similarly adopted for the other two communities.

4 - Secure Ring-Fenced Funding - additional funding is needed to co-ordinate the multitude of activities that already exist. It would require an oversight committee who would identify clear metrics to measure success and who would monitor the progress against an agreed Action Plan. It would also require a single organisation to manage the fund and implement the plan.

5 - Increase Government Percentage of Diverse Hiring - given the challenges that lie ahead for marginalised communities in securing employment, the government should take the lead and through the Public Appointments Service it should proactively increase the percentage of people that it employs from marginalised communities.

6 - Create a Dedicated Recruitment Portal for Employers/Employees - this portal would enable employers to connect with employees from marginalised cohorts, matched by suitability and merit. This will allow 'positive' filtering, with CVs to be sent through blind and thereby avoiding unconscious bias around names, educations, gaps in work, etc. that some face when applying through other recruitment avenues.

7 - Establish a Large-scale Mentoring Programme - encourage businesses to join a mentoring programme that would instil confidence in job seekers from marginalised groups, allow them to begin a support network and lead them through applying for jobs and interview skills

8 - Undertake Skills Audit of People - the research has highlighted that many people in Direct Provision and people with disabilities for example, possess skillsets and entrepreneurial experiences that could be beneficial to the Irish economy. It would be highly beneficial to undertake an audit so that employers are aware of the skills and experiences available and targeted hiring could then take place.

9 - Introduce Sectoral Placements for Target Groups - it would be beneficial to have 'professional apprenticeships' which would allow early school leavers and people who are reskilling or whose skills have atrophied to enter into a professional career and this would also enhance diversity and inclusion across many different industry sectors that are currently significantly underrepresented in terms of marginalised communities. Some examples of this are already in place in the financial sector.

10 - Maximise Access to Hardware, WIFI and Training in Digital Skills - the COVID-19 crisis highlighted the digital divide that exists and underlined how people from marginalised communities do not possess the same levels of digital access as the general population. A targeted Digital Skills initiative would allow them to pursue opportunities and be work ready when they arise. Assisted learning has an important role towards ensuring a strong uptake and completion of courses. This could potentially be rolled out as an adjunct to a mentoring programme.

⁷⁵ - <https://tudublin.ie/media/website/news/2020/main-news/Pathway-to-Entrepreneurship-for-People-with-Disabilities-in-Ireland-2020.pdf>

Recommendations

This report recognises that wonderful work that is already taking place in supporting people from marginalised communities into employment, but identifying and co-ordinating these activities remains a critical issue. The recommendations presented in this report seek to harmonise and put a greater focus on the many government and non-governmental initiatives that are taking place across the country. These recommendations are also designed to maximise the effectiveness and efficiencies of existing supports while maintaining the principle of being person-centred as the first priority. The collective ambition is to reduce the rates of unemployment for each of the target communities, but only through working together can such an ambition be truly achieved.



Supporting People from Marginalised Communities into Employment

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