Foreword


The Newsletter highlights some of the achievements of the ESF in Ireland in 2013. The articles in this issue show the variety of projects that benefit from the ESF in both the Border Midlands and Western Region (BMW) and the Southern and Eastern Region (S & E).

The cover photo is a logo designed by Charmaine Smyth, a student from Castleblayney Youthreach. It was one of the overall winners in the Irish Council for Civil Liberties Competition. This competition asked participants to identify human rights, social justice or inequality issues that affect Ireland today.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed with articles for this year’s issue and to those who contributed over the duration of the 2007-2013 period.

Willie Mc Intosh
Head of ESF Managing Authority
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PRIORITY 1:
INCREASING ACTIVATION OF THE LABOUR FORCE

Skills Training – SOLAS (ESF 1.1)

Local Training Initiative (LTI) – Connect Programme Waterford.

The Connect Programme is a Local Training Initiative programme set up in 2009 to provide training for people with disabilities in Waterford. It is 100% funded by SOLAS and Waterford Area Partnership is the sponsoring organisation.

The need for the programme was identified by people with disabilities and their families as a result of the downturn in the economy. Post 2008, many traditional industries in Waterford were no longer recruiting or were closing. Disabled people had lost confidence in the capacity of training programmes to assist them achieve the objective of open employment. The call centre sector was a growth area and in discussion with people with disabilities and their representatives Fas Community Services agreed to fund a course in Contact Centre Operations. In order to maximise the contact between the training course and the Contact Centre Sector, an approach was made to Rigney Dolphin to see if they would host the programme on the premises. Rigney Dolphin agreed to this novel proposal and the programme has been carried out on the premises since its inception.

The Connect Programme offers students the opportunity to gain a FETAC level 5 Major Award in Contact Centre Operations.
While the primary aim of the programme is to ensure that each person achieves a FETAC L 5 major award, the programme also takes a personal approach and a range of supports are offered to learners as required. For example staff provide personal one to one attention to students. Individual learning plans and personal development are key to the success of the programme. Staff work closely with students to ensure their full potential is met and they are supported in their chosen path, be it education or work.

The Connect Programme has established that it is possible to provide certified training to people who are viewed as distant from the labour market, with training in a sector within which there has been significant growth in Waterford city.

In Waterford there are approximately 900 people employed in the contact centre sector. Connect participants, as a result of their industry specific award, are valuable to employers in this sector. Over the past 5 years the Connect Programme has worked closely with two of these contact centres. It has established links which have ensured that Connect participants have been successful in gaining both full and part time work and are integrated as highly / occupationally trained members of staff.
Student Testimonial

Vicky Sullivan: Class of 2013-2014

I commenced the Connect programme in 2013. My reasons for starting the programme were to learn computer and office skills to help me get back into the work place. I had been previously studying for a Law degree when I found out that I had Sudden Adult Death Syndrome which resulted in my having to leave my degree and undergo treatment for my condition.

After two years at home recuperating I realised I needed to get back to work and the call centre environment appealed to me. I received excellent support from my tutors individually. I learned all types of Microsoft Office skills and did modules such as communications, contact centre skills and customer service. I gained great practical experience during work practice in a local call centre which helped me build my confidence and resulted in me securing a full time job.

Working with Solas has always been a pleasure. We share the same front door but are more than just neighbours, students and staff are part and parcel of our daily routine now. This has really helped both organisations understand each other’s cultures and objectives. When students come to us for work experience they just fit in so well. This year alone Rigney Dolphin have employed 3 students and it’s a great reflection of the work put into the program by the staff and students alike. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the program in the future.

Robert Hanrahan, Rigney Dolphin
BTEI – Back to Education Initiative (Part-time) (ESF 1.3)

Laois Offaly ETB

Pictured above are a group of students completing their Senior Trades Hairdressing in the Adult Education Centre, Edenderry.

Laois Offaly ETB run a number of hairdressing courses in their centres in Banagher and Edenderry which are part-funded through BTEI. These courses range from FETAC Level 3 modules in hairdressing to a full FETAC Level 5 Certificate in Hairdressing, while also offering students the opportunity to complete their Junior and Senior Trades Examinations.
Final year BSc. BIS students are participating in a Lean Simulation using Lego.

Motorcycle Factory Lean Simulation.

Overview:
The Motorcycle Factory Lean Simulation is a unique Lean Simulation developed by Martin Hughes, a lecturer in Business Information Systems in the School of Business & Economics at NUI Galway. The simulation is the centrepiece of the final year BSc. BIS module Lean Principles for the IS Professional. The simulation creates a highly engaging experimental learning environment in which the students learn and gain experience of the fundamentals of Lean Principles through active participation in the creation of Lean outcomes.
Aim:
The aim of the simulation is for the student to develop an advanced interface skill, theoretical understanding and experience necessary for them to become agents for transformational change.

How it Works?
The simulation is based on the use of Lego motorbikes. The teaching space is configured to represent a real motorcycle factory environment. As in real life, the factory has people, production stations and processes that combine to produce the finished motorcycle. However, the factory is also subject to resource constraints and initially the factory is performing very poorly. Over a multi stage process, representing production cycles, the participating students are charged with the task of making the factory profitable.

The Experience
The experience of the simulation is completely compelling. Students become immediately immersed in the reality of the simulation resulting in a truly experimental learning outcome. Time pressure, inefficient processes and uncertainty combine to create chaos. To resolve the chaos, the students have to come up with the solutions themselves. Problems have to be identified, solutions have to be sought, implemented and evaluated. Processes have to change, people have to change but where to start?

Through a phased process, students are challenged to implement solutions. However, there is no template solution and the facilitator allows the students to identify and implement their own solutions even if they are ‘wrong’. Over the phases improvements can be seen and problems are solved. Eventually, the factory achieves profitability. This event is always greeted by a spontaneous cheer which is striking evidence of the levels of personal engagement invested in the simulation by the students.

In addition to Lean Principles, students learn about Change Management, Decision-making under uncertainty, Effective Communication and Customer Satisfaction.
Radio Interview: The Pat Kenny Show  
Date: Wednesday, 15th January, 2014  
Title: Getting back into the workplace

Topic: The challenges facing those hoping to get back to work after unemployment.

Peter Cosgrove – CPL Resources, Michael O’Driscoll and Tina Valli (former participants of MOMENTUM programme) joined Pat Kenny in studio to discuss.

Pat Kenny introduces Peter Cosgrove, CPL Resources and Michael O’Driscoll and Tina Valli – former participants of MOMENTUM programme.
Pat Kenny – *Peter, what is MOMENTUM and how does it work?*
Peter Cosgrove explains that MOMENTUM is a government initiative aimed at getting long term unemployed back into employment. He explains that while unemployment numbers are falling there are still challenges in getting long term unemployed people back into employment. The goal is not just to train people but to get them into employment after their training.

Pat Kenny – *How did your company get involved?*
Peter Cosgrove explains how his company became involved, explaining that there was a tender process for interested companies. Companies have to demonstrate that they can not only train individuals but also get/attempt to get them into employment after their training.

Pat Kenny – *Do you specialise in any particular sector in the MOMENTUM programme?*
Peter Cosgrove explains that Healthcare is one of the sectors covered in the programme but that there are plenty of other sectors also.

Pat Kenny introduces a former participant of the MOMENTUM programme, - Michael O’Driscoll.

Pat Kenny – *Michael, how long are you out of work and what did you do before?*
Michael O’Driscoll describes his background and explains that he was working in the construction industry as a carpenter/joiner at Foreman grade and supervisory level for 20 years but lost his job during the downturn. He has been unemployed for 2 years now.

Pat Kenny – *How quickly did you realise you would have to change direction or do something else?*
Michael explains that after a year of sending CV’s and not finding employment he decided it was time for a new course of work/career change.

Pat Kenny – *How did you find out about MOMENTUM?*
Michael explained that he checked various recruitment websites and then came across a link for the MOMENTUM programme on the CPL website. He looked into the MOMENTUM programme further and found the promise of 20 weeks training and in company work placement of interest.

Pat Kenny – *What did you decide to do given that there was nothing in construction meaning that you had to learn new skills?*
Michael explained that he had an interest in the area of Process Engineering and partially completed a course in Sligo IT but when he saw the profile of the MOMENTUM course he was very interested. He applied for the Process Technician course and was successful in securing a place on the course.
Pat Kenny – **What exactly was that course?**

Michael - the Process Technician course covered Manufacturing Process Techniques, Quality Management Systems, Food Technology and a broad base of skills. Michael explained that the course was intensive covering 13 modules in 20 weeks with a lot of course material.

Pat Kenny – **Where did they place you?**

Michael – Turners Printing Company in Longford. Turners were looking for people with an aptitude for quality and quality checking, process improvement and a good work ethic.

Pat Kenny – **Did you find that when you went to Turners that you actually settled in quickly. Did you recognise the practice of what you had been learning in theory in the classroom?**

Michael – explained that he has no background in printing but it was obvious to him that the theory covered on quality checking, quality management systems and quality control on the 20 week in class course and the way it was taught helped him put the theory into practice and he fitted in quickly when he was in the workplace.

Pat Kenny – **What about a permanent job?**

Michael – I have been offered a permanent position with Turners Printing Company.

Pat Kenny – **Are you happy in the job or would you prefer joinery?**

Michael - Explains that he recognised that he needed a career change and MOMENTUM did that. He explains that as part of the MOMENTUM programme he was retrained to take opportunities with both hands and when you get an opportunity not to let it slip away.

Pat Kenny introduces Tina Valli a former participant of the MOMENTUM programme.

Pat Kenny – **Tina tell us about yourself**

Tina Valli - describes her background explaining that she is originally from Estonia and came to Ireland with her partner and 3 children in 2005. Tina is a qualified PE teacher and worked in this area in Estonia. However she could not find employment in this area when she moved to Ireland.

Pat and Tina discuss the school system in Estonia and the importance of PE in schools there.

Pat Kenny - How long were you in Ireland without any work even though you wanted to work? Tina explains that she found work as a kitchen porter after 3 months of arriving in Ireland but then in 2008 lost her job due to the closure of the company.
Pat Kenny – How did you come across MOMENTUM?
Tina explains that you need to have initiative and want to learn and to look for places to get help. Tina explained that she went to a FAS office and they directed her to MOMENTUM course.

Pat Kenny – What MOMENTUM course did you take and what did it involve?
Tina applied for the Healthcare course and was successful in obtaining a place on the course. The course covers areas that equip participants for work as care assistants in hospitals and nursing homes. The course was 20 weeks in class training followed by work placement. Tina’s work placement was in St Joseph’s Nursing Home in Ardee, Co. Louth. Tina speaks of how she was very lucky and enjoyed the work. She found the work very rewarding and helpful and enjoyed interacting and helping people.

Pat Kenny – Have you been offered a job?
Tina has been offered a job by the HSE as a Care Assistant.

Pat Kenny – Where will you work?
Tina Valli - In Co. Louth. Tina is due to start work with the HSE in February. Until then Tina is doing agency work.

Concluding the discussion, Pat Kenny congratulates Michael and Tina on getting back into work after a number of years being unemployed. Michael O’Driscoll and Tina Valli speak of how good it is to be back in work. Pat addresses Peter Cosgrove and refers to the statistics of 6% of unemployed people finding employment on their own and 55% of long term unemployed finding employment through the MOMENTUM programme.

Peter Cosgrove – says that people make sure that those entering the courses have an interest/vocation to the course, they want to learn and have a positive attitude.

Pat Kenny also comments on the fact that there is sometimes a caricature that long term unemployed people do not want to work or that they believe it doesn’t pay to work etc.

Pat Kenny – For anyone listening, is it that if you have the ambition to get back to work there is a pretty good chance of getting a job?

Peter Cosgrove – agrees that yes that the perception that long term unemployed people do not want to work or that they believe it doesn’t pay to work etc. is often there but that it is important for people to know what so they can tackle this straight away by saying “that’s not me”. He explains that there are opportunities out there but that it takes both hard work and a bit of luck. The harder you work the luckier you will be.
PRIORITY 2: INCREASING PARTICIPATION AND REDUCING INEQUALITY IN THE LABOUR FORCE

DACT – Disability Activation Project (ESF 2.2)

The Disability Activation Project (DACT) aims to increase the capacity and potential of people on disability/illness welfare payments to participate in the labour market.

This Project is jointly funded by the European Social Fund and the Department of Social Protection. The target group for this funding is people with a disability, 16 to 65 years of age, in receipt of disability/illness welfare payments residing in the BMW region.

The programme represents funding of €7m to organisations with experience of working with people with a disability. 14 projects have been funded under 4 key strands:

- **Strand 1** – Improving Access to Employment
- **Strand 2** – Progression Programmes for Young People
- **Strand 3** – Support for Progression and Retention of People with an Acquired Disability
- **Strand 4** – Innovative Employer Initiatives

Pobal manages the administration of the DACT Project on behalf of the Department of Social Protection and the 14 approved projects listed below are now in their second year of delivery. By the end of 2013, 878 people with disabilities were participating and 194 had already moved into employment or education. 857 employers had also engaged with the funded projects by the end of 2013.

One of the funded projects is “Training Options”, delivered by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU).

Following many years of working with people with disabilities and having researched a peer mentoring programme that was very successful in Iceland, ICTU decided to add mentoring and peer support to its pre-employment courses. Mentors are trained in Career Guidance, supporting the learner and assisting with goal setting and pathways to training or employment. This person-centred approach is key to alleviating fears and barriers people experience having been disconnected from the work place. Also built into the supports offered in the Training Options project are assistance with transportation and childcare.
Each learner has the opportunity to achieve 3 (NFQ Level 3) Component Certificates, 10 days’ work placement, one-to-one mentoring and also the opportunity to apply to be a mentor or Disability Champion working part-time in the Congress Centres Network. Each learner works with his/her mentor to complete an Individual learner progression plan and have a clear pathway, either to further education and training or to return to work.

To date 77 learners have completed the programme, translating into 77 Individual Learner Plans, 770 days on Work Placement, 231 Component Certificates (NFQ level 3) and 4,620 training days delivered by ICTU. 45 local employers have also been engaged and made aware of potential employees available locally.

Minister Joan Burton with participants in the ICTU Training Options Project
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant &amp; Project Title</th>
<th>Project Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICTU – Options programme</td>
<td>Individual progression plan mentoring – FETAC training and work placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Learning Network</td>
<td>Comprehensive Transition Plan for adolescents with autism/learning disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkinstown Assoc for people with an Intellectual Disability – Providing Equal Progression routes (PEER)</td>
<td>Building capacity, competence and potential through person centred planning for 16-24 year olds, using local community networks and trained volunteers (buddy system).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaghan Integrated Development Ltd. – Ability Activation North East</td>
<td>Awareness raising with employers (training w/shops, engagement with local authorities, business sector identification etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Bradley Foundation/Acquired Brain Injury Ireland – Work4You</td>
<td>Establish 3 vocational assessment to support people with acquired brain injuries to remain in or re-enter the workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Limerick/Arthritis Ireland – Working with Arthritis – Solutions &amp; Strategies</td>
<td>Developing individualised occupational therapy programmes to overcome barriers faced by people with arthritis in accessing, remaining in or returning to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Learning Network – Linking In</td>
<td>Developing early supportive interventions for people on Illness Benefit to promote reintegration specifically in the SME sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers of Charity Roscommon – Open to Work Opportunities</td>
<td>Building relationships between (rural) employers and people with disabilities to ensure appropriate job placements which match needs of both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Learning Network – Personal Employment Pathway</td>
<td>Develop personalised integration strategy for participants below FETAC 3 level – case managed, community based, job tasters etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Association of Supported Employment – Open Door</td>
<td>Awareness raising with employers – targeted employer events, supports to ‘new’ employers, develop online support materials etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drumlin House - Step Right to Work</td>
<td>Providing enhanced personalised service to people with disability who currently receive personal development and work-skills training in Drumlin House &amp; develop relationships with local employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo LEADER partnership – SEED</td>
<td>Community based mentoring and employment supports service (personalised progression plans and case management) for and by people with disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers of Charity Galway – Access to Work, Let’s Get to Work, Supported Employment Intensive</td>
<td>Targeting people with disability with very high support needs with person-centred planning, securing employment or developing business enterprise with local business people as mentors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Roscommon Disability Support group - Disability Activation for Work Nutrition (DAWN)</td>
<td>One-stop shop for training and business incubation – case managed approach with groups of 15, personal development plans, education, work-placement, self-employment supports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phrases and sentences from the image:

- Adult Literacy – (ESF 2.3)
- M.A.D.E. – ITABE (Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education)
- Wexford.
- AONTAS STAR AWARD WINNERS (LEINSTER CATEGORY)
- MAKING A DIFFERENCE EVERYWHERE
- M.A.D.E. began three years ago as a 14 week ITABE programme in Ozanam House, a hostel for homeless men in Wexford.
- The main aim and focus of the project is to encourage the men to return to education, improve self-confidence, self-esteem and equip the men with the skills and motivation to take their place in society and to enable them to achieve independent living and to return to the work force. The project covers basic literacy skills and life skills. Content is flexible to meet needs of learners. There are between 8 and 12 learners at any one time.
- The main partners were WWETB Adult Literacy Service (Wexford) and Ozanam House, a hostel for homeless men in Wexford. The Adult Literacy Service provided tutors and delivered a number of ITABE programmes in the hostel. The management of the hostel provided space for the sessions to take place with access to the kitchen when needed and also provided use of a minibus for field trips. A number of other organisations have had involvement to varying degrees, for example; The Cornmarket Project Wexford (an inter-agency community based treatment and rehabilitation project under the auspices of Wexford Local Development) printed up t-shirts that were designed by the men’s group and worn by them when volunteering in the community. The Wexford Arts Centre have offered a space and support for the men to put on a play that they plan to write themselves. Talbot Green women’s group and the MADE group worked together in the Talbot Green area of Wexford tidying and planting flowers and together they entered and
won an award in the Wexford Tidy Towns competition. WWETB have run themed ITABE programmes in the hostel such as art, cookery and photography as well as horticulture and life skills programmes. WWETB supported the men in looking at pathways to move forward through the Adult Guidance service. Wexford Borough Council facilitated a sports workshop aimed at the older age group under the Age Action project.

Individual initial learner assessments were carried out to establish literacy needs, interests learning and career goals of each learner. All learners have access to the Guidance Service on a one to one basis and the Guidance Counsellor has visited the group in the hostel to identify progression routes. Identifying learning styles and turning them into learning strategies has been an important feature of the course. Learners are encouraged to give their input and opinions throughout the project. This programme is at all times flexible to meet the current and changing needs and issues arising in the group. Course content, pace and activities are all learner driven. The programme was designed in consultation with the learners and is flexible enough to allow individuals to pursue their own goals and learning needs whilst still being part of the group.

Learners have diverse skills and interests and opportunities were given to each to build on their strengths in support of the group objectives. For example, one learner was a keen artist and he drew out the design for the t-shirt and also the poster advertising the end of year barbeque. Another learner's area of interest was horticulture and he planned the gardening scheme and grew some flowers from seed for the Talbot Green project. He is now growing vegetables for the hostel. Another learner was a keen musician and songwriter and he coordinated the musical entertainment for the barbeque and also participated in the writing of the Hostel Song.

Learners are introduced to other agencies and as many new experiences as possible to expand their horizons. Tutors were appointed based on their experience of working with marginalised people and on their knowledge and understanding of the issues pertaining to homelessness.

Despite all the odds stacked against this group they have flourished as a result of the learning programme and the interagency support. The project has supported and encouraged the men to become involved in the community and to take an active, positive role in society. It has improved their self-worth and empowered them to take a step forward and address some of the issues and challenges in their lives including building bridges, making friends and rebuilding their lives. A huge focus of the MADE group was reaffirming their identity. Everybody, learners, keyworkers, tutors, coordinators and managers worked together with a common goal of 'making a difference everywhere'.
Edenderry Men’s Group is a group of unemployed men from local authority housing estates in Edenderry. The men range in ages from 21 to 62 years. In conjunction with Offaly Local Development Company, the men initially completed a woodcraft course which was funded under Community Education. From there, the interest to progress further grew and the men completed a FETAC Level 3 in Woodwork which was funded through Adult Literacy.

The group made some spectacular pieces, including chairs, tables, mirrors and sculptures.
Introduction:

Unilink is a confidential, practical, evidence-based occupational therapy service for students who may be experiencing mental health and/or physical and sensory disabilities. Unilink is an innovative service between the Disability Service and the Academic Discipline of Occupational Therapy at Trinity College Dublin (TCD). The approach used within the Unilink Service is rooted within the Recovery Model, as espoused by A Vision for Change (Department of Health and Children, 2006) as well as a combination of occupational therapy theory - the Person-Environment-Occupation Model (Law, Cooper, Strong, Stewart, Rigby & Letts, 1996) and the social model of disability (Terzi, 2004; Swain & French, 2000; Barnes & Mercer, 2010).

The service has grown considerably over the past ten years, supporting 21 students with disabilities within Trinity College Dublin in 2004-05 to supporting over 450 students with disabilities in HEIs across the Dublin region in the academic year of 2012-13.

Unilink is funded through the European Social Fund for Students with Disabilities. It has been recognised nationally by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the Association of Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), the Mental Health Commission (2007) and the Oireachtas Committee on Mental Health, as a model of good practice in supporting students with disabilities within college. It has a proven track record in ‘Institutional Leadership’ and a collaborative relationship in supporting students with disabilities. It has a formal code of governance and its mission is to support students in their college journey, to engage in their student role and complete their studies throughout their college career.

What Does Unilink Do?

Unilink aims to enable the student, to develop practical skills and strategies to help them manage their role as a student both academically and socially.

Within Unilink, this means that we are promoting the students’ engagement and participation in all aspects of college life, whether it is academic or social, by using and adapting occupation, by occupational analysis and by promoting occupational engagement to restore and maintain health and wellbeing and in finding solutions to practical concerns. The primary focus with the student is upon facilitating them to become experts in their management of college life, regardless of their disability. This allows them to have the opportunity to develop skills such as self-awareness, self-efficacy, and self-determination.
The Unilink Shared Service Model

The Unilink Service initially originated within TCD in 2004 but began to expand in 2009 in providing shared services as a result of its recognition as a model of good practice. HEIs across the Dublin region saw an increase in the number of students with disabilities entering into third level that required this model of support, and as a result, Unilink then provided a service in DCU, with further expansion to DIT, Marino Institute and UCD.

Outcomes

Unilink as an evidence-based service carries out regular evaluations and audits in order to ensure quality of service provision. In 2012-13, ethical permission was sought from each HEI to carry out an evaluation of the Unilink Service by using a student satisfaction survey, to capture the thoughts and perspectives of students availing of the Unilink Service across the HEIs. This was a self-administered questionnaire specifically designed for the evaluation. Both quantitative and qualitative data was elicited and some of the findings are presented below:

Findings from the Unilink Student Service Evaluation 2012-13

- **97%** of students reported that they felt ‘well supported’ or ‘somewhat supported’ in making progress to achieve their academic/social/personal goals through engagement with the Unilink Service.
- **90.9%** of students reported that they applied the work completed in their Unilink sessions to the day-to-day activities that they did as a student.
- **94.3%** of students reported that they felt that their opinions and ideas were valued by their Occupational Therapist.

Student Feedback on the Unilink Shared Service

- “OT has at times been the most important part of my recovery. Finished my degree and have a job, couldn’t have done that without Unilink”
- “The self-management programme is great because it can be used when you are doing well to maintain your mental health or when you might be going through a rough patch and because it is customised to suit your needs”
- “This is a unique service. My OT has been the single greatest help to me in getting through college, and reaching my potential. My OT has also provided a forum for me to analyse how to address the difficulties I experience.”

The future of the Unilink Service as a shared model of practice is looking bright with successfully having engaged in a rigorous e-tender process to provide an on-campus Occupational Therapy service within DCU, DIT, and UCD. Unilink is also provided to Marino Institute of Education, on an off-campus basis, where students come into TCD to meet with Occupational Therapists from the service. Unilink aims to develop further over the coming years, in providing both on-campus and off-campus services to students.
Youthreach – (ESF 2.5)

City of Galway Youthreach

Y.S.I. Young Social Innovators

by Thomas Galvin

What is it?

Young Social Innovators is about young people like you and I in Ireland coming together to make a difference in your community and to the world. We become a Young Social Innovator working together to find out about a social issue that’s of interest to us.

Why get involved?

Getting involved in Y.S.I is fun and you develop your talents through finding a solution to a social issue. We can make a difference to our community and learn new skills for our life and work plus we will be certified as a Young Social Innovator!

Our Project…

For last year’s project we chose a topic that we cared about. Our plan was to make a change by promoting anti-bullying awareness and providing solutions to those who are being bullied. We had an ANTI-BULLYING awareness week. We launched an anonymous anti bullying box where students can report bullying anonymously; we did this so that groups could build trust amongst each other. We also did interviews on Newstalk and Galway Bay FM.
Castleblayney Youthreach

Youthreach Skills Exchange Programme with elderly group

On Monday 25th November 2013, 10 Youthreach students took part in a “Skills Exchange Programme” with 10 older ladies from a women's group. Youthreach students were the tutors on the day and demonstrated a variety of cookery skills and pottery skills.

This successful project formed great friendships and gained good understanding on the work of each group. Many stories were exchanged on the day from both parties and a great memory was achieved.

Student Charmaine Smyth receives third place in the Irish Council for Civil Liberties Competition

In November 2013, Castleblayney Youthreach entered The Irish Council for Civil Liberties Competition. This competition asked participants to identify human rights, social justice or inequality issues that affect Ireland today. These issues could be an issue that affects them personally or their Community as a whole.

Students explored human rights and social justice themes using their own unique talents through film, Art and the designing of a logo. The short film and art project were based on the theme “Positive mental health”

Charmaine Smyth was one of the overall winners with her awareness – raising branding and design project” Young people- Think Positive”. She was presented with 3rd prize at an Awards ceremony at the office of the Children’s Ombudsman in Dublin on 13th December 2013. Well done Charmaine!
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Charmaine Smyth was one of the overall winners with her awareness – raising branding and design project” Young people- Think Positive”. She was presented with 3rd prize at an Awards ceremony at the office of the Children's Ombudsman in Dublin on 13th December 2013. Well done Charmaine!
Logo Design Idea

After discussing the brief with my art teacher, I began by researching images and words associated with mental health and young people. Once I had completed my research I began drawing ideas. I started off with a jigsaw piece as the base. The jigsaw represents a “part” of our lives that may be incomplete or a small part of something bigger. I then put a silhouette image of a person into the centre of the jigsaw. I wanted to use the silhouette idea as it is non-descriptive and therefore could represent both male and female. Finally I put the images of cogs around the jigsaw piece. The cog’s behind the person represents our thoughts i.e. the thoughts that go around our head – sometimes negative, sometimes positive.

I wanted something a bit more optimistic. The hands in the air could symbolise the release of problems or joy and happiness. The outer figure of the silhouette is darker to represent male and the inner figure which is lighter represents the females. I used these colours because blue and purple (cool colours) are meant to be calming and the yellow and orange are bright and happy.

Corporate Identity
In my project presentation I showed how the logo can be used to brand various products – As a young person I like to wear baseball caps, hoodies and t-shirts – so I thought this would be appealing to other young people.
Garda Youth Diversion GYDP – (ESF 2.6/2.7)

RAY Garden Project….STONEMAD....

The RAY Garden Project started in 2012. The Garden is located at the rear of Roscrea Youth Project and Youth Café. The garden was to be developed as an additional space for Youth café users and the community. A group of 10 young men aged 15-17 took part in an initial Stone carving workshop and began the development and design of the garden. The tutor involved was Philip Quinn of “Stonemad Workshops”. The group completed stone carvings and put pieces together to make a totem pole. They also developed a design which they would work on during the summer.

In the beginning.....
During the summer of 2012, the group worked over six weeks digging, shoveling, mixing, building, carving, cutting, shaping, hammering... in the wind, rain and sun...a typical Irish summer! They built a BBQ, Patio area, Path, carved stone and designed a stage area, created seating area by making table/chairs out of old wood and willow. Some of the group had an interest in music and had been involved in youth café Gig night, so they thought a stage area would be a great addition to the outside. They carved lyrics into the stones which would be used for stage area. The lyrics “When life leaves you lost and stranded, light up and show them what you’re worth” were chosen.

During Easter Mid-term break and summer holidays in 2013, a second group began work on the garden. They started where the previous group had finished and demonstrated the similar hard work and enthusiasm for the project. This group also made chairs and carved stone for totem poles and finished carving of lyrics. They constructed a semi-circular raised flower bed, which they made using sandstone. Once these tasks were completed, they leveled off the entire area with gravel and stone. This process took a lot of time and effort, but they did this very well, as they could see the various elements of the garden coming together. They finished off by placing mosaics/mirrors/painted bins/buckets to add colour and design to the finished product.

All young people who worked on the garden have learned many skills in terms of stonemasonry, woodwork and gardening. As well as this they have demonstrated skills in communication, teamwork, commitment and responsibility. The project has been a huge success and is an absolute credit to all the RAY participants who have contributed towards its creation. There is still many more ideas and possibilities that can be added to garden over the coming years.
Kilrush GYDP

Case Study

John was 17 when he was referred to the Project for trespass and drunkenness offences. He was still in school but his attendance was poor and he had no plans as to what he wanted to do in the future. His relationship with his parents was also strained. His father had an issue with alcohol and his relationship with his mother was volatile at times.

John had started drinking at an early age but in the past few months had noticed that he was becoming more aggressive when he consumed alcohol. He also admitted that he had let school slip and that he felt overwhelmed and lost in relation to his school work. He wanted to do something in relation to Leisure and Recreation but felt that this would be next to impossible as his grades were poor and they would never earn him a place in the University of Limerick which is where he wanted to study.

Through participating in a Drugs and Alcohol Programme and engaging in individual work, John began to see that alcohol was having a negative impact on his life and the choices he was making. John’s relationship with family members slowly began to improve and he opened up to them in relation to his issues with school and how far behind he was. His parents organised a maths grind for him for which transport was facilitated by his Youth Justice Worker as the family had no means to do so. He was also encouraged to apply for a Post Leaving Certificate Course in Limerick Senior College and engaged in a Life Skills programme which improved on his self-efficacy, motivation and gave him the confidence and skill to go through the interview process. John’s parents were also supported in relation to the grant application.

John passed his Leaving Certificate and is now enrolled in a Leisure and Recreation course in Limerick Senior College, after which he hopes to progress to the University of Limerick and complete his education.
Women’s Way to Work Programme 2013 to April 2014

The Women’s Way to Work programme was developed under the ESF funded Equality for Women Measure - Access to Employment – commencing in 2010.

Under this phase (May 2013 to April 2014) the centre has targeted over 100 women through Information Days held in the Ballyfermot IT Centre, where potential participants were given details of the programmes, information on entitlements of returning to work and given stats and presentations of past programmes under this initiative.

We targeted the unemployed including those not in receipt of any social welfare payment (such as married women whose husbands are working) including those who required skills in order to successfully enter or re-enter the labour market. 46 women in total commenced this training under this phase; we used our waitlist to fill places as participants dropped out.

The training provided multiple combined training programmes aimed at increasing access and enhancing participation of women into the labour market. The Women’s Way to Work programme not only provided training in accredited IT skills but also included training in relation to the personal and social skills necessary for entry into the workforce.

We are delivering a suite of four “Further Education” training courses, called FETAC for short and the European Computer Driving Licence in Microsoft Office 2010 (ECDL). The programme also ensures that participants engage in mock interviews, role play scenarios, team building exercises and with participants receiving one to one support as and when required. At the one to one sessions women discuss their progress and any difficulties they may be experiencing. These sessions allow staff the opportunity to address issues and concerns as and when they arise.
Having took a career break for a number of years I felt that I wanted to get back ‘out there’ where work was concerned, although my CV showed I was capable, having been at home for a number of years my confidence proved otherwise. The Woman’s Way To Work Course has been instrumental in helping me gain the confidence and self-belief I need to go into the work force. I have enjoyed all modules of the ECDL course and feel that with the help of the tutor Philip Hickey I will soon be prepared to gain employment. Now I am looking forward to my job hunting and excited for what the future holds. I would recommend this course to those who are ready to take that step, not only will you learn from enrolling, it will give you the tools you will need to succeed and make good friends along the way. Education is the key to gaining confidence.

Mary Rogers

I am currently on the Women’s Way to Work Program at Ballyfermot IT Centre. I have been a full time mother at home for the past 14 years, my youngest child is 8 years old and I am preparing to go back to work part-time.

I had not looked at my CV for years so it was helpful to update that on the Career Prep course and I found the mock interview helpful. I am enjoying the ECDL course and have done well on the first 3 modules. This gives me confidence to consider returning to an office job. Overall it is positive to be back in ‘school’. I would hope to use what I have learned. I like the relaxed learning environment and understanding of where we the participants are at.

Mary Rogers

My name is Anioca Oprisan and I am currently doing the Women’s Way to work Program.

I learned about Computer literacy, Career Preparation, ECDL. I find it very helpful, I got my confidence back and I feel great about myself. I really enjoy it.

Thank you,

Anioca Oprisan
Equality Mainstreaming – (ESF 2.9)

Making It Real: Equality Authority Annual Conference

The Equality Authority’s annual conference on equality mainstreaming was held in Dublin Castle on 22 October 2013. It was officially opened by Mr Alan Shatter T.D. Minister for Justice & Equality.

The theme of the conference was Making it Real. The aim of the conference was share good practice and to identify key equality messages for mainstream policy makers and programme designers. The conference reinforced the message that further education and training providers can have a positive impact on reducing inequality across the nine equality grounds if they integrate a focus on equality in the way they plan and deliver their services. The conference also illustrated the effectiveness of partnership approaches between service providers, employers, trade unions and NGOs in challenging discrimination and accommodating diversity at workplace level.

During Session One of the conference, Orla O Connor, Director of the National Women's Council presented on the importance of gender mainstreaming in active labour market policies. Dr Marie Rooney, Development Officer with the recently established Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and training Board spoke about promoting equality in the design and delivery of further education and training programmes. And the final speakers in that session were Anne Costello and Joanna Corcoran from the Galway Traveller Movement on building equality into enterprise supports for member of the Traveller community.

During Session Two, Siobhan O Donoghue, Director of the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland spoke about an innovative partnership approach to equality in the mushroom sector. Dr Kara Mc Gann, Policy Executive with IBEC outlined the Maternity and Parenting toolkit and the final presentation was on Equality Mainstreaming in the Trade Union Sector delivered by Marian Geoghegan, IBOA, Aileen Morrissey, Mandate and Carol Scheffer CWU.


A positive duty is a requirement to have due regard to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality for groups protected by the equality legislation and to protect human rights. The introduction of a public sector positive duty could offer a real opportunity to advance and further embed equality mainstreaming within the public sector.
The Equality Mainstreaming Unit has prioritised partnership initiatives with the further education and training sector over the past years. We believe that if we can embed equality effectively within this sector, we can achieve such a positive impact on the lives of the most marginalised groups within our society. Inequality in education poses the most serious barriers preventing learners or potential learners across the equality grounds from realising their potential and from getting key employment and skills opportunities. The Equality Mainstreaming Unit looks forward to continuing our work with the FET sector over the coming years.

Launch of publication “Positive Duty - An Opportunity for Equality Mainstreaming” are left to right - Ms Renee Dempsey, CEO Equality Authority, Mr Alan Shatter TD, Minister for Justice and Equality, & Ms Sunniva McDonagh SC, Acting Chairperson of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Designate

“Funded by the Equality Mainstreaming Unit which is jointly funded by the European Social Fund 2007-2013 and by the Equality Authority”
Migrant Integration – (ESF 2.10)

The EPIC Programme contributes to the National and EU Integration policy by supporting immigrants to become financially independent and socially integrated in Ireland. It provides pre-employment training, opportunities for work experience placements and tailored individual support to access education and employment. EPIC is funded jointly by the Department of Justice and Equality and the European Social Fund.

EPIC TEAM
EPIC client Blanca Moreno studies a member of Ebay staff at work / Training and Employment

Training and Employment officer Olga Montiel with previous EPIC client Daniel Alvarez Romero.

Wednesday 31st July 2013 saw over twenty past and present clients and two training and employment officers from the EPIC programme visit the eBay offices in Blanchardstown. eBay were great hosts and there was a busy agenda set out for the day that included; presentations on eBay, a talk on building your personal brand, an overview of eBay employee engagement and community initiatives and a talk from a previous Epic client, Bertin Kodjo, who now works in eBay.

There were also side by sides after lunch, where the EPIC clients got to sit in with an eBay employee and watch them doing their job in real time and ask them any questions which arose.
This was a great experience and really gave the clients a clear picture of what working in the various departments in eBay is like. Luckily the day of our visit was also an internal open day where the different departments in eBay had information stands to find out about each other, this gave the clients even more of an insight into the workings of the organisation. All of those in attendance also received an official eBay mug and headphones on departure, which will be a reminder of their visit to eBay!

To top off the visit a number of weeks later one of the EPIC clients who attended the visit, Blanca Moreno joined eBay as an employee on their Fraud Team. Blanca liked the look of the place so much that she decided to apply for the role and after a number of interviews was successful. She joins a number of other past EPIC clients who are now working in eBay, these include; Bertin Kodjo in commerce and Daniel Alvarez Romero who is in the fraud department.

All in all the day was a great success and further strengthened the link between eBay and Business in the Community. Hopefully there will be more such days in the future.

**Work Experience Placements as a support on journey to employment**

A total of 13 EPIC Programme participants were recruited, trained and supervised in work experience placements within the EPIC Programme during 2013. The participants have reported on the usefulness of the experience in terms of increasing their understanding and experience of the Irish working environment and boosting their confidence.

Overall 47 work placements within EPIC have been supported since 2009 and of those 47 participants, 38 participants have engaged in employment or training after finishing the experience.
In addition, 3 EPIC participants were facilitated with work experience placements in other departments in Business in the Community and 18 clients have taken up work placements in other companies including 6 clients with 3 companies which are member companies of Business in the Community, one of which has provided 3 work placements. Work experience placements are proving to be a valuable support for EPIC Programme participants in progressing along their respective routes to a job.
ESF in the Media – European Social Fund Conference 28th May 2013


The Minister for Training and Skills, Ciarán Cannon T.D. opened the European Social Fund Conference on the ESF Contribution to Labour Market Activation in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin.

The conference discussed the very important theme of activating people for the labour market including the long term unemployed, youth and those at highest risk of social exclusion, with the financial assistance of the European Social Fund (ESF). The ESF is a European Fund which funds local and regional programmes to fight unemployment, to assist in making Europe’s workforce and companies better
equipped to face new challenges and to prevent people losing touch with the labour market through investment in education, skills and employment support. The ESF finances a large variety of Operational Programmes to the value of about €10 billion a year across Europe. Ireland was allocated €375 million of ESF funding for the Human Capital Investment Operating Programme (HCI OP) 2007-2013, which assists in addressing labour market and human capital development needs. The two main priorities for the programme are increasing activation of the labour force and providing citizens from disadvantaged groups the skills to improve their employment prospects.

Welcoming delegates and the Deputy Director General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion Mr. Zoltan Kazatsay, Minister Cannon said: “This conference on the European Social Fund contribution to Labour Market Activation is very important and timely. With high levels of unemployment in Ireland and across Europe it is pertinent for us as policy makers to consider how the European Social Fund can assist us in upskilling and educating our unemployed and our young people to assist them in attaining sustainable employment.”

“The ESF also involves our Social Partners from employer and trade union groups, many of whom are attending the conference today. They will give valuable input on how the Social Partners contribute to the ESF by identifying the links between labour market skills and labour market needs.”

The next round for ESF programme funding will commence next year and the policies and themes presented at this Conference will be central to the considerations of EU Member States for their decision-making on ESF implementation in the next period to 2020.