



Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot Project – working with young people and employers to reduce youth unemployment through training and securing placements.

PILOT PROJECT TO TEST THE YOUTH GUARANTEE APPROACH IN A DISADVANTAGED AREA IN BALLYMUN, IRELAND

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This Youth Guarantee pilot project sought to address the very high rate of youth unemployment in Ballymun. In this area on the outskirts of Dublin, the unemployment rate for 15-24 year olds was 54% in 2011 in comparison to the national average of 39%. At the end of the project, the unemployment register reduced by 29% as 88% of project participants were provided with a good quality offer of employment, training, further education or an apprenticeship. The project was deemed to have successfully met the needs of young people in the area. Important lessons learnt include the necessity for tailoring communication methods and content to the needs of the target group – in this case both young people and employers – so that it's engaging and 'fit for purpose.' Young people, who are the most marginalised, often require a multi-disciplinary approach to help them to address and overcome multiple barriers. In such cases they may not be ready for education, training or employment within four months. For employers, a proactive, personal approach proved key to engaging them. This was done through telephone calls, face-to-face meetings and breakfast briefings.

Name of the PES

Department for Social Protection

When was the practice implemented?

January to December 2014

Which organisation was involved in its implementation?

Department for Social Protection

A national steering group also brought together the following stakeholders:

- ▶ Employer and trade union organisations: Irish Business and Employer Confederation, Activating Dublin and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions;
- ▶ Youth and development organisations: National Youth Council of Ireland and Irish Local Development Network;
- ▶ Education and training organisations: SOLAS and City of Dublin Education and Training Board;
- ▶ Government departments: Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Department of Education and Skills, Department of Social Protection.

Which groups were targeted by the practice?

The target group for the pilot project was all newly registered unemployed young people and those already on the unemployment register (many of whom were long-term unemployed), all aged between 18 and 24.

The target group was divided into three specific groups:

- ▶ Those with very low-level educational attainment (35%);
- ▶ Those holding a high school 'Leaving Certification'/some work experience (47%);
- ▶ Those with 3rd level qualification/good work experience (18%).

Employers were also an important target group and this included large and small and medium-sized enterprises.

What were the practice's main objectives?

The pilot project had three broad objectives:

1. To develop and deliver a model Youth Guarantee tailored to the needs of a disadvantaged urban community;
2. Test the effectiveness of this model in Ballymun;
3. Extract the lessons learnt to inform the further development and implementation of the national Youth Guarantee.

The aim was to provide the target group with a good-quality offer of a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, work experience or continued education within four months of registration at the public employment service or within four months of an initial guidance interview (depending on the young person's circumstances).

<p>What activities were carried out?</p>	<p>The pilot project activities provided quality guidance services and focused on providing client-centred interventions to ensure that quality offers fit to the needs of each young person.</p> <p>Each young person's journey in the pilot project broadly followed the following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification and selection of participants; 2. Youth Guarantee assessment and development of a career plan. This was followed up with further training where relevant, including: basic skills development; personal skills development; specific skills training; preparation for education and training; or work experience; 3. Where relevant, entering into a course or training in mainstream education and training; 4. For all participants, entering into employment. <p>If a young person failed to participate in relevant activities they were faced with the possibility of sanctions. The Irish PES were very proactive in reaching out to employers. In some cases they made initial contact via the telephone to explain 'what's in it for them' and the support that they could provide to the employer if they wish to hire a young person. Face-to-face meetings also took place between the PES and employers where PES explained the different ways they could get involved. In addition, meetings and events were organised at times that suited employers, for example breakfast briefings.</p>
<p>What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?</p>	<p>As part of the pilot project, the national steering group was mirrored by a local implementation team who were more involved in the on-the-ground delivery.</p> <p>The project was very proactive in the work with employers. The PES' dedicated Employer Engagement Officers went out to meet them in their premises to explain what PES could offer them and find out what they could offer to the project using a 'menu of options', whereby any contribution from an employer was welcome – from a simple talk at a job club to providing a work experience placement.</p>
<p>What were the source(s) of funding?</p>	<p>European funding</p>
<p>What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?</p>	<p>People reached: The number of young people attending the guidance interview and agreeing on a career plan was 679.</p> <p>Products: Communication materials included a website, mailshots, leaflets, newsletters, breakfast briefing sessions for employers, career plans, and guidance sessions.</p>
<p>What outcomes have been identified?</p>	<p>At the end of the pilot project, young people on the unemployment register in the area reduced by 29% in comparison to a national average reduction during this time of 19%. The previous record reduction in Ballymun in the ten years prior was 6.5% (in 2010).</p> <p>In terms of participants, by the end of the pilot project 593 (88%) young people were made a good quality offer. 98% of the offers were made within the 4 month deadline. Moreover 57% of these were for education or training and 43% were for work experience, an internship or employment (covering publicly-funded employment programmes, full-time private sector employment, part-time employment and internships, and work experience/blended learning programmes). Almost 70% were happy with the process and would recommend it to a friend.</p>

What are the lessons learnt and success factors?

The pilot project's external evaluation found that the project had 'successfully met the needs of young people.' The partnership approach helped to ensure joined-up working, make the most of expertise available, and involve all of those who contributed something to the project. However, the pilot project also showed that collaboration with employers needs to have a high priority and be very well organised. As a result, PES put in place a strategy for employer engagement and subsequently will be revising their employer-focused communication materials and tailoring it to large and small and medium-sized employers. In terms of working with employers, defining PES' offer – what PES actually wants from employers – was an important learning point for the project. In many cases, PES found that employers are not fully aware of PES services and that financial support was available for hiring an unemployed young person. PES learnt that the method of communication and the message to young people is very important. Traditional media such as letters may not be the most suitable for some young people – particularly those with literacy difficulties and or whose life-style makes them highly mobile (routinely not at 'home' to receive mail). Instead, SMS reminders for appointments were much more effective and communications used language that was engaging for the audience. Incentives were used to encourage young people to take part in the different opportunities. Benefit sanctions were in place for those in receipt if they failed to attend appointments or take part in specific activities. The project found that it is difficult to engage the most marginalised young people. In these cases, multi-disciplinary approaches are important and they may require counselling, not coaching. Indeed, a four month time frame for the Youth Guarantee may not be suitable for all as some young people may require more intensive support before entering into employment, education or training. Lastly, the project learnt that the role of the guidance practitioner is critical in providing a quality guidance service, ensuring that the offer available to the young person has the right 'fit' and, in many cases, offers support after the offer is made.



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