EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND | NEWSLETTER 2019

Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020
Foreword

We continue to showcase the achievements of the European Social Fund, in this, the 11th issue of the ESF’s newsletter. The newsletter highlights a range of projects that receive assistance from the ESF across Ireland and also tells the story of the participants who benefit from this support.

Many thanks to all of our partners for their continued support and commitment. Thank you to the projects who have submitted articles for this year’s Newsletter, we were overwhelmed by the number of submissions. Unfortunately we could not use all submissions, however if you visit www.esf.ie you can read further stories from our projects.

This ESF Programme has helped nearly 330k people in Ireland since its inception in 2014. Congratulations to all those who have participated in ESF projects and contributed to the fantastic achievements of the ESF in Ireland. We wish you continued success for the future.

If you are interested in contributing an article or a story for next year’s newsletter, please contact us at esfnewsletter@education.gov.ie.

From all in the ESF Managing Authority, we hope you enjoy reading our Newsletter!

Cover Photo
L to R: Julie Queally (Clare Youth Service), Jennifer Malone (IYJS), Aideen Clery (IYJS), Orla Maloney (Clare Youth Service) Full story page 13
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AONTAS STAR Awards

The prestigious STAR Awards ceremony was held on Monday 4 March 2019 in Dublin. The Awards are organised by Ireland’s national adult learning organisation, AONTAS. The Awards celebrate the positive contribution that adult learning initiatives make to adult learners, local communities and wider society. This year the ESF proudly sponsored a Special Recognition STAR Award for ESF co-funded projects. Six ESF co-funded projects were shortlisted across the categories.

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Two ESF co-funded projects won awards on the day. The WISE project won the STAR Award for Sustainable Employment while the New Futures programme was awarded the Special Recognition Award for an ESF co-funded project.
New Futures Programme

One Family’s New Futures Programme supports and enables women who are parenting alone and economically inactive to take advantage of training and development opportunities.

Louise Finnegan is a lone parent to four daughters. Having completed a number of community based courses in the past, Louise decided to participate in New Futures with One Family in 2017. Louise knew she wanted to return to education; describing herself as motivated but lacking confidence. Louise knew she wanted to have a career working in the community but didn’t know where to start.

New Futures gave Louise the opportunity to explore her natural strengths and abilities and discover what career path she wanted to follow. By availing of the one to one support Louise persevered and overcame challenges along the way. In September 2018 Louise enrolled in the Access Foundation Programme with Dublin Institute of Technology. Louise graduated from the Programme with distinctions in May 2019.

This year Louise was a panel speaker at the AONTAS International Women’s Day Policy Event and was also invited to attend an Awareness and Guidance Peer Learning Activity in Luxemburg. Louise shared her personal experience of returning to education. She spoke about the transformative effect of adult learning and the power it has had in building her self-confidence and recognising her ability.

In June 2019 Louise was the keynote speaker at the New Futures Graduation ceremony. Louise encouraged New Futures graduates to continue taking the support from their key worker as they transition on their journey into education and employment.

“Start with little steps, take the positive from every situation because there is learning in everything you do and take the support from your key worker” Louise Finnegan

This September Louise commenced her level 8 degree programme in Social Care at the Technological University Dublin.
Moving On

The Story behind the Story — By Mary Hopkins

A small country town, circled by even smaller country villages, where heads remained bowed under the banner of isolation and where women lived with the hope of, one day, being able to get up, get dressed and again take their rightful place in the world of gainful employment.

A Poster appeared. At first only one, but then more and more, with an invitation to Move On! I and no doubt, others like me, dared to stop and read. It all appeared too good to be true and it was free!

Will I qualify? At my age? I got back in my car to go home. I tuned to Radio Kerry. Lisa Fingleton was being interviewed on the very subject of Moving On. A sign from above, I said aloud and pulled over to listen and change my life.

What resulted was the trip of a lifetime.

My fellow participants and I were taken to the very edge of our comfort zone and then encouraged to break through our self-induced boundaries and head for the hills.

At any one time, the diversity of this group, aged 20 to 70, from Nigeria, India, Russia and Lixnaw, with a broad spread of educational attainments, abilities and disabilities, were welcomed, accepted, comforted and supported, as each one emerged from the shadows, on their Moving On journey.

In the early days, each story was softly heard, honoured and secured in confidentiality. Participants who were, as yet, unable to unburden, grew to appreciate the ethical ethos that prevailed.

These highly skilled approaches, especially to survivors of conflict zones and those living with mental health disorders, did much to aid these vulnerable participants in finding their voice and having found it, to speak their pain. Discreet enquiries were made about those who were missing meetings and their return was always warm and accepting.

Their sense of belonging was again assured and the team leaders and fellow participants waited and hoped for their deliverance from the sad circumstances of their lives.
Fun, and a sense of freedom began to emerge, as this gathering of women began to re-ignite the fire in their souls. Invitations to share in their River of Life journeys, showed that, despite their current disadvantage, a wealth of human experience and a hope of better days prevailed.

These findings were the flicker of hope that was tenderly nourished to produce the flame that lit the way forward for each emerging working.

The excitement of the first job interviews, carefully coached and the joy on the faces of those securing that longed-for place in the land that is employment, sustained those in waiting. The opportunities afforded Moving On participants in Tralee, were worthy of being termed “life changing”. From Computer Technology, with The Institute of Technology, Tralee to producing a live programme on Radio Kerry, these women who dared to dream employability, took each challenge to heart and supported each other in making their dreams reality.

Another dream was revealed.
The most humble.
The most shy.

The hidden talent of our group, sang, live on air and filled the Kerry Hills with a voice so pure and clear and we gathered, from a discreet distance, as she emerged from the offices of Radio Kerry, all curls and glowing with happiness, to meet with her first ever date.

Statistics will vouch for the employment success for this group.

The Story behind the story tells how we got there.
Thank you Lisa Fingleton.
Thank you Lisa O’Flaherty.
Funding through the Gender Equality aspect of the PEIL 2014-2020 has enabled the NCCWN to develop and deliver a programme for marginalised women aimed at building capacity to engage fully in education, training and/or employment with adequate support measures in place. The STEPS programme improves skills and confidence levels as well as working with women on an individual level to develop a personalised targeted career path and Personal Action Plan.

The programme is delivered across seven NCCWN centres: Clondalkin/Lucan, Ronanstown, Tallaght, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, Mullingar, North Leitrim & South Kerry.

**Fiona Dowd**

Fiona took part in the first STEPS programme in 2017. Fiona was able to avail of childcare support for her son which allowed her to attend the programme.

Fiona says that “the STEPS for Women programme is one of the best things I have done for myself. It was a safe supportive space! I met some wonderful women and we had a great fun journey together exploring our future options. The programme gave me a sense of purpose and it became clear that I want to work in and for the community sector. I am trained to be a parenthood supporter through Cuidiú. I finished the STEPS for Women programme and went on to complete a train the trainer programme which allowed me to gain tutor hours as a Fit for Life community Facilitator.”

This September, Fiona began the UCD Women’s Studies Outreach Programme to study Women, Gender and Social Justice along with 10 other students from the NCCWN Steps programmes.
RePower Programme

Southside Partnership’s RePower programme is designed to support women into education and/or employment. Providing a range of modules and supports, it allows for personal and skills development and educational opportunities.

Priscilla’s Story

Priscilla came to Dublin from Brazil in 2017 when her husband relocated here for his work. She had a strong Human Resources career in Brazil but had it in her mind that she would not be up to the standard being sought in Ireland. Her husband’s Stamp 3/Critical Skills visa technically allowed her to seek employment but the process was cumbersome. In the meantime, Priscilla realised she had the chance to work on her English and re-consider her career path.

Priscilla found the RePower programme while she was looking for a way to learn English in a context that would also allow her the chance to build relationships with other women in her age group. In the autumn of 2018 she enrolled in both the RePower QQI Level 4 ESOL course and the Personal Development course. “Having a supportive group was important – every day I left the course, I left a stronger person. The Personal Development course helped me to be stronger and recognise the fears are just my brain sabotaging myself.”

With her confidence growing in herself and in her English ability, Priscilla took the RePower Job Seeking Skills workshop in February 2019 and when the Stamp 3/Critical Skills Visa restrictions changed in March 2019, Priscilla was ready to hit the jobs market with new vigour and strategies.

“The ESOL, the Personal Development, the Job Seeking Skills – all of these courses gave me support and encouraged me to believe in myself. I got so much information from all of these – not just feelings of confidence or self-esteem but also information. Finding a job in Ireland is completely different than finding a job in Brazil so the information I got on how to find a job here was so helpful.”

Priscilla is now working full time and loves her job as an operations officer in office management, focusing on the employees and helping to create HR procedures for the company. She also maintains contact with some of the women she met on the courses.
The Springboard+ upskilling initiative in higher education offers free courses at certificate, degree and masters level leading to qualifications in areas where there are employment opportunities in the economy. Professional Accountancy Training (PAT) and ACCA have collaborated to deliver the Diploma in Accounting and Business at level 6 equivalent of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) as part of the Springboard+ programme.

The ACCA Diploma in Accounting and Business was delivered in two modes of learning namely:
- On a part-time evening basis with live streaming of lectures to a national audience
- On an e-learning/online basis

PAT is a gold standard approved learning partner of the ACCA with accredited recognition. ACCA Gold status is only awarded to those institutions able to meet a highly challenging set of performance standards and is a formal recognition of PAT’s expertise to develop and deliver this programme.
Kevin Ayres

“Gerry’s passionate delivery of the course content brought out my twenty five years of accounting/bookkeeping experience and turned it into 71% pass on the FFA (F3) Financial Accounting plus 67% pass on the FAB (F1) Accountant in Business and has me all fired up to keep the momentum going for FMA (F2) Management Accounting and the online Foundations in Professionalism and Ethics.

I would recommend this course to anyone with a history in bookkeeping or finance and looking to advance their knowledge and career prospects into the future in a practical and enjoyable environment both online or in classroom.”

Lisa O’Brien

“As a mature student, returning to education can be quite a daunting path to endeavour. My return began with an application to Springboard to undertake the ACCA Diploma in Accounting and Business through PAT. I need not have worried, the level of support and encouragement from each of the lecturers in each of the course modules was second to none. Each instilling the ‘yes you can and yes you will’ attitude that drove me to succeed. Lecturers were always on hand to provide support and advice. Inspiring quotes were received throughout to inspire and instil confidence which gave me that extra little push. Gerry is a truly inspirational person, I have never before encountered such enthusiasm and passion, it is something to behold. I would have absolutely no hesitation in recommending PAT to anyone looking for an education provider.

The course has given me the confidence to pursue further studies through PAT. The ACCA Diploma in Accounting and Business is the first stepping stone for me in my career advancement. I would have said before commencing my studies that in my career I was driving down a one way street, now I have options to turn left or right!”
**Helena’s Story**

Helena is a service user at Depaul’s Tus Nua service for women with complex needs, who have been released from prison and are at risk of becoming homeless.

“My life was very good until I got heavily involved with addiction. I was in my late twenties and I had had a bad accident, and that was the start of my addiction to pain killers. Eventually, at about thirty I ended up with a heroin addiction. I was only about a year on heroin and I found myself in prison for the first time. I was also pregnant on my fourth child.

The last ten years have been a nightmare, living in homelessness and doing crazy things. I wouldn’t have considered myself a criminal as such, I was just doing things out of desperation, to get help. I found there wasn’t much support for people with heroin addiction so I was just doing things as a cry for help really.

I had a good upbringing. I am the only person with a drug addiction in my family. It’s not something you plan, for me it feels like an illness that I’m trying to battle to get better. I was never brought up to judge people. My Mother always said to me, ‘you should never look down on someone unless you’re helping them up’.

I’m in fairly regular contact with my kids. I haven’t seen them too much but I’m just trying to get things organised before I do. I just want to be fit, healthy and strong before I do so I know I can cope. They’re great kids. I can’t lie to them anymore; I hate promising them things when I can’t stick to my word so I’m just building up things when I can’t stick to my word so I’m just building up things before I travel to see them.

If I could get rid of my addiction in the morning and have it out of me I’d give my right arm. But it’s there and it’s a battle and it’s a daily thing that I have to go through to stay clean. It’s a full time job but it’s worth it. I’m just glad to be alive and I’m lucky to be alive. I’ve a chance now and I’m going to take every opportunity I can get.

I don’t have any major plans at the moment. I used to have great plans. I’m keeping life simple at the moment. I’m just trying to manage my health, eat well and get enough sleep. I go to meetings regularly, helping other people I find helps me a lot.”
On Thursday, 28th February the Kilrush Youth Project (KYP) and Kilrush Garda Youth Diversion Project (KGYDP) opened its doors to the people of the local area, funders, the Clare Youth Service Board of Management members and staff and other agencies to showcase the work of the young people in the area. The event was a hive of activity where the young people got to display the work that they do with the projects.

Also on the night, eight young people were presented with their First Aid Certificates. After consultations with the young people, First Aid was the most popular choice as, through personal experiences, they felt they needed to know what to do in case of an emergency. Both the facilitators of the training and the youth workers were delighted at the level of participation and commitment given to this training. The skills and knowledge that these young people have gained from this training are invaluable to them, their families and their community.

The KYP and KGYDP work with young people aged between 12 and 18 years of age. They run different programmes and projects including road safety awareness, drugs and alcohol information talks, sports programmes and personal development programmes. The Open House Event was a massive success and left the young people of Kilrush filled with pride and accomplishment.
GYDP National Conference

On Wednesday, 7 November 2018, the Department of Justice and Equality reinstituted the Annual Garda Youth Diversion Projects National Conference, which was held in Trim, Co. Meath.

The event brought together speakers from a variety of disciplines to discuss current issues affecting the Garda Youth Diversion Projects. The conference was designed to allow the attendees to have their say, and contribute to policy and future development of the GYDP service. The opening address was given by Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration, David Stanton TD.

The morning programme featured two panel discussions, the first from the young people involved in the Young Persons Consultation, and the second on the Action Research Project lead by Dr Seán Redmond. It also included the keynote speaker for the conference, Dr Sharon Lambert. Since 2014, Dr Lambert has been a member of the teaching staff in the School of Applied Psychology, University College Cork, following a number of years working in community based settings. Her research interests revolve primarily around the impact of trauma on development, its link with substance misuse and mental health and consequent considerations for service design and delivery. The scope of her work includes understanding the impact of childhood adversity on later life outcomes, the impact on staff of working in trauma laden environments, and how services can incorporate trauma research into their practice and policies.

In the afternoon, workshops led by volunteers from within the GYDP network, focused on four topics affecting Youth Justice Workers:

1. Best Practice Support for GYDP projects
2. Enhancing Communications and Relationships
3. Resources
4. Practice issues
The discussions aimed to consider and produce solutions to many of the problems faced by the projects. The outputs were captured for the Conference Report, which captures a range of issues which YCPPD will progress during 2019.

The young people that spoke at the conference were subsequently invited by Minister of State David Stanton to visit Leinster House. They had the opportunity to view Leaders Questions in the Dáil, also take a tour of the building and learn about its history. They then had an informal chat with Minister of State David Stanton and met the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD.
Interview with Dan Airey

My name is Dan Airey. I am 22 years old going into my final year of Creative Digital Media in September 2019. I have a condition called Cerebral Palsy which means I use an electric wheelchair to get around.

How has the ESF benefited you in your studies?
Firstly, through the use of a full-time Personal Assistant (PA). In college my PA helps me with tasks such as taking notes in lectures, personal care and assistance organising my equipment at the end of the day, amongst others. The availability of a PA is imperative for me to be able to throw myself wholeheartedly into my work along with the college experience as a whole. A prime example of this is that I am a member of the college Radio Society. Having a PA allows me to enjoy the college experience to the fullest possible degree without any unnecessary restrictions. Secondly, I have benefited from ESF funding through transport to and from college via a taxi. Personally this represented a huge step forward. This is because up until the start of college, I had been brought everywhere by my Mum or Dad. As a result, this gave me a new sense of independence and freedom while simultaneously giving my parents a break for the first time in years.

You have got an achievement award regarding your contribution to the University?
The award I received earlier in the year at the Clubs and Societies Awards, was received along with my classmate Darragh McNicholas. The award was a Certificate of Merit in recognition of our Best Mental Health Event, ‘Dan and Darragh Do The Radio’ which we staged during the Radio Society’s Radio Week. The show continually aimed to promote the importance of talking about mental health, for both men and women as it is still unfortunately a taboo subject.

Personally, mental health has always been something that I’ve been extra conscious of, particularly due to the situation I find myself in. It was incredible to hear the positive reaction that the show had generated around the university and to be officially recognised by the university was and is an honour.
Interview with Niamh Dunphy

How has the ESF benefited you in your studies?
Through the support of the ESF, I have been given the opportunity to experience third-level education in a way that equals that of my peers. I have access to a PA who helps me with my studies; she attends my classes with me and assists with note-taking so that I receive the same standard of education as my classmates. She also tends to my general care needs throughout the day so that I can experience college with as few obstacles as possible. Because of this assistance and support, I am proud to say that I have achieved some of the highest grades in my degree class. My college life is also enhanced by my access to transport cover. This means I do not have to worry about my commute to and from college, which makes my life much easier. I know that I will arrive at college safely and comfortably every day, without having to depend on the availability of the wheelchair access space on the bus or make my own alternative transport arrangements.

You have got an achievement award regarding your contribution to the University?
Recently I received a Certificate of Merit for my contribution to the University through my work with the Radio Society and I was very honoured and humbled to accept this. This award means the world to me because it is a recognition of my success in doing something I love; it means that I have achieved above and beyond what is expected of a first-year student and I am so grateful for the support of the ESF which allowed me to reach my full potential in third-level education.
Laura’s Story

Donegal ETB Specific Skills welding learner Laura Mulkeen built up a career in event management over ten years in Dublin and Belfast. While she enjoyed her work, when she moved to Donegal for family reasons, she found herself unemployed and decided to rethink her options dramatically.

Having taken up blacksmithing as a hobby, Laura signed up to a Basic Welding class with Donegal ETB. The trade really appealed to her love of practical, craft-focused work and she has since gone on to complete Intermediate Welding and Coded Pipe Welding courses, all coming under the category of Specific Skills Training.

Describing the career change, Laura said, “Taking up welding with Donegal ETB is the best decision I’ve ever made. I had always wanted to take up a trade, but was pushed down the academic route. The ETB has helped me realise that I’m much more at home in the workshop than in the office.

Despite having never welded before the basic course, I’m now a Coded Pipe Welder and really love what I do. Although welding is still a male-dominated industry, the ETB is hugely supportive of women in trades. The instructors and facilities are world-class and I couldn’t have asked for a better environment to learn in.”

Laura has since started working for an engineering company and is looking forward to building her skills further.
Donegal ETB Instructor Appointed WorldSkills Ireland Expert for Welding

Earlier this year Donegal ETB welding instructor Cathal McGee was appointed as a WorldSkills Ireland Expert for Welding. This appointment was made for the 45th WorldSkills competition which took place in Kazan, Russia from 22nd - 27th August 2019 and was the first time ever that welding staff from any ETB in the country have been appointed to this position. WorldSkills is the collective voice for skills excellence and development in vocational, technological, and service oriented careers around the globe. Every two years WorldSkills hosts the world championships of skills which attracts more than 1,600 competitors from over 60 countries.

At this event, young people from all corners of the globe gather together for the chance to win a prestigious medal in their chosen skill. There are competitions in 56 skills across a wide range of industries — from joinery to floristry; hairdressing to electronics; and autobody repair to bakery. The competitors represent the best of their peers and are selected from skills competitions that are held in WorldSkills member countries and regions.

Cathal has worked with Donegal ETB for the last fifteen years and teaches three of their ESF co-funded Specific Skills courses – basic welding, intermediate welding and coded pipe welding as well as having developed their ESF co-funded Engineering Operations Traineeship on which he also teaches.

Huge congratulations to Cathal on his appointment as a WorldSkills Ireland Expert!
Dún Laoghaire Community Training Centre
dunlaoghairecommunitytrainingcentre@gmail.com

Dún Laoghaire Community Training Centre caters for early school leavers and offers educational and other supports to young people aged 16-21. At this time of year, we prepare to say goodbye to some students who are progressing to higher education whilst others we look forward to continue working with after the summer break. Here are some of their voices.

Joshua Kelly
“I started at DLCTC in November 2017. I was very nervous as I had been out of school for a while but all the staff and the environment itself was very welcoming. I got my QQI Level 3 in Employability Skills while I was studying in the Information Technology Skills group and I am almost complete my QQI Level 4 in General Learning – I just have Maths and Work Experience to complete. I have a place at IADT in Dún Laoghaire to study Sound Production & Sound Engineering at Level 5. I am super excited about this new step!”

Katie Carroll
“I started in the VTCT Hair & Beauty course in November 2018 at DLCTC. I found the work difficult at the start particularly the theory side of the course but as I progressed I found it got a lot easier and more enjoyable. I have now developed into an independent thinking trainee beautician and have definitely developed more within myself. I love it here. My plan long term is to carry on in the beauty industry, hopefully.”

Hannah Kelly
“I started in the Catering group at DLCTC a couple of years ago which I’ve really enjoyed. The part I liked best was definitely baking!!! I completed my QQI Level 3 Major Award in Employability Skills last year, and I found this course quite easy. I have just completed my QQI Level 4 Major Award in General Learning but I found this definitely more challenging. However, I got through it and did well in all my modules. My plan for this September is to do a business course – although I’m not sure in what college yet. I’m looking for a challenge in the next step I take – whatever that may be!”

Caoimhe Lawless
“I started off in the Information Technology course where I got my QQI Level 4 major award in General
Learning. I found the course easy enough as I liked working on computers. Then I moved to the VTCT Hair & Beauty course where I have just finished my second major award, this time in Salon Services. I am starting in the Dún Laoghaire College of Further Education this September to study Animal Health Care at Level 5 – which I’m very excited about! I have enjoyed my time at the Dún Laoghaire Community Training Centre. It’s been great for me.”

Naomi Bird

“I really enjoyed my experience here – meeting new people and learning new things. Being in DLCTC has really built my confidence and kept me motivated to attend very well. The learning environment suited me and I felt more comfortable and at home as opposed to being in school. I feel being here benefitted me more with all that I was exposed to such as boxing, Gaisce award, sailing and learning hair and beauty techniques. The centre also linked me to a service which offered Mindfulness training and led to me doing the SOMA course which I found really useful. I am now ready to leave and move on to college and study to be a personal trainer.”

Naomi Bird
City of Dublin ETB

Cherryorchard Community Training Centre

National Career Skills Competition 2019
Open to second level students, the National Career Skills competition requires entrants to complete a Career Investigation based on their work experience. The investigation should include the career area that they had been working in, their work experience in light of essential skills and, to conclude, explain how these will affect their future career choices.

Thousands of entries were submitted from schools across Ireland, including an entry from Cherryorchard CTC student Jodie Cleary. Jodie submitted her entry to the FET/QQI category and was up against QQI level 5 & 6 first year students while she is studying at level 4 in the CTC.

Jodie placed first in this category and received an incredible first prize and a trophy in recognition for her excellent work on her career investigation.

The Minister of State for Training, Skills, Innovation, Research and Development, Mr John Halligan TD presented the prizes at an awards ceremony on 8th May in the Department of Education & Skills. The winning students, their parents, programme co-ordinators and principals attended the prize giving ceremony. The national co-ordinators from all programmes and the Vice President of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors were in attendance, as were key individuals in the area of guidance, education and industry.

Jodie has completed her Horsemanship QQI Level 4 Award with Cherryorchard Community Training Centre and has gained a place on the Animal Care/Animal Care Assistant QQI Level 5 Course in Dún Laoghaire Further Education Institute.
Youthreach Edenderry Learners Reach National Enterprise Final

45 innovative businesses from all over Ireland showcased their enterprises on Thursday May 9th in the Light House Cinema, Smithfield, Dublin 7. These businesses included customized Gaelic football gloves, eco-friendly phone chargers, a harness to combat suspension trauma, and “Kristina & Chelsea’s Chocolates” from Youthreach Edenderry.

There were nine finalists in the Foróige Youth Entrepreneur Award, as well as the winner in the “Best Innovation” category, the winner of each receiving the top prize of a trip to Barcelona to represent Ireland at the European YouthStart Awards in November 2019, sponsored by ActionCoach Ireland.

“Kristina & Chelsea’s Chocolates” was the brainchild of two learners in Youthreach Edenderry Kristina Stanley Curran and Chelsea Judge. The girls engaged in the NFTE (Network for Teaching Enterprise Programme) with their tutor Claire Grehan, who delivers this exciting programme across multiple centres in Laois and Offaly ETB. Indeed Kristina started a business last year called Kristina’s Krafts which produced outdoor blackboards for schools and businesses. Chelsea was in partnership with another learner this year selling phone cases and they traded as CB Cases.

The idea to make chocolates and truffles developed organically through the girl’s experimentation with various recipes. The chocolate truffles proved highly popular with staff and learners in Youthreach, and the girls decided to trade at the then upcoming Christmas Craft Fair in Castle Buildings Tullamore for all NFTE businesses in Laois Offaly ETB centres. The truffles were a complete sell-out on the day.
Production and experimentation with recipes continued, and the girls then competed in the Midlands Regional NFTE Finals on March 27th 2019. The judges Padraig Boland, Caroline Spollen and Caroline Duane were so impressed with the standard of the girl's product, their excellent presentation skills and their ability to interact with the judges. It was quite evident that the NFTE experience had made a very positive impact on the self-esteem and self-confidence of all learners involved in the programme.

“Kristina & Chelsea's Chocolates” won the Best Business Category at the Midlands Regional Final that day in March, and then represented the Midlands in the National Semi-finals on April 10th in the Huckletree, Dublin 2.

Here Kristina tells their story:

“The semi-finals were a big step for the business, it gave us the exposure we needed and built our confidence in our business to bring it further. The semi-finals were definitely a challenge. We were up against other amazing businesses and we had to stand out. We spent the days leading up the semi-finals making our chocolates and practicing our pitch. Then before we knew it the day came, we went into our pitch excited but terrified all at the same time. There were three judges. We presented our products and gave our pitch about the business that we had worked so hard on for so many months. We had to patiently wait for two days to hear the results, and we got the phone call when we were together and got the amazing news that we had made it to the finals. We were so happy words can't really describe, but now we needed to step up our game for the finals.

We got invited to the ‘Step It Up’ workshop held in the Berkeley Library in Trinity College during the Easter Holidays. The workshop offered many new skills, we practiced our pitching and presenting skills, we did a marketing strategy workshop and we learned about Trinity's Launchbox Programme. We also got to meet other businesses in the competition.

We were then lucky enough to be invited for a business lunch with vegan food blogger Holly White. Holly gave us many tips on how to expand our vegan chocolate range and how to sell in stores. She gave us advice on sustainable packaging and advice on our social media presence and how to stay relevant.
Then the big day had come, the finals! The finals were held in the Lighthouse Cinema, Smithfield, Dublin. When we arrived, we were brought up to the waiting area, and pretty soon after was the slot for our pitch. This consisted of a seven-minute pitch, followed by a ten-minute Q&A session with the judges. We then set up our stand and had time to talk to visitors and other entrepreneurs. For the announcement of the winner, we were all brought to the main stage and each business got to go up to the mic and talk about our business and our experience, then the awards were handed out. Unfortunately we didn’t win but we had made it so far and we were so happy with ourselves for making it this far and we couldn’t be happier.

What’s next for our business, well, we have already been booked for weddings and other special events and we plan to continue growing our business and making it better, maybe hopefully open our own store.

This has been a humbling experience, we have faced critics, challenges both personal and business. This experience has given us so much confidence to speak in public and showed us how far passion and determination can get us. This experience has helped shape us as people and we are so grateful that the Foróige Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship believed in us and gave us this opportunity and tools to do this and make it a success.

We would also like to thank our Youthreach centre for always believing in us when at times we lacked belief and confidence. Like all good businesses, there was a lot of behind the scenes hard graft and organization. We can’t begin to thank them for everything they’ve done.“

Lorraine O Neill, Centre Manager of Edenderry Further Education and Training Centre explained how proud she and her centre are of Kristina and Chelsea. Lorraine said “Kristina and Chelsea’s Chocolates were in the final 9 of 3,200 businesses which started out in NFTE in 2018, thus to make it so far and to get to the final was a huge win and a huge achievement in itself. Kristina and Chelsea are two bright, articulate girls and it was determination and hard work which saw them develop their business and bring it so far. They have travelled a journey of learning and growth, and we in the centre wish them both and Kristina and Chelsea’s Chocolates continued good luck and success going forward.“
Kevin’s Story

“My time in Youthreach was one of the best experiences of my life. If I had not attended, I would not be where I am today and for that I cannot be more grateful. Before attending I had no idea of what I wanted to do after leaving school as I never liked school to begin with. From my first day in Youthreach I could tell that it was completely different. The attitude, the teachers show a much larger respect for students and they treat you as an individual, not a number.

For the first time in my life I was happy to get up in the morning and go to school and was confident in what I was doing and where I was going. Staff both past and present made it feel like a home away from home and treated you as an equal. Through the help of the staff and with the mentor programme I found a course I was interested in pursuing in college and they helped me find out more and how to apply.

Although at first, I was sceptical due to the requirements of the course and I felt like I couldn't achieve the points required, they encouraged me to try and even set up extra classes to support me and give me the best chance at achieving my goal. When I got my results, I found that I exceeded the points required and got my top choice, Electronic Engineering at Limerick Institute of Technology.

At first when I enrolled, I found it too difficult and I wasn't planning on sticking it out as I found some of the subjects just too much and felt everyone else knew far more than I did. However, I took my most important lesson from Youthreach, never being afraid to try and never being afraid of failing, and carried on. To try and get help understanding some of the Maths involved in the course I asked a lecturer for assistance and he directed me to the Learner’s Support Unit where I found essential help. He also recommended that I apply for the Leaders Programme which offers scholarships to a number of students and supports them through college. To my disbelief I was awarded this scholarship and was delighted to see that Youthreach sent one of the teachers to be there for the awards ceremony.

I am now in my 2nd Semester and feel that the worst is far behind me. Had I never attended Youthreach and met all those who made it a life changing and vastly educating experience I know that whatever I have accomplished up to now wouldn't have been possible. I want to deeply thank them all and any success I have in the future will be credited to all they have done for me, thank you.”
Youthreach Teacher Maria Power with Kevin Hanley
European Employment Services (EURES)

EURES Ireland is currently implementing the ‘Experience Your Europe’ (EYE) Programme under the Youth Guarantee Initiative. One element of this programme is the Co-Sponsored Placement Programme. The Programme supports young jobseekers aged 18-30 in taking up a work placement in Europe for up to 12 months. During this time the jobseeker will be co-sponsored by EURES Ireland and the employer offering the work placement.

EURES Ireland has, to date, worked successfully with companies in the Digital Media, Animation, Construction and Hospitality sectors in the placement, upskilling and provision of full-time employment to participants of the Programme.

What allowances are available from EURES Ireland?
- A relocation allowance: €635 to €1,270 depending on the country (subject to a minimum 6 month placement)
- A weekly allowance of up to €205 per week for the duration of the placement (supplemented by the employer)
- Reimbursement of flight costs up to a maximum of €350
- Language training allowance (If required)

Does the Employer pay the jobseeker?
The employer is asked to supplement the allowance provided from EURES Ireland to make it financially viable for the jobseeker to live in another country. This amount is agreed prior to commencement of the work placement.
EURES Ireland currently has 7 jobseekers on placements in Belgium and Germany. One of our participants, Ciara Shanahan was recruited to work in Europa Park in Germany with the support of EURES Ireland's EYE Co-Sponsored Placement Programme.

Europa Park is the largest theme park in Germany and the second most popular theme park resort in Europe, following Disneyland Paris. Ciara was recruited to work in the hospitality area where she is gaining lots of skills and is also receiving German Language Training as part of the placement.

The following is a testimonial from Ciara: “I have really enjoyed the move here from Ireland to Germany. I’m so grateful that I’ve been given this opportunity to immerse myself in a different culture and learn the language. I am here one month already and loving every second of it, I’ll never look back!

Thank you to EURES Ireland for giving me this chance to learn new skills and experiences that will help me to be successful in my new career.”
Migrant Access Programme

The Migrant Access Programme (MAP) is a service established by New Communities Partnership (NCP) in 2017 to support migrants to increase their employment opportunities in Ireland. Their aim is to empower migrants and assist them in overcoming cultural and personal barriers to access employment.

It brings its services to job-seeking migrant people based around the country, offering one-day information sessions and four-week intensive training courses to help them understand and navigate the employment landscape in Ireland.

The Migrant Access Programme – which is designed and provided by migrants for Ireland – tackles a whole host of barriers to employment that many migrant people face. It teaches participants about how the labour market works in Ireland, what cultural differences they might expect, the requirements and practices to compete favourably for advertised positions, the standards of CV and cover letter writing, interview skills, IT skills and English language skills required for job searching. With the support and training the Migrant Access Programme provides, migrant jobseekers are empowered to find meaningful work that they enjoy.

That was certainly the case for Monik Galucio, a 30-year-old woman who completed the four-week training programme in May. Originally from Brazil but living in Cork City, Monik was finding it difficult to find employment in Ireland. Though she has been living in Ireland for three years, her visa type meant that she could not legally work here. Then, the rules changed and Monik got a Stamp1G visa that allowed her to work in Ireland.

Still, she found the prospect daunting. When she heard about the Migrant Access Programme via a Brazilian group on Facebook, she signed up for the four-week training course.

“The programme was very important to me. I learned how to identify my skills, how to make my CV more attractive for the positions I was applying for and how the interview here could be. But the most helpful thing was to rescue my self-confidence.”

That increase in confidence paid off. Days after she did a “mock interview” in the training programme – designed to assess and strengthen her interview skills – Monik was sitting a final interview for real. That real-life interview landed her a position as an engineering document controller at a big pharmaceutical company, a role that strongly relates to her degree in production engineering.

Monik is now happily employed and has been recommending the programme to all of her friends.
In just the first two quarters of 2019 alone (January to June), 49 migrant people who were job-seeking participated in the four-week training course. Of these, 23 are already employed (as of 26 July 2019); three are doing further training or education; three have gained a qualification; and three have found useful volunteering positions. That’s 30 people who are already closer to living the kind of life they envisioned when they came to Ireland.

The results have a profound effect on everybody – the individuals who participate; Irish society; and to employers who need strong candidates they might otherwise have missed. It has a deep meaning for programme coordinator Doris, too, who gets to give other migrants the support she didn't have when she first started job searching in Ireland.

Doris Abuchi-Ogbonda, Coordinator for the Migrant Access Programme
EPIC Programme

EPIC (Employment for People from Immigrant Communities) is a Business in the Community Ireland programme tailored for migrants, to support them in gaining meaningful employment and accessing education and training, making an impact on diversity and social inclusion in Ireland. Since 2017 to date, 81% of participants have third level education - 55% with primary degrees while 26% have completed postgraduate studies. The majority of them have extensive experience in their areas in their countries, but when they arrive in Ireland, they find it challenging to access professional employment even though they have skills and knowledge that are in demand in the Irish labour market.

Wallace’s Story

Wallace is originally from Brazil and moved to Ireland in 2012. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Advertising and a Master’s Degree in Strategic Marketing. He had been looking for a job in his area for six months until one of his friends recommended him to try the EPIC Programme: “I’ve applied for a lot of job opportunities but I didn’t get any interview”. He decided to apply for the programme in January 2019 to “get to know more about the CV, interview preparation, and about the Irish culture” and started his training in February.

During the six weeks of EPIC training Wallace learned and developed his job seeking skills: “The programme was very good. I learned how to set up a CV in the Irish standards, I got a lot of tips during the CV preparation process, how to set up and use LinkedIn to improve the chances of getting a job.” EPIC not only covers the basics of the job application process, it also focuses on other areas such as body language, different communication styles and other types of support that our participants might need: “The programme covers the entire process of searching for work, giving support in different aspects, emotional and psychological, driving the search for employment.”

Apart from the training, which is done in groups of 16 people from different nationalities and backgrounds, participants meet weekly with their Career Counsellors. The support with the career counsellor is ongoing, so our participants are still working with them after finishing their training: “The Programme helped me a lot to find a job, preparing myself for the interview process.”

INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF MIGRANTS
The meetings with career counsellors are very valuable, they prepare you for the entire job search process, helping you write and adapt the CV and cover letters. Even after I finished the course I’m still getting emails from my career counsellor asking news about the job, if everything’s ok in the company.

Business in the Community Ireland is the network for responsible businesses, and some of these companies provide supports to the EPIC participants in the form of workshops, company visits, mentoring and mock interviews. Wallace participated in the IT skills training with BT: “IT training offers a good idea of Office programmes, as well as tips on how to use advanced programs” and in a company visit: “During the EPIC Programme I had the opportunity to participate in an activity at Microsoft Headquarters, and to expand networking with people from different sectors of the company.” These supports give our participants the opportunity to learn about the hiring process and the culture of the company, get support with CV and interview tips from HR professionals and recruiters and expand their professional networks.

The recruitment agency Cpl provides mock interviews at the end of the training: “The mock interview is a good opportunity to put into practice everything that was taught during the six weeks of the course. The interview was held at the Cpl headquarters, with recruiters that make the process as real as possible. At the end of the interview we received feedback that is very useful for evaluating our performance.”

Wallace started a new employment in his area in April and this is his experience with EPIC: “After a few months searching for jobs without much success, the EPIC Programme prepared me for job interviews, giving me emotional and psychological support. Yes. The course is very well structured, with good professionals, besides being totally free.”

Business in the Community Ireland specialises in providing advice and guidance to leading companies on corporate responsibility and sustainability and also works in education and employment. Regarding employment, BITCI runs programmes tackling issues on integration and social inclusion working with businesses, the government and the non-profit sector. The EPIC Programme supports migrants to become economically independent and more socially integrated in Ireland. Participants develop job seeking skills through pre-employment training, one-to-one support and work experience opportunities. Since its inception in 2008, over 3,200 people from 101 nationalities have engaged with the services. 67% of clients have secured employment or entered training or volunteering positions.
West Cork Development Partnership

Ability programme funding was granted to 27 organisations around Ireland in order to support young people with disabilities and is designed to assist in their transition from school to further education, training and employment. West Cork Development Partnership identified a target group of young people aged between 19-29 years of age that may be living with a mental health condition and live in the West Cork region. These young people have diagnosed mental health conditions that are making it difficult for them to engage in education, training or any type of employment, be it voluntary, work shadowing or paid. The West Cork Ability team aim to support, build skills and empower participants so that they may eventually take part in social activities such as accessing transportation, education, voluntary work or even employment.

Cillian Clifford and Ciara Hurley are participants on the West Cork Ability programme. Both participants have made huge progress in the development of confidence, skills building and the management of their mental health since joining the programme.

Cillian Clifford

For the West Cork Ability team, Cillian has been inspirational to work with. A really clever young man with so much potential. To name but a few of his many talents, Cillian paints, composes music, is a computer whizz and is becoming a kayaking expert on the programme. The team are extremely proud of Cillian and can see he is growing in confidence and motivation as the weeks go by.

Everyone at West Cork Ability are excited to see where Cillian’s journey is going and are fully behind him either in a kayak or in theory!
Ciara Hurley

Ciara's journey has been amazing to watch. An independent, talented 23 year old with her whole life ahead of her, the West Cork Ability team are delighted to have been a part of her progression. Ciara, a budding photographer, lives in a very isolated part of West Cork. Ciara identified a number of points of the Outcomes Star - our income/outcome measure (right) that she wished to progress in. The blue line is where Ciara identified with in March of this year. The green was 12 weeks later.

Through a variety of interventions that the team provided to Ciara and that she was committed to working on, she progressed in most objectives. In doing this, Ciara is now managing her mental health, has grown in confidence and independence and is about to embark upon her new venture in college this coming September. Ciara says, “Ability enables us to manage our mental health all the while engaging in society in a meaningful way that's individual to me”. Everyone is so excited for what the future has in store for Ciara.
Howard’s Story

Howard Davies is 18 years of age and has been attending Blossom Ireland since he was eight. He recently graduated from the Blossom Gateway programme which worked with him over a period of two years in developing his social skills, his independence while out in the community along with preparing for life after school.

During his time at Blossom Ireland, Howard has developed so many new skills. Along with volunteering in delivering Blossom Ireland yoga classes and he did some work experience at the Bloom Festival. He recently told us: “Blossom Ireland taught me how to travel safely by myself. I learned how to talk to other people. I am confident more often and I can now do more things by myself. I helped the staff with their jobs and tasks.”

As a result of the skills and experience attained at Blossom Gateway Howard has also got work placements as a café/shop assistant in Londis in Sandyford and a café assistant in Mario’s Pizzeria in Malahide. Howard travelled independently to work thanks to the travel training done during Blossom Gateway and his confidence has soared since getting these jobs. His increased confidence also led him to co-present a radio show on Dublin South FM and assist instructors at gym sessions in Portmarnock Leisure Centre.

Howard will attend Blossom Connect this autumn which will see the Local Area Co-Ordinator work with him and his family on a one to one basis to support his transition to life after school for up to two years. Howard has also applied for a part time paid position with Blossom Ireland as a Peer Mentor at the Blossom Buddies and Gateway programmes. He loves to tell the staff and the other participants what it was like participating in an interview, what he has done in work that day and this in turn further benefits the other participants who see what they can achieve.
Dublin South City Ability Programme

The Dublin South City Ability programme connects young people experiencing mental health challenges and co-occurring disabilities with Guidance Workers to assist them engage with work and/or study, learn new skills, find volunteering opportunities and take steps towards finding sustainable employment.

William’s Story

“After four years out of college and unsure of where to go next I found the Ability programme extremely helpful. I found it to be an extremely polite and friendly environment with very helpful staff. I found communication and training to be very useful to a person such as myself who suffers from anxiety and my Career Guidance Councillor was of tremendous help.

The programme itself, I felt, helped me push my boundaries and explore new frontiers of which I would not have done had I not been encouraged to do so. I found my time in Recycle IT very enjoyable and its staff extremely helpful and pleasant, I found my employers were very amenable in that they listened and respected me but also gave me advice and encouraged me to pursue initiatives within the organisation to increase productivity. I feel like this programme has enabled a person such as myself to get back onto his feet a great deal faster than he would have had he been left to his own devices. I also felt it would be well suited to those who, after college had no set goal or destination or real goal in mind, furthermore. in working I felt I got a clearer picture of what the real world is like and the real people I work with every day.”

The Dublin South City Ability Guidance Officer Ben Lindsay reached out to Recycle IT to explore work placement and employment opportunities for Ability participants. Recycle IT are a community based social enterprise specialising in recycling Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and were very excited and willing to partner with Ability to offer young adults the opportunity to take up a work placement with them.

William is currently working with the Recycle IT team and the feedback on William’s work and contribution is very positive. Well done William and thank you Recycle IT.
IRD Duhallow Ability Programme

IRD Duhallow collaborates with Ballyhoura Development and South East Cork Area Development (SECAD) to deliver the Ability programme across Cork, Kerry and Limerick. They work closely with a number of referral agencies including St. Joseph’s Foundation, Charleville, the National Learning Network, Midleton, the Disability Federation of Ireland and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

The aim of the programme is to bring young people with disabilities, who are not work-ready, closer to the labour market, using a range of person-centred supports. Person-centred planning has allowed the Youth Engagement Development Officer to look at the young person as a whole and assists planning in relation to all aspects of life, thus ensuring that the individual remains central to the creation of any plan which will affect them.

Where necessary home visits are facilitated for the initial meetings until the participants feel more at ease. Each participant is provided with an opportunity to work with an Occupational Therapist to carry out a Vocational Assessment. These assessments have been utilised to identify individual training and work capabilities as well as support needs. These processes help the Youth Engagement Development Officer to design a programme responsive to the needs of each young person.

A broad range of courses have been delivered including:

- Life Skills training in areas such as cookery, money management, keeping safe, laundry skills, teamwork and shopping;
- Social and Personal Development which involved modules such as confidence building, community involvement, assertiveness, relationship building, personal care and hygiene;
- Career Preparation Programme;
- Drama Therapy Workshops which uses drama and theatre techniques to facilitate personal growth and promote self-confidence & mental health
- Art & Craft Programme
- Horticulture
- Computers

Ability participant Joe Collins displaying his artwork at ‘A Day of the Region’ community festival
Graduation Event
IRD Duhallow’s Ability Programme held its first graduation ceremony on Tuesday 11th of June in the James O’Keeffe Institute in Newmarket, with five students graduating from the programme on the day. The important celebration was opened by the Chairperson of the Board of IRD Duhallow, Mary Wallace, who welcomed the Young People and their families to this special event. Jacinta Carroll, the Ability Programmes Youth Disability Engagement Officer explained the wide variety of courses that the young people participated in over the last seven months.

Speakers and presenters of certificates on the day included PJ Cleere, of the Disability Federation of Ireland, Cathal Geraghty of Cork Sports Partnership, Ailbe Coffey & Dermot McNamara of the Wellness Circle and local artist Claire O’Reilly. Maura Walsh, CEO of IRD Duhallow presented students with an overall Certificate of Excellence for their participation in IRD Duhallow’s Ability Programme and congratulated them on their achievements. Triona Dennehy, Project Co-ordinator explained how IRD Duhallow has established a strong relationship with a number of referral agencies to assist in identifying participants for the programme. She thanked St. Joseph’s Foundation in Charleville for their support for the programme.
Wild Work, an initiative of SECAD, launched a pilot youth programme in July 2018 called Stepping Stones in Midleton, Co. Cork. It uses experiential learning (learning by doing) to utilise the natural environment as a “hook” with which those experiencing marginalisation within society may become engaged, allowing them to approach other services and their personal development with confidence and motivation.

Participants on the pilot programme were referred from the Midleton & Fermoy Garda Youth Diversion Project and were early school-leavers or at risk of leaving school and involved in anti-social behaviour.

SECAD staff, supported by SICAP, worked in conjunction with GYDP youth leaders on the design of the pilot programme, and participants themselves were also encouraged to contribute ideas to the design.

The pilot programme took place over five weeks and focussed on five key areas related to nature and biodiversity.

The participants grew in confidence, their personal and professional development was evident to both themselves and to the Wild Work SICAP officers.

Two participants expressed a strong interest to pursue a degree qualification in the areas of geology or zoology and another expressed a desire to obtain a job in the area of health and safety and described the Stepping Stones programme as ‘the first course I will have ever passed in my life’, a huge personal achievement.

Next Steps…

Following the success of The Stepping Stones Midleton pilot, a second programme with six participants was rolled out in Macroom and the design of a third for rollout in either Cobh or Youghal is due following the completion of the programme in Macroom.
There has been much positivity surrounding the programme and SECAD fully believes that Stepping Stones can be used as an effective engagement strategy with hard-to-reach individuals in a range of other services beyond SICAP participants.

Stepping Stones participants with Wild Work Development Officer William O’Halloran on Pilmore Strand
South West Mayo Development Company (SWMDC) delivers SICAP in the Mayo Islands and in the Castlebar & Claremorris areas of County Mayo.

**Inishturk Organic Community Garden**

Inishturk Island is perched in the Atlantic Ocean, nine miles off the coast of County Mayo. There is an active Community Council on Inishturk with a full-time development officer and a part-time administrator. The Community Council owns and operates a beautiful Community Club with a traditional bar and a full restaurant. The island is accessible via an hour-long boat journey, often across rough seas. Life for island communities can be extremely challenging. Islanders live at the mercy of tides and weather and are reliant on the mainland for most goods and services. Following a community needs analysis, Inishturk set itself a challenge to become a self-sustaining island community.

In early 2018, members of the Inishturk community donated Inishturk Community Council a piece of land to develop a community garden. An Organic Community Gardening group was set up to develop the garden. This group approached SWMDC for support to develop the garden under SICAP 2018. SICAP supported this project through facilitation support and a small capital grant.

The community garden is a way of ensuring that fresh, nutritious vegetables are available to all the community, reducing food miles incurred in transporting vegetables to Inishturk and the reliance of islanders on produce from the mainland. A community garden has the potential to reduce costs, promote health and provide a project to unite the community.
The community garden is a valuable community-led initiative that has the potential to enhance the food served in the Inishturk Community Club, the food available to islanders and to enhance community life.

However, there are systemic issues that face fragile island communities such as declining populations and lack of economic opportunities. Although Inishturk’s population has increased in recent years, a very small number of people live on the island.

Nonetheless, there is a tremendous amount of goodwill towards the garden. In all senses, it is a community-led and community-driven initiative. The need for the garden was identified by the community, land was donated by the community and the community comes together to maintain it. Most importantly, the community benefits from the garden as a social activity and economically, through the Community Club. The overall project shows how very modest ESF support has practical applications and tangible impacts in remote island communities.