

# **Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot Scheme**

**Evaluation**

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An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialai  
Department of Social Protection  
[www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)

**Author**

Owen O'Reilly is a senior researcher at Franklin Research and the Head of School, Business and Professional Accountancy, City Colleges, Dublin, Ireland.

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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALMP	Active Labour Market Programmes
BJC	Ballymun Job Centre Co-op Limited
BJC/LESN	Ballymun Job Centre Local Employment Service Network
BRYP	Ballymun Regional Youth Resource
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DSP	Department of Social Protection
ETB	Education and Training Boards
EYN	Equal Youth Network
FET	Further Education and Training
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
ILDN	Irish Local Development Network
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LESN	Local Employment Service Network
LIG	Local Implementation Group
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NSG	National Steering Group
NYCI	National Youth Council of Ireland
PEX	Probability of Exit
PPP	Personal Progression Plan
TNP	Training Networks Programme (Skillnets)
VEC	Vocational Education Committees
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VFM	Value for Money
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative
YG	Youth Guarantee
YGIP	Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan

## Introduction and context

In response to the EU Commission's call to Member States, the Department of Social Protection (Department of Social Protection) submitted a proposal to establish a partnership to develop and test a Youth Guarantee model to address youth unemployment and for it to be piloted in an area of severe social and economic disadvantage (Ballymun).

The Department of Social Protection application was successful and received a grant of €250,000 towards the total cost of the project, which was budgeted at just over €300,000. The application envisaged an initial 3-month Planning Phase, followed by a 9-month operational phase and officially began in October 2013. This was extended and it actually ran for the calendar year of 2014.

This report is concerned with evaluating the Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot Scheme (BYG). Its purpose is to describe the BYG approach and to evaluate the efficacy, efficiency and effectiveness of the pilot. Further the report aims to bring together feedback and lessons learned from those involved in the BYG to identify key learning and potential elements that could inform design and implementation for the national roll-out and related EU programmes.

## The BYG model

The BYG were tasked with developing a model YG through a partnership approach<sup>1</sup> and extracting the learning from it to inform the national and other EU YG schemes.

A basic premise of the Youth Guarantee (YG) is that the long-term cost of youth unemployment and inactivity to economies and societies is greater than the cost of setting up a scheme to get young people into education, employment or training as soon as possible. Further, the hypothesis was that there is value in involving all relevant stakeholders (i.e. the current BYG partners) in the development, design, delivery, management, monitoring and promotion of the BYG to deliver effective solutions to the problem of youth unemployment.

The BYG model promoted an activation approach tailored to the needs of young people which would lead to a guarantee whereby all young people aged between 18 and 24 living in the Ballymun area would receive a good-quality offer of a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, work-experience, or continued education within 4 months of registration at the Department of Social Protection Intreo Centre.

As part of the BYG process young unemployed people under 25 on the Live Register were referred from the Intreo centre to a Group Engagement session. They were subsequently directed to a series of one to one meetings with a guidance counsellor at the Ballymun Jobs Centre. The scheme included the identification of an individual career plan which included (depending on the needs of the individual) elements of assessment, guidance, education

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 8 for composition of National Steering Group and Local Implementation Group.



and training with a particular focus on providing a work placement opportunity with local employers as a route to permanent employment.

## **Methodology**

The external evaluation of the BYG pilot had two roles. Firstly, to provide monitoring and an effective feedback loop to partners on the progress of the pilot. Secondly, to identify lessons learned to inform the design and development of the national, and EU, youth unemployment policy and practice.

The evaluator used multiple research tools: secondary research, observation, questionnaire surveys, focus groups, testimonials, case studies, video feedback, field visits and follow up depth interviews were all used to get broad feedback and insight from those involved in the pilot. These took place throughout the project. In addition, CSO and agency records were used, where available, to provide relevant data to document the BYG approach.

In hindsight there are a number of limitations in the evaluation approach. Greater use of BRYR could have enabled more feedback from the most marginalised young unemployed people<sup>2</sup>. In addition there are a number of unsettled issues that require further research, such as, what happens to clients after their offers. A longitudinal research could augment this research with useful insights into what happened next for clients.

## **Key findings from background research**

There is an abundance of peer learning around youth unemployment existing in the EU (Appendix 6 offers a brief summary of key learning). These are highlighted here to provide appropriate context for the BYG evaluation and also for the development of the National Plan. Key established learning includes:

Ensuring early access to Public Employment Services (PES)<sup>3</sup>. Evidence shows that many young people who experience difficulties in gaining a foothold in the labour market only access PES services once they are already unemployed, or indeed not at all, particularly if they are not entitled to any form of benefit. Therefore there is a need to establish contact with schools, develop outreach activities through links with NGOs, youth clubs, social or community actors, and, use modern media which “speak the language” of young people.

The BYG only dealt with people who were on the Live Register already. However, this learning around early intervention would need to be central to any National Plan.

Finding the right balance between flexibility and accountability: the pros and cons of PES decentralisation<sup>4</sup>. Decentralisation can take the form of managerial decentralisation, and, increased flexibility is a clear advantage of decentralised institutions. However, some PES functions may best be kept centralised. For example, efficient job matching services require a national database in order to support regional mobility. Data collection must be

<sup>2</sup> BRYR contend that with sufficient funding they could have improved feedback from Target Group 1.

<sup>3</sup> Peer Review: *‘Youth Guarantees: PES approaches and measures for low skilled young people’* (AMS Vienna, 22-23 March 2011)

<sup>4</sup> Dissemination Conference: *‘New developments, good practices and lessons learnt’* (Brussels, 8-9 September 2011)

standardised in order to ensure high quality and comparable information. There needs to be learning around how this could be best achieved in an Irish context. This requires further research and is not provided by the BYG.

Another established learning from previous EU projects is the need for strengthening individualised approaches leading to more individualised service provision, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. As a result various profiling tools and different delivery channels have been developed in order to identify those most at risk (and also) enable individuals who can do so to help themselves (self-service). New tools for profiling work better when staff are involved in development and trained at an early stage. Profiling is becoming increasingly important to identify those individuals most at risk of long-term unemployment. However, recent experience has shown some disillusionment with statistical profiling and self-help tools, partly because the results of some purely self-help tools can lack reliability. Cautions in this regard are echoed in the BYG guidance report.

The evaluator notes the Connexions Service in the UK (Appendix 7<sup>5</sup>). This inter-agency partnership in the UK aims to adopt a proactive response to youth unemployment by, among other initiatives, proactively engaging with schools and young people before they become unemployed. The BYG specifically did not model such approaches. It is a consistent theme of lessons learned in youth unemployment that dealing with the causes rather than the symptoms is recommended. The UK experience should be documented (specifically the role of Personal Advisors) to examine if it is relevant to the development of the National Plan.

### **Key findings from the BYG experience**

By the end of the project 739 young people had participated in the BYG. Of these, 255 (34%) were categorised as Target Group 1 (highest level of need), 345 (47%) were Target Group 2 and 139 (19%) were Target Group 3 (lowest level of need).<sup>6</sup>

As of the end of December 2014, 60 clients had dropped out of the BYG<sup>7</sup> leaving 679 clients who had completed or were completing the process. The ratio of males to females was approximately two-to-one. A total of 593 clients were involved in training, work programmes or employment. This means that 86 are still in the process or awaiting offers.

Of the offers made, 57% (338) have been of further education or training (FET) and 43% (255) have been of work experience/employment. With regard to the latter, 10% (77)<sup>8</sup> of total offers have been to private sector employment, 3% (20) have been publicly-funded internships and the balance comprised a range of publicly-funded community or local government employment schemes and blended learning programmes incorporating work experience elements.

<sup>5</sup> Department for Education and Skills Connexions Service Advice and guidance for all young people Report by the Controller and Auditor General [UK] HC 484 Session 2003-2004: 31 March 2004.

<sup>6</sup> These figures relate to the actual numbers engaging in BYG in each Target Group. Research shows the actual numbers in each group is 45/40/15%. See section 3.1.1.

<sup>7</sup> Of the 60 some changed to Lone Parent payment, or disability. Others closed their payment.

<sup>8</sup> Others have progressed to employment following offers.

There is a strong endorsement (69%) from participants of the BYG being beneficial for participants. The fact that 73% of participants<sup>9</sup> would recommend the BYG to their friends indicates a relatively strong endorsement of the BYG from those who utilised its services.

It is interesting to note how Ballymun performed relative to other North Dublin Intreo centres. There has been a greater reduction in youth unemployment in Ballymun (29%) compared to other North Dublin centres with an average reduction of 18.46%<sup>10</sup>. While we are unable to conclude a cause and effect between the BYG pilot and the relative significant improvement in youth unemployment in Ballymun - Table 15 and section 3.3.2 identifies the circumstantial evidence for a positive relationship.

### **Specific issues in BYG**

Monitoring and reporting of KPIs was impeded by the difficulties, amongst other reasons, of getting systems to share data. Reporting improved as the pilot progressed. Overall it can be concluded that the BYG has been successful in achieving the KPIs that it set itself<sup>11</sup>.

During the project, some clients disengaged at the initial stages and were repeatedly brought back in only to further disengage at every subsequent stage of the process. While the vast majority of young people attended the Group Engagement by the third call. However for those most marginalised it took a significantly longer amount of time, with some not attending until the eighth call. To date 84 young people from Target Group 1 (total number 255) have disengaged from the Youth Guarantee process at some point. This represents 33% of the overall number of clients in Target Group 1. This is much larger than the 9% in the other two target groups.

The aim of the Equal Youth Network (EYN)<sup>12</sup> is to bring together the main stakeholders in the provision of services to young early school leavers. It is an inter-agency partnership of social, health, education and training, public employment and youth services, for more intensive case management and support. 170 were referred to Equal Youth Network from the BYG (all from Target Group 1 - represents 67% of that cohort of 255). The network aims to tackle a wide range of barriers and meet the needs of young people in a holistic and integrated way.

Indications from this model would suggest that very few (5%<sup>13</sup>) of those on the Equal Youth Network are not engaging or are detached. This could suggest that successful engagement for this cohort depended on multi-agency and multi-level responses as operated in the EYN.

An offshoot of Equal Youth is the BallyRunners Programme and in this programme the young people are not paid for participation. The evaluator notes that the programme has voluntary participation and high levels of engagement and retention. This demonstrates their

<sup>9</sup> Survey of 55 respondents who had been in the BYG process for more than four months.

<sup>10</sup> Table 14 Comparative changes in under 25s youth unemployment (CSO Live Register, selected offices) page 32, and, Table 15 page 32.

<sup>11</sup> See 3.1.3 Key Performance Indicators page 25.

<sup>12</sup> The origin of the Equal Youth Network stems from a 2005 Equal funded pilot project managed by the BJC/LESN. The objective of the EU Equal Project was to develop a model of interagency co-operation for organisations working with young people.

<sup>13</sup> This is a best guesstimate based on experience of those involved with this programme.

motivation to engage in something meaningful (as perceived by them). Perhaps there is something that could be learned from this programme around engaging with marginalised clients on their own terms. Perhaps any engagement is a significant outcome for some.

Penalty rates were introduced as a means of encouraging job seekers to engage with activation measures. To date only one client has been fully disallowed from payment under the BYG. Almost a quarter (23%) of Target Group 1 have been penalty rated compared to Target Group 2 (8%) and Target Group 3 (6%). A number of Target Group 1 participants received a further penalty rating for non-attendance at Guidance meetings and not taking up offers. Further research is needed to consider whether attendance after a Penalty-Rating leads to subsequent genuine re-engagement, and, whether Penalty-Rating of Target Group 1 client group is appropriate or effective.

Regarding the 'flexible fund' and the Post-Pilot Pathways fund these amounted to less than €40,000. The logic was that sometimes a small amount of money is sometimes necessary to help a client get or stay on a programme. The former equated to €241 per recipient and the latter €211. Relatively, these represent less than two weeks unemployment payments. These expenditures seem reasonable especially if it is felt appropriate by those who have the closest understanding of clients. They are probably in the best position to judge.

### **BYG performance in context**

Lastly in evaluating outcomes, there is need to consider the context of the BYG in terms of the changing economic environment during 2014. There has been a general improvement in unemployment figures across Ireland. It is interesting to note how Ballymun performed relative to other North Dublin Intreo centres. There was a 29% reduction in under 25's on the Live Register in Ballymun during the period of the BYG. This was a higher reduction than any other office in north Dublin<sup>14</sup>.

Another context for evaluating the BYG is that other approaches for tackling youth unemployment are also being trialled, for example, the Swords approach. It is useful to consider the relative effectiveness of this approach although it is worth noting that there are significant differences in the respective profiles of both areas<sup>15</sup>.

The Swords Approach involved inviting all existing YG clients to large events attended by local employers (who were recruiting employees) and a wide range of education and training providers. The evaluator notes that in the Swords experience effectively 82% successfully self-served themselves to a progression. Those that remained were invited to a 1-to-1 review meeting with their Case Officer and Personal Progression Plans updated as appropriate. The Case Officers assigned to deliver the YG in Swords also dealt with a large number of additional (older) clients. The overall Case Officer: client ratio for Swords was 1: 911<sup>16</sup>. This compares with the ratio in Ballymun of 1:158. This implies efficiency and value for money considerations that need to be balanced with quality of outcome concerns.

<sup>14</sup> See section 3.3.2

<sup>15</sup> See 3.3.3. Note Swords and Ballymun have a different methodology for PEX identification.

<sup>16</sup> As 82% self-served to a progression in Swords some have argued they should not be included in the caseload ratio.

The profile of Swords clients is markedly different from Ballymun clients. Not only were there greater numbers in Ballymun but there were particularly greater numbers in Target Group 1. However, it is noted that Target Groups 2 and 3 performed relatively better in Swords and the reasons for this are not conclusive. In relation to the national rollout Swords may be more representative of the general situation. In that context, the Swords approach offers a solution for clients to self-serve if they are capable of making informed choices. It is efficient and effective for less disadvantaged clients. The report on the guidance process concluded

The Swords model catered effectively for less disadvantaged clients, many of whom it appears could self-serve. The Big Event approach, in particular, seems effective in acting as a 'pre-interview' intervention, potentially reducing the number of clients requiring one to one interviews.<sup>17</sup>

Further, they went on to conclude that

A combination of both the BYG and Swords model would merit further consideration within the context of a national Youth Guarantee for Ireland.

The evidence suggests that it is important to be able to determine who needs what type of help at the earliest stage. Those in Target Group 1 have the greatest need and are often furthest away from being job capable. High support intervention is required by many of these clients. These clients need to be identified earlier and then managed more effectively with appropriate services. Profiling needs to be established that can achieve this goal. This potentially could be effectively achieved at their earliest engagement – in the Intreo centre.

Overall this evaluation considers that there is a need for a more robust profiling tool. This is a recommendation because early identification of those with greatest need would lead to a more effective service. Some have urged caution around using the PEX as an indicator of guidance need and the complexities of the situation need to be appreciated.

### **Challenges for the CDET in delivering the FET elements of the BYG**

The main challenge for CDET was to create a flexible model of training and education that met the needs of the identified target groups, delivered as the young people complete the guidance process and yet could be planned and budgeted for. This required detailed planning where programmes agreed at the Local Implementation Group (LIG) had to be accommodated in a range of funding models that existed in the recently transferred Training Centre (former FAS) and in the further education sector.

### **Lessons for Educational and Training Boards - Emerging Best Practice Guidelines:**

Capacity planning needs to be flexible. There was an underlying assumption that the ETB should establish KPIs that included places for all young people covered by the Guarantee. It was not possible to plan a programme for every referral in advance of the guidance engagement with the client groups. Additional provision was put in place for each of the target groups. There are two models for delivery: establish courses with specific start dates for referral by guidance service or put in place courses for client groups when the numbers

<sup>17</sup> Duggan, C., Whelan, N., & Together, S. (2015). Lessons from the Ballymun Youth Guarantee pilot: a focus on employment related career guidance.

were available. In reality, the plan to deliver required both approaches and getting the balance right was an important part of delivering a flexible model.

The ETB needs to work in partnership with community-based youth work providers and community education providers to support the most marginalised young people to actively engage with the guidance process and the work/education/training opportunities provided.

The timing of the planning period is crucial and the plan if it is to include additional and innovative programmes will have to be finalised in time for the annual negotiations with SOLAS for the budget the following year. CDETB was successful in securing additional funding with SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority because of the pilot nature of this initiative. However, in the rollout of the Youth Guarantee it will be the responsibility of each ETB to plan its response within its budget allocation.

However, there is a significant policy issue to be addressed. The need to respond to young people on the live register under the Youth Guarantee will require the ETB to prioritise access to existing courses without additional places being made available. The implication is that it will require the ETB to possibly displace young people who are self-referrals and who have not signed on the Live Register. In addition, the young people on the Youth Guarantee will be in competition with other Department of Social Protection clients who may also be prioritised by Department policy such as the long termed unemployed. This will impact on the capacity of the ETB to respond effectively in the flexible manner described in the pilot.

The ETB will be providing programmes under different budgets each of which carries its own entry requirements and restrictions. Matching the right fund to the right initiative will be a challenge given the limited funding available. Ensuring that barriers are not inadvertently created for young people will be a challenge.

Following an offer and subsequent take up of a place it is recommended that a level of ongoing support be offered to some of the young people through a nominated mediator/advocate/coach, placed within the LES or DSP. This model of support would add more efficiencies to the programme.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Conclusions and recommendations are grouped into themes, that could inform the design and implementation for the national roll-out include the following.

### **Key lessons and recommendations around partnership**

The adoption of a formal policy framework (Eurofound) was successful in establishing basic principles to assist in the development and implementation of an effective Youth Guarantee.

Building an effective partnership among disparate stakeholders takes time, energy, effort and resources but is universally perceived by partners as being worth it. Partnership is resource intensive and time-consuming and this needs to be recognised by all participating organisations and, in particular, the line managers of those representatives participating in partnership structures. It needs to become part of their internal job description and performance evaluation matrix.



Partnership workings require a 'driver or motivator' to ensure that an interagency approach works. Agencies tend not to come together unless they are mandated by their funder. Consideration needs to be given to supporting 'partnership workings' through setting it as a KPI for employees and by providing training.

Critical success factors include the need for clarity around roles and responsibilities of partnership structures and members ('Memorandum of Understanding' for NSG), objectives, KPIs, reporting and monitoring framework, independent/revolving chair, and governance.

There is concern over the inability of project managers to manage partner work contributions through task allocation and performance appraisal. Inevitably, perhaps, some partners contributed more than others. If the model was to be replicated this would need to be considered. How can management manage effectively within a voluntary partnership where interest and responsibility may vary? The presence of external feedback and monitoring, as in the pilot, would be seen as a help in this regard.

There is often a lack of a partnership culture between agencies and that this needs to be considered and addressed. Partnership requires new ways of working and additional skills that should not be assumed. Further, training should be engaged in by those involved.

Partnership is effective at both national and local level; however, replicating the local BYG structures nationally would be challenging and not necessarily appropriate or efficient. A particular challenge is determining the optimum geographic remit of any local YG partnership structures where the boundaries of putative partners are not contiguous.

The establishment of a National Youth Guarantee committee would be welcomed by BYG partners. Consideration needs to be given to the inclusion of the Department of Justice (Probations Services) and the Department of Children. Also, the LIG is an important structure which operationalises the Youth Guarantee. It should form part of the Youth Guarantee structures where possible.

Monitoring and evaluation is critical. External feedback, similar to the pilot, is recommended as this increases the effectiveness of partner contributions. The use of a robust evidential base is essential to determine what does and does not work, and facilitates better prioritisation of resources, continuous improvement of service delivery and collaborative working. Ensuring an on-going monitoring of the Youth Guarantee serves to establish a feedback loop to improve different aspects of the process (measures, partnership, etc.). This should be by an external independent agency similar to the pilot because their independence gives them authority and credibility – especially in the partnership context.

**Lessons and recommendations around the role of community groups and employers**  
Working with relevant community and Youth Service Providers<sup>18</sup> for hard-to-reach clients is important because they have a better understanding of these clients and have established a

18 Department of Children and Youth Affairs. *What is Youth Work?*  
<http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2Fyouthaffairs%2Fwhatisyouthwork.htm>

level of trust and rapport that make them an ideal communication channel to certain clients especially Target Group 1.

Employer involvement is essential to the design and delivery of the Youth Guarantee to maximise take-up of existing supports and services, ensure the relevance of the guidance and training aspects of the YG, and assist in the development of innovative approaches such as blending learning opportunities. However, more needs to be done to engage employers.

Active employer relationship-building is required at national, regional and local level. The most successful approach to get business on board was through one-to-one communication with business either in person or through phone contact. Further, there is a need to build trust and confidence in the Intreo service (from the employer's perspective). There is much uncertainty about Intreo and what they can do to support business. There is no consistent approach in how Intreo engage with business. The response depends on the office/ individuals involved.

Improving employer engagement should be a priority for a national Youth Guarantee which can build on the lessons learned in the BYG experience. Engaging employers through Chambers of commerce and Business associations has brought benefits however it does need to have a dedicated resource on both sides to ensure its success. There is a recommendation to pilot a dedicated business liaison service which would involve local Intreo staff working alongside the Dublin Chamber of Commerce to encourage recruitment directly from the live register.

### **Lessons and recommendations around the client and engaging the most marginalised**

Conducting initial research, client segmentation and capacity planning are a key basic step. This shows that young people vary in their level of labour market readiness and certain clients (particularly those with multiple barriers) may require a number of interventions as part of a structured supported pathway to employment.

There is a need to understand that the lives of many young people are challenging and chaotic and therefore implementation measures must adapt in order to engage with them. Partners need to understand that the trust of young people is hard won and easily lost and therefore initiatives and programmes must be well planned and executed.

A key learning from the BYG is that the most marginalised are the most difficult group to engage in the process. A one size fits all approach will fail with them. Key learning includes:

Given the range of support needs of this client group, and following on from the Eurofound insights, an inter-agency approach will be required to support progressions as no one agency will have the necessary skills to meet these young person's needs. This will require an 'Equal Youth' approach and key working to have an intensive support framework and progression plan in place for each client.

The Equal Youth Model of a 'case management' approach needs to continue to support the effective placement of clients. This process includes a shared responsibility of a client's employment/training pathway and enhances interagency working.



The right payment classification - many of the client group are still very distant from the real labour market. Given this reality consideration should be given to these young people's 'live register status' as they are clearly are not 'job ready'. Consideration should be given as to the appropriate income support payment for severely marginalised clients who are neither job-ready, nor in a position to progress into standard FET interventions.

Group Engagement may not be the best way to engage with the most marginalised. The initial meeting with a deciding officer could refer the client straight into Equal Youth. This is important because the longer the process the greater the chance of disengagement. BallyRunners shows that the most marginalised will engage if the programme is relevant.

Penalty Rating - further research is required on the effectiveness of this approach but it seems that penalty rating alone does not encourage engagement or activation of those most distant from the jobs market.

### **Lessons and recommendations around the BYG approach and the Guidance Model**

While there were undoubted successes in the BYG approach aspects of the 'Swords approach' need to be considered. The fact that over 80% of Swords clients were able to self-serve at the low cost Employment Fair seems to offer an efficient, effective and economical model. This obviated the need for extensive guidance and counselling for those that progressed themselves.

The evaluation notes that while all clients are offered the same service, it is unclear if all clients, irrespective of profiling, require the same testing. Value for money suggests there are cost implications that need to be considered. Perhaps the level of guidance required could be identified from improved profiling, as previously recommended. This could allow resources be targeted at those that most require support.

The provision of ongoing support, advice, guidance to clients while participating in an intervention is considered to be crucial by BYG partners so that clients maintain progress. Allied to this is the flexible fund to help prevent a small sum negating a progression.

Scheme Flexibility - there was acknowledgement that the adjustment to eligibility and entry requirements to Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMP) was an enabling factor which supported good outcomes for clients. This was beneficial and should be replicated.

It was also noted that there is a very low level of awareness of the Youth Guarantee among key stakeholders – including young people themselves. There is a need to review the effectiveness of the current strategy (channels, material and content) leading to the development a wide-ranging communication strategy to promote awareness of the YG.

### **Lessons and recommendations from Barriers to Client Activation/Progression**

Eligibility - the recommendation is that Department of Social Protection review ALMP age-related eligibility criteria in light of the YG.

Requirement for vertical progression - recommendation is that Case Officers/Mediators be afforded discretion to approve 'horizontal/downward movement' in exceptional cases, where considered appropriate to enhance the client's employability.

Cost of participation - recommendation is that Department of Social Protection could consider covering cost of incidental expenses associated with participation on programmes/taking up employment from the TESG fund on a case-by-case basis.

Personal issues/circumstances - recommendation is to, where possible, mainstream BYG by

- Provision of intensive guidance where required, giving the client sufficient advice, support and time to agree an appropriate progression plan. This would have significant resource implications for Department of Social Protection.
- Multidisciplinary case management. This presupposes the existence of similar networks in other areas, or their establishment where there are none.
- Delivery of appropriate developmental interventions in other areas. This presupposes the existence of programmes in other areas, or their establishment where there are none. This would have significant funding implications for the Education and Training Boards.

Low levels of educational attainment - mainstream

- Provision of intensive guidance, giving the client sufficient advice, support and time to agree an appropriate progression plan
- Multidisciplinary case management
- Development of appropriate developmental interventions

#### **Best practice still needs to be identified in the following areas**

- Client profiling needs to be able to segment clients at the earliest opportunity
- Communication around KPIs, monthly reporting, budgets and meetings
- Sharing and centralising the data necessary to fully track and support a young person's journey is not an easy task, but is a critical step in being able to fully support a person within the context of the Youth Guarantee. How this will be achieved needs to be considered and all relevant information requirements on clients defined.
- The electronic communication systems used in the project were weak. Future Youth Guarantee partnership arrangements would need to consider the importance of an effective communication platform. Further, the effect of the remoteness of organisations from each other in interagency work needs to be considered. Professional group systems which promote visual communication may have a useful role to play in promoting effective collaboration.
- Project management methodologies used in conducting the projects/ activities need to be reconsidered
- There should be a clear definition of what constitutes an 'offer' to ensure clarity among all stakeholders and facilitate monitoring.
- Further, the timing of the offer is important and needs to be clear. The evaluator considers that 4 months after the initial guidance meeting is preferable to 4 months after the Group Engagement because some clients may miss their initial guidance and this could make a 4 month guarantee impractical.

#### **National and EU knowledge transfer**

It is important that the pilot experience is shared with colleagues and there is a need to identify methods to transfer pilot learning to the National YG plan and other EU member states. Reports and dissemination conferences should be utilised as well as networking and personal contacts at national and EU level.

## **Recommended short-term actions**

Recommendations for how activity and practice currently carried out by the BYG could be mainstreamed include

Any National Plan must develop proactive systems for engaging with schools and younger people at risk of becoming unemployed. See the UK Connexions programme Appendix 7.

Effective client profiling that could efficiently segment clients at an early stage needs to be developed. Group Engagement is an appropriate first stage for many but not all clients. The deciding officer should use an improved client profiling process to refer the client onto the most appropriate pathway (for example, straight into Equal Youth if appropriate). The 'Swords' model of client activation using Employment Fairs should be further trialled to see if its success is replicated.

The Equal Youth Model of a 'case management' approach needs to continue to support the effective placement of clients. This process includes a shared responsibility of a client's employment/training pathway and will enhance interagency working.

Active employer relationship-building is required at national, regional and local level. There is no consistent approach in how Intreo engage with business. This is crucial as without improved employer engagement the Youth Guarantee will continue to rely on state efforts. The Swords example indicates that employers are willing to participate if the design is clear.

The usefulness of 'flexibility in approach' to youth unemployment is a particular learning from the BYG pilot. Elsewhere specific recommendations are made around eligibility, requirement for vertical progression, cost of participation/expenses and, penalty rating.

The timing of the offer needs to be considered. The evaluator considers that 4 months after the initial guidance meeting is preferable to 4 months after the Group Engagement.

Education and Training providers also noted the significant policy issue around the need to respond to young people on the live register under the Youth Guarantee will require the ETB to prioritise access to existing courses without additional places being made available. The implication is that it will require the ETB to possibly displace young people who are self-referrals and who have not signed on the Live Register. This will impact on the capacity of the ETB to respond effectively in the flexible manner described in the pilot.

The ETB also noted that it needs to work in partnership with community-based youth work providers and community education providers to support the most marginalised young people to actively engage with the guidance process and the work and/or education and training opportunities provided. This needs to be researched and established whether and how this can be replicated nationally.

The idea of post placement support has considerable support and needs to be resourced. The Personal Advisor service offered in the Connexions Service in the UK is a model that should be researched further.

### **Further short- to medium-term actions recommended**

- The establishment of a National Youth Guarantee Steering Committee and Local Implementation Groups where practical.
- Clarity around roles and responsibilities of partnership structures and members ('Memorandum of Understanding'), objectives, KPIs, reporting and monitoring framework, and governance established
- Conducting initial research, client segmentation and capacity planning are a key basic step that can be done locally in the short-term
- Consideration should be given as to the appropriate income support payment for severely marginalised clients who are neither job-ready, nor in a position to progress into standard FET interventions.
- Commission external monitoring and feedback, similar to the pilot, for a national rollout

### **Challenges facing the national rollout**

There are going to be challenges in implementing lessons learned into a national rollout. For example, working with relevant community and Youth Service Providers is particularly important for communicating with the most marginalised clients. However, these Youth Service Providers need to be adequately resourced.

The ETB noted it was not possible to plan a programme for every referral in advance of the guidance engagement with the client groups. The indication is that capacity planning needs to be flexible. But is this possible and how can this be facilitated? Further, for the Education and Training providers a key issue is that additional and innovative programmes will have to be finalised in time for the annual negotiations with SOLAS for the budget the following year. Responsibility for this needs to be owned and planned accordingly.

The ETB also noted that it will be providing programmes under different budgets each of which carries its own entry requirements and restrictions. Matching the right fund to the right initiative will be a challenge given the limited funding available. Ensuring that barriers are not inadvertently created for young people will be a challenge. What changes are required here? Are simplifications possible and who is responsible for delivering these? What are the constraints involved? Perhaps a more decentralised, flexible, client centred approach that was recommended in the peer review learning earlier could be adopted.

Employer involvement is essential. Active employer relationship-building is required at national, regional and local level. This is easier said than done and requires an understanding of 'business culture' which may be challenging to achieve.

There are several processes that need to be developed. These include effective client profiling that could efficiently segment clients at an early stage. Also the sharing and centralising of data is seen as challenging. An effective communication and collaboration platform needs to be established.

One particular learning from the BYG was that dedicated staff need to be allocated to the programmes. It was only when staff were allocated full time to the pilot that significant development was achieved. Further, staff need to be appropriately trained in partnership culture and skills.

It will be a challenge to replicate the level of drive, energy and enthusiasm demonstrated by the BYG partners within any mainstreamed structures given the particular focus and spotlight of a high-profile pilot. Further, some of the lead players in the BYG were particularly skilled in facilitating partner engagement. Subsequent Youth Guarantee must be designed considering normal management capability and buy-in.

All of these proposals require financing which will be challenging in the present economic environment. However, it needs to be remembered that a basic premise of the Youth Guarantee is that the long-term cost of youth unemployment and inactivity to economies and societies is greater than the cost of setting up a scheme to get young people into education, employment or training as soon as possible. The 'social cost' for the client and society of not adequately resourcing these proposals needs also to be appreciated. The financial cost of not addressing youth unemployment may be far greater than the expedient course of ignoring the innovative approaches that have been successfully adopted in other EU countries.

The BYG have developed a "Declaration", see Appendix 9, to encapsulate their recommendations for interested parties to adopt the good practice principles identified by the Ballymun pilot Youth Guarantee.

The manner in which the BYG pilot has been developed and managed demonstrates that Ireland can be a leader in addressing youth unemployment in EU. The BYG has shown that an interagency partnership approach does release synergies which can be more efficient, effective and economical at addressing youth unemployment than traditional approaches. The BYG would contend that the most enduring message from the pilot is how the 'process issues' impacted on securing good outcomes, i.e.:

- Enhanced working relationships between stakeholders
- Flexibility in the approach
- Youth Sector involvement
- Guidance process
- Multi-disciplinary case management approach to support clients with multiple barriers

The evaluator agrees with this contention and contends that the lessons from the BYG pilot contained in this report warrant consideration, and ultimately, implementation.

Theodore Roosevelt suggested that '*Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.*'<sup>19</sup> This challenge is as enduring and appropriate for policy makers today as when he made that statement over one hundred years ago. Perhaps the legacy of the Ballymun Youth Guarantee and the partnership approach that implemented it is to help point the direction towards more effective policies on youth unemployment in Ireland and Europe. Undoubtedly, there are worthwhile lessons in the BYG approach which merit careful consideration by policy makers.

<sup>19</sup> Theodore Roosevelt's "A Square Deal" speech to farmers at the New York State Agricultural Association Syracuse, NY, September 7, 1903.

## Introduction

In response to the EU Commission's call to Member States, the Department of Social Protection submitted a proposal to establish a partnership to develop and test a Youth Guarantee model to address youth unemployment and for it to be piloted in an area of severe social and economic disadvantage (Ballymun).

This report is concerned with evaluating the Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot Scheme (BYG). Its purpose is to describe the BYG approach and to evaluate the efficacy, efficiency and effectiveness of the pilot.

Further the report aims to bring together feedback and lessons learned from those involved in the BYG to identify key learning and potential elements that could inform design and implementation for the national roll-out and related EU programmes.

This evaluation has three main objectives:

1. To summarise the BYG project, its evolution over time, project activities and mobilisation of resources, in order to provide a documentary account of the pilot project.
2. To analyse and assess the BYG approach in terms of:
  - a. Outputs, outcomes and impact
  - b. Partnership and communications
  - c. Barriers to progression
  - d. Learning arising in the course of the project, particularly in terms of issues arising, gaps identified and barriers addressed.
3. Valorisation: To distil key elements in each of these areas and recommend how and which elements should be adopted to inform the design and implementation of the national roll-out of the Youth Guarantee, taking into account issues of transferability and generalisability.

### Report outline

The first Chapter introduces the BYG pilot project, including background information contextualising it within wider Irish and EU policy developments. It goes on to describe the pilot and why Ballymun was selected as the pilot area.

In Chapter 2, identifies the methodology adopted and how the Pilot was monitored, assessed and evaluated.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 collectively form different perspectives of the evaluation. The aim is to initially report on outputs and outcomes, for example, to what extent were performance indicators delivered in the pilot. In chapter 4, to evaluate the BYG compared to established best practice in youth unemployment. Chapter 5 evaluates specific key issues in the BYG.

Chapter 3 assesses the outputs and outcomes of the BYG and considers what 'worked' and did not 'work' in terms of achieving identified outcomes and impacts. Firstly, key outputs and outcomes are considered such as participant demographics key performance indicators (KPIs). Then the issues of client engagement /disengagement, and, penalty rating are

addressed. Lastly, the context of the BYG in terms of the changing economic environment during 2014, and also, an opportunity to compare the BYG to other approaches to youth unemployment are considered.

In chapter 4, we evaluate to what extent the BYG is based on established best practice. The evaluation compares the BYG experience to established best practice as established in the Ten Eurofound insights, which were, in this report, are adapted and grouped as

- Importance of understanding the target group
- Long-term sustainable and tailored path for clients
- Appropriately trained personnel offering holistic client centred guidance
- Focus on employability and employer buy-in
- Youth unemployment requires flexible responses
- Monitoring and evaluation should be used to inform policy
- Inter-agency collaboration

In each there is a review of the Ballymun experience and an identification of lessons to be considered.

Chapter 5 is an assessment of seven key issues relevant to the BYG. These were identified as areas for particular evaluation and learning from the pilot which were

- Partnership
- Youth Work Sector contribution
- Client engagement
- Employer engagement
- Education and Training Provision
- Barriers to progression
- Promotion of the Youth Guarantee

In each there is a review of the Ballymun experience and an identification of lessons to be considered.

Chapter 6 identifies the key learning and elements to be adopted together. This section also considers incremental reforms that could contribute to the future adoption of the positive elements of the BYG approach.

Finally, Chapter 7 draws conclusions and recommendations on how the key learning and potential elements could inform the design and implementation for the national roll-out, focusing on transferability and generalisability. This section also reflects on the 'best possible' solutions over the short-, medium- and long-term, and, challenges arising recognising that infrastructure and capacity constraints may hinder the full adoption of these elements immediately.



# Chapter 1: Introduction to the BYG Pilot and EU Policy Context

## Introduction

In response to the EU Commission's call to Member States, the Department of Social Protection (Department of Social Protection) submitted a proposal to establish a partnership to develop and test a Youth Guarantee model to address youth unemployment and for it to be piloted in an area of severe social and economic disadvantage (Ballymun). The call for proposals was launched in 2012 and this resulted in 18 pilot projects being funded, in seven countries: Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom.

A basic premise of the Youth Guarantee (YG) is that the long-term cost of youth unemployment and inactivity to economies and societies is greater than the cost of setting up a scheme to get young people into education, employment or training as soon as possible.

### 1.1 Ballymun Youth Guarantee (BYG)

The BYG were tasked with developing a model YG through a partnership approach and extracting the learning from it to inform the national and other EU YG schemes.

The hypothesis was that there is value in involving all relevant stakeholders (i.e. the current BYG partners) in the development, design, delivery, management, monitoring and promotion of the BYG. Essentially, that the integrated whole is more effective than the sum of its parts.

The premise of the BYG pilot to be tested was that a partnership of relevant stakeholders can deliver effective solutions to the problem of youth unemployment through a Youth Guarantee approach.

The model adopted an activation approach tailored to the needs of the individual and designed to support each young person on a sustainable pathway to employment. The BYG was more ambitious than the national YG both in the nature of the offer and the implementation schedule. It set itself the target of guaranteeing a good-quality offer of a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, work-experience, or continued education to all young job seekers aged between 18 and 24 who were registered with Ballymun DSP Intreo Centre within four months of a first "1-2-1" meeting with a guidance practitioner

The scheme included the identification of an individual career plan which would include (depending on the needs of the individual) elements of assessment, guidance, education and/or training - with a particular focus on providing a work placement opportunity with local employers as a route to permanent employment.

The Department of Social Protection application (VP/2012/012/0450) was successful and received a grant of €250,000 towards the total cost of the project, which was budgeted at just over €300,000. The application envisaged an initial 3-month Planning Phase, followed by a 9-month operational phase and officially began in October 2013. This was later rescheduled so that the operational phase ran from January to December 2014 followed by an assessment and evaluation phase.



The pilot had an important role, not just for the young people of Ballymun, but also in informing the development and roll out of the national Youth Guarantee.

## **1.2 Background to the Youth Guarantee and EU Policy context**

To address the challenging situation faced by young people in the labour market, the European Commission released a Youth Employment Package in December 2012, which paved the way for the Council's adoption of the Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee in April 2013. The Youth Guarantee is based on the experience of Austria and Finland who demonstrate 'that investing in young people pays off' (p.29)<sup>20</sup>

Following the Commission Communication "Working together for Europe's young people – A Call to Action on Youth Unemployment" and the related European Council conclusions in June 2013, Member States with regions experiencing a youth unemployment rate above 25% were requested to submit a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP) by the end of 2013. The remaining Member States were expected to submit their plans during 2014.

To support the Member States, the Commission circulated an outline for the YGIP annexed by guidelines and a non-exhaustive list of Youth Guarantee policy interventions that can be supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

The Minister for Social Protection and Minister for Education and Skills published the national Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan "Pathways to Work" on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2014. It specified that the Youth Guarantee will be implemented on a phased basis at national level. It also outlined the roles of stakeholder organisations, how the Plan would be financed, the measures to be put in place, how progress would be assessed and the timetable.

### 1.2.1 EU rationale behind the Youth Guarantee

Fostering youth employment - and, more generally ensuring that young people are appropriately supported in their transition towards working life - has become a collective concern and moved to the top of the national and European policy agenda.

In many countries, young people face structural challenges in making the school-to-work transition and encounter more adverse conditions than other age groups in the labour market, as reflected by their over-representation in part-time and fixed-term work.

In the difficult economic climate of the last five years, youth unemployment has been steadily rising across all qualification levels and especially among the low-qualified. By the first quarter of 2013, youth employment had risen to 23.4% across the EU-28 (compared to approximately 15% at the start of 2008). The current average youth unemployment rate is more than double that of the adult population (10.9%) in the EU-28.

Many young people in Europe are not only out of work, but also not in education, employment or training (NEET) (in 2012, 13.4% of all EU citizens aged 15-24 fell into this 'NEET' category. This includes low-skilled young people, such as early leavers from education.

<sup>20</sup> Employment Policy beyond the crisis: Social Europe Guide, Volume 8 (2014). European Commission

In today's labour market, very low-qualified young people are at particular risk of being 'left behind' as the overall level of educational attainment among young people is rising, while demand for (young) unskilled labour is generally decreasing.

For young people, long periods spent in a NEET status can have a scarring effect: it becomes much harder for them to (re-)enter the labour market or re-engage in training activities; it damages their future wages and employment prospects; and it makes it more likely that they will ultimately fall into poverty and suffer from social exclusion.

The Eurofound report concluded

There is a general consensus that the current economic situation in Europe creates the risk of a 'lost generation' of young people who lack opportunities and pathways.<sup>21</sup>

A basic premise of the Youth Guarantee is that the long-term cost of youth unemployment and inactivity to economies and societies is greater than the cost of setting up a scheme to get young people into education, employment or training as soon as possible.

A guarantee scheme is primarily a structural reform – it requires immediate measures as well as investment in the medium and long term. Action costs less than inaction, as described below.

According to a study led by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions, in 2008, the re-integration into work of unemployed and inactive young people (aged 16 to 29 years old) would create a yearly saving of more than €10 billion.

Using estimates of the costs of the Swedish guarantee scheme, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) calculated in July 2012 that to introduce a Youth Guarantee scheme in the Eurozone would cost 0.45% of the Eurozone GDP, equivalent to €21 billion.

Taking into account lost taxes and earnings, as well as the welfare benefits for unemployed young people, Eurofound calculated in 2011 that €153 billion is lost annually to young NEETs in the EU, or around 1.21% of GDP.<sup>5</sup> In other words, it costs the EU substantially more when young people are out of education, employment and training than it would to set up a Youth Guarantee scheme in each country. Furthermore, large savings could be generated by reintegrating young people into the labour force.

On balance, setting up a Youth Guarantee is a fundamental structural reform and a positive investment in the future of young people and the economy. At the same time, it signals an advance towards three of Europe's targets for 2020: 75% employment for 20 to 64 year olds, 20 million fewer people in poverty or social exclusion, and an early school-leaving rate of less than 10%.

<sup>21</sup> Hawley, J., Nevala, A. M., & Weber, T. (2012). Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the employment participation of young people. (AKA Eurofound), p. 65

### 1.2.2 Options for national adoption of a Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee, as defined by the Council Recommendation, is a formal pledge that “young people (up to age 25) receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education”.

In practice, a Youth Guarantee could take different forms as there is no single, one-size-fits-all model that could respond to the needs of different groups of young people across all European countries. So far, only a few countries in Europe have put in place a comparable Guarantee. As indicated in the Council recommendation, the Youth Guarantee 'should be geared to national, regional and local circumstances'.

There are a number of significant differences between EU Member States that are likely to influence the shape of a national Youth Guarantee.

The socio-economic context and the labour market situation (as reflected in the rates of enrolment in education, levels of educational attainment of young people and share of early leavers from education and training, average length of school-to-work transitions, the youth unemployment rate, the proportion of young people with NEET status, etc.). These factors have a direct impact on the number of potential users of a Youth Guarantee scheme, as well as the level and type of support these would require.

The institutional and policy context: the characteristics of the education system (e.g. the type and role of the vocational education and training (VET) sector compared to general education), the labour market structure, the role played by public employment services (PES), other labour market institutions, stakeholders active in the field of youth and social partners - as well as the level of cooperation between stakeholders - the level of development of youth policies and budget available, the level of organisation and governance (national/regional), etc.

The design and implementation of the Youth Guarantee should take into account the specificities of the national context. In some countries, the PES, as the main current provider of employment and guidance services to young people, would be expected to coordinate the implementation of a Youth Guarantee, while in other countries responsibilities may differ.

The specificity of national circumstances, in terms of socio-economic and policy context, also makes it extremely difficult to estimate a 'standard' cost of the Youth Guarantee per person. Data available on existing Youth Guarantees schemes (or similar schemes aimed at young people) at the national level suggests that the cost per person per year of these programmes can range from around €2,240 in Finland to €5,500 in Austria and €6,000 in Sweden. The cost of some activities to be carried out as part of a Youth Guarantee may, however, be difficult to quantify (e.g. strengthened cooperation between stakeholders).

Finland has been offering a Youth Guarantee since 2005 and it is the closest example amongst Member States to the Council Recommendations. As part of the 2013 revision to their Guarantee, the Finnish Government pledged to ensure that all young people under 25 and all graduates under 30 would be offered further education or training within three

months. School leavers were also promised places in further studies, training or rehabilitation.

The 'Training Guarantee' in Austria means that all young people up to the age of 18 can take on an apprenticeship in a training body funded by the PES, if they cannot secure an apprenticeship in a company. There is also a 'Job and Training Guarantee' for those aged 19 to 24.

In Sweden, the job guarantee scheme places an emphasis on follow-up with young jobseekers in order to engage them in the process of looking for work. After three months, they are matched to a placement and may also be offer further training.

### **1.3 Peer learning around youth unemployment within the EU**

Appendix 6 offers a very brief Review of Peer Learning on Youth Unemployment in EU. It is based on an earlier report produced by Franklin Research for the BYG.

The objective of this synopsis is to highlight key conclusions from selected peer reviews and evaluations of Public Employment Services (PES) approaches across Europe. The purpose of this is to ensure that this learning is noted by those developing policy for the national Youth Guarantee.

Two reviews have been particularly considered and presented in a bullet point format to highlight relevant lessons learnt that may aid the development of the BYGS and other subsequent schemes. The two reviews are:

1. Peer Review: *'Youth Guarantees: PES approaches and measures for low skilled young people'* (AMS Vienna, 22-23 March 2011)
2. Dissemination Conference: *'New developments, good practices and lessons learnt'* (Brussels, 8-9 September 2011)

By identifying core elements of good practice, the Peer Review aimed to give impulses for the further development of PES services and in doing so, contribute some indications on how to best implement youth guarantees in Europe.

Key points include ensuring early access to PES services. They recommend going where young people are and use their language. Evidence shows that many young people who experience difficulties in gaining a foothold in the labour market only access PES services once they are already unemployed, or indeed not at all, particularly if they are not entitled to any form of benefit.

Co-operation between all key actors in the field of education and employment, as well as community groups is critical here. Three main routes were identified towards establishing such early interaction:

- Contact with schools, with PES advisors visiting schools, school classes visiting local PES offices or innovative activities for teachers
- Outreach activities through links with NGOs, youth clubs, social or community actors
- Use of modern media which "speak the language" of young people.
- Most PES are offering websites or web pages and other media campaigns particularly tailored for young people.

Another key finding in peer reviews of previous YG is on finding the right balance between flexibility and accountability: the pros and cons of PES decentralisation  
Decentralisation can take the form of managerial decentralisation  
Increased flexibility is a clear advantage of decentralised institutions.  
Some PES functions may best be kept centralised (flexible centralisation).

- For example, efficient job matching services require a national database in order to support regional mobility
  - data collection must be standardised in order to ensure high quality and comparable information.

PES and personalised services are also urged to strengthen individualised approaches and the spectrum of services. More individualised service provision, particularly for the most vulnerable groups with a greater targeting of services. As a result various profiling tools and different delivery channels have been developed in order to identify those most at risk. Also they urge services to enable the individual who can help themselves (self service).

Services were urged to increasingly offer online services such as: registration, vacancies advertisement, job search, automatic matching of jobseekers' profiles with jobs or communication via social media.

New tools for profiling<sup>22</sup> work better when staff are involved in development and trained at an early stage. Profiling is becoming increasingly important to identify those individuals most at risk of long-term unemployment. However, recent experience has shown a certain disillusionment with statistical profiling and self-help tools, partly because the results of some purely self-help tools can lack reliability. An increased understanding is emerging that the introduction of such tools needs to go hand in hand with change management processes.

Partnership approaches are widely accepted and are also attractive as many PES are under resource constraints.

Though their long term efficiency is widely accepted, the cost of youth-oriented PES services and measures may be prohibitively high. However, total costs can be reduced by careful targeting.

### **Connexions Service in UK**

The evaluator also wishes to draw attention to the Connexions Service in the UK (See Appendix 7<sup>23</sup>). This interagency partnership in the UK aims to adopt a proactive response to youth unemployment by, among other initiatives, proactively engaging with schools and young people before they become unemployed. The BYG specifically did not model such approaches. However, it is important that such lessons are available to those developing the National Plan. It is a consistent theme of lessons learned in youth unemployment that dealing with the causes rather than the symptoms is recommended.

<sup>22</sup> Dissemination Conference: *'New developments, good practices and lessons learnt'* (Brussels, 8-9 September 2011).

<sup>23</sup> Department for Education and Skills Connexions Service Advice and guidance for all young people Report by the Controller and Auditor General [UK] HC 484 Session 2003-2004: 31 March 2004.

In this context the engagement with/by schools should be seen as a priority. Similarly, the development of Personal Advisors<sup>24</sup> who can offer young people advice on a wide range of issues (not just employment and careers but finance, bullying, sexual health, drugs and other issues of concern to young people) is also seen as a proactive bridge to young people. The UK experience should be documented to examine if it is relevant to the development of the National Plan.

## **1.4 Introduction to the Ballymun Youth Guarantee (BYG)**

### 1.3.1 Rationale for choosing Ballymun as a pilot area

Ballymun is one of the most disadvantaged areas in the country and was seen as an ideal location for the pilot scheme having regard to its size and history of partnership.

Ballymun was built in 1960's in response to housing shortages & chronic overcrowding in the city. Three thousand apartments were built in a series of tower blocks – the first and only tower block scheme of its kind in Ireland – and a further two thousand four hundred houses were built all within a 2.4 square km radius. It was intended as a 'state-of-the-art' and modern town, but a lack of investment in the physical and social infrastructure led to alienation, isolation, and, the rise of serious social and economic disadvantage in the area.

In 1996, there was a decision to demolish the high-rise tower blocks and replace them with low-rise housing. There has been a physical regeneration with two thousand seven hundred new housing units, a new main street, Civic Centre, primary health care centre, arts centre, and, two new hotels. But this masks severe social and economic disadvantage as illustrated in the relative levels of unemployment and employment in Ballymun compared to the rest of the country.

Ballymun is an area on Dublin's north side with a population of 16,236 of which 16.6% are aged 15 to 24 and approximately 2,100 or 18% of individuals over 15 are single parents (Census 2011). The area has been characterised as a neighbourhood of high disadvantage, with considerable social, economic, educational and labour market disadvantage permeating since the 1980s. Census data (2011) shows that in terms of key labour market indicators, Ballymun performs quite poorly relative to the national average (Figure 1), with a significantly lower employment rate (44%) and higher unemployment rate (36%) when compared nationally (57% and 19% respectively). Appendix 1 gives an overview of 'Unemployment and Ballymun'.

In relation to Youth, (Figure 2) their participation rate in the labour force in Ballymun is quite high (46% versus the national average of 30%) largely due to the fact that young people in Ballymun tend to leave the education system much earlier, with 41% having ceased full-time education compared to 33% nationally (Census, 2011). This is reflected in their low level of educational attainment with 88% of young people in Ballymun having at best, Leaving Certificate level. Consequently, the labour force in Ballymun consists of a larger proportion of unskilled/semi-skilled (21% compared to 14% nationally) workers.

<sup>24</sup> A new profession of Connexions Personal Advisers is being recruited and trained to provide advice and guidance to young people. Personal Advisers are not expected to be experts in all fields, but are able to identify individuals' needs, supply directly or broker the services they need and monitor their progress to ensure they are getting the necessary support. Ibid p4.



A number of factors contribute to the higher levels of unemployment in Ballymun including the low levels of educational attainment, the predominance of unskilled and semi-skilled occupational roles, the inter-generational unemployment, including high levels of jobless households and the complex social issues which persist in the area.

**Principal Economic Status (PES): State, Dublin City and Ballymun 2011 Census**

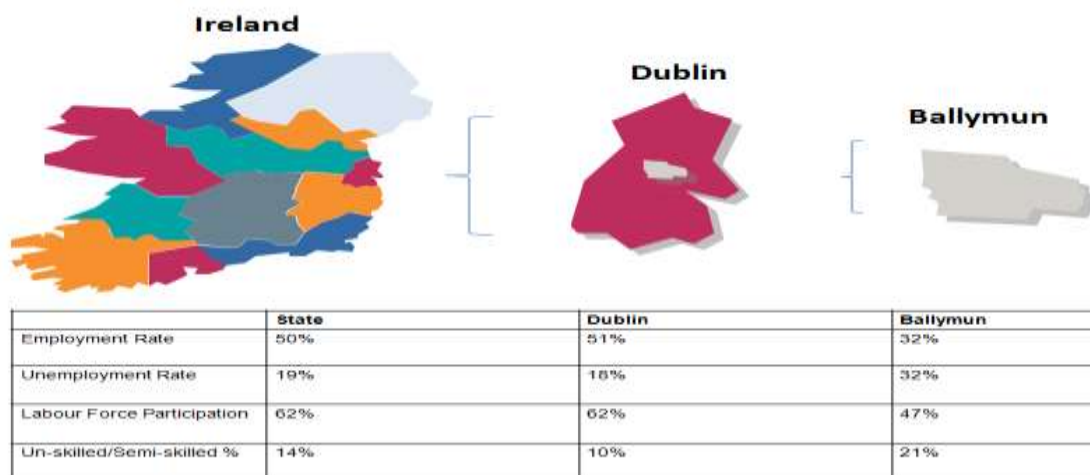


Figure 1. Relative overall employment, unemployment rates etc.

**15 – 24 year olds PES Data, State, Dublin City & Ballymun 2011 Census**

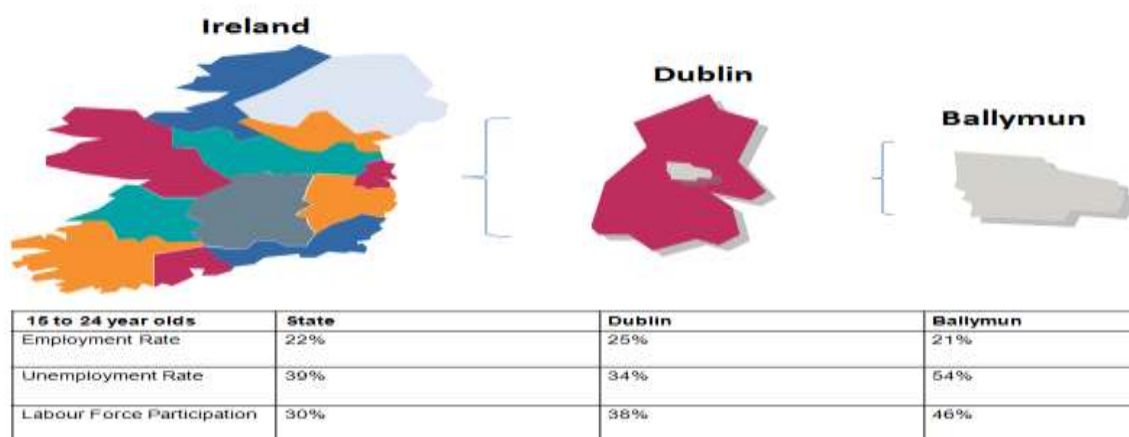


Figure 2. Relative 15 – 24 year olds employment, unemployment rates etc.

### 1.3.2 Introduction to the characteristics of the BYG

Having looked at the background context of YGs in Europe, and why Ballymun was chosen, there follows a summary of background and key characteristics of the Ballymun YG.

The BYG model was developed from October 2013 and delivered during the period January – December 2014, by an interagency partnership of key stakeholders, including relevant Government Departments and agencies, employer and trade union representatives, education and training providers, local development and youth organisations.

The BYG has a number of characteristics that differentiate it from other youth unemployment initiatives and these are now described.

### **Partnership approach**

A key characteristic of the Youth Guarantee (YG) is that it is a partnership of all of the key stakeholders - public employment services, education and training providers, local development and youth organisations, employer and trade union representatives who came together to design and implement an activation approach tailored to meet the needs of young unemployed people in one of the country's most severely disadvantaged areas.

### **Governance and structures**

The BYG model was developed and delivered by a partnership of key stakeholders at national and local level. A National Steering Group (NSG) was responsible for finalising the design of the pilot and monitoring its implementation. The membership of the NSG comprised senior representatives from:

- Department of Social Protection (Chair)
- Activating Dublin (collaboration between Dublin City Council and Dublin Chamber of Commerce)
- City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb)
- Department of Education and Skills
- Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Dublin City Council
- Irish Business and Employers' Conference (IBEC)
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Irish Local Development Network
- National Youth Council of Ireland.
- SOLAS, Further Education and Training Authority

This broad stakeholder partnership was mirrored on the Local Implementation Group (LIG) whose role was to identify and refer participants, offer advice on progress and generally support the implementation of the BYG pilot project. The membership of the LIG included representatives from local service providers, employers and youth organisations, including:

- Department of Social Protection (Chair)
- Ballymun Job Centre/Local Employment Service
- Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRyR)
- Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership
- City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb)
- Fast Track to Information Technology (FIT)
- North Dublin Chamber of Commerce

The NSG was chaired by the Department of Social Protection Divisional Manager, who was the Project Manager for the pilot.



### 1.3.3 Systematic engagement with and on-going support to clients

Another characteristic is that the pilot represented a more intensive systematic engagement with young unemployed people compared to the standard engagement via the Intreo Office that would be the norm for unemployed young people.

The BYG engagement process included elements of assessment, guidance, education and training with an emphasis on providing a work placement opportunity as a route to permanent employment. Each client received a guarantee of access to career guidance leading to identification of an individual career plan with follow-through to training, education, work experience or full-time employment. Depending on their individual needs, steps in that career plan included personal assessment, job search assistance, skills training, work exposure and experience, but the clear objective in all cases was to lead the young person on a pathway to employment placement or further education or training.

The BYG guidance team continues to provide on-going support to clients while they progress along the “pathway” and in the early stages of employment.

#### **Employer engagement**

A particular focus was to involve and build links with employers, not just to maximise take up of existing incentives and supports, such as JobsPlus and JobBridge, but to generate new innovative work placement and experience opportunities, such as job shadowing, job sampling and blended education, training and work experience options. The aim was to also ensure that the guidance and training elements of the YG were tailored to the needs of the labour market.

#### **Scope of the Guarantee**

The scale of the BYG was more ambitious than that outlined in the “Pathways to Work” national Youth Guarantee implementation plan. It set itself the target of guaranteeing, to a maximum of 90 participants a month, a good-quality offer of a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, work-experience, or continued education to;

- all young people aged between 18 and 24 living in the Ballymun area within 4 months of registration at the Department of Social Protection Intreo Centre and to
- all existing registrants aged between 18 and 24 within 4 months of a first one-to-one meeting with a guidance practitioner

#### **Guidance Model**

The guidance model adopted by the BYG is a high support model developed by Ballymun Job Centre over many years of service provision which has proven successful for clients with multiple barriers to labour market access. The model consists of a number of steps:

1. An initial assessment of the individual’s needs (education, training, skills, personal situation, etc.)
2. A tailored career guidance process – identifying the individuals latent skills, abilities, aptitudes, preferred behaviour style in the workplace, values; and building career clarity, career identity, improving self-esteem and career efficacy.
3. Development of a career plan which includes a career objective, a number of shorter term career goals, and the identification of potential barriers which may prevent progression
4. Implementation of the career plan in a supported and positive way.

All BYG participants were offered this high support model as a method of identifying their labour market needs, supporting the development of both human and social capital, enabling progression to a quality offer and securing sustainable labour market attachment.

### **Role of Ballymun Jobs Centre**

Another distinctive feature of the YG pilot was the fact that the career guidance component was delivered by the Ballymun Job Centre (BJC/LESN), a community based organisation providing employment related supports and services to local people since 1986. It was established as a community response to a chronic unemployment situation and since 1996 the BJC/LESN has managed the Local Employment Services in the Ballymun area (under contract with Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership and funded by DSP). Intreo did not provide a guidance service within the framework of the BYG apart from the initial group engagement. Instead, the BJC/LESN was appointed by the Department of Social Protection to provide the service and five LES Mediators were assigned to deliver guidance to the BYG client cohort (a level of provision significantly greater than the current, or anticipated, guidance practitioner/client ratios). The BJC/LESN has developed a model of guidance based on the use of specific diagnostic tools and psychometric tests that are not commonly available to DSP Case Officers (for example EGUIDE, eMERGE). All the BJC/LESN/LESN guidance staff hold at a minimum the Certificate in Adult Guidance (Maynooth University) along with specific training in guidance related approaches and tools, and the BJC/LESN/LESN guidance process is more intensive than the DSP norm, typically involving three to four interviews.

The BJC/LESN is also the lead organisation in a locally-based interagency Equal Youth Network which aims to support young people aged 16-24 who are most distant from the labour market. This initiative was developed in an EU EQUAL funded project (2005-2007) and has continued at a local level by the key organisations delivering services to young people in Ballymun<sup>25</sup>. The Equal Youth Network meets on a monthly basis and works through a case load of clients, providing updates on progression and discussing cases which require more targeted support. This interagency approach enables the provision of a continuum of seamless support from career guidance, through education/training interventions and into the workplace. The BJC/LESN applied this methodology within the BYG pilot, thereby engaging the full range of Equal Youth Network organisations in delivering the guarantee to participants.

<sup>25</sup> Organisations involved in EQUAL Youth include Ballymun Job Centre, Ballymun Community Training Centre, Ballymun Youthreach, Young Persons Probation, Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force, Ballark Community Training Centre, An Garda Síochána, Trinity Comprehensive, Ballymun Regional Youth Resource, and DSP.

## Chapter 2: Methodology for Evaluation

### Parameters and context of the evaluation.

The Department of Social Protection determined there was a need for an external evaluation of the BYG pilot so that

- It could be monitored and an effective feedback loop established to give timely feedback to partners on the progress of the pilot
- Lessons learned could be identified and fed back to initially the pilot itself but subsequently into the design and development of the national, and EU, youth unemployment policy and practice.

This was built into the original proposal to EU and became an integral aspect of the BYG pilot.

### Evaluator preparation

At the outset the evaluator also participated in ‘The Youth Guarantee: Options for Ireland’ conference<sup>26</sup> hosted by the Department of Social Protection, in October 2013. This allowed the evaluator to immerse himself in relevant issues and make contact with key players. It also drew attention to stakeholder perspectives and concerns.

This was followed by extensive secondary research on matters relating to youth unemployment both in a national and EU context. There is extensive research in this area. This proved useful and resulted in an initial report by the evaluator on peer learning around youth unemployment and youth guarantees in EU. This was presented to the NSG in February 2014 and also disseminated via Basecamp.

### Feedback and evaluation process

In conjunction with the evaluator an NSG sub-group established a range of key performance indicators to monitor and evaluate the pilot. These were ratified by the NSG. In theory these were to be reported monthly by officers and in practice this improved as the project developed.

### Research tools

The evaluator used multiple research tools -secondary research, observation, questionnaire surveys, focus groups, case studies, testimonials<sup>27</sup>, video feedback, field visits and follow up depth interviews were all used to get broad feedback and insight from those involved in the pilot. These took place throughout the project in 2014.

In addition, CSO and agency records were able to provide relevant data and these were used to document the BYG approach. CSO records also provided relevant comparisons to the BYG experience.

Beyond the initial conference and secondary research, an extensive amount of observation was used by attending many meetings of the NSG and LIG over 16 month period from

<sup>26</sup> Youth Guarantee: Options for Ireland, conference hosted by Department of Social Protection, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2013. Venue Chartered Accountants Ireland, Pearse Street, Dublin 2.

<sup>27</sup> See Appendices 4 and 5 for example case studies and testimonials from clients.

November 2013. This was augmented with visits to various partners etc. These proved useful for the evaluator as it allowed a better understanding of the issues involved, especially in partnership workings. It also facilitated the development of relationships and trust which helped in the evolution of the evaluation.

As a mechanism for gaining feedback from stakeholders regular multiple surveys were employed by the evaluator. Online questionnaire surveys were seen as an ideal method to get broad feedback from a large number of stakeholders. By the end of the pilot there have been a series of online surveys to capture feedback from partners:

- Four NSG surveys
- Three LIG surveys
- Three implementer surveys (those involved in implementing the YG)
- Five participant surveys

All 15 of the above survey reports are available on request.

Throughout the pilot there were multiple follow up in depth interviews with several contributors with the aim of getting greater insight into key issues. In addition a series of three Focus Groups were conducted with participants by BRYR so as to probe deeper and offer participants opportunities to elaborate. The involvement of BRYR was useful for gaining feedback from young people who may be particularly hard to engage in such feedback. BRYR was able to use their relationship and rapport to facilitate such participant feedback.

For the surveys, a census approach was adopted with the survey being sent to all members of the NSG, LIG, and, Implementors involved. Likewise, for participant surveys, all participants had the opportunity to participate.

Designing the questions for the surveys proved an interesting task. The objective was to research as many pertinent topics as possible while also obtaining as much depth as possible. The surveys were developed in an iterative manner engaging multiple stakeholders in their design so as to gain buy-in and promote engagement in the feedback process. The ongoing feedback was then communicated to the relevant group (NSG/LIG) who used the feedback to address issues arising.

CSO and agency records were also used to identify Live Register trends and this provided a background context to youth unemployment in Ireland in 2014. These records also provided relevant comparisons to the BYG experience.

In addition to those tools described above testimonials (Appendix 5) and video feedback evidence from participants were used to gain insight. Additionally case studies were used (Appendix 4). These tools offered qualitative insights which helped get beyond the 'numbers' and into the experience of the lives of young unemployed people.

### **Limitations in approach**

In hindsight there are a number of limitations in the evaluation approach. These relate to gaining feedback from participants. The online surveys were useful in gaining feedback from multiple participants but many of those surveyed did not have an email address or the one

provided was inaccurate. Greater use of BRYR could have enabled more feedback from the most marginalised young unemployed people.

### **Unsettled issues**

Unfortunately the evaluation has failed to achieve learning in some key areas. These are recommended for further research and include:

A longitudinal study is recommended to track what happens to participants after their offer, for example to determine their progression to employment or back to the Live Register. For those that do end up back unemployed there needs to be an assessment of what next stage interventions would be required to maintain progress.

A longitudinal study of the impact of different interventions is required. For example, Are CE schemes effective for the clients? What happens after the end of the scheme? Are some interventions more effective than others? This needs to be tested and researched.

The effectiveness of penalty rating and the Swords approach for Target Group 1.

How could a robust profiling model be best identified that could identify clients most in need, or otherwise, of a comprehensive guidance process.

In addition, there were a range of other issues requiring research. These were identified in 7.4.3 as Process challenges, such as, how the sharing and centralising of data could be achieved. These are also unsettled issues after this evaluation and they need researching for lessons to be fully learned in advance of a national rollout.

## Chapter 3: Assessment of outputs and outcomes of the BYG

Having described the BYG approach we now analyse this approach by reflecting on outcomes and key issues. Here we describe and reflect on what actually happened in the Ballymun experience to conclude what worked or did not work in practice. In each area lessons are identified for consideration.

### Structure for evaluation

This chapter focuses on participant demographics and offer outcomes, and, key performance indicators (KPIs). They help assess the quantitative evidence and whether the BYG achieved the targets the National Steering Group set for the project.

Then there is a section around two specific issues of client engagement and disengagement, and, penalty rating. It is useful to consider these as they have relevance for the national rollout because there is relevant learning from the BYG in these areas.

Lastly, there is need to consider the context of the BYG in terms of the changing economic environment during 2014, and also, an opportunity to compare the BYG to other contemporaneous approaches to youth unemployment.

### 3.1 Outputs and outcomes

Key outputs and outcomes are considered. These focus on participant demographics and offer outcomes, and, key performance indicators (KPIs). They help assess the quantitative evidence and whether the BYG achieved the targets it set itself around three areas

- 3.1.1 Participant numbers, demographics
- 3.1.2 Offer outcomes
- 3.1.3 Key Performance Indicators

#### 3.1.1 Participant numbers, demographics

The overall participant numbers and demographics are given in Tables 1 and 2. Young jobseekers are not a homogenous group. The original proposal for the pilot YGS envisaged that a “quality offer” would be made to 810 young people during the project (90 per month by 9 months). By the end of the project 739 young people had benefited. This was because the number of potential beneficiaries turned out to be lower than initially estimated and the BYG National Steering Group decided to extend the guarantee to all registered jobseekers under 25 years of age in the area.

Number of participants	Original target
739 (All potential beneficiaries)	810 (90 per month X 9 months)

Table 1 Overall participant numbers

Profile		Number
GENDER	Male	483 (65%)
	Female	256 (35%)

AGE	< 19 years [DSP payment €100 p/w or €5,200 p/a].	242 (33%)
	20 – 25 years [DSP payment €188 p/w or €9,776 p/a].	497 (67%)
	26 – 30 years	N/A
	Unknown	N/A
STATUS (before taking part in the Pilot Project)	In education or training (full time or part time)	Nil
	Unemployed (registered jobseeker for less than 6 months)	355 (48%)
	Long term unemployed (registered jobseeker for over 6 months)	384 (52%)

*Table 2 Overall demographic breakdown*

Of the total 739 clients dealt with by the YGS, 255 (35%) were categorised as Target Group 1 (highest level of need), 345 (47%) were Target Group 2 and 139 (18%) were Target Group 3 (lowest level of need). Clients presented a high level of need and very significant labour market barriers including no employment history, poor educational qualifications and limited expectations regarding employment. In this respect, they reflected the local Ballymun context. The objective of the BYG was to improve their long term sustainability on the labour market and not merely the achievement of short term outcomes.

As of the end of December 2014, 60 clients had dropped out of the BYG<sup>28</sup> leaving 679 clients who had completed or were completing the process. The ratio of males to females was approximately two-to-one. Eleven young people were on pre-offers<sup>29</sup>. A total of 593 clients were involved in training, work programmes or employment. This means that 86 are still in the process.

The partners conducted an analysis of young people in Ballymun using data from various sources including the CSO and public employment service in order to build a profile to assist in capacity planning. The analysis facilitated the identification of three groups of young people that would require different types of interventions based on their perceived employment readiness (although it was acknowledged that there may be some overlap between the groups):

- Target Group 1: clients with Junior Certificate/equivalent or less and little or no work experience (45%). Some of these clients would also face additional barriers such as literacy/numeracy, substance misuse and/or criminal records.
- Target Group 2: clients with Leaving Certificate/equivalent or some work experience (40%)
- Target Group 3: clients with above-Leaving Certificate/equivalent or good work experience (15%)

These figures relate to the actual numbers in Ballymun in each target group. The following Table 3 refers to the client breakdown by educational level of people who engaged in the BYG. So although 45% are Target Group 1 this is not reflected in the actual numbers who engaged. This reiterates the problem of engaging those in Target Group 1.

<sup>28</sup> Of the 60 some changed to Lone Parent payment, or disability. Others closed their payment

<sup>29</sup> The BYG implemented a pre-offer stage for those most marginalised including addiction counselling and mental health support. This was to allow the participant the time to engage with supports that would assist them to address their issues prior to their formal engagement with the BYG.



<b>Educational level</b> of those engaged in the BYG	Target Group 1 Young people with no formal second level educational qualifications or Junior Certificate only and no work experience	255 (34%)
	Target Group 2 Young people with a Leaving Certificate or equivalent and little or no work history	345 (47%)
	Target Group 3 Young people with above Leaving Certificate educational attainment and/or significant work experience work history.	139 (19%)
	Unknown	Nil

*Table 3 Client breakdown by educational level of people engaged in the BYG*

### **Client analysis**

A considerable number of clients had low levels of educational attainment, had not availed of post-school education/training courses and had little/no work experience. Some faced additional barriers such as a history or low level criminality, misuse of substances, etc. 170<sup>30</sup> were referred to Equal Youth Network, an inter-agency partnership of social, health, education and training, public employment and youth services, for more intensive case management and support. 11 clients did not have the capacity to avail of a “quality” offer, but were instead given a “pre-offer”, including mental health/addiction counselling. We will continue to work with these clients to support them along what will necessarily be a longer pathway to employment.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Final number of participants</b>
Group Engagement (information sessions)	609
Client Profiling	739 (all)
Individual Career Guidance	739 (all)
Career Plan Agreed	739 (all)

*Table 4 Group Engagement, Profiling, Guidance, Career Plan*

#### 3.1.2 Offer outcomes

As at end December 2014, 739 clients had commenced the guidance process and 80% (593) of these have already received an offer. The balance includes clients who are at a very early stage in the process and it is expected that a very high number will receive an offer in due course. 98% of clients received their offer on time (i.e. within 4 months). The residual 2% relates to clients who disengaged, but subsequently re-engaged in the process and/or who face significant barriers.

<sup>30</sup> Of the 170 referred to EYN – all were from Target Group 1.



<b>Number of offers</b>	Number of participants	Share (%) from all participants	Original target
Total number of participants who received an offer of employment, continued education, training.	593	TBC	100%
Participants receive an offer of employment, continued education, training (including apprenticeship or traineeship) within 4 months of the first guidance meeting.	561 (is the proportion of participants who were due an Offer by 31/12/2014)	TBC	100%

*Table 6 Offer within 4 months of participation*

### **Target group analysis**

An analysis of offers per target group would appear to validate the assumption that different types of offer are required to address the disparate needs of the clients.

The most popular offers for clients in Target Group 1 have been FET programmes at NQF Levels 3, 4 and 5 (118) with smaller numbers availing of the publicly-funded employment options (35), or blended learning programmes (15). Only 7 secured fulltime and 3 secured part-time employment in the private sector.

Target Group 2 have availed of FET options at all levels (165) and publicly-funded employment opportunities<sup>31</sup> have also been popular (77). 27 secured fulltime and 14 secured part-time employment in the private sector.

Unsurprisingly, much higher numbers of Target Group 3 secured private sector employment – 17 full-time and 9 part-time. The most popular offers for FET programmes were at NQF Level 5 and above (24), but a significant proportion required Level 4/5 (20) and nine actually required Level 3. Twenty availed of internships under the JobBridge programme.

Many participants were not job ready and needed additional support. These were funded by the pilot and took the form of a ‘pre-offer’. These are identified in table 6.

<b>New/additional activities identified/funded by the pilot: “Pre-offer”</b>	Final number of participants
Mental Health support (funded by the BYG)	10
Addiction Counselling(funded by the BYG)	15
Pre-college course (funded by the project)	19

*Table 1 New/additional activities identified/funded by the pilot: “Pre-offer”*

<sup>31</sup> Such as Community employment (CE) schemes

<b>New/additional activities identified/funded by the pilot : Financial support and interventions</b>	Final number of participants
Flexi-support fund to overcome barriers, including cost of transport, course fees, materials, clothing, etc (funded by the BYG)	94
Post-Pilot Pathways (funded by the BYG)	76

*Table 7 Financial support and interventions*

Regarding the 'flexible fund' which amounted to €22,630 which needs to be evaluated in the context of the effect it had on the 94 participants. This evidence is not available at this stage. However, this cost needs to be considered in the context of the annual cost of welfare payments for individuals (c€5,200 P/A for those 19 or under (33% of BYG), and, c€9,800 P/A for 20 to 25 year olds (67% of BYG)). This equated to €241 per recipient – or less than two weeks unemployment payments. In this context this expenditure seems prudent.

Similarly there was a budget of €16k for Post- Pilot Pathways. Again the logic was that sometimes a small amount of money is necessary to help a client stay on a programme. This equated to €211 per client. Again, this expenditure seems reasonable especially if it is felt appropriate by those who have the closest understanding of client s. They are probably in the best position to judge.

#### **New activities developed**

A key challenge has been to provide sufficient capacity of suitable offers within the four month timeframe. A particular focus of the BYG has been to increase the volume and range of options available to meet the disparate needs of the client base. These new additional activities developed as a result of the BYG are identified in Table 8.

<b>New/additional activities identified by the pilot and funded by State/Partners</b>	Final number of participants
Horticulture Programme(funded by the BYG)	10
BallyRunners Programme (funded by the BYG) (basic skills & personal development)	22
Premier Dining Programme (funded by the BYG) ((blended learning programme which includes a work placement element)	5
ICTU Employment Programme (funded by the BYG)	22
BRYR LTI	3
Positive 2 Work Programme (blended learning programme which includes a work placement element)	43
UCD Innovation Academy (innovative course in enterprise, innovation and entrepreneurship)	7
Gateway (publicly-funded employment scheme)	5

BITC (career guidance including work placement)	11
IKEA Traineeship	15
Worklink (mentors)	3
Community Employment (publicly-funded employment scheme)	90
TUS (publicly-funded employment scheme)	12
Note: these do not include the extensive range of standard Further Education and Training or Active Labour Market Interventions that BYG participants have availed of.	

*Table 8 New/additional activities identified by the pilot and funded by State/Partners*

From Table 8 it can be seen that a range of innovative approaches aimed at different target groups have been developed in the BYG. There is a range of data around these activities funded by the pilot but it is difficult to make an evaluation as to which are better than others. They often have different objectives and are aimed at different target groups.

Follow-up research would be useful to identify the long-term outcomes and impact from different activities. For example, the Community Employment (CE) accounts for a significant proportion of these activities. There are some differences of opinion regarding the usefulness of such schemes. They may play a more social role than job activation role. The evaluation notes the NSG are not advocating the expansion of the CE as a panacea for youth unemployment.

### **Nature of the offer made**

The actual number of offers is classified in Table 9. Of the offers made, 57% (338) have been of further education or training (FET) and 43% (255) have been of work experience/employment. With regard to the latter, 10% (77)<sup>32</sup> of total offers have been to private sector employment, 3% (20) have been publicly-funded internships and the balance comprised a range of publicly-funded community or local government employment schemes and blended learning programmes incorporating work experience elements.

Understandably further education and training provide the largest contribution of actual offers (#338, 46%). Participants in publicly-funded employment programmes (Community Employment, Gateway, TUS) also accounted for a significant number (114, 15%). Offers of employment accounted for less than 11%. The conclusion here around outcomes is that the burden for funding offers is overwhelmingly on the state. This should not be seen as surprising given the nature of the target groups. Further, there is evidence that there have been lessons learned around employer engagement which are considered later.

<b>Classification of actual offers</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Share (%) from all participants</b>
Offers of further education or training (FET)	338	46%

<sup>32</sup> Others have progressed to employment following offers. Suzanne to add.

Participants in full-time employment, including self-employment, after participating in the project	51	7%
Offers of traineeships, work-experience or blended learning programmes (Worklink)	44	6%
Participants who have not yet received an offer	86	20%
Participants inactive (not registered as unemployed or taking part in education or training)	Nil	Nil
Participants in Part time employment	26	4%
Participants in publicly-funded employment programmes (Community Employment , Gateway, TUS)	114	15%
Participants on internships	20	3%
Participants in pre-offer stage e.g. counselling	11 <sup>33</sup>	1%

Table 9 Nature of the Offer [Note data is not yet available on the status of participants at various intervals (e.g. within 4 months) following participation on the pilot/completion of an offer]

### Analysis of offers

Further, in relation to the nature of offers, an analysis of offers per target group would appear to confirm the assumption that different types of offer are required to address the disparate needs of YGS clients. TG1 and TG2 were more likely to be on training programmes (both 47%) compared to TG3 (38%), whereas TG3 was much more likely to be in employment (20%) compared to 4% for TG1 and 11% for TG2.

<b>Entrepreneurship and self-employment</b>	Number	Share (%) from all participants
Participants who have set up their own business	Nil	n/a
Participants who in the process of setting up their own business	Nil	n/a
Participants who have plans to set up their own business	2	0.2%

Table 10 Entrepreneurship and self-employment

Very few went on, or intended, to set up their own business. This is not surprising because the skill sets involved in entrepreneurship are complex. Gaining work experience is often the best first step towards entrepreneurship.

### Employer Engagement

Another key performance indicator was the engagement of employers. Although there was extensive activity in this area,<sup>34</sup> of the 739 clients who have been through the guidance process, only 77 (10.4%) secured employment in the private sector within the four month

<sup>33</sup> Table 6 shows there were 44 in total in 2014. The eleven figure refers to as of 31.12.2014.

<sup>34</sup> See 4.5.1 Lessons around the focus on employability and employer buy-in page 49.

period specified in the Guarantee. This highlights a very significant challenge. Many of the young people indicated that what they really wanted was a job – any job, but the experience to date has been that there are insufficient private sector employment opportunities for job-ready clients and that many others are not job-ready/do not have the requisite competence/skills/experience to avail of such opportunities as are available. The issues are complex and, inter alia, reinforce the need to improve and intensify employer engagement to maximise private sector employment potential and ensure the relevance of FET to the labour market.

The importance of employer engagement was also noted by Dr John Sweeney in a Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed

Not all vocational education and training (VET) provision is optimally aligned with employer needs, nor is all further education (FE) provision that addresses social exclusion sufficiently linked with eventual employment outcomes. There is scope for greater linkages between employers and providers.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile there is significant pressure on the state sector to provide suitable FET or publicly funded work-experience options. This has significant human and financial resource implications.

### **Participant feedback about the BYG**

There is both quantitative and qualitative evidence of young people's satisfaction with their participation in the pilot through surveys, focus groups, video feedback and testimonials. Many were surveyed through a partnership approach with BRYR. There have been 5 surveys of participants during the pilot to get feedback of those using the service. The final survey was conducted in November and was of participants who had been on the Youth Guarantee for at least 4 months. Some relevant results included

- 79% 'strongly agreed/agreed' that the meetings with the Guidance Counsellor increased their awareness of opportunities available to them.
- 86% 'strongly agreed/agreed' that 'my meetings with the Guidance Counsellor... was useful'
- 84% felt they had the 'right number of meetings with the Guidance Counsellor'

Some representative feedback from participants

- I found the officer was extremely helpful to me and brilliant at the job.
- They made sure I got what I was interested in
- The offer I received was a CE scheme. So far I find the CE scheme (is) brilliant and I've had opportunities to attend courses relevant to my workplace which I find very beneficial.

Overall participant satisfaction with BYGS

- 69% agreed or strongly agreed that the BYGS was beneficial to them
- 73% agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the BYG to their friends.

<sup>35</sup> Sweeney. John, A Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed A review undertaken for the Department of Education and Skills, National Economic and Social Council. Autumn 2013.

In conclusion these satisfaction ratings indicate that there is a strong endorsement (69%) from participants of the BYG being beneficial for participants. Further, the fact that 73% of participants would recommend the BYG to their friends indicates a strong endorsement of the BYG from those who utilised its services.

### 3.1.3 Key Performance Indicators

In conjunction with the evaluator an NSG sub-group established a range of key performance indicators to monitor and evaluate the pilot. These were ratified by the NSG. These KPI reports are available on Basecamp.

Overall monitoring and reporting of KPIs improved as the pilot progressed. As a general point, there needs to be improved mechanisms for reporting significance. Reports with lots of figures are meaningless unless accompanied by some descriptor of its significance. It is unrealistic to expect partners to wade through reports to understand what their significance is.

Similarly, just because a report is on Basecamp (the shared communications platform) does not mean it has been successfully communicated. Too often reports with multiple versions were unsystematically loaded on Basecamp to considerable indifference. There needs to be systematic learning around this although the evaluator is concerned that this will be inadequate.

Key Performance Indicator	Result	Notes
Number of Referrals from the Ballymun Intreo Centre (Live Register) to Job Centre (Guidance Counselling) for '1-1' Interview.	<b>814</b>	This is the total 'Referred' from the Ballymun Intreo centre to the BJC/LESN/LESN to 31/12/2014.
Number of Initial '1-1' Guidance Interviews.	<b>739</b>	Of the 814 referred, 739 have commenced the Guidance process (91%)
Number of Offers made.	<b>593</b>	593 out of 814 Referrals have had an Offer (73%)

*Table 11 Key Performance Indicators*

Employment, CE, TUS, Gateway etc Offers	<b>255</b>	CE 91; TUS 12; Internship 20; Work Exp 37; Work Sampling 1; Full-Time Employment 51; Part-time Employment 26; Gateway 11.
Education and Training Offers	<b>338</b>	FETAC Level 3: 110; FETAC Level 4/5: 177; Above FETAC Level 5:51.
Guidance Interview Rate	<b>2.8</b>	Average Number of Guidance Interviews (2,059) per Guidance Participant (739)

*Table 12 Employment, education and Training and, Guidance Interview Rate*

## Conclusion

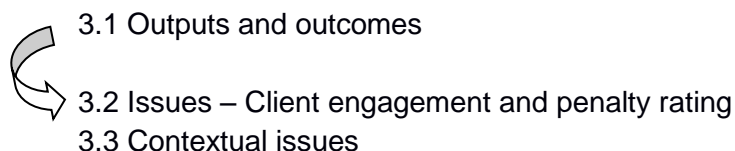
There were clearly considerable challenges around reporting and communicating KPIs. It is noted that overall the keeping and reporting of KPI data was weak with contradictory figures in multiple locations emanating from different sources. Going forward there needs to be

consideration of learning and best practice in this area with responsibility and authority designated.

The above caveat should not detract from the actual performance of the BYG. Overall it can be concluded that the BYG has been broadly successful in achieving the KPIs that it set itself.

### 3.2 Issues – client engagement and penalty rating

Following the preceding evaluation of outputs and outcomes this chapter now considers issues around client engagement and penalty rating



#### Client disengagement

The path to becoming a longer-term unemployed young person is not a one-off event. It is a cumulative process of disengagement caused by a combination of personal, social, economic, geographical, education and or family related reasons. It is widely agreed that early intervention with unemployed young people is less time-consuming/resource intensive than facilitating re-integration at a later stage of those who disengage.

Nevala et al (2009) have identified a scale of employability which provides a useful understanding of the situation of different types of clients and, hence, what might be their requirements. This may also give some clues to reasons for disengagement.

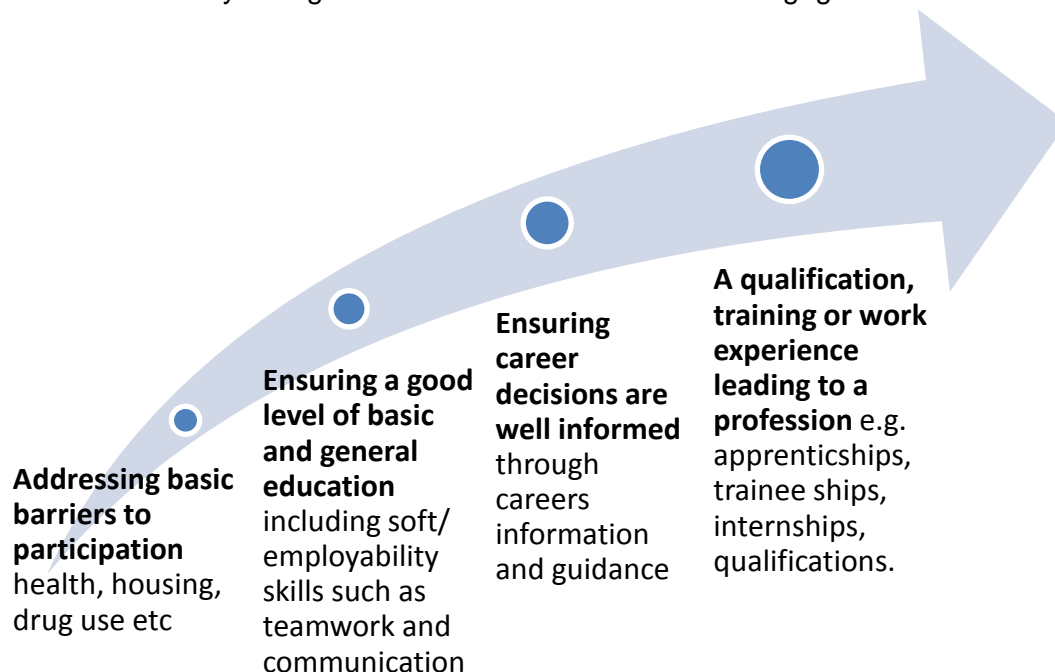




Figure 3 Scale of employability<sup>36</sup>

During the project, some clients disengaged at the initial stages and were repeatedly brought back in only to further disengage at every subsequent stage of the process. Their engagement was consistently staggered.

Reasons are complex/not possible for public employment service staff to detect. These clients presented with a myriad of complex issues and had a high risk of falling between the services because of the lack of clarity/severity of their needs. Responses included multi-agency, multi-disciplinary and multi-level responses and tailored interventions. Notwithstanding the comprehensive response, a small number of clients have not re-engaged.

### Outcomes around client engagement and disengagement

The pilot participants were contacted via letter to invite them to a Group Engagement (GE). There was poor attendance at the Group Engagement with an average of 50% attendance (particularly from Target Group 1 clients). To ascertain why, one of the local partners, Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (the local youth service) facilitated a focus group. Reasons given included:

- Lack of awareness of the BYG
- Not receiving the invitation
- Not being able to read/understand the invitation
- A generally negative perception of the value of the public employment service or information sessions delivered by them
- A dislike of the negative/threatening tone of the invitation
- Perception that the presentation was too-long, boring and not very relevant
- Course start time was too early

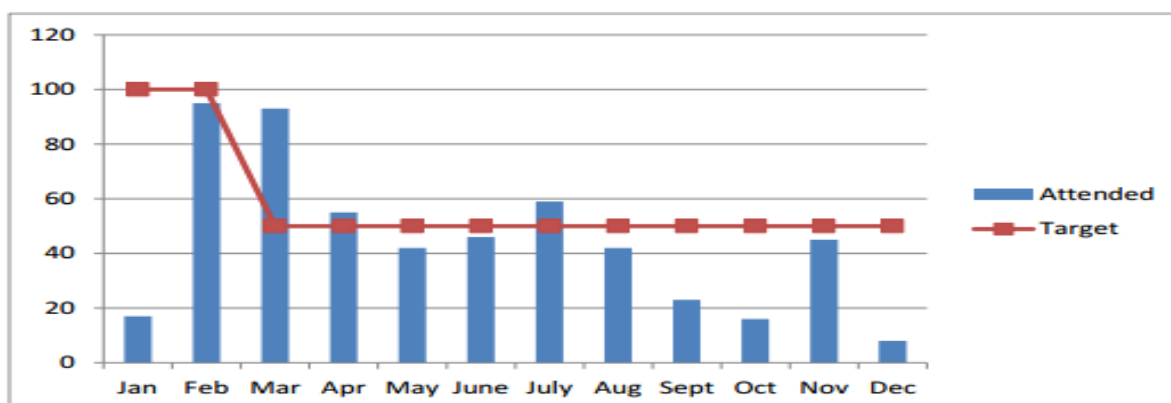


Figure 4 Group Engagement attendances. Full Live Register had been referred by September 2014. Only new claims and re-referrals from September 2014.

### BYG Response to poor engagement

<sup>36</sup> Nevala, A-M., Pavlovaite, I. (2009) *Success factors of second chance schools in Ireland and Lithuania*. GHK Consulting Ltd. 2012.



- the partners produced a leaflet outlining the core elements of the BYG and developed a website ([www.youthguarantee.ie](http://www.youthguarantee.ie)) to promote awareness of the BYG and the positive opportunity it afforded young jobseekers
- DSP revised the content and tone of the invitation and presentation. Documentation has been literacy-proofed by the National Adult Learning Association. NALA also provided literacy training for all guidance practitioners (Case Officers) and other front-line staff in all DSP PES offices across Dublin North Division.
- Changed the venue (to the local Job Centre), had a later start-time and shortened the duration.

The result of these activities was that while it took a number of attempts, the level of attendance at GE sessions improved to 94% by the 3<sup>rd</sup> invitation. The remaining 6% required interventions including the imposition of financial penalties to secure attendance. While the vast majority of young people attended the Group Engagement by the third call. However for those most marginalised it took a significantly longer amount of time, with some not attending until the eighth call.

The next stage of the Youth Guarantee process is that the clients were invited to attend one-to-one guidance sessions and were further profiled using a range of tools developed by BJC/LESN. There were a relatively small percentage of Target Group 2 clients (9%) and Target Group 3 clients (9%) who disengaged at some point of the process. The majority of those re-engaged following a review meeting or a single penalty rating. Those that did not re-engage changed their payment to One Parent Family Payment (OPFP) or closed their payment. The main issue has been with the engagement of Target Group 1.

### **Target Group 1 engagement**

To date 84 young people from Target Group 1 (total number 255) have disengaged from the Youth Guarantee process at some point. This represents 33% of the overall number of clients in Target Group 1. This is much larger than the 9% in target groups two and three. Of the 84 that disengaged at some point, 1 moved out of the area, 11 changed payment to OPFP or Disability. The remaining 72 re-engaged.

A significant number of Target Group 1 participants (50%) missed more than two calls to a Group Engagement, and in some cases requiring up to seven calls for them to attend. Those that were difficult to engage with at group engagement stage continued to present with attendance issues at guidance meetings. A pattern emerged whereby these clients were repeatedly brought back only to further disengage at every stage. Their engagement could be described overall as consistently staggered with a continued reluctance to be involved. The guarantee that they would receive a quality offer within four months was an impossible deadline as on average it took six months for these clients to attend guidance meetings regularly.

It is widely accepted that those with no formal qualifications and with little or no work experience would be furthest from the labour market. However these participants presented with a myriad of complex issues and had a high risk of falling between the services because of the severity of their needs.

### **The Equal Youth Network**

A significant number of clients had low levels of educational attainment, had not availed of post-school education/training courses and had little/no work experience<sup>37</sup>. Some faced additional barriers such as a history or low level criminality, misuse of substances, etc. 170 were referred to Equal Youth Network, an inter-agency partnership of social, health, education and training, public employment and youth services, for more intensive case management and support.

The aim of the Equal Youth Network (EYN)<sup>38</sup> is to bring together the main stakeholders in the provision of services to young early school leavers. This model recognises the complexity of the needs being presented by young people and the need for a range of services networking to establish inclusive progression pathways for young people.

Currently there are 170 referrals to the Equal Youth Network from the BYG, these clients present with a range of challenging and difficult issues including substance misuse, criminal justice issues, low educational attainment, literacy and lack of motivation. The 170 are all from Target Group 1 and this represents 67% of that cohort of 255.

The network aims to tackle a wide range of barriers and meet the needs of young people in a holistic and integrated way. In addition to focusing on the needs of the individual young person, it also addresses the wider systems and structures that are required in order to ensure that the model of delivery can operate effectively. It provides support and assistance for the young person in the form of an integrated progression process. It combines different components and successive stages through which the young person becomes sufficiently empowered and acquires the skills to integrate into adult life.

Indications from this model would suggest that very few (5%<sup>39</sup>) of those on the Equal Youth Network are not engaging or are detached. This could suggest that successful engagement for this cohort depended on multi-agency and multi-level responses as operated in the EYN.

### **BallyRunners**

Whilst Equal Youth is a very positive initiative with the majority of clients progressing onto training, education and employment, the Equal Youth committee acknowledged that there was a particular cohort of young people that needed more intensive and prolonged support to make similar progress.

A sub-committee was established to explore this issue. It comprised of representatives from the Ballymun Job Centre, the Probation Service and the Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYR). The focus was to devise intensive, hands on group work programme to engage hard to reach young people, who are out of training/employment, and are involved in criminal behaviour, drug use and are generally apathetic. And so the Ballyrunners<sup>40</sup> Programme was formed, getting its name from the original goal of the programme which was to complete a

<sup>37</sup> Appendix 4 gives three sample case histories – which feature examples of clients who were facilitated under the EYN.

<sup>38</sup> The origin of the Equal Youth Network stems from a 2005 Equal funded pilot project managed by the BJC/LESN. The objective of the EU Equal Project was to develop a model of interagency co-operation for organisations working with young people.

<sup>39</sup> This is a best guesstimate based on experience of those involved with this programme.

<sup>40</sup> Appendix 4 gives three sample case histories – which feature examples of clients who were facilitated under the BallyRunners Programme.

Fun Run for charity. The programme is a 26 week, high-support, low-threshold, skills based programme that aims to positively engage young people in constructive activities and change their attitudes and behaviours. The programme runs 3 days per week and is aligned with a FETAC Level 3 Health and Fitness module as well as The Bronze Gaisce Award.

The key feature of the Ballyrunners Programme is that engagement is voluntary but the engagement and retention rate of the young people is very high; thus demonstrating their motivation to engage in something meaningful (as perceived by them).

Key to success is motivated and enthusiastic facilitators who believe in the programme and in the young people's capacity to make positive changes, interagency collaboration, flexibility and creativity.

The BallyRunners approach has generated significant outputs for the participants. Since the start of the programmes in 2009 a total of 6 programmes have been organised with a total of 57 having participated in the programmes. The outputs are as follows: 38 into education and training, 9 into third level, 15 into employment. The BYG provided funding for a BallyRunners Programme for 22 participants. This is still ongoing and the numbers are not included in the above.

The evaluator notes that the programme has voluntary participation and high levels of engagement and retention. Perhaps there is something that could be learned from this programme around engaging with marginalised clients on their own terms. Perhaps any engagement is a significant outcome.

### Penalty Rates

Penalty rates were introduced as a means of encouraging job seekers to engage with activation measures and co-operate with efforts of the Department to assist them in securing employment. The DSP have a guideline document setting out sanctions, circumstances and the process of penalty rating. Sanctions can be applied for up to three weeks if a person in receipt of a job seeker payment fails to engage with the activation process. In the BYG the penalty is lifted as soon as the participant reengages with the BJC/LESN/LESN. If the client does not engage they are then given a nine week disqualification. If the client does not attempt to make any contact or respond to contact made by DSP they are then disallowed from their payment.

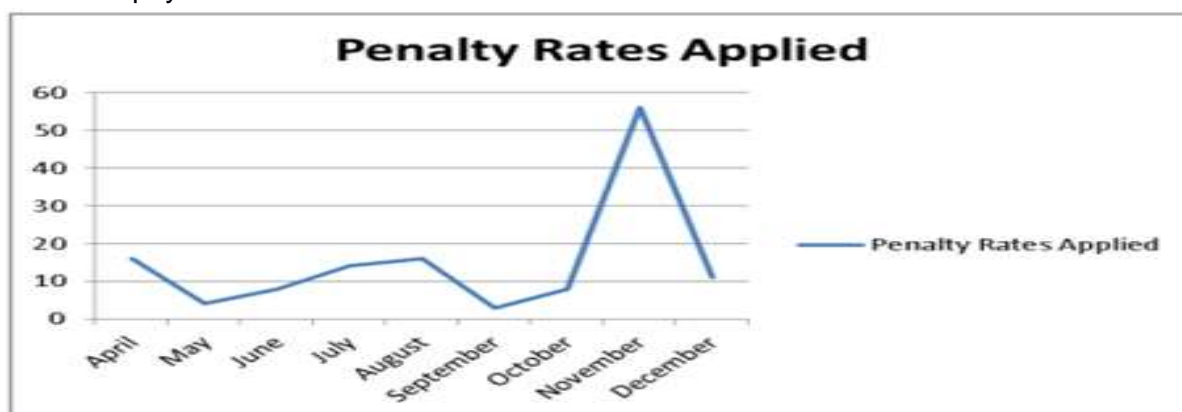


Figure 5 Occurrence of Penalty Rates applied in BYG

Welfare payments remain conditional on the young person's willingness to engage with the guidance/activation process, and to accept reasonable offers of employment and/or training/work experience. Judgment as to whether any offer is reasonable, and should be taken up if sanctions are to be avoided, remains one for Department of Social Protection staff, subject to the provisions that are available for appeal.

To date only one client has been fully disallowed from payment under the BYG. Almost a quarter (23%) of Target Group one have been penalty rated compared to Target Group 2 (8%) and Target Group 3 (6%). A number of Target Group 1 participants received a further penalty rating<sup>41</sup> for non-attendance at Guidance meetings and not taking up offers. There was a significant increase in penalties in November 2014. This was because an operational decision was made by agencies in the LIG as a means to promote engagement by a cohort of participants. This particularly referred to clients in Target Group 1.

The National Youth Council of Ireland noted that it accepts that the DSP had the right to implement its policy on penalties but did not agree with it especially in the context of the Youth Guarantee. The Department of Social Protection have noted that the decision to apply penalty rates was not taken lightly by the LIG. 'Every opportunity was afforded to the client to engage in the BYG process. Penalties were only applied after two 'DNAs'<sup>42</sup> for Group Engagement and subsequent unsuccessful contact by the Guidance Counsellor. This ultimately proved to be successful in securing engagement with the client.'(DSP).

Due to the short life span of the project it is difficult to be conclusive however indications would suggest that penalty rating the most marginalised alone does not encourage activation. The client may appear at appointments after being penalty rated but this does not necessarily mean engaging. Further research is needed to consider whether attendance after a Penalty-Rating leads to subsequent genuine re-engagement, and, whether Penalty-Rating of this client group is appropriate or effective.

### **3.3 Contextual issues**

Lastly in considering outcomes, there is need to consider the context of the BYG in terms of the changing economic environment during 2014, and also, an opportunity to compare the BYG to other contemporaneous approaches to youth unemployment. The three areas considered are

- Rising economic performance
- Ballymun comparative evidence
- Alternative approaches (Intreo, 'Swords approach')

#### **3.3.1 Rising economic performance**

Live Register Summary from the CSO for December 2014 represents a 10% year-on-year decrease, continuing the recent downward trend. The December 2014 total of 356,112 is

- 6,456 lower than the November 2014 total;
- 39,299 lower than the December 2013 total;
- 67,621 lower than the December 2012 total.

<sup>41</sup> See Appendix 4 - Case Study of client from Target Group 1.

<sup>42</sup> DNA (Did Not Attend).

	2012	2013	2014	Year-on-year
December	423,733	395,411 (-6.7%)	356,112(-9.9%)	-39,299 (-9.9%)

Table 13 Monthly and annual comparisons—Live Register figures

### BYG in the context of a rising economy

There has been a general improvement in unemployment figures across Ireland (Table 11). This has been a trend over the last three years. In addition the trend has been accelerating with greater numbers coming off the Live Register in 2014. The performance of the BYG pilot needs to be considered in the context of this improving economic backdrop.

#### 3.3.2 Ballymun comparative evidence

It is interesting to note how Ballymun performed relative to other North Dublin Intreo centres. Table 14 identifies that there was a 29% reduction in under 25's on the Live Register in Ballymun during the period of the BYG. This is higher than any other office. It is not possible to establish a cause and effect of the BYG pilot and these relative reductions.

It is relevant to note that all centres recorded a reduction in overall and youth unemployment with the latter ranging from 14% to 29%. Youth unemployment reduced by a greater amount than general unemployment (-9.9%) across Ireland. However, the fact is that there has been a greater reduction in youth unemployment in Ballymun (29%) compared to other North Dublin centres (Table 14) with an average reduction of 18.46%.

	Dec 13	Dec 14	% change
<b>National</b>	59,148	47,928	-18.9
<b>Swords</b>	546	444	-18.6
<b>Coolock</b>	894	680	-23.9
<b>Finglas</b>	1,025	880	-14.1
<b>Kilbarrack</b>	683	542	-20.6
<b>Ballyfermot</b>	665	564	-15.1
<b>Ballymun</b>	686	487	-29.0

Table 14 Comparative changes in under 25s youth unemployment (CSO Live Register, selected offices)

While one can argue that there is no clear direct evidence to arrive at a definitive relationship between the activities of the BYG and the fall in the LR maybe it is possible to identify indirect “circumstantial evidence” to support such a relationship. This evidence maybe found by an analysis of changes in the LR for Under 25 in Ballymun going back a few years and to see if the BYG pilot altered the patterns of changes in unemployment. Outlined below is the LR data for U25 in Ballymun from December 2003 to December 2014.

Start date	Number	End date	Number	Annual % Change
December 2003	358	December 2004	367	+2.5
December 2004	367	December 2005	404	+10.0
December 2005	404	December 2006	389	-3.7
December 2006	389	December 2007	418	+7.5
December 2007	418	December 2008	609	+45.7
December 2008	609	December 2009	791	+29.9

December 2009	791	December 2010	816	+3.2
December 2010	816	December 2011	764	-6.3
December 2011	764	December 2012	726	-4.9
December 2012	726	December 2013	686	-5.5
December 2013	686	December 2014	487	-29.0

*Table 15 Live Register data for under 25 unemployment in Ballymun 2003 to 2014*

The above table shows a pattern of small percentage variations for example minus 3.7 percent in 2006 but plus 7.5 percent in 2007. This pattern is also seen in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013.

The data shows that over the three years 2004, 2005 and 2006 there was a net overall increase of 8.7 percent. This was during a period of economic growth and would indicate some evidence to suggest that the “rising tide” does not lift all boats and that the profile of unemployment and social exclusion in disadvantaged areas like Ballymun require more focused and specialised approaches in order to support individuals to take advantage of a growing economy. The approach taken in the pilot was client driven and adapted to the local environmental social and labour market profile.

The impact of the economic down turn on the number of young people signing in Ballymun can be seen by the increase of 45.7 percent in 2008 followed by an increase of 29.9 percent in 2009. This was followed by a smaller increase of 3.2 percent in 2010.

The decrease in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 coincided with a more positive economic environment. Over the three years there was a decrease of 15.9 percent with an average annual decrease of 5.3 percent. Given the continued economic growth in 2014 and in the absence of the pilot it would not be unreasonable to assume that the number of U 25s on the Live Register would continue to decrease but probably by single digit percentages reflecting the pattern established in 2011. However the decline may have reached lower double digit percentages but in the last ten years Ballymun never achieved double digit falls. In contrast to other years in 2014 the percentage fall at 29 percent was nearly six times the average of the previous three years. This may indicate that the presence of the pilot accelerated the decline in the numbers of U25 signing on the Live Register in Ballymun. It is also worth noting that the decline in the number of over 25s in Ballymun in 2014 was much lower than the U25. It is not possible to conclude with full certainty that it was the presence of the pilot that resulted in the decline however the above data provides some “circumstantial evidence” of a positive relationship.

### 3.3.3 Alternative approaches (Intreo, ‘Swords approach’)

#### **Relative outcomes to Youth Activation in context**

The context for evaluating the BYG is that other approaches for tackling youth unemployment are also being trialled and suggested. Comparison of different approaches is



problematic due to the different locations of trials. For example, Swords and Ballymun are different in their youth unemployed in terms of length of unemployment and PEX<sup>43</sup>.

However, it is possible to describe these approaches and the outcomes of each to consider if there are any lessons to be learned for the national rollout.

Three approaches to Youth Activation are considered:

- Systematic Activation of Youth Guarantee Clients by DSP (Intreo)
- Ballymun Youth Guarantee approach
- “Swords Approach” to Youth Activation

The NSG agreed that the preferred outcome of a guidance process is people who are informed and able to set their own direction. The extent of the intervention required to achieve this will depend on the starting point of the client.

### **Systematic Activation of Youth Guarantee Clients by DSP (Intreo)**

The first approach described is the normal Intreo service which seeks to commit to engage with all newly unemployed under 25s and all long term unemployed (LTU) over 25 within 12 months. It seeks to guarantee a reasonable “offer” of education, training, development or employment within specified periods commencing with first engagement (defined as attendance at Group Engagement (GE) session which is based on a random selection. Specified periods within which to make an offer:

- 4 months for all newly unemployed under 25, with Low PEX score
- 9 months for all newly unemployed under 25, with Medium/High PEX score
- 4 months for all LTU clients under 25 regardless of profile score

The Intreo approach to engagement with under 25 (new and LTU clients) will be a Group Engagement session followed by one-to-one interviews with a Case Officer (guidance practitioner) and agreement on a PPP (Personal Progression Plan). There will be subsequently monthly face-to-face engagements thereafter.

The evaluator notes that activation will be in random batches and that all clients will receive the same service. The guarantee is timed from the GE session. Further, there is a commitment to meet every month subsequently for those remaining on the Live Register.

### **Ballymun Youth Guarantee approach**

The BYG gives each client a guarantee access to career guidance/assistance leading to identification of an individual career plan for the young unemployed person with follow-through to training, education, work experience or full-time employment.

The guidance process was delivered by Local Employment Service (LES) Mediators of the Ballymun Job Centre (BJC/LESN). Depending on the needs of the individual, the steps in the career plan might include personal assessment, job search assistance, skills training, work experience internships, but the objective in all cases will be to lead the young person to employment placement or further education or training.

In the BYG clients are ‘guaranteed’ to be given an offer within 4 months of the initial meeting with their guidance practitioner. In practice the average number of meetings leading to an offer was 2.8.

<sup>43</sup> Not only were there greater numbers in Ballymun but there were particularly greater numbers in Target Group 1. In Swords all but one client were short-term unemployed compared to 384 long-term unemployed (52%) in Ballymun.



There is a provision of continued support for clients along their pathway to sustainable employment. This includes ongoing contact with clients while on FET programmes or work experience/placement to reduce the risk of drop-out or return to unemployment on cessation.

The evaluator notes that the BYG guarantee is 4 months from the initial meeting with the guidance practitioner while the national YG specifies that the offer must be made within 4 months of attendance at a Group engagement session.

### **“Swords Approach” to Youth Activation**

Another approach that was trialled by the Department of Social Protection was in the Swords area during 2014. This varied from the standard Intreo engagement process. It is useful to consider the relative effectiveness of this local Swords approach.

The Swords Approach involved inviting all existing YG clients to large events attended by local employers (who were recruiting employees) and a wide range of education and training providers. Clients were encouraged to inform themselves of the range of opportunities available, interact with recruiters and providers and avail of the opportunity to self-serve if they found a suitable opportunity. Clients were asked to complete an evaluation, indicating, inter alia, what supports they felt they required if they found nothing suitable on the day.

Clients who did not find a suitable progression path were subsequently invited to attend 1-to-1 guidance meetings with a Case Officer and Personal Progression Plans agreed and thereafter reviewed. A small team of two Case Officers and the service manager planned and delivered this programme and were given considerable flexibility.

The engagement process commenced in February 2014. All (414) unemployed clients under 25 years of age were initially invited to a “Pathways to Education, Training and Employment Fair”. The objective of the Jobseekers/Employment/ Training Event was to:

- Inform jobseekers of the jobs available in the Swords and Greater Dublin area.
- Give Employers the opportunity to meet and screen potential employees for current and future vacancies
- Provide prospective Employers with information regarding the various incentives available from the Department in order to encourage them to recruit employees from the LR.
- Promote educational and training opportunities available
- Showcase and provide information and supports to clients who require additional intervention in order to enter the labour market.
- Provide a “CV clinic” to provide advice and guidance on client CVs

Employers from the local area who had vacancies were actively canvassed to participate and five attended recruiting for jobs in customer services, sales and marketing, care assistants, general operatives & warehouse operatives. 26 Education and training providers attended. These included the ETB’s and local Specialist Training Providers, Springboard Course Providers, Momentum Course Providers, Gateway Programmes, Community Workshops, Skillsnets, Disability Support Organisations, AONTAS/NALA, Job/Club, ICTU, IBEC.

In addition to the Employers present a ‘Jobs Wall’ listed all local job vacancies (advertised on Jobsireland website) and Officers were on hand to provide details and match clients to job profile.

A major retailer interviewed & selected 20 participants on the day for a Positive2Work warehouse distribution programme (19 of whom completed the programme and achieved their FETEC certification).

Clients who did not find a suitable progression path were subsequently invited to attend 1-to-1 guidance meetings with a Case Officer and Personal Progression Plans agreed. By April 2014, 11% of Swords YG client claims (45) had closed (clients had either signed-off immediately prior to the event, transferred to another payment type or notified the DSP of a change of address). Of the remaining 369 clients, 17% (63) had secured fulltime private sector employment, 5% (19) commenced casual employment and 4% (15) started internships. 2 clients secured employment on a TUS programme. 9% (34) had commenced courses of further education; training or blended-learning programmes and a further 40% (159) were waitlisted for courses.

Within two to three months of the February "Pathways Event" jobs fair only 74 Swords YG clients (18%) had not received an offer/otherwise progressed. The evaluator notes that effectively 82% had successfully self-served themselves to a progression. Those that remained were invited to a 1-to-1 review meeting with their Case Officer and Personal Progression Plans updated as appropriate.

From May to July 2014, the Case Officers maintained contact with YG clients by text and telephone to inform those actively job seeking of suitable employment/internship opportunities. During this period, most of the Case Officers time was spent with non-YG clients.

In August 2015 a second "Pathways Event" to which all current under 25 year old clients were invited (a total of 218 i.e. 144 clients who registered unemployed since February 2014 and the 74 existing YG clients who had not progressed). A further, similar event was held in September during National Jobs Week.

During August and September the Case Officers maintained on-going contact with YG clients who required additional assistance was maintained by text/telephone, but the majority of their time was spent supporting other client groups.

During October 2014, YG clients who had not progressed were invited to review meetings. By this time, of the 218 YG clients, 107 were in fulltime employment, 33 in casual employment, 20 were on internships, 9 on Gateway and 8 on TUS. In addition, 97 had either commenced or were waitlisted for further education or training courses.

A further 49 claims were closed for various reason, 23 had moved to another area and 11 transferred to other payments.

By January 2015 the 60 remaining clients from this group were invited to a Group Engagement event. 40 attended and 20 did not. This client group are likely to require high support intervention.

### **Swords approach to guidance**

Both of the Case Officers in Swords are trained in the 'Ali & Graham' Guidance Model. This model provided a foundation for the Case Officers to structure their 1-2-1 interviews and manage the guidance process in order to achieve the desired outcome. It also allows for a client centred approach. Individual client's needs and circumstances as well as time available for the interview, dictated the pace of each interview. For some clients the introduction and exploration phases took a greater proportion of the interview time, while for other clients the evaluation and action planning stages dominated. Depending on the circumstances, some phases of the model was used irrespective of whether it was the first or subsequent interview with the client.

The evaluator notes that one of the Eurofound insights to best practice relates to having appropriately trained personnel who are trained and supported and offer good quality career advice and comprehensive holistic guidance. It is assumed that the Case officers in Swords are of an appropriate standard and that the 'Ali & Graham' Guidance Model is appropriate - but this could be challenged.

### Case Officer: client ratio

The Case Officers assigned to deliver the YG in Swords also dealt with a large number of additional (older) clients. The overall Case Officer: client ratio was 1: 911<sup>44</sup>. This compares with the ratio in Ballymun of 1:158 and for the Intreo service of 1:500.

### Client Profile

The profile of Swords clients is markedly different from Ballymun clients. While not all 414 YG clients in Swords in February 2014 were PEXed (segmented by educational attainment, c.f. Ballymun segmentation of clients) the distribution of the 329 who were:

Target Group	Swords start	Swords end	Ballymun start	Ballymun end
<b>Target Group 1</b> Low PEX	53 (16%)	75%	45%	59% (#44)
<b>Target Group 2</b> Medium PEX	228 (69%)	22%	40%	31% (#23)
<b>Target Group 3</b> High PEX	48 (15%)	3%	15%	10% (#8)
<b>Total</b>	329 <sup>45</sup>	60	849	75

*Table 16 Comparison of client profile by PEX of Swords and Ballymun at the start and end of their intervention*

It is noted by the evaluator that apparently the methodology used to determine an individual's PEX in Swords and which Target Groups they were in and that used in Ballymun pilot were different. So comparison is complicated. Further, it is also noted that not only were there greater numbers in Ballymun but there were particularly greater numbers in Target Group 1. Another significant difference was that in Swords all but one client were short-term unemployed compared to 384 long-term unemployed (52%) in Ballymun. However, it is noted that Target Groups 2 and 3 performed relatively better in Swords and the reasons for this are not conclusive. It may be more related to the nature of Ballymun rather than the activation process in Swords. Or perhaps, some combination of both.

At the end of the process there were 60 remaining clients in Swords. The Officers dealing with these clients are of the view that high support intervention is required by many of these clients.

### Need to be able to profile clients at earliest stage

The evidence suggests that it is important to be able to determine who needs what type of help at the earliest stage. Those in Target Group 1 have the greatest need and are often furthest away from being job capable. High support intervention is required by many of these clients.

The question then becomes can these clients be identified earlier and then managed more effectively? What are the observations and questions that could help classify clients

<sup>44</sup> In Swords 82% successfully self served themselves to a progression and it has been argued that in this case is it right to include them in the caseload ratios.

<sup>45</sup> Not all not all 414 Swords YG clients in February 2014 were PEXed

successfully? Is this profiling possible and who is best placed to do it? The BJC/LESN profiling contains, for example, elements of self assessment for the client. They are asked to rate, among other things, their present levels of 'resilience' and 'hopefulness'. Some argue that it is important to try to understand how the client sees themselves and that such understanding can give an insight into the state of mind of the client and hence what type of support(s) would be most appropriate.

## Conclusion

The comparison of evidence between Swords and Ballymun is difficult given the different nature of the clients. In relation to the national rollout Swords may be more representative of the general situation. In that context, the Swords approach offers a suitable solution for clients to self-serve if they are capable of making informed choices. It is efficient and effective for less disadvantaged clients. The report on the guidance process concluded

The Swords model catered effectively for less disadvantaged clients, many of whom it appears could self-serve. The Big Event approach, in particular, seems effective in acting as a 'pre-interview' intervention, potentially reducing the number of clients requiring one to one interviews.<sup>46</sup>

Further, they went on to conclude that

A combination of both the BYG and Swords model would merit further consideration within the context of a national Youth Guarantee for Ireland.

However, the evaluator notes concerns from author Nuala Whelan around using the PEX as an indicator of guidance need

I would not recommend this based on feedback from practitioners of the three services (Intreo, Swords and BYG). They did not have confidence in the PEX system and preferred (in terms of accuracy and understanding client needs) to establish the level of need themselves using their own profiling/ needs based assessments etc. It is also noted on page 2 of the Lessons for national YG report, under Assessing Clients needs, that the data indicated by PEX is limited in determining client need. So I would be cautious in suggesting PEX as an indicator of guidance need.

My sense is that some clients, no matter what their PEX level is, really benefit from the guidance approach, from having a practitioner who can support them and perhaps just be a 'sounding board' in terms of their progression options/ career decisions...in an ideal world the Big Event and the guidance process could be offered to all clients, however the level/depth of guidance required might be more related to PEX or a more robust profiling tool.

This indicates the need for a more robust profiling tool<sup>47</sup>. Whether such a tool can be successfully developed is open to question. However, this requirement is a recommendation

<sup>46</sup> Duggan, C., Whelan, N., & Together, S. (2015). Lessons from the Ballymun Youth Guarantee pilot: a focus on employment related career guidance.

<sup>47</sup> New tools for profiling work better when staff are involved in development and trained at an early stage. Profiling is becoming increasingly important to identify those individuals most at risk of long-term unemployment. However, recent experience has shown a certain disillusionment with statistical profiling and self-help tools, partly because the results of some purely self-help tools can lack

from this evaluation because early identification of those with greatest need could lead to a more effective service.

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reliability. An increased understanding is emerging that the introduction of such tools needs to go hand in hand with change management processes.

Dissemination Conference: *'New developments, good practices and lessons learnt'* (Brussels, 8-9 September 2011)

## Chapter 4: Assessment of BYG versus Eurofound best practice

### 4.1 Evaluation of issues arising from the Eurofound policy insights

The second part of the evaluation considers to what extent the BYG follows established best practice. This is useful as it evaluates the extent to which the BYG has successfully adopted best practice in this area. The Eurofound report (2012) is a meta level review of existing evidence on the effectiveness of 25 policies tackling youth unemployment over nine countries (including Ireland) and complements this information with expert interviews. It assesses the extent to which the chosen measures have been successful, looking at their outputs, outcomes and wider impact.

The Eurofound study concludes with 10 insights for designing effective policies to tackle youth unemployment. As such it is the most appropriate basis for identifying best practice for addressing youth unemployment in EU.

The NSG adopted this policy framework to underpin the design and implementation of the pilot Youth Guarantee based on a Eurofound study in 2012<sup>48</sup>. How well, or otherwise, does the BYG compare to this established best practice? This evaluation will now consider the BYG compared to those insights and identify lessons arising.

#### 4.1.1 Established best practice for addressing youth unemployment

This evaluation considers the Eurofound report to be a natural basis for the NSG to initially consider best practice and received wisdom in addressing youth unemployment. The NSG is commended for basing policy development in the BYG on the Eurofound insights.

The following is an adaptation of those insights for analysing and evaluating outputs, outcomes and impacts of the BYG. This structure groups Eurofound insights as themes:

- Importance of understanding the target group
- Long-term sustainable and tailored path for clients
- Using appropriately trained personnel offering holistic client centred guidance
- Focus on employability and employer buy-in
- Youth unemployment requires flexible responses
- Monitoring and evaluation should be used to inform policy
- Inter-agency collaboration

This policy framework structure facilitates this evaluation to consider issues along these themes.

The BYG is to be commended for adopting the Eurofound study as the basis for policy development. There are clear advantages from adopting such a policy framework. It shows

<sup>48</sup>Hawley, J., Nevala, A. M., & Weber, T. (2012). Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the employment participation of young people. (AKA Eurofound, EF/12/60/EN, 2012).

that the BYG approach is based on established peer learning in EU. Further, rather than reinvent the wheel, it offered a guide which aided the development of both policy and subsequent operational issues.

#### **4.1.2 Lessons from using an established policy framework**

The BYG was successful in adopting the Eurofound best practice insights as a policy framework to guide the development of the BYG. This resulted in several valuable lessons being learned.

Firstly, there is extensive existing research on Youth Guarantee experiences in the EU. It is important to be aware of previous lessons learned. Therefore it was appropriate for the NSG to identify and utilise this best practice relevant to the development of the BYG.

Secondly, the adoption of a formal written policy framework (based on the 10 Eurofound insights) was useful in establishing basic principles to assist in the development and implementation of an effective Youth Guarantee by

- Setting out the policy context of measures to increase the employment participation of young people
- Ensuring clarity around the objectives and overall approach to achieve them, which assists, inter alia, in ensuring the adoption of a shared vision by key stakeholders
- Providing an underpinning structure to facilitate the design of an appropriate operational framework.

#### **4.2 Importance of understanding the target group**

The first comparison between the BYG to the Eurofound best practice is around the importance of understanding the target group



##### **Importance of understanding the target group**

- Long-term sustainable and tailored path for clients
- Using appropriately trained personnel offering holistic client centred guidance
- Focus on employability and employer buy-in
- Youth unemployment requires flexible responses
- Monitoring and evaluation should be used to inform policy
- Inter-agency collaboration

The first Eurofound theme for evaluating the BYG approach is that of the importance of understanding the target group. It is based on the grouping of two Eurofound insights:

Successful policy measures specify their target group and find innovative ways to reach them, e.g. by establishing a good reputation or working with relevant community groups for hard-to-reach groups.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Hawley, J., Nevala, A. M., & Weber, T. (2012). Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the employment participation of young people. (AKA Eurofound, EF/12/60/EN, 2012.) (Page2).



Young people vary in their level of labour market readiness and policies have to cater for a range of minor to complex needs.

In assessing the BYG's adhering to the best practice of understanding the target market the following points were considered

- Research on client group and segmentation
- Capacity Planning and matching to target group requirements
- Young people vary in their level of labour market readiness
- Role of working with relevant community groups for hard-to-reach groups
- Flexible funding facilitates offer take up

#### **4.2.1 Research on client group and segmentation**

One way the BYG sought to understand the target group was through client research and segmentation. The Local Implementation Group (LIG) undertook research on the client group to facilitate resource and offer-capacity planning. The research indicated that almost half of the client group had very low levels of educational attainment and almost 10% had additional barriers (such as literacy/numeracy difficulties/a history of substance abuse/criminal records). Many had little or no work experience or previous participation on FET courses/ALMPs. The LIG thought it useful to segment clients into 3 cohorts on the basis of perceived labour market readiness.

- Target Group 1: clients with Junior Certificate/equivalent or less and little or no work experience (in Ballymun #255, 34%)
- Target Group 2: clients with Leaving Certificate/equivalent or some work experience (#345, 47%)
- Target Group 3: clients with above Leaving Certificate/equivalent or good work experience (#139, 19%)

There is a benefit from researching the client group. Firstly by quantifying the numbers unemployed it helped to understand the issue and its relative importance. Secondly, the segmentation also was important because it promoted an understanding that young unemployed people are not a homogenous group. Quantification of segments again aided understanding of the issues. The fact that this research happened at an early stage is also to be commended.

#### **4.2.2 Capacity Planning and matching to target group requirements**

A formal Capacity Plan was developed from the research carried out by the LIG on existing local and readily accessible FET capacity and identified potential shortfalls in certain areas, particularly in NFQ Level 3 interventions. A decision was made to provide for increased capacity to meet the anticipated need (if necessary by redistributing resources from other areas) in order to maximise the learning from the BYG. The LIG also recognised the need to respond flexibly as individual needs could only be fully identified during the course of the guidance process. The need for particular types of intervention would also have to reflect the emergence of other opportunities (e.g. the allocation of a significant number of places on the Gateway scheme) or emergent labour market needs, work experience or employment opportunities.

The key benefit of the Capacity Plan is that it helps to identify gaps in the provision of courses etc compared to the needs of the clients as identified in the client research. The evaluation concludes that this Capacity Plan is a useful and logical step and should be developed in conjunction with the research and segmentation of the client group.

#### **4.2.3 Young people vary in their level of labour market readiness<sup>50</sup>**

Another benefit of the Client Research is that the NSG and LIG recognised that certain clients (particularly those with multiple barriers) may require a number of interventions as part of a structured supported pathway to employment.

This understanding was important because by better understanding the target group it increased awareness of the difficulties faced, particularly, by Target Group 1. A particular focus of the BYG has been to increase the volume and range of options available to meet the disparate needs of the client base and particularly Target Group 1.

#### **4.2.4 Role of working with relevant community groups for hard-to-reach groups**

Hard-to-reach clients are a particular problem in youth unemployment. These clients, generally, do not trust the Department of Social Protection and so are often unlikely to engage with the process. Through the NSG and LIG youth organisations are able to participate in the YG. The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) participated in the NSG and Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYP) on the LIG.

BRYP, for example, played an important role in reaching and working with hard-to-reach groups. This is because they have a better understanding of these clients and have established a level of trust and rapport. The evaluation considers that the participation of local Youth Service Providers is an important aspect of the Youth Guarantee because they provide a bridge to clients who otherwise may not be aware or interested.

There is further analysis of the role and contribution of Youth Work Sector in chapter 5.

#### **4.2.5 Flexible funding facilitates offer take up**

A small amount of money can be the difference between a client being able to take up an offer or not. The economic and social profile of the area, the family and community environment and the personal profile of some clients is such that the availability of an offer in itself may not be sufficient to ensure that the young person can take up the offer. A flexible fund was established to support individualised responses to barriers faced by BYG participants. It was used when a solution could not otherwise be found from existing actions, programmes or resources.

Regarding the 'flexible fund' which amounted to €22,630 which needs to be evaluated in the context of the effect it had on the 94 participants. This evidence is not available at this stage. However, it equated to €241 per recipient – or less than two weeks unemployment payments. In this context this expenditure seems prudent.

<sup>50</sup> Appendix 4 gives three sample case histories – which describe examples of clients who needed multiple supports.

#### **4.2.6 Lessons from seeking to understand the target group**

The BYG was successful in adopting the Eurofound best practice insight around seeking to understand the target group. This resulted in several valuable lessons being learned.

**4.2.6.1 Conducting initial research** (using Department of Social Protection-held data) on the cohort of existing YG-eligible clients is a valuable exercise which facilitates resource and offer capacity planning. Parameters should include numbers, highest level of educational attainment, prior attendance on training courses, identified barriers (e.g. literacy/numeracy difficulties) and previous employment history.

**4.2.6.2 Client segmentation** is useful for identifying the numbers of people in each segment and therefore types of interventions required. It may also be useful in determining the quantum and range of suitable offers required to meet needs, selecting clients for particular events/interventions/opportunities (e.g. those that might find particular FET options suitable or indeed to identify the need for potential supports to better prepare clients for them, such as Study Skills courses in preparation for Post Leaving Certificate programmes)

**4.2.6.3 Capacity planning** is necessary to determine the number of scheduled options available and identify potential shortfalls. This is a necessarily dynamic process as the capacity model may need to be revised to reflect individual needs which can only be definitely identified during the course of the guidance process. Regard should be had not just to locally-available options, but also those that are readily accessible. The risk that a number of Intreo Centres may be relying on the availability of the same programmes for their client base can be reduced by conducting the analysis on a Department of Social Protection Divisional/ETB basis.

**4.2.6.4 Young people vary in their level of labour market readiness** and certain clients (particularly those with multiple barriers) may require a number of interventions as part of a structured supported pathway to employment.

**4.2.6.5 Working with relevant community groups and Youth Service Providers for hard-to-reach groups** is important because they have a better understanding of these clients and have established a level of trust and rapport that make them an ideal communication channel to certain clients.

**4.2.6.6 The BYG has benefited from the degree of flexibility** afforded with regard to service provision and funding (through dedicated BYG funding and approval to trial new approaches). In the absence of similar arrangements, consideration should be given as to how the underlying issues might otherwise be addressed.

#### **4.3 Long-term sustainable and tailored path for clients**

We continue by comparing the BYG to the next Eurofound best practice heading – around a sustainable long-term path for clients



Importance of understanding the target group

#### **Long-term sustainable and tailored path for clients**

- Using appropriately trained personnel offering holistic client centred guidance

- Focus on employability and employer buy-in
- Youth unemployment requires flexible responses
- Monitoring and evaluation should be used to inform policy
- Inter-agency collaboration

The second theme groups two more insights from Eurofound. They indicate that a long-term sustainable pathway and a tailored client centred approach are recommended.

Young people should be set up on a long-term sustainable pathway, e.g. by providing them with necessary skills and stable employment, rather than low-quality quick fixes.<sup>51</sup>

Youth employment measures should focus on the client, not the provider, e.g. by offering tailored, personalised advice by mentors.

The manner of the BYG delivery in these regards is now analysed.

In assessing the BYG's adhering to the best practice of adopting a long-term sustainable and tailored path for clients the following points were considered

- "Gateway" and 'Pathway' to employment
- Definition of an 'offer'
- Timing of the offer
- The BYG Guidance Process
- Post Placement Support

#### **4.3.1 "Gateway" and 'Pathway' to employment**

The NSG endorsed a pathway to employment policy framework to support jobseekers develop a route to employment. This is directly based on the Eurofound insights.

Key elements of the BYG process include

- Creation of a 'gateway' which would lead on the development of a structured and supported pathway for job seekers.
- The Department of Social Protection/LESN will profile clients and, using a career guidance process, agree a Personal Progression Plan that will outline a tailored education/training/ employment pathway for the client.
- Continued provision of advice and support to the client along the pathway.

The BYG gives each client a guarantee access to career guidance/assistance leading to identification of an individual career plan for the young unemployed person with follow-through to training, education, work experience or full-time employment. Depending on the needs of the individual, the steps in the career plan might include personal assessment, job

<sup>51</sup> Hawley, J., Nevala, A. M., & Weber, T. (2012). Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the employment participation of young people. (AKA Eurofound, EF/12/60/EN, 2012.) (Page 2).

search assistance, skills training, work experience internships, but the objective in all cases will be to lead the young person to employment placement or further education or training.

The gateway and pathway image is easy to understand and helps communicate that there may be a need for several interventions along that path depending on client circumstances. It also helps counter the quick fix option which may be unrealistic and counterproductive.

#### **4.3.2 Definition of an ‘offer’**

Another aspect related to the sustainable pathway concept is what constitutes an ‘offer’? The Youth Guarantee does not guarantee a job, but seeks to activate young people as soon as possible, thus keeping them in touch with the labour market, or ensuring further education. The EU Commission states that a “good-quality offer” means offering personalised guidance and developing an individual plan which results in an offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship.

With regard to the definition of what constitutes a ‘quality offer’, the European Commission document Frequently Asked Questions on the Youth Guarantee cautions that “What it does NOT mean is any counselling or any activation measures or any occupation that would have an immediate effect to reduce the statistics of youth unemployment for a while”<sup>52</sup>.

There is, however, a subjective aspect as to what exactly constitutes a “quality offer” as this may vary depending upon the needs of the individual and, indeed, the wider employment situation.

Having regard to the client profile in Ballymun, the BYG partners were conscious of the fact that many clients would potentially need a wide range of supports including progression through a number of interventions as part of a structured pathway to employment, none of which, individually and in isolation, might constitute a “quality offer”. The question arises therefore as to at what point along the continuum of measures (pathway) you might consider a “quality offer” to have been made. This question is important, inter alia, for the purpose of monitoring whether an offer has been made and within the specified timeframe.

The BYG partners decided that the critical issue was to provide a support most appropriate to the needs of the individual and, save for those aimed at addressing basic preparatory needs (“pre-offers”) to record the first offer along a structured pathway as the “quality offer”, while recognising the potentially controversial nature of this view. The evaluation considers this approach reasonable.

#### **4.3.3 Timing of the offer**

BYG clients were given an offer within 4 months of a meeting with a guidance practitioner. The average number of meetings leading to an offer was 2.8 meetings (for all Target Groups). The requirement to give an offer within 4 months in all cases was considered by guidance officers to be inappropriate, as some may require further time to agree a suitable progression route.

The evaluation considers that the requirement to give an offer within four months in all cases, while possibly inappropriate in some cases, does offer a useful benchmark for monitoring and evaluation. Perhaps there could be some flexibility depending on the nature of the client.

#### **4.3.4 The BYG Guidance Process**

Another output related to the long-term sustainable path for clients is the actual guidance process used. The NSG agreed that what you would hope would be the outcome of a guidance process is people who are informed and able to set their own direction. The extent of the intervention necessary to achieve this will depend on the initial starting point of the client.

This output has been assessed by a complementary research and they concluded  
In delivering the pilot, the model in Ballymun replicated those elements of good practice identified by Eurofound in 2012 based on its assessment of interventions to support young people into employment across Europe. In this regard, the BYG pilot can be seen to be an example of best practice in relation to the YG in Ireland.<sup>53</sup>

This guidance process was delivered by Local Employment Service (LES) Mediators of the Ballymun Job Centre (BJC/LESN). Brief, overview, evaluation notes include:

- Undoubtedly this is a thorough process designed by professionals
- This process may take several sessions and is labour intensive
- Consideration on value for money is difficult to evaluate
- Is the whole process necessary for all target groups (or all individuals)?

There has been an extensive review of the guidance process used in BYG, Swords, and, Intreo. Lessons need to be taken directly from this review.

#### **4.3.5 Post Placement Support**

Another output of the BYG has been the post placement support given to clients. A fundamental principle of the BYG is the provision of continued support for clients along their pathway to sustainable employment. This includes ongoing contact with clients while on FET programmes or work experience/placement to reduce the risk of drop-out or return to unemployment on cessation. Given their starting point, for many clients the offer may be a first step on what might be a long journey requiring further steps and ongoing support. Following agreement from the Local Implementation Group, Ballymun Job Centre staff contacted participants (on an offer) and their tutor/host organisation/employer to identify additional/complementary supports linked to the current experience and career plan in order to enhance post- offer sustainability. To date 76 participants have benefitted from the fund<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> Duggan, C., Whelan, N., & Together, S. (2015). Lessons from the Ballymun Youth Guarantee pilot: a focus on employment related career guidance.

<sup>54</sup> See Appendices 4 and 5 for example case studies and testimonials from clients who received post placement support.

There was a budget of €16k for Post- Pilot Pathways. Again the logic was that sometimes a small amount of money is necessary to help a client stay on a programme. This equated to €211 per client. Again, this expenditure seems reasonable especially if it is felt appropriate by those who have the closest understanding of clients. They are probably in the best position to judge.

This post placement support is considered a useful mechanism for helping to deliver the full pathway to clients.

#### **4.3.6 Lessons around adopting a long-term sustainable and tailored path for clients**

The BYG was successful in adopting the Eurofound best practice insight around the need for developing a long-term sustainable and tailored path for clients. The gateway and pathway image is easy to understand and helps communicate that there may be a need for several interventions along that path depending on client circumstances

There should be a clear definition of what constitutes an 'offer' to ensure clarity among all stakeholders and facilitate monitoring.

The BYG experience is that there has been a negative perception of the value of the public employment service and that the real value of the Guarantee is the guarantee of a good-quality offer of a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, work-experience, or continued education.

Timing of the offer – Under the BYG, offers were required to be made within 4 months of the initial meeting with a guidance practitioner. The national YG specifies that the offer must (in the case of newly-registered Low PEX and all long-term unemployed clients) be made within 4 months of attendance at a Group engagement session. This further reduces the time available within which an offer must be made which may be problematic for some clients – especially if the client fails to attend the initial one-to-one meeting for some reason.

The provision of ongoing support, advice, guidance to clients while participating in an intervention is considered to be crucial to ensure that underlying needs continue to be addressed so as to minimise the risk of clients dropping out or returning to the Live Register on cessation.

#### **4.4 Appropriately trained personnel offering holistic client centred guidance**

We go on by comparing the BYG to the next Eurofound best practice heading – around the importance of using trained personnel and holistic client centred guidance

- Long-term sustainable and tailored path for clients



#### **Using appropriately trained personnel offering holistic client centred guidance**

- Focus on employability and employer buy-in
- Youth unemployment requires flexible responses
- Monitoring and evaluation should be used to inform policy
- Inter-agency collaboration

A key recommendation of Eurofound was the need for appropriate trained personnel who can offer good quality career advice and comprehensive holistic guidance.



Policy delivery relies on appropriate personnel, who need to be trained and supported.<sup>55</sup>

Successful policies offer good quality career advice and comprehensive holistic guidance.

In this context the BYG implemented the following practices to be tested.

#### **4.4.1 Allocation of dedicated guidance practitioners<sup>56</sup>**

In recognition of the importance of the guidance process, the intention to intensify the level of engagement and the increased administrative overhead of pilot (additional data capture, reporting, monitoring, evaluation, etc.), 6 dedicated Local Employment Service (LES) Mediators (guidance practitioners) were assigned to deliver the BYG guidance process. This is significantly greater than current (or future anticipated) guidance practitioner/client ratios.

- This proved successful as there were adequate guidance practitioners for the pilot period

#### **4.4.2 Competencies of guidance practitioners, assessment and guidance tools.**

Mediators in the Ballymun Job Centre are fully qualified and have many years of experience of supporting the client group. They employ a suite of diagnostic tools and psychometric tests that are not commonly available to Department of Social Protection Case Officers (guidance practitioners) and the guidance process is more intensive – typically 3 to 4 interviews - leading to agreement on an individual tailored progression plan.

- This process contrasts with the Intreo centre process where there is a 40min interview

#### **4.4.3 Lessons around using appropriately trained personnel and offering holistic client centred guidance**

The provision of a quality guidance service is considered to be an essential feature of the Youth Guarantee. This has resource implications for Department of Social Protection, including the number of Case Officers allocated to its delivery, their skills and qualifications and the tools and systems available to support them.

##### **4.4.3.1 All clients are offered the same service**

The BYG offers intensive guidance by suitably qualified guidance practitioners using a range of diagnostic tools and psychometric tests. All clients are offered the same service, irrespective of Department of Social Protection profiling.

- The evaluation notes that while all clients are offered the same service, it is unclear if all clients, irrespective of profiling, require the same testing
- Value for money suggests there are cost implications that need to be considered
- Perhaps the level of guidance could be PEX related.

<sup>55</sup> Hawley, J., Nevala, A. M., & Weber, T. (2012). Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the employment participation of young people. (AKA Eurofound, EF/12/60/EN, 2012.) (Page 2).

<sup>56</sup> See Appendices 4 and 5 for example case studies and testimonials from clients who benefited from such dedicated guidance practitioners

The BYG was successful in adopting the Eurofound best practice insight around the need for appropriately trained personnel offering holistic client centred guidance. These trained personnel have also been able to develop best practice in the guidance process. A complementary report details their advice on this matter.

#### **4.5 Focus on employability and employer buy-in**

The next comparison of the BYG to the next Eurofound best practice heading – around the importance of a focus on employability and of gaining employer buy-in



Using appropriately trained personnel offering holistic client centred guidance

#### **Focus on employability and employer buy-in**

- Youth unemployment requires flexible responses
- Monitoring and evaluation should be used to inform policy
- Inter-agency collaboration

Another Eurofound insight to be evaluated in a BYG context was on the role of employers.

Measures that aim to increase the employability of young people should focus on existing and future labour market needs and ensure a buy-in of employers and their representatives.<sup>57</sup>

A later section of this report will evaluate the specific lessons around employer engagement. This section considers outcomes around employer buy-in – to what extent was employer buy-in achieved?

A particular focus of the pilot YGS is to involve, and build links with, employers in the locality and the immediate hinterland in order to ensure that the guidance and training elements of the YGS are tailored to the needs of the local labour market and also to generate work placement/experience opportunities for the YGS participants.

Employer and business representative organisations were another key stakeholder in the YG partnership approach. These were represented on both the BYG NSG [Both IBEC and the Dublin Chamber of Commerce (through their Activating Dublin programme)] and LIG (North Dublin Chamber of Commerce).

Experience to date has been that there are insufficient private sector employment opportunities to match the profile of the BYG cohort<sup>58</sup> and this places pressure on the state sector to provide suitable FET options. This has significant resource implications for the Education and Training Boards. It also reinforces the need to improve and intensify employer

<sup>57</sup> Hawley, J., Nevala, A. M., & Weber, T. (2012). Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the employment participation of young people. (AKA Eurofound, EF/12/60/EN, 2012.) (Page 2).

<sup>58</sup> Many of the candidates, as noted elsewhere, were not job ready.

engagement to maximise private sector employment potential and ensure the relevance of FET to the labour market.

#### **4.5.1 Lessons around the focus on employability and employer buy-in**

While employers did show some appetite to get involved in the YG the number of actual 'real' jobs delivered from the private sector was only 77 (representing only 10% of the total number of offers). There may be several reasons for this relatively low percentage. The guidance process may have a tendency to recommend further education and training. The high number of clients in Target Group 1 and their job readiness may mean they are more suited to further training.


Employers did show a willingness to engage in a range of mechanisms beyond actual jobs to help provide candidates with a pathway to a real job. For example; hosting interns, providing work placement/experience opportunities, job sampling tours, job shadowing, Jobs Clubs and other public employment service events, development/delivery of blended learning opportunities<sup>59</sup>.

In conclusion, the BYG was only moderately successful in delivering the Eurofound best practice insight around the need for ensuring employer buy-in. This translated into only 10% of offers in the pilot. However, in the current economic situation this may be understandable. Further employers noted the, at times, weak quality of candidates presented to them. Some have noted that there could be improved connections between guidance counsellors and employers.

There is a sense that lessons learned in the BYG could usefully improve employer buy-in, and the resulting jobs delivered, in a national rollout. This is due to a significant amount of learning around the area of employer engagement documented as a specific area of interest in Chapter 5.

#### **4.6 Youth unemployment requires flexible responses**

We again compare the BYG to the next Eurofound best practice – this time around the requirement for flexible responses

- Focus on employability and employer buy-in
- 
- Youth unemployment requires flexible responses**
- Monitoring and evaluation should be used to inform policy
  - Inter-agency collaboration

Another Eurofound insight to be evaluated in a BYG context was on the role of flexible responses to youth unemployment.

Youth unemployment requires flexible responses, which have to be adapted to economic cycles, whereas social exclusion is a structural issue and has to be addressed consistently.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> See Menu of Options for Employer Engagement in the Youth Guarantee, page 70.

<sup>60</sup> Hawley, J., Nevala, A. M., & Weber, T. (2012). Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the

In a related observation the Eurofound report notes (p.45)

A key issue to take into account in the design and delivery of youth employment measures is the cyclical nature of the problem. Youth unemployment rises during an economic downturn and declines when the economic situation improves (often more so than overall unemployment). This means that measures need to be flexible to meet these changes in demand.

#### **4.6.1 Eligibility flexibility**

An example of a flexible response in BYG was in relation to extending eligibility for participation in certain programmes to the YG cohort (see reference to Community Employment in the Section on Barriers to Progression, below), prioritising young people for certain programmes (e.g. TUS) and developing new innovative approaches (e.g. the collaboration with the UCD Innovation Academy to provide a University Certificate in Innovation, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship and blended learning opportunities).

One particular example was eligibility to Community Employment schemes<sup>61</sup>. These are normally designated for people over 25 but in Ballymun all the CE places were allocated to the YG cohort.

The evaluation notes that as such there was a displacement which favoured the YG but disadvantaged those over 25.

Further, the evaluation is concerned that such flexibility may be difficult to implement outside of the BYG.

#### **4.6.2 Flexible funding facilitate taking up an offer and post-participation support.**

A small amount of money can be the difference between a client being able to take up an offer or not. The economic and social profile of the area, the family and community environment and the personal profile of some clients is such that the availability of an offer in itself may not be sufficient to ensure that the young person can take up the offer. A flexible fund was established to support individualised responses to barriers faced by BYG participants. It was used when a solution could not otherwise be found from existing actions, programmes or resources. Over 90 participants accessed the fund.

#### **4.6.3 Lessons around the role of flexible responses to youth unemployment**

The BYG has benefited from the degree of flexibility afforded with regard to service provision and funding (through dedicated BYG funding and approval to trial new approaches). In the absence of similar arrangements, consideration should be given as to how the underlying issues might otherwise be addressed.

The BYG was successful in adopting the Eurofound best practice insight around the need for flexibility in approach.

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employment participation of young people. (AKA Eurofound, EF/12/60/EN, 2012.) (Page 2).

<sup>61</sup> See Appendices 4 and 5 for example case studies and testimonials from clients who received flexibility in application of eligibility criteria for CE.

#### 4.7 Monitoring and evaluation should be used to inform policy

Another Eurofound best practice relates to how monitoring and evaluation should inform policy. How well did the BYG do in this regard?



- Youth unemployment requires flexible responses

#### **Monitoring and evaluation should be used to inform policy**

- Inter-agency collaboration

Another Eurofound insight to be evaluated in a BYG context was the role of monitoring and evaluation

Robust monitoring and evaluation should be used to inform policymaking and development.<sup>62</sup>

One key finding of the Eurofound report was that more emphasis should be placed on developing and implementing systematic evaluations. Eurofound considers that this is essential in order to gain knowledge about the effectiveness of policy measures and to identify best practices, improve employability and labour market participation of young people.

Monitoring and evaluation are critical to determine what works and what doesn't. YG policy and practice must be evidence based to ensure appropriate allocation and prioritisation of resources, the effectiveness and efficiency of the approach and continuous service delivery improvement.

On-going monitoring also provides an important feedback loop to improve different aspects of the YG scheme (measures, individual interventions, partnership, etc.). Key indicators include the date on which offers are made, the quality of the offer, outcomes achieved and impacts (over specified periods).

Agreeing a comprehensive range of BYG Key Performance Indicators took time and evolved over the lifetime of the project. Collecting and sharing collation and interpretation of data was more problematic than envisaged and required supplementing existing public employment service data bases (both Department of Social Protection and LES) and the assignment of considerable administrative support. For these reasons, the BYG KPI framework may not be scalable.

Observation, questionnaire surveys and follow up interviews were used to get broad feedback and insight from those involved in the pilot. An extensive amount of observation was used by attending many meetings of the NSG and LIG. This was augmented with visits to various partners etc.

Throughout 2014 there were a series of regular surveys to capture feedback from partners:

- Four NSG surveys

<sup>62</sup> Hawley, J., Nevala, A. M., & Weber, T. (2012). Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the employment participation of young people. (AKA Eurofound, EF/12/60/EN, 2012.) (Page 2).

- Three LIG surveys
- Three implementer surveys (those involved in implementing the YG)
- Five participant surveys (over 250 responses in total)

There were follow up depth interviews with several contributors with the aim of getting greater insight into key issues. The reports provided a feedback loop to partners on how the pilot was progressing and they often identified areas that needed attention.


In addition there was an extensive amount of secondary research leading to a report on lessons learned from previous EU Youth Guarantee Schemes (available on Basecamp).

#### **4.7.1 Lessons around monitoring and evaluation**

The BYG has benefited from extensive feedback loops from multiple stakeholders. Monitoring and evaluation is critical. External feedback, similar to the pilot, is recommended as this increases the effectiveness of partner contributions. The use of a robust evidential base is essential to determine what does and does not work, and facilitates better prioritisation of resources, continuous improvement of service delivery and collaborative working. Ensuring an on-going monitoring of the Youth Guarantee serves to establish a feedback loop to improve different aspects of the process (measures, partnership, etc.). This should be by an external independent agency similar to the pilot because their independence gives them authority and credibility – especially in the partnership context.

#### **4.8 Inter-agency collaboration**

We conclude this section by comparing the BYG to the Eurofound best practice – around inter-agency collaboration

- Monitoring and evaluation should be used to inform policy
-  **Inter-agency collaboration**

The final Eurofound insight to be evaluated in a BYG context was the role of inter-agency collaboration

Inter-agency collaboration and involvement of all stakeholders can be a cost-effective way to implement policies, when the specific roles and responsibilities of different actors are specified.<sup>63</sup>

This is a key concept in the BYG approach and one that has been developed successfully. It will be assessed in the next chapter under the heading of ‘partnership’.

#### **Conclusion on the BYG use of the Eurofound policy insights as policy basis for BYG**

The evaluation concludes that the BYG has based itself on established best practice as established in the Eurofound study. In all of the Eurofound insights the BYG has developed both policy and operations to mirror the recommendations.

<sup>63</sup> Hawley, J., Nevala, A. M., & Weber, T. (2012). Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the employment participation of young people. (AKA Eurofound, EF/12/60/EN, 2012.) (Page 2).

The BYG is to be commended for adopting the Eurofound study as the basis for policy development. Further it is to be commended in succeeding in delivering a model to be tested that operationally delivers on each of the Eurofound insights.

The adoption of this formal policy framework was successful in establishing basic principles to assist in the development and implementation of an effective Youth Guarantee by

- Setting out the policy context of measures to increase the employment participation of young people
- Ensuring clarity around the objectives and overall approach to achieve them, which assists, inter alia, in ensuring the adoption of a shared vision by key stakeholders
- Providing an underpinning structure to facilitate the design of an appropriate operational framework

Importantly these policies were tested in the BYG in an Irish context and useful lessons were learned under each heading to aid the development of best practice for future YG in an Irish and EU context.

This report now turns to evaluate key issues that were identified as areas of particular interest for evaluation and learning from the BYG pilot.

## **Chapter 5: Assessment of key issues relevant to the BYG**

### **Introduction**

The third part of the evaluation considers key issues that were identified as areas of particular interest for evaluation and learning from the pilot.



### **Partnership**

- Youth Work Sector contribution
- Client engagement
- Employer engagement
- Education and Training Provision
- Barriers to progression
- Promotion of the Youth Guarantee

In each there is a review of the Ballymun experience and an identification of lessons to be considered.

### **5.1 Partnership**

A basic premise of the BYG pilot is that a partnership of relevant stakeholders can design and deliver effective solutions to the problem of youth unemployment. The hypothesis was that there is value in involving all relevant stakeholders in the design, delivery, promotion, monitoring and evaluation of the YG. This idea is echoed in the Eurofound insights used in Section 1.



Inter-agency collaboration and involvement of all stakeholders can be a cost-effective way to implement policies, when the specific roles and responsibilities of different actors are specified.

The potential role of partnership was echoed by the Youth Work Sector also. To more effectively address the employment needs of young people it will be necessary to counter the siloed nature of provision, and to improve interagency sharing and communication at all levels. This will require leadership from the 'top' with interdepartmental and associate organisation co-operation, for example between DES, JEI, DCYA, and DSP.<sup>64</sup>

### **5.1.1 Stakeholder Collaboration**

The assumption was that an effective Youth Guarantee model could best be developed and delivered through collaboration between key stakeholders. These included relevant Government Departments and agencies, employer representatives, education and training providers and local development and youth organisations. Membership was later expanded to include trade unions and local government in recognition of the significant contribution that they could make.

### **5.1.2 Basic structure of BYG**

The pilot was developed through two main partnership structures<sup>65</sup>:

1) A **National Steering Group** (NSG) comprising senior representatives of key stakeholder organisations including all relevant Government Departments and agencies, employer and trade unions, education and training providers, local development and youth organisations to provide strategic management and oversight. The NSG is responsible for:

- Agreeing the final detailed design and methodology of the pilot
- Supporting the Local implementation Team
- Addressing issues that arise from Local Implementation Team
- Reviewing and evaluating the work of the Local Implementation Team
- Evaluating the efficacy, efficiency and effectiveness of the pilot
- Agreeing a final report
- Making recommendations on future Youth Guarantee schemes

2) A **Local Implementation Group** comprising similar representation to refine and deliver the model. The LIG is responsible for:

- Supporting the implementation of the pilot
- Identifying and referring participants
- Advising on the progress of the pilot, working to implement solutions to any barriers restricting the implementation of the pilot
- Reporting back to their own organisations
- Providing regular progress reports to the NSG

<sup>64</sup> Centre for Effective Services (CES), Foroige, the National Youth Council of Ireland and Youth Work Ireland, Conference on "Enhancing the Contribution of Youth Organisations to Youth Employment". CES Seminar Report, *Dr John Bamber and Ellen Garvey*, July 2014, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> See Appendix 8 for composition of NSG and LIG.

- Participating in the evaluation
- Supporting the dissemination of the lessons from the pilot

The LIG undertook research on the client base, mapped service provision, engaged in a capacity planning exercise, agreed a Local YG Implementation Plan and monitored progress. A list of participating partners is appended (Appendix 8). All members of the partnership brought a unique perspective on the issue of youth unemployment and how best to address the problem. Each made a unique contribution to the design and delivery of the pilot.

The NSG agreed to expand the original membership to include representatives of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and Dublin City Council. It also acknowledges that the Department of Justice and Department of Children and Youth Affairs would have been useful additions.

### **5.1.3 Role of the NSG and LIG**

The role of the NSG was important as it formally recognised the possible contribution of multiple stakeholders to the problem of youth unemployment. In addition it also provided a forum whereby the experiences and received wisdom of multiple stakeholders could be exchanged and considered.

The evaluation also considers that the LIG is an integral aspect in the delivery of the YG. The LIG offered a structure for interested partners to work together and coordinate activities. The BYG sought to establish effective local activation networks between the partners:

- To identify local/readily accessible employment opportunities and make them available in a timely way to Department of Social Protection/LES.
- To promote the creation of employment and work experience opportunities.
- To match training activity to labour market opportunities.
- To identify any changes/flexibility required to enhance the effectiveness of Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs), improve take-up and remove barriers.

Again, the benefit of this was that it increased understanding of different perspectives and helped to coordinate actions, this time, at a local level.

### **5.1.3 Partnership communication and collaboration effectiveness**

The electronic communication systems used in the project were initially based solely around group emails. This tended to create an 'email blizzard' which did not facilitate effective communication. Half way through the project there was a move to Basecamp – a platform that facilitates project communication. This allowed all documents to be grouped in one platform which was useful.

Generally communication around KPIs, monthly reporting, budgets and meetings improved as the pilot developed but there is room for best practice to be identified. To an extent Basecamp facilitated this advance although the improvement was more a result of increased learning around the need to communicate progress to multiple agencies.

Basecamp also has its weaknesses. Again it can become a place to deposit reports and documents without any signalling of their importance or relevance. Future Youth Guarantee partnership structures would need to consider the importance of an effective communication platform.

Meetings also need to be considered. There was frustration at the nature of some of the NSG meetings which were felt by some to stray into LIG matters. These monthly meetings generally lasted three hours and were seen by some as frustrating and lacking focus.

It was suggested that an amount of partnership work could be achieved via forums on Basecamp in advance of meetings. This was started late in the pilot but there was no real culture of using the platform to discuss issues. The benefits of a forum are that the communication is visible to many and this promotes inclusiveness and participation. It also facilitates clarifying the important aspects of an issue so that meeting time is focussed.

The evaluator has no way of costing the time of participation in these meetings. However, it is very significant. Partner organisations are, presumably, busy with their own work and the Youth Guarantee to be successful needs to facilitate effective communication systems.

One possibility, which was not trialed, is that of a web based communication platform. These have their problems but they could be trialed. The effect of the remoteness of organisations from each other in interagency work needs to be considered. Skype and other such group systems which promote visual communication may have a useful role to play in promoting effective collaboration.

#### **5.1.4 Partnership effectiveness**

The partnership approach has presented unique challenges of itself. It is resource intensive and requires a high level of commitment from participating partner organisations and representatives to a shared vision, a clear articulation and prioritisation of objectives and actionable steps to achieve them, excellent communication, monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

After a slow start, the partnership agreed a strategic and policy framework, but the absence of Key Performance Indicators, a project management framework and fulltime project resource were problematic.

Over time these were addressed. Key to this was the allocation of specific staff resources. One key learning from the pilot is that it needs dedicated staff resources to be effective.

#### **5.1.5 Overall cost effectiveness of partnership**

From an evaluation perspective it is difficult to assess the cost effectiveness of the approach. The Eurofound recommendation suggests that Inter-agency collaboration and involvement of all stakeholders can be a cost-effective way to implement policies, when the specific roles and responsibilities of different actors are specified.

Two immediate caveats are identified and supported in the BYG experience, 'when the specific roles and responsibilities of different actors are specified'. The BYG experience would support this qualification.

Another evaluation concern is the one-off nature of the BYG. The extraordinary effort that has gone into delivering the Pilot may not be a reliable indicator of the effectiveness, or otherwise, of partnership as a means of working generally.

However, there is a general consensus among the participating partners at all levels that the partnership approach is effective, but they also acknowledge that is difficult, takes time and is resource intensive. The feedback of those involved suggests there is an obvious benefit of different organisations working together. They argued that the partnership approach delivered

- Improved mutual understanding and awareness of partner perspectives and cultures
- Facilitated the interaction and co-ordination of disparate groups involved in the provision of services for young people (e.g. the ability to co-ordinate training services to the specific needs of targeted young people).
- Improved understanding of the nature of the problems facing some of those in the target groups and sharing of knowledge and experience as to how best to address them.

From experiencing the project the evaluator would agree with these arguments.

#### **5.1.6 Examples of successes in partnership:**

There are many examples of partnership success such as:

- Department of Social Protection seems to have learned a lot from the employer representatives about how to best engage with employers and have responded flexibly in relation to suggestions from other partners about how best to engage with young people, respond to non-engagers, imposition of penalties, and trial changes in eligibility conditions for access to Active Labour Market Programmes.
- CDET have responded flexibly in relation to the need identified by the BJC/LESN for an increase in the quantum and type of courses
- BRYR have been able to locate and communicate with marginalised participants and use their credibility to engender trust in the process and hence participation.
- The BJC/LESN has been able to develop an enhanced guidance process that develops a greater understanding of the needs of the individual and their career needs<sup>66</sup>.

One respondent involved in implementing the guidance process highlighted the benefits of partnership when noting

Lobbying these LMI issues could have taken years. For example;  
an integrated network of providers with common aims and objectives ...  
the increased understanding of the target groups and associated needs  
through initial research and analysis;  
the tested and applied best practice systems of engagement (best practice at EU level) and a thorough guidance system, and,  
the flexibility – the ability to alter existing LMI's via Department of Social Protection for the youth guarantee participants to ensure ease of access and

<sup>66</sup> See Appendices 4 and 5 for example case studies and testimonials from clients who received services in an inter-agency partnership approach.

development of youth through these systems. All of these were extremely useful.

The evaluator notes that this example response to one of the feedback surveys is representative of a broadly held view that there is a great benefit from agencies working together. It can release synergies and improve effectiveness.

However some particular weaknesses of the BYG partnership approach were also noted. The lack of clarity over what constituted NSG and LIG work. As mentioned previously, this sometimes led to NSG meetings being longer than necessary<sup>67</sup>. This weakness was recognised by the NSG and there were attempts to improve the relevance of meeting work. One consequence of the overly long initial meetings was a sense of frustration reported by some members. This may also have contributed to some partners becoming less involved in the process and activities of the NSG over time.

Greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of NSG and LIG members with a possible 'Memo of Understanding' at the start of the process were suggested by some members. Interestingly, these points mirror the Eurofound recommendation.

In hindsight, it is probably understandable that the NSG monthly meetings sometimes lacked focus given its multiple stakeholder nature and the need to proceed in an inclusive manner. Also the fact that it was, to some extent, an innovative approach may have contributed.

However, it maybe that such collaborative working requires skill sets and dispositions that should not be assumed. Some members suggested that training in such collaborative work may be required. The evaluator endorses this view.

### **Some experiences of Intreo frontline staff**

#### **Partnership has helped established useful working relationships at a local level**

Intreo staff have reported that partnership has been very beneficial. This is because it has helped link in with other agencies. Also, it has helped established working relationships and this has had a 'very positive' effect.

In the BYG approach Intreo staff work closely with LES staff and are able to discuss clients and decide what would be the most appropriate course of action for that particular person. This is achieved through not only phone calls and emails but also informal face to face meetings. As one Intreo staff put it:

*The benefit of having these meetings (and the relationship) is that we can get things done faster. It has allowed a trust to be built up between us and the LES and visa versa. For example, on Penalty Ratings of clients (who are not engaging) there is an allowance for a judgement call rather than just rules. This has been useful and beneficial to keeping clients*

<sup>67</sup> Regarding the duration of early meetings and perceived overlap of LIG and NSG content, there is a degree of inevitability of this in a start-up phase – particularly when one of the roles of the NSG is to support the LIG – and were there was requirement to clarify issues in order to respond to them. It is also the case that different partners wanted to discuss issues to greater or lesser degrees of detail.

*in the system.*

Previously communication was on a more formal basis where as now it is on a more 'personal basis'. Intreo staff have also noted that this benefit has 'rippled out' into other aspects of how the Intreo staff deal with clients on other payments.

### **Improved working environment**

Another benefit of the partnership relationships is that it has improved the working environment. Not having to go through formal procedures, according to one DSP staff, *'streamlines the whole process... it makes work a lot easier and a lot quicker. It definitely is more efficient'*.

But is it more effective? *'Yes, I believe, it is because we are taking a more holistic view of the client'*.

They said it was difficult to compare the Intreo and BYG activation approach because with the previous (Intreo) approach *'we were always down staff and chasing our tail'*. However, while recognising the extra resources required they felt that the BYG approach via the LES was more in-depth and that this extra activity is worthwhile because *'the LES can chase a client and tell them there is a suitable course for them... Intreo would not have the resource for that'*.

This is an argument in support of the YG approach being more effective because the extra resources have facilitated getting that client a potentially time sensitive and appropriate offer. From an evaluation perspective it is difficult to quantify the benefit of such interventions. However, anecdotally, they seem to be relevant from the perspective of staff working with clients.

### **5.1.7 Conclusion of the Partnership process**

As the BYG partnership process comes to a conclusion there is an opportunity to conclude the project so that partners consciously recognise lessons learned. Some partners have suggested that it may be useful to have a 'Ballymun Youth Guarantee Declaration'<sup>68</sup> where each of the agencies/organisations on the NSG would make a written statement on their commitment to secure the learning from the BYG and articulate how they will deliver on disseminating the learning within their organisations/agencies.

### **5.1.8 Lessons around partnership**

A partnership approach to service provision **releases synergies**, capitalises on the experiences and expertise of partners, can better identify gaps and solutions, and reduces the risk of duplication of activity.

**Working with the third sector, particularly youth and community groups**, to deliver the Youth Guarantee can have important benefits by improving reach and taking into account young people's groups. Ballymun has a very vibrant third sector, but there may be a need to

<sup>68</sup> For Ballymun Youth Guarantee Declaration, see Appendix 9.

build the capacity of organisations that are less able to participate. Funding is also a key issue.

**Employer involvement is essential** to the design and delivery of the Youth Guarantee to maximise take-up of existing supports and services, ensure the relevance of the guidance and training aspects of the YG, and assist in the development of innovative approaches such as blending learning opportunities.

**Partnership is effective at both national and local level.** However, replicating the local BYG structures nationally would be challenging and not necessarily appropriate or efficient.

- The BYG approach and evidence from other EU countries with a history of implementing YG schemes (e.g. Finland) would support a significant role for inclusive partnership structures (Peer to Peer Review of the Youth Guarantee, Helsinki, September 2014)
- A particular challenge in determining the optimum geographic remit of any local YG partnership structures is the fact that the boundaries of putative partners are not contiguous, e.g. Department of Social Protection Divisional/Intreo Centres, ETB Training Centres/Colleges, Local Enterprise Office, Local Area Partnerships, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
- In implementing the Youth Guarantee at the local level, partnerships should be tailored to the local context and, in as far as is practicable, capitalise on existing networks/channels of cooperation, e.g. Local Community Development Committees, Local Area Partnership Companies, etc.

**Trust** is a key issue. Partners, such as youth organisations, are potentially risking their reputation with their clients by being involved with the YG. Employer groups, trade unions, government agencies and other partners often have conflicting interests which requires trust and mutual respect in the partnership process.

Critical success factors include the need for **clarity around**

- roles and responsibilities of partnership structures and members ('Memorandum of Understanding')
- objectives, KPIs, reporting and monitoring framework
- governance

Building an effective partnership among disparate stakeholders takes time, energy, effort and resources but is worth it.

**Partnership is resource intensive and time-consuming** and this needs to be recognised by all participating organisations and, in particular, the line managers of those representatives participating in partnership structures.

There is a potential **conflict between having a team of equal partners but led by one.** A lead partner is needed to provide vision, direction and encouragement, but there are risks that other partners may not feel sufficiently valued, or not fully engage if it is perceived that they are not responsible or accountable for success - particularly when participating organisations have resource constraints. This might be mitigated by considering the value of having a workshop at start of the process to address these issues, team-building initiatives,



independent/revolving chair, external facilitation, etc. An allocation of roles, responsibilities and tasks among partners could enhance coordinated service delivery and increase commitment.

The evaluator notes that Partners have limited time to attend meetings, which heightens the need to consider **appropriate communication vehicles** to progress work in between meetings. Professional advice around electronic communication and collaboration platforms is recommended.

**Monitoring and evaluation is critical.** The use of a robust evidential base is essential to determine what does and does not work, and facilitates better prioritisation of resources, continuous improvement of service delivery and collaborative working. Ensuring an on-going monitoring of the Youth Guarantee serves to establish a feedback loop to improve different aspects of the process (measures, partnership, etc.).

**Sharing and centralising the data necessary to fully track and support a young person's journey is not an easy task, but is a critical step** in being able to fully support a person within the context of the Youth Guarantee.

Consideration should be given to the value of having an **appraisal process** of the performance of tasks of each partner. In a partnership there is no 'line authority' in a management sense. This could make it difficult for a project lead to achieve outputs. Having clear written roles and responsibilities for partners may aid the mutual working within the partnership process.

It will be **difficult to replicate** the level of drive, energy and enthusiasm demonstrated by the BYG partners within any mainstreamed structures given the particular focus and spotlight of a high-profile pilot. Further, some of the lead players in the BYG were particularly skilled in facilitating partner engagement. Subsequent Youth Guarantee must be designed considering normal management capability and buy-in.

## 5.2 Youth Work Sector contribution

Another key issue to evaluate the BYG under is Youth Work Sector contribution

- Partnership



### **Youth Work Sector contribution**

- Client engagement
- Employer engagement
- Education and Training Provision
- Barriers to progression
- Promotion of the Youth Guarantee

A particular example of partnership was the involvement of the Youth Work sector. It was represented on the National Steering Group (NSG) through the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) and on the Local Implementation Group (LIG) through Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYP).

The potential contribution of the Youth Work Sector to partnership was supported at the Enhancing the Contribution of Youth Organisations to Youth Employment (seminar report, July,2014)

Youth workers need to clearly articulate what they bring to the table and advocate for a process of 'co-design'. At local level, a framework can be used to identify the contribution of each partner – the specific inputs they bring, the competencies and skills of all partners, and the particular outcomes valued by each individual/sector. The partnership needs to recognise that everyone brings something valuable to the table but a shared vision and common goal is crucial. The importance of a long-term vision, strategic planning and evaluation/reflection on the partnership over time cannot be over-stated.<sup>69</sup>

### **5.2.1 Rationale for participation by BRYR/NYCI in BYG**

- Important that local and national youth work sector contribute to addressing youth unemployment and the development of policy.
- Important to ensure voice of young people was heard and listened to in process.
- Youth workers and youth work sector have capacity, track record and credibility to engage with young people, in particular the hardest to reach.
- Important to ensure lessons from BYG concerning role and contribution of youth work sector informed national roll-out of Youth Guarantee.

A particular challenge for BRYR was the issue of how the BYG fitted with the purpose and values of youth work. This was particularly around the whole area of voluntary participation and the impact of involvement on the already depleted financial resources of BRYR due to significant cuts in funding.

### **5.2.2 Lessons around the Youth Work Sector contribution**

- Youth work organisations need to be clear from the outset about their role and potential contribution to the implementation of the youth guarantee
- Youth work organisations need to be aware of and address the challenges posed by participation in the roll out of the initiative
- Government and other partners need to recognise that the contribution of youth work organisations in supporting the implementation of the Youth Guarantee must be funded and resourced.

### **5.2.3 BRYR's specific role on the LIG:**

- To capture the feedback of young people in relation to the BYG through its outreach and in-house services and provide this feedback to the LIG Partners.
- To provide practical support for the most marginalised young people to assist them to engage with the programme from the initial guidance process through to their offer.
- To act as an advocate for young people at all times –putting the needs of young people in the community front and centre on the agenda of the BYG pilot.

<sup>69</sup> Centre for Effective Services (CES), Foroige, the National Youth Council of Ireland and Youth Work Ireland, Conference on "Enhancing the Contribution of Youth Organisations to Youth Employment". CES Seminar Report, *Dr John Bamber and Ellen Garvey*, July 2014, p.7.

### 5.2.4 The Challenges

- The conflict between the voluntary participation philosophy of youth work vs potentially punitive action of the penalty rating for non-engagement in the BYG process
- Young people are not homogenous and require different approaches.
- Struggle to engage the most hard to reach & vulnerable young people presented an on-going challenge.
- Significant barriers engaging with many young people i.e. mental health difficulties, substance misuse issues, family issues, justice related issues, poor educational attainment, and literacy & numeracy problems.
- The time required to participate as an active LIG member was demanding.
- No budget line in initial project proposal for supporting the work of youth work sector
- Concern that the lessons learned in Ballymun with regard to role of youth sector and youth engagement will not be taken into account in national roll out of Youth Guarantee.

### 5.2.5 Lessons around the Youth Work Sector contribution

One lesson is the importance of putting young people at the centre of the initiative and that their views, experiences and perspectives should be incorporated into the development and revision of the initiative as required. There have been four surveys and three focus groups of participants and these views need to be represented.


#### Other lessons

There is a need to understand that the lives of many young people are challenging and chaotic and therefore implementation measures must adapt in order to engage with them. Willingness to accept feedback from participants and important to provide feedback/explanation in cases where action not possible.

Understanding that the trust of young people is hard won and easily lost and therefore initiatives and programmes must be well planned and executed. Flexibility is vital as illustrated by the success of revised criteria for CE in Ballymun. It is important that learning from BYG is disseminated and incorporated into planning and implementation of Youth Guarantee nationally, in particular the role of the youth work sector in supporting implementation.

### 5.3 Client engagement

Client engagement was also identified as a key issue for BYG evaluation

- Youth Work Sector contribution
- 
- **Client engagement**
  - Employer engagement
  - Education and Training Provision
  - Barriers to progression
  - Promotion of the Youth Guarantee

Maximising and maintaining client engagement is seen as a key concern of the activation process. Progressively significant resources go into the Group Engagement, the guidance process, and, offers made to clients. Non-engagement results in resource wastage.

There were high levels of non-engagement by clients at all stages of the process life-cycle, though diminishing as the clients progressed through it. Areas where disengagement occurred

- Group Engagement (GE) session
- Initial one-to-one guidance interview
- Subsequent guidance interviews
- Failure to take-up an offer/commence the intervention
- Dropping out of the intervention

### **5.3.1 BYG Response to failure to engage with Group Engagement (GE)**

The GE is the initial stage of the activation process. The standard Department of Social Protection response to non-attendance at GE sessions/guidance interviews without a satisfactory explanation is to impose a financial sanction (penalty rate of payment) to encourage the client to engage. The BYG partners were uncomfortable with this and sought derogation from this approach and suggested consideration of alternatives based on research as to the underlying reasons. At focus groups facilitated by BRYR, clients indicated that the reasons for non-attendance at Group Engagement sessions included:

- Lack of awareness of the BYG
- Not being able to read/understand the invitation
- A generally negative perception of the value of the public employment service or information sessions delivered by them
- A dislike of the negative/threatening tone of the invitation

The partnership team did several activities such as revising content and tone of the invitation and presentation to address the issues raised. Documentation was literacy-proofed by the National Adult Learning Association. They also changed the venue (to the local Job Centre), had a later start-time and shortened the duration.

Addressing these issues, while warranted of their own accord, did not result in higher levels of attendance at the initial interview, which remains consistent at around 50%. This rises to 94% for third invitations.

### **5.3.2 Lessons/Recommendations around client engagement**

Much of the criticism of the tone and content of written communications from the Department of Social Protection was recognised as warranted by the Department of Social Protection. All communications should be reviewed to address the issues raised. The evaluation notes that while addressing these issues warranted it did not result in higher levels of attendance.

### **5.3.3 Engaging the Most Marginalised**

A key learning from the BYG is that the most marginalised are the most difficult group to engage in the process. A one size fits all approach will fail with them. Further consideration needs to be given to addressing how best to engage the most marginalised. There follows a description of some programmes aimed at this group and the learning from these approaches and other relevant learning from the BYG.

### **Target Group 1 engagement**

To date 84 young people from Target Group 1 have disengaged from the Youth Guarantee process at some point. This represents 33% of the overall number of clients in Target Group 1. This is much larger than the 9% in target groups two and three.

### **Pre-offer/ Flexible Approach**

In dealing with this cohort, the BYG implemented a pre-offer stage for those most marginalised including addiction counselling and mental health support. This was to allow the participant the time to engage with supports that would assist them to address their issues. The uptake of addiction counselling was better than those that took up mental health support however overall the uptake was poor.

### **The Equal Youth Network**

The EYN programme was described earlier in chapter 3, and currently there are 170 referrals to the Equal Youth Network from the BYG<sup>70</sup>. The 170 are all from Target Group 1 and this represents 67% of that cohort. These clients present with a range of challenging and difficult issues including substance misuse, criminal justice issues, low educational attainment, literacy and lack of motivation.

Indications from this model would suggest that very few (5%) of those on the Equal Youth Network are not engaging or are detached. This could suggest that successful engagement for this cohort depended on multi-agency and multi-level responses as operated in the EYN.

### **Equal Youth Network - BallyRunners**

Whilst Equal Youth is a very positive initiative with the majority of clients progressing onto training, education and employment, the Equal Youth committee acknowledged that there was a particular cohort of young people that needed more intensive and prolonged support to make similar progress.

The focus was to devise intensive, hands on group work programmes to engage hard to reach young people, who are out of training/employment, and are involved in criminal behaviour, drug use and are generally apathetic. And so the Ballyrunners Programme was formed, getting its name from the original goal of the programme which was to complete a Fun Run for charity. The programme is a 26 week, high support, low threshold, skills based programme that aims to positively engage young people in constructive activities and change their attitudes and behaviours. The programme runs 3 days per week and is aligned with a FETAC Level 3 Health and Fitness module as well as The Bronze Gaisce Award.

The key features of the BallyRunners Programme are that the young people are not paid for participation<sup>71</sup>. Their engagement is voluntary but retention of the young people is very high<sup>72</sup> thus demonstrating their motivation to engage in something meaningful (as perceived by them).

<sup>70</sup> See Appendices 4 and 5 for example case studies and testimonials from clients who were on EYN and BallyRunners.

<sup>71</sup> Participants on the initial Ballyrunners included people who were not in receipt of a payment, but it should be noted that all BYG clients are in receipt of a payment.

<sup>72</sup> Anecdotal from mediator

The BallyRunners approach has generated significant outputs for the participants. Since the start of the programmes in 2009 a total of 6 programmes have been organised with a total of 57 having participated in the programmes. The outputs are as follows: 38 into education and training, 9 into third level, 15 into employment. The BYG provided funding for a BallyRunners Programme for 30 participants. This is still ongoing and the numbers are not included in the above.

Key to success is motivated and enthusiastic facilitators who believe in the programme and in the young people's capacity to make positive changes, interagency collaboration, flexibility and creativity.

### **Youth Sector**

The role of the youth work sector in engaging with those most marginalised needs further research. In July 2014 the Centre for Effective Services, Foróige, the National Youth Council of Ireland and Youth Work Ireland held a seminar on "Enhancing the Contribution of Youth Organisations to Youth Employment". A member of the Local Implementation Group from the BYG spoke at the seminar outlining the Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYR) experience of working with statutory agencies as part of the Local Implementation Group for the Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot.

The BRYR manager reflected on the reservations, challenges and successes for Youth Service Providers in working with statutory agencies, and, what BRYR has gained through the relationships built, and the successes of the Youth Guarantee pilot so far. The important role of the Youth Work Sector is highlighted elsewhere in this report with a caveat note on the requirement for appropriate funding.

### **Penalty Rates**

Penalty rates were described earlier<sup>73</sup>. They were introduced as a means of encouraging job seekers to engage with activation measures and co-operate with efforts of the Department to assist them in securing employment. Almost a quarter (23%) of Target Group 1 have been penalty rated compared to Target Group 2 (8%) and Target Group 3 (6%). A number of Target Group 1 participants received a further penalty rating for non attendance at Guidance meetings and not taking up offers.

Further research is required on the effectiveness of Penalty Rates – especially for the most marginalised target group. Indications would suggest that penalty rating this group not encourage active participation. The client may appear at appointments after being penalty rated but this does not necessarily mean engaging with the process.

Further research is needed to consider whether attendance after a Penalty-Rating leads to subsequent genuine re-engagement, and, whether Penalty-Rating of this client group is appropriate or effective.

<sup>73</sup> The National Youth Council of Ireland noted that it accepts that the DSP had the right to implement its policy on penalties but did not agree with it especially in the context of the Youth Guarantee.

### **Lessons for engaging the most marginalised**

Those who are most marginalised from the labour market are complex individuals who present with a myriad of complicated issues.

The learning from the BYG would indicate that standard practices work for some, for others small modifications will work however with those most marginalised there needs to more flexibility and innovative responses as situations arise requiring multi-disciplinary expertise. Particular learning includes:

#### **Group Engagement**

The vast majority of clients invited to the GE, attended by the third call (94%). Those who were most marginalised took a lot longer to attend and in most instances they only attended after being penalty rated. The GE presentation informs the client of labour market opportunities, these opportunities may be a jump too far for these clients therefore the information session is perceived as a waste of time for the participant. It is concluded that the GE may not be the best way to engage with the most marginalised.

There are windows of opportunity that could be utilised in engaging with those most distant from the labour market e.g. the initial meeting with a deciding officer. If the participant were to be profiled and asked key questions that would be indicators to distance from the labour market, educational attainment, current personal disposition etc depending on the outcome the deciding officer could refer the client straight into Equal Youth.

#### **Four month deadline for quality offer is not practical for very disadvantaged/ marginalised clients**

The BYG process set out to give all participants a quality offer within four months. Half of those called from Target Group 1 missed two or more GE and consistently missed appointments throughout the process. The four month deadline was impossible to achieve considering it took six months or more for the participant to attend regularly.

#### **Partnership/Interagency approach**

The partners may not have always understood the issues or experienced working with the most marginalised however they were willing, open and committed to achieving the goals set out by the pilot. Working collaboratively the partnerships were willing to bring in external expertise. The Local Implementation Group supported and implemented flexible programmes. For example Business in the Community, and an employability programme run by ICTU. This type of interagency flexibility was one of the key successes from the BYG pilot.

#### **The right payment classification**

Another key learning form considering the engagement of the most marginalised in the BYG is whether some young people are on the right payment.

In order to receive a jobseeker payment you have to be available for and genuinely seeking work. Almost a quarter (23%) of the total number of participants in the BYG required intense interagency support through the Equal Youth Network. This raises the question of “job-



readiness” of these young people and if those involved in the Equal Youth Network should be on a Job Seekers payment at all. It would suggest that whilst the individual is engaging in supports that require time to make an impact the individual should be on a payment scheme reflecting the transition from unemployable to job ready.

### **Penalty Rating**

Further research is required on the effectiveness of this approach but it seems that penalty rating alone does not encourage engagement or activation of those most distant from the jobs market. It would be useful to assess if disengagement from YG offers differed from disengagement from the standard process.

## **5.4 Employer engagement**

Another key issue to evaluate the BYG under is employer engagement

- Client engagement



### **Employer engagement**

- Education and Training Provision
- Barriers to progression
- Promotion of the Youth Guarantee

Earlier the report considered BYG in light of the Eurofound policy pointer

Measures that aim to increase the employability of young people should focus on existing and future labour market needs and ensure a buy-in of employers and their representatives.

Employer and business representative organisations were another key stakeholder in the YG partnership approach. These were represented on both the BYG and NSG [Both IBEC and the Dublin Chamber of Commerce (through their Activating Dublin programme)] and LIG (North Dublin Chamber of Commerce). They assisted in the development and implementation of

- a local Employer Engagement Strategy
- a suite of options for employer engagement in the Youth Guarantee
- best practice guidelines.

The objectives of the **local Employer Engagement Strategy** are to work with employers to:

- facilitate recruitment of job-ready candidates to fill existing and future vacancies from the talent pool of job-ready clients;
- identify and address skills gaps so that BYG clients can be prepared for future vacancies;
- develop innovative work experience opportunities for those BYG clients with little or no employment history. This involves a coordinated effort to tap into the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agenda of employers across the Dublin Region. Working with the Ballymun pilot there is an opportunity for these companies to showcase and align their CSR priorities and pilot innovative new approaches to working with young people

**An innovative partnership was developed with employers across Dublin** (as part of Activating Dublin which was a joint initiative between the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, Central government and Dublin City Council to deliver on projects that have mutual benefit for Dublin). A dedicated resource was in place throughout the pilot to help build engagement with employers. This partnership helped open up many opportunities for employers to engage in a positive manner for example in the delivery of innovative employment training and skills programs and reviews of the guidance process. Engaging employers through Chambers of commerce and Business associations has brought benefits however it does need to have a dedicated resource on both sides to ensure its success.

### **Actions taken by the BYG partners**

There was a very active approach taken by the YG to employer engagement. They undertook a range of activities to achieve this.

- Assignment of dedicated Department of Social Protection and BJC/LESN/LES Employer Engagement officers to drive both local and regional engagement
- Building a suite of communication tools to engage employers
- Developing a database of local employers to facilitate communication and relationship building.
- Surveying local employers and raising awareness of the pilot and opportunities to engage
- Hosting of local employer events including breakfast briefings
- Engaging Business in the Community to test the willingness of employers to provide work experience opportunities for clients with multiple barriers.

### **Menu of Options for Employer Engagement in the Youth Guarantee**

The BYG has articulated a 'menu of options' for employer engagement in the YG process, including:

- Recruiting young people from the Live Register
- Hosting interns
- Providing work placement/experience opportunities, including job sampling tours (on-site visits, showcasing events), job shadowing (opportunities or jobseekers to shadow employees),
- Participation at publicly-funded Jobs Clubs and other public employment service events (e.g. motivational speaking about employment options/careers, short presentations, etc.),
- Participation in the development/delivery of blended learning opportunities involving a mix of academic/vocational learning and work placement/experience.
- This 'menu of options' helped inform the recently launched Employment and Youth Activation Charter.

### **Employer perspective on current standard approaches to employer engagement**

- Employers are still confused about the various employment services and supports. While progress is being made with the establishment of the national Labour Market Council, messaging at the national level needs investment
- Marketing and promotion material needs to be reconsidered
- Experience of the Intreo Service is mixed: varies across the different Intreo offices – there is no consistency for employers.

- Once engaged, employers seem to realise that there is a relevant package of supports available.

### **Lessons – around Best Practice Guidelines for employer engagement**

**Employer involvement is essential** to the design and delivery of the Youth Guarantee.

This is because they need to maximise take-up of existing supports and services, ensure the relevance of the guidance and training aspects of the YG<sup>74</sup>, and assist in the development of innovative approaches such as blended learning opportunities.

**Need to articulate a clear Employer Engagement Strategy**, by setting objectives, targets and KPIs (for example, measuring levels of satisfaction of employers with the Intreo service).

**Employer relationship-building** is required at national, regional and local level. A key learning is that a more proactive engagement with employers will bring about improved outcomes.

**Active engagement with employers is the key at the local and regional level.**

The most successful approach to get business on board was through one-to-one communication with business either in person or through phone contact.

**There is a need to build trust and confidence in the Intreo service** (from the employer's perspective). There is much uncertainty about Intreo and what they can do to support business. There is no consistent approach in how Intreo engage with business. The response depends on the office/ individuals involved. Intreo need to develop relationships with local employers. This requires dedicated staff with the appropriate skills.<sup>75</sup>

**An understanding on the nature of business culture** is required to maintain a good relationship with business.

**Marketing** and promotion material needs improvement and development to maximise impact.

**Employers have demonstrated a willingness to provide opportunities** when made aware of the supports in place to deliver these schemes e.g. Keelings (blended learning), Accent Solutions (work experience), Premier Dining (blended learning), while others offered mentoring and motivational chats.

It also is noted that employers have reported that programmes like the Keelings blended learning take quite an amount of resourcing from the employer's perspective. An estimate from Keelings suggested that there were costs of c€4,000 for each six week programme.

**Department of Social Protection and SOLAS require a comprehensive understanding of the skills and training needs of employers.** This can be facilitated through partnership

<sup>74</sup> Including improved connections between guidance counsellors and employers.

<sup>75</sup> It was also noted that there needs to be a consistency of staff allocated to building these relationships with employers. During the BYG this critical role seemed to rotate.

structures. The importance of employer engagement, in this context, was also noted by Dr John Sweeney in a Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed

Not all vocational education and training (VET) provision is optimally aligned with employer needs, nor is all further education (FE) provision that addresses social exclusion sufficiently linked with eventual employment outcomes. There is scope for greater linkages between employers and providers.<sup>76</sup>

There is a need to ensure that any work placement/experience opportunities provide a valuable quality experience for the trainee and that the assignment does not displace or negatively impact the existing workforce.

There is a recommendation to pilot a dedicated business liaison service which would involve local Intreo staff working alongside the Dublin Chamber of Commerce to encourage recruitment directly from the live register ensuring a consistent and high quality support and advisory service for members. Building relationships like this will bring about further opportunities for employers to engage with Intreo services.

## 5.5 Education and Training Provision

Education and training provision was also assessed in the BYG

- Employer engagement



### Education and Training Provision

- Barriers to progression
- Promotion of the Youth Guarantee

The Department of Education and Skills (DES), SOLAS and City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb) were represented on the BYG National Steering Group (NSG). CDETb is also represented on the BYG Local Implementation Group (LIG).

Key objectives of the BYG were to deliver a range of further education and training (FET) opportunities to reflect the heterogeneous client base, and to ensure that the guidance and training elements of the model are responsive to both the needs of the young person and labour market requirements.

### Challenges for the CDETb in delivering the FET elements of the BYG

CDETb was an active partner in both the structures created for the planning and implementation of the BYG and in the delivery of training and education provision.

The main challenge for CDETb was to create a flexible model of training and education that met the needs of the identified target groups, delivered as the young people complete the guidance process and yet could be planned and budgeted for. This required detailed planning where programmes agreed at the LIG had to be accommodated in a range of funding models that existed in the recently transferred Training Centre (former FAS) and in the further education sector.

### Principles underlying the approach of CDETb to engaging with the BYG

<sup>76</sup> Sweeney, John, A Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed  
A review undertaken for the Department of Education and Skills, National Economic and Social Council. Autumn 2013

- A person-centred approach providing the necessary supports to enable the young person actively participate to a programme that addresses their needs
- Providing tailored services for those at risk of long-term unemployment and social exclusion
- Structure the scheme to reflect the disparate needs of the client groups - focus on the educational needs of younger clients, whereas for the older age group with higher educational attainment the focus is on skills development and job placement.
- Expand the existing capacity to respond appropriately. The programme cannot only be about co-ordinating existing provision or prioritising certain young people into the existing programmes. This would merely displace existing young people who have not signed on the live register and are therefore not entitled to avail of the Youth Guarantee scheme.

### **Structures**

The structures put in place to ensure the active engagement of the services of CDETБ and to co-ordinate its delivery were as follows:

An internal planning and co-ordinating group was established comprising of the Education Officer, the Adult Education Officer, the Youthreach Coordinator, the Guidance Counsellor, the Literacy Organiser, and the Training Centre Manager.

The AEO and the Training Centre Manager were representing ETB on the Local Implementation Group (LIG) and the Education Officer represented CDETБ on the National Steering Committee.

The Youthreach Co-ordinator and the Literacy Organiser represented the CDETБ on the Equal Youth Network.

The Guidance Counsellor acted as liaison with the Ballymun Job Centre (BJC/LESN) to support young people enter into Level 5 and 6 programmes in Further Education Colleges. The Recruitment Officer in the Training Centre met with the mediators in the BJC/LESN to present the range of options which would be available to the young people who participated in the BYG. This included all our direct training provision in centre and that provided through our Second provider and contracted Training.

These relationships between staff in the ETB and the BJC/LESN were established to ensure the smooth and timely transition of a young person on to an appropriate training and programme.

All BYG clients were guaranteed a place on a programme of their choice, pending the meeting of requisite entrance requirements and the joint recommendation of the suitability of the programme following their guidance interview.

### **FET Provision**

The range of further education and training provision provided by CDETБ based on discussions and planning in the Local Implementation Group included:

- BYG clients were guaranteed an interview for a place on a programme of their choice, pending the meeting of requisite entrance requirements and the joint recommendation of the suitability of the programme following their guidance interview.
- The funding of a training programme provided by BRYR Youth Service targeting early school leavers who was a registered QQI centre. This was designed to engage those young people who were not likely to engage with the further education and training services directly and may engage with access programmes provided by a service that they knew and trusted.
- Given the profile of the young people in the area CDETБ increased the number of places in the local Community Training Centre and in Youthreach.

- Priority access for BYG clients to the range of training programmes provided in the CDET B Training Centre (Finglas)
- A level 4 Traineeship in Retail was developed in partnership with a local employer and the BJC/LESN.
- The CDET B Adult Education Service provided additional part-time courses at level 3 and 4 and study skills and specialist courses in science, physiology and anatomy were provided to those young people who had got places in courses in FE Colleges or Universities.
- The Literacy Organiser of Ballymun Read and Write Scheme, funded by CDET B provided additional part-time literacy and numeracy programmes.

Other innovations that took place in the education and training field included the following:

BYG collaborated with University College Dublin Innovation Academy to develop and deliver a Level 7 Certificate in Enterprise, Innovation and Entrepreneurship with additional supports for students with literacy/numeracy/personal difficulties. Following this successful pilot a proposal has been developed to deliver a similar programme at Level 4/5 and test a “train-the-trainer” model to facilitate delivery by the ETBs. This would enable the programme to be mainstreamed nationwide.

A blended education programme was developed in the catering sector (a further iteration of the successful Postive2Work programme in the retail and warehousing sector).

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions delivered an “Employability Skills” programme which included a work placement which the participant researched in the initial module.

### **Lessons for ETBs - Emerging Best Practice Guidelines:**

**Capacity planning needs to be flexible.** There was an underlying assumption that the ETB should establish KPIs that included places for all young people covered by the Guarantee. It was not possible to plan a programme for every referral in advance of the guidance engagement with the client groups. Additional provision was put in place for each of the target groups but not in the numbers that the statistics would seem to indicate. There are two models for delivery: establish courses with specific start dates for referral by guidance service or put in place courses for clients groups when the numbers were available. In reality, the plan to deliver required both approaches and getting the balance right was an important part of delivering a flexible model.

The ETB needs to work in partnership with community-based youth work providers and community education providers to support the most marginalised young people to actively engage with the guidance process and the work and/or education and training opportunities provided.

The analysis of the profile of the young people on the live register in the Ballymun enabled the Local Implementation Group plan a range of options that should be put in place. The three month planning period enabled the ETB to put in place additional training and education places for those young people activated by the Youth Guarantee.

The timing of the planning period is crucial and the plan if it is to include additional and innovative programmes will have to be finalized in time for the annual negotiations with



SOLAS for the budget the following year. CDETBA was successful in securing additional funding with SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority because of the pilot nature of this initiative. However, in the rollout of the Youth Guarantee it will be the responsibility of each ETB to plan its response within its budget allocation.

However, there is a significant policy issue to be addressed. The need to respond to young people on the live register under the Youth Guarantee will require the ETB to prioritise access to existing courses without additional places being made available. The implication is that it will require the ETB to possibly displace young people who are self-referrals and who have not signed on the Live Register. In addition, the young people on the Youth Guarantee will be in competition with other DSP clients who may also be prioritized by Department policy such as the long termed unemployed. This will impact on the capacity of the ETB to respond effectively in the flexible manner described in the pilot. .

**Avoid creating barriers to participation or progression.** The ETB will be providing programmes under different budgets each of which carries its own entry requirements and restrictions. Matching the right fund to the right initiative will be a challenge given the limited funding available. Ensuring that barriers are not inadvertently created for young people will be a challenge. For example, a course at level 5 provided by PLC funding through a Further Education College will require young people to pay a fee. The same course provided in a Training Centre will be free and may provide a training allowance to the young person. The flexible fund used in the pilot initiative was effective in addressing such barriers and supporting young people access the higher level programmes that carried fees or involved travel and subsistence support.

Following an offer and subsequent take up of a place it is recommended that a level of ongoing support be offered to some of the young people through a nominated mediator/advocate/coach, placed within the LES or DSP. This would ensure that student/trainee have a higher probability of completing their programme and appropriate progression and takes place. This model of support would add more efficiencies to the programme.

## 5.6 Barriers to Client Activation/Progression

A key issue to evaluate the BYG under is barriers to client activation/progression

- Education and Training Provision



### **Barriers to progression**

- Promotion of the Youth Guarantee

There were several barriers to Client Activation and progression recognised during the YG. The BYG responded to these barriers and this evaluation tries now to document these efforts and possible resulting recommendations.

### **Eligibility**

Eligibility conditions for some ALMPs. All ALMPS have eligibility criteria, usually age and duration of attachment to the Live Register.

BYG response was that for the duration of the pilot, Department of Social Protection has facilitated access to Community Employment (CE) to BYG clients aged 20 years or older and in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance/Benefit for a minimum of 12 months or profiled as



being at risk of long-term unemployment<sup>77</sup>. This has proven to be a very popular option with BYG participants. The trial will be fully evaluated.

Recommendation is that Department of Social Protection review ALMP age-related eligibility criteria in light of the YG.

### **Requirement for vertical progression**

Current standard conditionality requires that a client can only retain payments while progressing vertically through FETAC certification levels. Some clients, however, have qualifications that are not relevant to the labour market and may need to acquire qualifications in disciplines at the same level in order to improve their employability. Some indeed may need to avail of interventions at a horizontal or indeed lower level in order to address factors that are seriously impeding employability, e.g. a person who has a Leaving Certificate (Level 5), but has had a history of substance abuse, or has serious motivational/confidence issues that can best be addressed through a Level 3 intervention. While guidance practitioners have some discretion with regard to the former (horizontal movement may be permitted for Back to Education Allowance purposes), the issue remains at for the former (downward movement).

Recommendation is that Case Officers/Mediators be afforded discretion to approve 'downward movement' in exceptional cases, where considered appropriate to enhance the client's employability.

### **Cost of participation**

Another barrier to progression are participation costs which include travel and incidental expenses, and, fees.

BYG response was that the cost of incidental expenses and college fees was covered by the Mediators Fund where these were identified by the guidance practitioner as a barrier.

Recommendation is that Department of Social Protection could consider covering cost of incidental expenses associated with participation on programmes/taking up employment from the TESSG fund on a case-by-case basis- i.e. where these are considered to be a barrier to the client's progression. Further, DES, SOLAS and Department of Social Protection to consider how best to address the issue of course fees where this is demonstrated as acting as a barrier to participation.

### **Personal issues/circumstances**

Such barriers include low levels of motivation, confidence, stress, anxiety, parochial mind-set(leading to anxiety about attending opportunities outside of local area)

BYG response to these barriers is particularly important to consider in this evaluation. This is because many of the following interventions are resource intensive. However, it needs to

<sup>77</sup> See Appendix 5 for example testimonials from clients who received flexible admission to CE schemes under the BYG.

be recognised that these are the responses of professionals who are closest to the clients and the barriers involved<sup>78</sup>. Such activities involved

- Intensive guidance and counselling
- Multidisciplinary case management by Equal Youth Network
- Providing client with a 'pre-offer' to better prepare them to make a decision on an appropriate offer
- Provision of part-time blended learning/community work programme (for example BallyRunners)
- Making it as easy as possible for the client to participate on the programme, e.g. providing transport to/from venues, 'hand-holding' - texting/calling the client to remind them of starting times, etc.
- Provision of on-going support by guidance practitioners.

In terms of evaluation it is difficult to quantify the cost per case in the BYG context. However, it may be useful to remember two policy pointers from the Eurofound research

Young people vary in their level of labour market readiness and policies have to cater for a range of minor to complex needs.

Young people should be set up on a long-term sustainable pathway, e.g. by providing them with necessary skills and stable employment, rather than low-quality quick fixes.

The implication here is that there is recognition that there are costs to countering such barriers but that the received wisdom is that this needs to be weighed against the cost of not implementing such responses.

Recommendation is to, where possible, mainstream BYG response by

Provision of intensive guidance where necessary, giving the client the opportunity to agree an appropriate progression plan. This would have significant resource implications for Department of Social Protection.

Multidisciplinary case management. This presupposes the existence of similar networks in other areas, or their establishment where there are none.

Delivery of appropriate developmental interventions in other areas. This presupposes the existence of programmes in other areas, or their establishment where there are none. This would have significant funding implications for the Education and Training Boards.

### **Low levels of educational attainment**

BYG Response:

- Provision of sufficient Further Education and Training (FET) capacity at lower NFQ levels, including Youthreach, and progression opportunities focusing on work-experience (CE, Gateway, Positive2Work programme, work-sampling in the private sector, etc.)

<sup>78</sup> See Appendices 4 and 5 for example case studies and testimonials from clients displaying a range of barriers to progression.

- Intensive guidance and counselling.
- Multidisciplinary case management by Equal Youth Network.
- Providing client with a 'pre-offer' to better prepare them to make a decision on an appropriate offer.
- Provision of part-time blended learning/community work programme (Ballyrunners)

Recommendation: Mainstream BYG response by

- provision of intensive guidance, giving the client the opportunity to agree an appropriate progression plan
- Multidisciplinary case management
- Development of appropriate developmental interventions.

**Additional barriers** (including history of substance abuse, criminal records)

BYG Response: As per 'personal issues/circumstances' above

Recommendation: As per 'personal issues/circumstances' above.

### **Lessons around barriers to Client Activation/Progression**

These are detailed in the previous section.

## **5.7 Promotion of the Youth Guarantee**

The final key issue to evaluate the BYG under is promotion of the YG

- Barriers to progression



### **Promotion of the Youth Guarantee**

The experience of the BYG is that there is a very low level of awareness of the YG among young people and most partner organisations. The launch of the national plan did not appear to gain much traction/publicity. The BYG developed a range of promotional multi-media material to promote awareness including a leaflet, website and most recently social media, as well as outreach and street work undertaken by BRYR youth workers.

### **Lessons around promotion of the Youth Guarantee**

There is a very low level of awareness of the Youth Guarantee among key stakeholders – including young people themselves. There is a need to review the effectiveness of the current strategy (channels, material and content) leading to the development of a wide-ranging and targeted communication strategy to promote awareness of the YG. Messages and media need to be tailored to individual audiences – e.g. what is in it for young people, what is the ask of employers, etc.

All YG partners have a key role in promoting awareness of the YG among their constituency. Employer and Youth organisations can make significant contributions. There should be an emphasis on what is different about the YG from the standard public employment service.

## Chapter 6: Key Learning and Elements to be Adopted

### Introduction

Having analysed key issues to see what worked or did not work in practice, this chapter identifies key learning and areas to be adopted. Beyond KPIs and other quantitative evidence the NSG would contend that the most enduring message from the pilot is how the 'process issues' impacted on securing good outcomes, i.e.:

- Enhanced working relationships between stakeholders
- Flexibility in the approach
- Youth Sector involvement
- Guidance process
- Multi-disciplinary case management approach to support clients with multiple barriers

The evaluator agrees with this contention and argues that there are a number of other key lessons that need to be considered in the evolution of Youth Guarantee in Ireland and EU.

### 6.1 Lessons around partnership

The adoption of a formal policy framework (Eurofound) was successful in establishing basic principles to assist in the development and implementation of an effective Youth Guarantee.

Building an effective partnership among disparate stakeholders takes time, energy, effort and resources but is universally perceived by partners as being worth it. A partnership approach to service provision releases synergies, capitalises on the experiences and expertise of partners, can better identify gaps and solutions, and reduces the risk of duplication of activity.

Partnership is resource intensive and time-consuming and this needs to be recognised by all participating organisations and, in particular, the line managers of those representatives participating in partnership structures. It needs to become part of their internal job description and performance evaluation matrix. Partnership workings require a 'driver or motivator' to ensure that an interagency approach works. Agencies tend not to come together unless they are mandated by their funder. Consideration needed to be given to supporting 'partnership workings' though setting it as a KPI for employees and by providing training.

Critical success factors include the need for clarity around roles and responsibilities of partnership structures and members ('Memorandum of Understanding'), objectives, KPIs, reporting and monitoring framework, and governance.

There is concern over the inability of project managers to manage partner work contributions through task allocation and performance appraisal. Inevitably, perhaps, some partners contributed more than others. If the model was to be replicated this would need to be considered.

There is often a lack of a partnership culture between agencies and that this needs to be considered and addressed. Partnership requires new ways of working and additional skills

that should not be assumed. Such skill sets should be written into all relevant competency frameworks associated to relevant job titles. Further as suggested, training should be engaged by those involved.

Partnership is effective at both national and local level; however, replicating the local BYG structures nationally would be challenging and not necessarily appropriate or efficient. A particular challenge in determining the optimum geographic remit of any local YG partnership structures is the fact that the boundaries of putative partners are not contiguous.

The establishment of a National Youth Guarantee committee would be welcomed by BYG partners. Consideration needs to be given to the inclusion of the Department of Justice (Probations Services) and the Department of Children. Also, the LIG is an important structure which operationalises the Youth Guarantee. It should form part of the Youth Guarantee structures.

Monitoring and evaluation is critical. External feedback, similar to the pilot, is recommended as this increases the effectiveness of partner contributions. The use of a robust evidential base is essential to determine what does and does not work, and facilitates better prioritisation of resources, continuous improvement of service delivery and collaborative working. Ensuring an on-going monitoring of the Youth Guarantee serves to establish a feedback loop to improve different aspects of the process (measures, partnership, etc.).

## **6.2 Lessons around the role of community groups/Youth Service Providers and employers as partners**

Working with relevant community groups/Youth Service Providers for hard-to-reach groups is important because they have a better understanding of these clients and have established a level of trust and rapport that make them an ideal communication channel to certain clients especially Target Group 1.

Employer involvement is essential to the design and delivery of the Youth Guarantee to maximise take-up of existing supports and services, ensure the relevance of the guidance and training aspects of the YG, and assist in the development of innovative approaches such as blending learning opportunities.

Active employer relationship-building is required at national, regional and local level. The most successful approach to get business on board was through one-to-one communication with business either in person or through phone contact. Further, there is a need to build trust and confidence in the Intreo service (from the employer's perspective). There is much uncertainty about Intreo and what they can do to support business. There is no consistent approach in how Intreo engage with business. The response depends on the office/ individuals involved.

While employers did show some appetite to get involved in the YG the number of actual 'real' jobs delivered from the private sector was relatively small at about only 10% of all offers. Improving employer engagement should be a priority for such Youth Guarantee.

### **6.3 Understanding the client and lessons for engaging the most marginalised**

Conducting initial research, client segmentation and capacity planning are a key basic step. This shows that young people vary in their level of labour market readiness and certain clients (particularly those with multiple barriers) may require a number of interventions as part of a structured supported pathway to employment.

There is a need to understand that the lives of many young people are challenging and chaotic and therefore implementation measures must adapt in order to engage with them. Partners need to understand that the trust of young people is hard won and easily lost and therefore initiatives and programmes must be well planned and executed.

A key learning from the BYG is that the most marginalised are the most difficult group to engage in the process. A one size fits all approach will fail with them. Key learning includes:

Given the range of support needs of this client group, and following on from the Eurofound insights, an inter-agency approach will be required to support progressions as no one agency will have the necessary skills to meet these young person's needs. This will require an "Equal Youth approach and key working to have an intensive support framework and progression plan in place for each client.

The Equal Youth Model of a 'case management' approach needs to continue to support the effective placement of clients. This process includes a shared responsibility of a client's employment/training pathway and will enhance interagency working.

The right payment classification - A lot of the client group are still very distant from the real labour market. Given this reality consideration should be given to these young people's 'live register status' as they are clearly are not 'job ready'. Consideration could be given to the development of a new vocational status which could be applied where the client would move off the live register and into a 'training status' and be supported to secure vocational and employability skills. This should be a sub category of the Live register to avoid accusations of number deception.

Group Engagement may not be the best way to engage with the most marginalised. The initial meeting with a deciding officer could refer the client straight into Equal Youth.

Penalty Rating - Further research is required on the effectiveness of this approach but it seems that penalty rating alone does not encourage engagement or activation of those most distant from the jobs market.

### **6.4 Lessons around the BYG approach and the Guidance Model**

While there were undoubted successes in the BYG approach aspects of the 'Swords approach' need to be considered. The fact that over 80% of Swords clients were able to self-serve at the low cost Employment Fair seems to offer an efficient, effective and economical model. This obviated the need for extensive guidance and counselling for those that progressed themselves (again noting the differences in the Swords and Ballymun cohorts).

The adult guidance process, its nature and model and resource implications for the success of client outcomes will need to be carefully considered DSP/LESN/Job Path client engagement process in particular for more disadvantaged clients.

The evaluation notes that while all clients are offered the same service, it is unclear if all clients, irrespective of profiling, require the same service. Value for money suggests there are cost implications that need to be considered. Perhaps the level of guidance could be PEX related. This could allow resources be targeted at those that most require support.

The provision of ongoing support, advice, guidance to clients while participating in an intervention is considered to be crucial by BYG partners so that clients maintain progress.

Scheme Flexibility - There was acknowledgement that the adjustment to eligibility and entry requirements to Active Labour Market programmes was an enabling factor which supported good outcomes for clients.

It was also noted that there is a very low level of awareness of the Youth Guarantee among key stakeholders – including young people themselves. There is a need to review the effectiveness of the current strategy (channels, material and content) leading to the development a wide-ranging communication strategy to promote awareness of the YG.

### **6.5 Lessons from Barriers to Client Activation/Progression**

Eligibility - Recommendation is that Department of Social Protection review ALMP age-related eligibility criteria in light of the YG.

Requirement for vertical progression - Recommendation is that Case Officers/Mediators be afforded discretion to approve 'downward movement' in exceptional cases, where considered appropriate to enhance the client's employability.

Cost of participation - Recommendations is that Department of Social Protection could consider covering cost of incidental expenses associated with participation on programmes/taking up employment from the TEGS fund on a case-by-case basis

Personal issues/circumstances - Recommendation is to, where possible, mainstream BYG response by

- Provision of intensive guidance, giving the client the opportunity to agree an appropriate progression plan. This would have significant resource implications for Department of Social Protection.
- Multidisciplinary case management. This presupposes the existence of similar networks in other areas, or their establishment where there are none.
- Delivery of appropriate developmental interventions in other areas. This presupposes the existence of programmes in other areas, or their establishment where there are none. This would have significant funding implications for the Education and Training Boards.

Low levels of educational attainment - Recommendation: Mainstream BYG by

- provision of intensive guidance where necessary, giving the client the opportunity to agree an appropriate progression plan
- Multidisciplinary case management
- Development of appropriate developmental interventions



## **6.6 Areas best practice still needs to be identified around**

Client profiling and its role in identifying client need or employability status.

Sharing and centralising the data necessary to fully track and support a young person's journey is not an easy task, but is a critical step in being able to fully support a person within the context of the Youth Guarantee. How this will be achieved needs to be considered and all relevant information requirements on clients defined. Allied to this is the communication around KPIs, monthly reporting, budgets and meetings.

The electronic communication systems used in the project were weak. Future Youth Guarantee partnership structures would need to consider the importance of an effective communication platform. Further, the effect of the remoteness of organisations from each other in interagency work needs to be considered. Skype and other such group systems which promote visual communication may have a useful role to play in promoting effective collaboration.

Project management methodologies used in conducting the projects/ activities need to be reconsidered

There should be a clear definition of what constitutes an 'offer' to ensure clarity among all stakeholders and facilitate monitoring.

Further, the timing of the offer is important and needs to be clear. The evaluator considers that 4 months after the initial guidance meeting is preferable to 4 months after the Group Engagement because some clients may miss their initial guidance and this could make a 4 month guarantee impractical.

## **6.7 National and EU knowledge transfer**

It is important that the pilot experience is shared with colleagues and there is a need to identify methods to transfer pilot learning to the National plan and other member states. Reports and dissemination conferences should be utilised as well as networking and personal contacts at national and EU level.

It will be a challenge to replicate the level of drive, energy and enthusiasm demonstrated by the BYG partners within any mainstreamed structures given the particular focus and spotlight of a high-profile pilot. Further, some of the lead players in the BYG were particularly skilled in facilitating partner engagement. Subsequent Youth Guarantee must be designed considering normal management capability and buy-in.

Having identified and summarised the key lessons from the pilot the following chapter will make recommendations on how these are relevant to a national roll-out.

## Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

### 7.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Having identified key learning and areas to be adopted this chapter endeavours to make conclusions and recommendations that could inform the design and implementation for the national roll-out. These include

A partnership approach to service provision releases synergies, capitalises on the experiences and expertise of partners, can better identify gaps and solutions, and reduces the risk of duplication of activity. However, partnership is resource intensive and time-consuming and this needs to be recognised by all participating organisations.

Partnership requires new ways of working and additional skills. There is often a lack of a partnership culture between agencies and training should be engaged by those involved. Critical success factors include the need for clarity around roles and responsibilities of partnership structures and members ('Memorandum of Understanding'), objectives, KPIs, reporting and monitoring framework, and governance. Further, there is concern over the inability of managers to manage partner work contributions through task allocation and performance appraisal. All these need consideration.

Monitoring and evaluation is critical. External feedback, similar to the pilot, is recommended as this increases the effectiveness of partner contributions. Ensuring an on-going monitoring of the Youth Guarantee serves to establish a feedback loop to improve different aspects of the process.

Partnership is effective at both national and local level; however, replicating the local BYG structures nationally would be challenging. The establishment of a National Youth Guarantee steering committee is recommended as are Local Implementation Groups where practical.

Young people vary in their level of labour market readiness and certain clients (particularly those with multiple barriers) may require a number of interventions as part of a structured supported pathway to employment. The most marginalised are the most difficult group to engage in the process. Given the range of support needs of this client group an inter-agency approach is required to support progressions as no one agency will have the necessary skills to meet their needs.

Working with relevant community groups and Youth Service Providers for hard-to-reach groups is important because they have a better understanding of these clients. However, these groups may not always be available, and, need to be adequately funded.

Successful employer activation is crucial. Active employer relationship-building is required at national, regional and local level. There is uncertainty about Intreo and what they can do to support business. There is no consistent approach in how Intreo engage with business. The response depends on the office/ individuals involved. This needs to be managed. There is a need to differentiate between the straight forward business case for availing of the range of supports to recruit from the Live Register (free recruitment and job matching services and

cash incentives) and leveraging the Corporate Social Responsibility of businesses to provide work placement/experience opportunities for non-job-ready unemployed people.

Conducting initial research, client segmentation and capacity planning are a key basic step. Client profiling needs to be able to segment clients at the earliest opportunity. Successful profiling could direct clients to the most appropriate next stage in their pathway. For example, Group Engagement may not be the best way to engage with the most marginalised. The initial meeting with a deciding officer could efficiently refer the client straight into Equal Youth.

The Equal Youth Model of a multi-disciplinary 'case management' approach needs to continue to support the effective placement of clients. This process includes a shared responsibility of a client's employment/training pathway and will enhance interagency working.

While not totally analogous to the Ballymun situation, the fact that over 80% of 'Swords' clients were able to self-serve at the low cost Employment Fairs seems to offer an efficient, effective and economical model for client activation. This obviated the need for extensive guidance and counselling for those that progressed themselves.

The evaluation concludes that not all clients require the full guidance process. The level of guidance could be PEX related. Effective client profiling could efficiently segment clients at an early stage and allow resources to be targeted at those that most require support. The provision of ongoing support, advice, and guidance to clients while participating in an intervention is crucial so that clients maintain progress.

Consideration should be given as to the appropriate income support payment for severely marginalised clients who are neither job-ready, nor in a position to progress into standard FET interventions.

The flexible adjustment to eligibility and entry requirements to Active Labour Market programmes was an enabling factor which supported good outcomes for clients.

There is a very low level of awareness of the Youth Guarantee among key stakeholders – including young people themselves. There is a need to review promotion of the YG. It will be a challenge to replicate the level of drive, energy and enthusiasm demonstrated by the BYG partners within any mainstreamed structures.

## **7.2 Recommended short-term actions**

There follows BYG recommendations for how activity and practice currently carried out by the BYG could be mainstreamed. Immediate short-term lessons that could be implemented include

More effective client profiling that could efficiently segment clients at an early stage needs to be developed.

Group Engagement is an appropriate first stage for many but not all clients. The deciding officer should use the improved client profiling process to refer the client onto the most appropriate pathway (for example, straight into Equal Youth if appropriate).

The 'Swords' model of client activation using Employment Fairs should be further trialled to see if its success<sup>79</sup> is replicated.

The Equal Youth Model of a 'case management' approach needs to continue to support the effective placement of clients. This process includes a shared responsibility of a client's employment/training pathway and will enhance interagency working.

Active employer relationship-building is required at national, regional and local level. There is no consistent approach in how Intreo engage with business. This is crucial as without improved employer engagement the Youth Guarantee will continue to rely on state efforts.

The Swords example seems to indicate that employers are willing to participate if the design is clear.

The usefulness of flexibility in approach to youth unemployment is a particular learning from the BYG pilot. Some examples flexible solutions that could be adopted:

- The flexible adjustment to eligibility and entry requirements to Active Labour Market programmes was an enabling factor which supported good outcomes for suitable clients that could be quickly adopted nationally.
- Requirement for vertical progression - Recommendation is that Case Officers/Mediators be afforded discretion to approve 'horizontal/downward movement' in exceptional cases, where considered appropriate to enhance the client's employability.
- Cost of participation - Recommendation is that Department of Social Protection could consider covering cost of incidental expenses associated with participation on programmes/taking up employment from the TESH fund on a case-by-case basis
- Personal issues/circumstances - Recommendation is to, where possible, mainstream BYG response by
  - Provision of intensive guidance, giving the client the opportunity to agree an appropriate progression plan. This would have significant resource implications for Department of Social Protection.
  - Multidisciplinary case management. This presupposes the existence of similar networks in other areas, or their establishment where there are none.
  - Delivery of appropriate developmental interventions in other areas. This presupposes the existence of programmes in other areas, or their establishment where there are none. This would have significant funding implications for the Education and Training Boards.
- Low levels of educational attainment - Recommendation: Mainstream BYG by
  - provision of intensive guidance, giving the client the opportunity to agree an appropriate progression plan
  - Multidisciplinary case management
  - Development of appropriate developmental interventions

<sup>79</sup> Over 80% of the Swords clients self-served themselves successfully at the Employment Fair. It could also be argued that Swords maybe a closer representation of the national situation in contrast to the area of acute disadvantage that in Ballymun.

- Penalty Rating - Further research is required on the effectiveness of this approach but it seems that penalty rating alone does not encourage engagement or activation of those most distant from the jobs market. Flexibility was again useful to achieving positive outcomes.

The timing of the offer needs to be considered. The evaluator considers that 4 months after the initial guidance meeting is preferable to 4 months after the Group Engagement.

### **7.3 Immediate short term development of best practice required**

- Communication around KPIs, monthly reporting, budgets and meetings
- Sharing and centralising the data necessary to fully track and support a young person's journey is not an easy task, but is a critical step. How this will be achieved needs to be considered and all relevant information requirements on clients defined.
- Professional advice around communication and collaboration platforms suitable to interagency partnerships.
- Project management methodologies used in conducting the projects/ activities need to be reconsidered
- There should be a clear definition of what constitutes an 'offer' to ensure clarity among all stakeholders.

### **7.3 Further short- to medium-term actions recommended**

- The establishment of a National Youth Guarantee steering committee is recommended as are Local Implementation Groups where practical.
- Clarity around roles and responsibilities of partnership structures and members ('Memorandum of Understanding'), objectives, KPIs, reporting and monitoring framework, and governance established
- Conducting initial research, client segmentation and capacity planning are a key basic step that can be done locally in the short-term
- Commission external monitoring and feedback similar to the pilot
- Many clients should not be on the 'Live Register' as are not 'job ready' and a new sub classification of 'vocational status' should be applied where the client would move from the live register and into a 'training status' and be supported to secure vocational and employability skills.

### **7.4 Significant challenges facing the national rollout**

There are going to be significant challenges in implementing lessons learned into a national rollout. Some of these are now identified.

#### **7.4.1 Client needs challenges**

Clients face the challenge of continued unemployment. Further, the pilot demonstrates that many of the most marginalised are a significant distance from being job capable. There is a particular need for these people to be treated with compassion and respect as progression for them can be challenging as they often face multiple barriers to progression. This can lead many to feel hopeless.

#### **7.4.2 Partner needs challenges**

Working with relevant community groups is particularly important for communicating with the most marginalised clients. However, these Youth Service Providers need to be adequately resourced.

Employer involvement is essential. Active employer relationship-building is required at national, regional and local level. This is easier said than done and requires an understanding of 'business culture' which may be challenging to achieve.

#### **7.4.3 Process challenges**

There are several processes that need to be developed which will prove challenging:

- Effective client profiling that could efficiently segment clients at an early stage needs to be developed and implemented by the deciding officer
- Sharing and centralising the data is seen as challenging
- An effective communication and collaboration platform needs establishing. 'Basecamp', the system used in the pilot, is inadequate and not the solution for collaborative working
- Project management methodologies need to be adopted and staff need training in these to aid implementation and performance management
- Appropriate guidance processes need to be understood and implemented

#### **7.4.4 People challenges**

Dedicated staff need to be allocated to the programmes. It was only when staff were allocated full time to the pilot that significant development was achieved.

Further, staff need to be appropriately trained in partnership culture and skills. Guidance staff with appropriate skills need to be recruited and/or trained.

It will be a challenge to replicate the level of drive, energy and enthusiasm demonstrated by the BYG partners within any mainstreamed structures given the particular focus and spotlight of a high-profile pilot. Subsequent Youth Guarantee must be designed considering normal management capability and buy-in.

#### **7.4.5 Financial challenges**

All of these proposals require financing which will be challenging in the present economic environment. However, it needs to be remembered that a basic premise of the Youth Guarantee is that the long-term cost of youth unemployment and inactivity to economies and societies is greater than the cost of setting up a scheme to get young people into education, employment or training as soon as possible.

The 'social cost' for the client and society of not adequately resourcing these proposals need also to be appreciated. The financial cost of not addressing youth unemployment may be far greater than the expedient course of ignoring the innovative approaches that have been successfully adopted in other EU countries.

The manner in which the BYG pilot has been developed and managed demonstrates that Ireland can be a leader in addressing youth unemployment in EU. The BYG has shown that an interagency partnership approach does release synergies which can be more efficient, effective and economical at addressing youth unemployment than traditional approaches. The BYG would contend that the most enduring message from the pilot is how the 'process issues' impacted on securing good outcomes, i.e.:

- Enhanced working relationships between stakeholders

- Flexibility in the approach
- Youth Sector involvement
- Guidance process
- Multi-disciplinary case management approach to support clients with multiple barriers

The evaluator agrees with this contention and contends that several lessons from the BYG pilot contained in this report warrant consideration, and ultimately, implementation.



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## Appendix 1 Unemployment and Ballymun.

Mick Creedon, Manager BJC/LESN

The 2011 Census shows that the population of the Ballymun area (DED Ballymun A, B, C, D) is: 16,236 of which 16.6% are aged 15 to 24. There are a high number of single parents. Approximately 2,100 or 18% of individuals over 15 are single parents.

Figures from the most recent Census (2011) show that Ballymun performs very poorly in terms of key labour market indicators relative to the National Average (see table below), with a significantly lower employment rate (44%) and higher unemployment rate (36%) than the national average (57% and 19% respectively). There is also a larger proportion of unskilled/semi-skilled (21% compared to 14% nationally).

### Main Labour Force PES Data, State, Dublin City and Ballymun 2011 Census

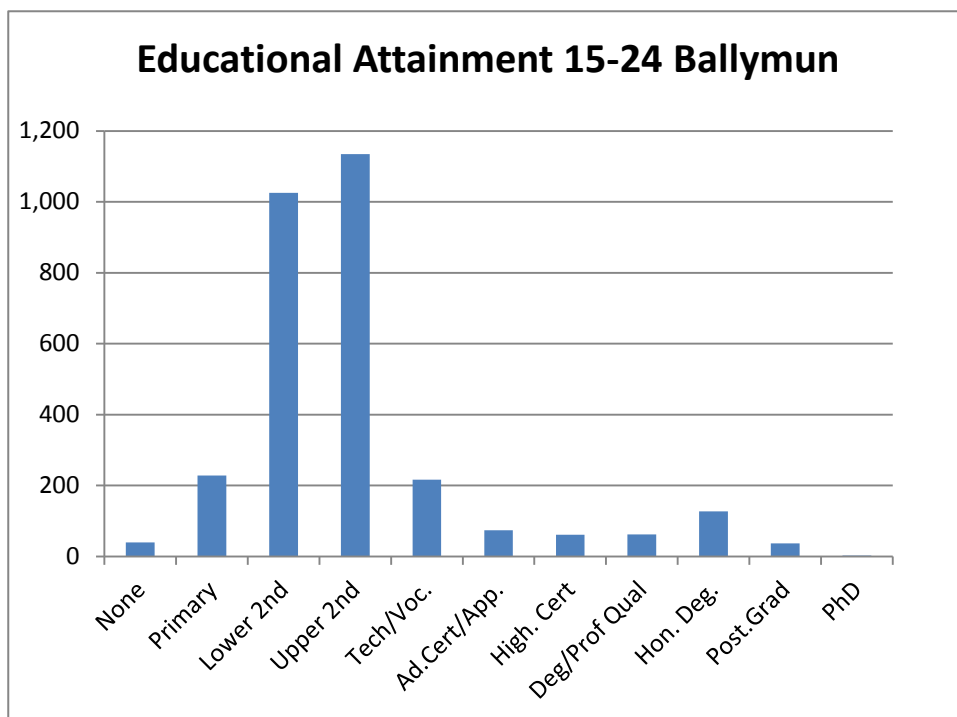
<i>Source: CSO</i>	State	Dublin	Ballymun
Employment Rate	57%	58%	44%
Unemployment Rate	19%	18%	36%
Labour Force Participation	62%	62%	69%
Un-skilled/Semi-skilled %	14%	10%	21%

According to the 2011 census the unemployment rate for the 15-24 age-group is 54% compared to 39% for the national average and 34% for Dublin. While the youth employment rate for Ballymun of 21% is similar to the national average of 22% this is due to a relatively high participation rate of 46% in Ballymun versus the national average of 30%, rather than a comparable incidence of employment among those participating in the labour market. Indeed, the relatively high participation rate for Ballymun youth is largely due to the fact that they tend to leave the education system much earlier, with 41% of this cohort having ceased full-time education compared to 33% nationally. This is reflected in their low level of educational attainment with 88% of young people in Ballymun having at best leaving cert qualification (See graph).

### Main Labour Force PES Data, State, Dublin City and Ballymun 2011 Census (15-24)

	State	Dublin	Ballymun
Employment Rate	22%	25%	21%
Unemployment Rate	39%	34%	54%
Labour Force Participation	30%	38%	46%

*Source: CSO Census, Small Area Population Statistics*



Source: CSO Census, Small Area Population Statistics.

Overall there are low levels of educational attainment when compared to Dublin City and nationally. This is particularly the case for individuals where their highest level of formal education is a degree or higher. In Dublin City the percentage with a degree or higher is 32% in Ballymun this is 9%. The National percentage is 25%. (See table below)

#### Highest level of formal educational attained

	National	Dublin city	Ballymun
Lower Sec or less	32	31	49
Degree or higher	25	32	9

#### Live Register

The most up-to-date source of information on unemployment at a local level is the Live Register<sup>80</sup>. Between January 2008 and January 2011 the number of individuals on the Live Register in Ballymun doubled from 1,501 to 3,003 with the under 25 age group increased by 91% from 435 to 833 while the 25 and over age group increased by 104% from 1,066 to 2,170.

<sup>80</sup> The Live Register is not designed to measure unemployment as it includes part-time workers, seasonal and casual workers entitled to unemployment payments. Unemployment is measured by the NQHS.

Since 2011 the number of individuals on the Live Register has fallen. By January 2014 the number on the Live Register was 2,765 this is a fall of 8% when compared with January 2011. Over this three year period most of the fall was in the under 25 age group where the number signing on dropped from 833 to 678 a fall of 19%. In contrast the 25 plus age group fell by 4% from 2,170 to 2,087.

In general this pattern has continued to the end of 2014 with the number of Under 25s continuing to fall at a faster rate when compared to those in the over 25 age group<sup>81</sup>. Between January and end December 2014 the number signing on fell from 2,765 to 2,482 a fall of 10%. The Under 25s accounted for 67% of the total fall of 283. By the end of 2014 the number of under 25s on the Live Register had fallen from 678 to 487 a drop of 28% when compared to January 2014. In contrast the over 25s fall from 2,087 to 1,995 a fall of 4%.

Of those on the Live Register over half have been signing on for more than a year, while a third have been signing on for two years or more.

However, the Live Register does not paint the full picture of those out of work in Ballymun. Ballymun has a large number of single parent family units accounting for 26% of all family units in the area. Many single parents who are out of work are not counted on the Live Register if, as is usually the case, they are in receipt of a One Parent Family Payment. Furthermore, individuals in receipt of a disability payment are not counted on the Live Register and young unemployed (under 18) are also not counted on the Live Register. In March 2000 a local labour force survey put the percentage of unemployed at 58.4% higher than the Live Register.

A range of factors contribute to the higher levels of unemployment in Ballymun, compared to the National figures. These include the high prevalence of low educational qualifications and the dominance of unskilled and semi-skilled manual occupational backgrounds. This highlights the importance of providing relevant education and training provision for job seekers in Ballymun. Addressing the labour market needs of individuals will require long-term strategies and actions that have the capacity to increase the skill levels of individuals in Ballymun in order to enable them to compete for employment that is more sustainable and provides in the long-term the possibility of higher income levels.

<sup>81</sup> Source CSO Live Register Figures for CSO database



## **Appendix 2**

The following is from the Report on the Guidance Process.

Duggan, C., Whelan, N., & Together, S. (2015). Lessons from the Ballymun Youth Guarantee pilot: a focus on employment related career guidance.

### **Guidance Model**

The guidance model adopted by the BYG is a high support model developed by Ballymun Job Centre over many years of service provision which has proven successful for clients with multiple barriers to labour market access. The model consists of a number of steps:

1. An initial assessment of the individuals needs (education, training, skills, personal situation, etc.)
2. A tailored career guidance process – identifying the individuals latent skills, abilities, aptitudes, preferred behaviour style in the workplace, values; and building career clarity, career identity, improving self-esteem and career efficacy.
3. Development of a career plan which includes a career objective, a number of shorter term career goals, and the identification of potential barriers which may prevent progression
4. Implementation of the career plan in a supported and positive way

All BYG participants were offered this high support model as a method of identifying their labour market needs, supporting the development of both human and social capital, enabling progression to a quality offer and securing sustainable labour market attachment.

### **Key elements of the Guidance Process identified from the findings**

The consultation process identified a number of key elements of the guidance process which were important in ensuring that the engagement with clients was effective. These included:

- A non-intimidating setting: it was widely noted by both providers and clients that the setting within which the service is delivered can have an impact on the perception of the client and their ability to participate fully. This may be something to which younger clients are more sensitive.
- Establishing trust and rapport: this was crucial to ensuring the buy-in of the young person and enabling them to be motivated and positive about the process
- Formal needs assessment: a structured approach to identifying barriers helped motivate and incentivise young people as well enabling them to see how they might address barriers
- Putting a career plan in place: the development of career plans, appropriate to the needs and aspirations of clients provided a targeted approach to moving towards positive outcomes.
- Providing ongoing guidance: the provision of ongoing, in-depth guidance kept clients motivated and supported and facilitated re-engagement where necessary
- Providing a quality offer: referral to a progression option that ensures a correct fit with the young person and helps them to progress to employment.
- The team approach and the element of peer support were important aspects of the service.

## **Appendix 3**

### ***The BYG Guidance Process:***

#### **Step 1**

All new jobseekers aged between 18 and 24 years who register at the Ballymun Intreo Centre would be given a Jobseekers Application and Information Pack which would include information about the Ballymun Youth Guarantee Scheme. The person would also be given an appointment to see a Department of Social Protection Deciding Officer who would determine the person's entitlement to a jobseekers payment.

#### **Step 2**

During the interview with the Deciding Officer, the jobseeker would be asked a range of questions about his/her means and circumstances to facilitate a speedy decision on his/her entitlement to a jobseeker payment; and questions about educational attainment, skills level and previous work experience which would assist in determining an appropriate personal progression plan.

#### **Step 3**

Following this, the jobseeker would be invited to attend a Group Engagement session presented by Department of Social Protection at which the person would be given information on the range of employment support and activation services available and the pilot Youth Guarantee Scheme. The person would also be reminded of the value and importance of engaging with the process and the penalties for failing to do so. At the end of the session, the person would be given an appointment to see a career guidance officer as soon as possible.

#### **Step 4**

The purpose of the career guidance session is to agree an appropriate personal progression plan with the jobseeker. The process would include elements of assessment and guidance to facilitate agreement on an appropriate career development plan, tailored in, as far as is practicable, to the needs of the individual, and may comprise:

1. An initial assessment of the individual's needs (education, training, skills, personal situation, etc.),
2. A tailored career guidance process – identifying the person's latent skills, abilities and aptitudes,
3. Development of a career plan which includes a career objective and a number of shorter-term career goals, and
4. Implementation of the career plan in a supported and positive way.

Depending on the profile of the person, the career development plan may include elements of education, training and/or development, but would have a particular focus on providing a work placement opportunity for job-ready clients as a route to permanent employment.

This stage of the process would be delivered by Local Employment Service (LES) Mediators of the Ballymun Job Centre (BJC/LESN).

## **Appendix 4**

### **Case Study of client from Target Group 1 (BJC/LESN Guidance Counsellor).**

**Case 1 Jennifer** (pseudonym) is a 21 year old female from Ballymun who left school after completing Junior Cert. Jennifer has no voluntary or paid employment or work experience. She has never completed any further training since leaving school. Jennifer stated that she had been to lots of different agencies in Ballymun and had been referred to a number of courses and programmes. She is long term unemployed and lacking in experience and skills, client presented with low self-esteem and confidence in her own abilities.

Initially it was difficult to work consistently with Jennifer due to her attendance issues. Jennifer attended appointments sporadically. She would attend one appointment miss the next appointment. Jennifer would then call to the Job Centre to arrange another appointment may attend that or come the next day. Following a number of attempts to address this I referred Jennifer back to the Intreo. Jennifer was penalty rated for one week as a consequence of her non attendance.

Jennifer returned to the guidance process, I spoke to her about the level of supports available and she expressed this is something she has struggled with her whole life and this has hindered her from progression. She explained that she had never completed any course after her Junior Certificate. I spent some time working with client on these issues, through exploration and intense guidance tools.

Jennifer wanted a job and did not want to engage in full time training as she felt she did not respond to didactic methods. I began referring Jennifer to short introductory and basic courses including Job Seeking skills offered at the Ballymun Job Centre. Jennifer received training on basic job seeking skills which included a mock interview, tips and techniques. From the beginning Jennifer had expressed interest in becoming a childcare worker and was willing to travel outside the local area if the opportunity arose. I referred client for several Childcare Community Employment Schemes offered to Youth Guarantee participants. After her first interview, Jennifer was offered a position, subject to Garda vetting, as a trainee childcare worker leading to a QQI Level 5 Award in childcare.

I met with client after the interview and she was absolutely thrilled and delighted with this opportunity and was very much looking forward to her start date. This is her first real break in the world of work since leaving school! The change in her disposition was already apparent. As the CE is a developmental programme, it is the perfect fit for a young person experiencing the kind of barriers outlined in this case study. Jennifer had issues with attendance and punctuality at the beginning of the CE. The CE Supervisor and I spoke with Jennifer and we have continued to work together to address these issues. It is hoped that Jennifer will continue to develop and mature through the CE experience and I will continue to support her towards full time employment.

**Case 2 Glen** - Case Study of client from Target Group 1 (BJC/LESN Guidance Counsellor). "Glen" is an 18 year old male, an early school leaver and was involved in criminal behaviour. He was referred by the courts to The Probation Service. The Probation Service referred him to The Job Centre. Glen was recently released from prison and was referred into the Youth Guarantee Scheme.

**Family background.** He was living at home with his mother, step father and brothers, one younger and one older; he does not have contact with his father. Glen has been to prison for a small drug related charges, public order offences, theft and larceny. "Glen" has a good relationship with his family however this relationship was strained because of his involvement in criminal activity, drug taking and drug dealing.

**Education/ training.** "Glen" did not complete his Junior Cert in school; he did attend Ballark Community Training Centre for a short period. Initially he got on well however he subsequently lost his place due to his regular absence and disruptive behaviour.

### **Supports needed and received through Equal Youth**

When I profiled "Glen" for Equal Youth I became more aware of some of the issues that were preventing him from progressing to training/employment. Through our discussions we identified obstacles to him successfully maintaining a training placement. The strategy was to put a career plan in action, there was a number of barriers impeding his progress.

#### **E.g. Drug addiction, literacy issues, criminal behaviour:**

The Equal Process was clearly explained to "Glen" in a language that he would understand, so he was made aware of the fact that information concerning him would be discussed at an interagency forum.

"Glen" was discussed by representatives from local agencies at the Equal Youth Meetings and a collaborative plan was decided upon and commitments were given from various agencies to undertake the following:

- Link him in immediately with YAP (Drug service)
- Refer him to local counselling service
- Link him with literacy service (BARWS)
- Engage him into The Ballyrunners (a high support p/t programme).
- Track his progress with the Ballyrunners.
- Ballark training centre to give him a place on a training course as soon as possible
- Inform the relevant partners at the meetings of Glen's progress.
- As Ballark attend the meetings his progress would be known to them.
- Within the Equal Youth network work with the four partners involved (BJC, YAP, Probation & Ballark and BARWS )

"Glen" has benefited from being an Equal Youth client as outlined above. Glen did not return to Ballark but went to PACE instead. His progress is tracked at the monthly meetings where all issues/barriers are discussed and actions implemented if needed. Whilst "Glen" received the benefit of the aforementioned inter-agency collaboration the Job Centre was the sole point of contact for "Glen" in conveying the decision made by this forum.

This is one of the benefits of participation in Equal Youth; the young person is surrounded with support and encouraged to take control of their own progression.

**Case 3 John** - Case Study of client from Target Group 1 (BJC/LESN Guidance Counsellor). Client (John) is a 22 year old male. An Early School Leaver and is a client of the Job Centre for a number of years. He lives at home with his mother and two siblings.

**Education/ training.** John left school at 13 years of age and up until June 2013 he had never engaged in any type of further training or education. He was referred to BallyRunners in June 2013 just a couple of week after being released from prison.

**Work History** John has no work experience and has never held any type of job.

### **Issues and barriers**

- Criminal Justice Issues  
John has been in and out of custody since aged 13, and frequently comes to the attention of Án Garda Síochána. His convictions range from larceny, theft, criminal damage and robbery. In the two weeks following his release from prison in May 2013 he returned to criminal activity and was charged with two offences.
- Drug addiction  
John also has a long history of drug and alcohol abuse, currently he is not linked in with any addiction service.
- Educational Attainment  
John completed his Junior Certificate whilst in custody. However following a literacy test John was identified as having serious literacy issues, at present he is reluctant to engage with any literacy support agency.

**Supports needed** Initially John was referred to BallyRunners. BallyRunners is an initiative that came from an identified need by the Equal Youth Network. The programme is aimed at engaging unattached individuals who present with a number of challenging issues. It is a high support low threshold model that has fosters personal development, attainable achievements and civic responsibility.

Having completed Ballyrunners John is more open to continuing with his training. However because of his reluctance to engaging with other agencies we will need to go through a period of intense career guidance. Together we will put in place a comprehensive progression plan: e.g Progression Plan- Equal Youth Network

- Continue with weekly appointments over a period of time.
- Link in with YAP to address drug issue.
- Link in with Depaul Ireland to address alcohol issue.
- Link in with Mary Love in Ballymun Adult Read & Write agency.
- Link in with Counsellor to address personal issues
- Use Eguide to assist in identifying what best career path to take, and what training will be required.
- Plan for training progression – Community Employment Scheme.

The BYG gave John the opportunity to look at Community Employment as part of his progression plan. This has allowed John to work, have an income and feel a sense of responsibility. He has also sufficient time to attend counselling appointments and literacy classes. Although this intervention is in its early stages John reports as feeling more hopeful and positive about his future.

## Appendix 5

### Sample of participant testimonials:

#### Testimonial 1

Hi The CE programme has been very beneficial to me so far. I was offered a placement in XXX and have gained a lot of experience in childcare. I know now childcare is definitely the right path for me. I have also gained confidence and a better knowledge of childcare. I am to start my vetech level 5 on Tuesday, and also have child protection and a play workshop completed. I am so grateful i was given this opportunity. I intend to make this my life long career path. Without this opportunity i would have felt stuck and not knowing how to achieve my goals. I am flying along now and doing very well in XXX. I hope a lot of other people get this experience as it have been so beneficial to me, and made me a much happier person. Kind regards.XXX

#### Testimonial 2

Hi XXX,

The Youth Guarantee Scheme has helped me a lot since last year. They got me an 8 week shadowing experience which resulted in me gaining full-time employment.

They've also gave me a €200 clothing grant for work clothes when i started. Since I've been working with XXXX, I have gotten a lot of experience in Electronics, Building Management Systems and Facilities services.

I've improved my Computer skills dramatically, I now know how to use excel correctly and to put postal orders on our system to name a few things.

I've gained a lot of experience and would highly recommend this Scheme to anyone. I'm very grateful for what the Ballymun Job Centre and Youth Guarantee Scheme have done for me.

Many Thanks,

#### Testimonial 3

I think personally the youth guarantee scheme helped me a lot because there was no ce schemes that I could do as I was too young before it came out.

But now I got a ce scheme working in the office of a crèche and I love it. My confidence is up 100% and I feel a lot more comfortable when job hunting myself.

There's not a lot of jobs out there for young people without a degree so having the opportunity to get my foot in the door and get some experience was amazing.

#### Testimonial 4

To whom it may concern,

I became aware of the Ballymun job centre as part of the Ballymun youth guarantee scheme which was run in conjunction with the local Intreo office for young people in the Ballymun area.

I was only unemployed for a short time before I attended the centre for a group meeting on the pilot scheme. I was initially apprehensive about attending this meeting as I thought it was just another made up government initiative that would not lead to anything substantial. I had grown annoyed and frustrated with a system that I felt had failed me and my generation and led us straight from college into an unemployment abyss.

To my amazement and having come out the other side of this relatively short process I can see the light at the end of a tunnel that I felt would never shine.

As part of the Ballymun youth guarantee scheme I was assigned to Ms Sandra Heffernan in the Ballymun job centre. The first meeting I had with her may well turn out to be the most productive and in many ways important meeting I will have in my life. Her skill and ability in dissecting and pinpointing what was holding me back from gaining valuable experience in the working world was extraordinary. She was extremely professional and proficient in establishing a method and system for me to follow in order to find work and employment. She was able to find the reasons why employers were not contacting me back for interviews and within two weeks of my first meeting with Sandra I had received call backs for interviews with many legal firms.

The first interview I attended after speaking with Sandra I was offered an internship under the jobbridge scheme which I accepted as it was in the specific area of law I wish to practice. I faced many difficulties in securing this place and without Sandra and the team in the Ballymun job centre I would not have been able to have started as soon as I was. Sandra went well beyond the call of duty to ensure my training, development and experience would not be hindered.

As a result of Sandra's hard work and endeavour I was able to receive funding to go toward my traineeship on the road to becoming a solicitor. I have now completed my jobbridge scheme and have been taken on in full employment by the firm. I believe that Sandra Heffernan is one of the most hard working, efficient and productive people I have met. She is friendly, easy to talk to and honest in her dealings with people she is giving guidance to. Her guidance and help has had a profound impact on me over the last year and has given me my confidence and self esteem back which over the past few years has taken a severe bashing. Because of Sandra Heffernan and the staff in the Ballymun job centre I have been able to begin my journey on the road to my dream career.



## Testimonial 5

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Youth Guarantee Pilot**

I am writing to share my experience that I had while partaking in the Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot Scheme and how this program has impacted my life.

I became unemployed at the age of 18 in XX 2013 after leaving college in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of a 3 year program. I was referred to the Ballymun Job Centre by my case officer in the Ballymun department of social protection office. I attended guidance meetings with XXX for several months until she informed me about the proposed pilot scheme happening in Ballymun. It could not of came at a perfect time as I wished to return to education as soon as possible.

During the early stages of discussing options in my career guidance meetings, Ms XXX identified the barriers that were preventing me from returning to education. One of the main barriers was financing my education. I had already received a SUSI grant and could not receive it again therefore I could not return to education. I become anxious however Ms XXX gave excellent guidance during this time. After a few months it was time to apply to colleges. With Ms XXX's guidance I decided to apply to Fetac Level 5 courses. She helped with my college applications. Her guidance skills were outstanding and really helped me at the time. I was very happy with the service and overall experience I was getting. I developed a great relationship with the job centre as they were so helpful.

In August 2014 I was given a place on a pre nursing course. Unfortunately I was unable to pay the fees. I became very anxious at this time with the prospect that I could be unemployed with no qualifications for another year. Fortunately the youth guarantee scheme was able to help with the funding I needed to partake in this course. My mind was put at ease that I could finally go back to education. I could finally have a chance of having a career. I was very happy with the support that the scheme had given me.

With the guidance and support I received by partaking in this scheme my life has been positively impacted. My career prospects have improved greatly. I am learning about subjects that I thought I had no interest in, but I now actually really enjoy. I have been given excellent opportunity's by partaking in this program, for example as I am now attending college, I have been selected to do my work placement in XXX (EU country). By the end of this year I will be a qualified health care assistant which I can find employment in. I can also progress into 3<sup>rd</sup> level education in Ireland or the UK to study nursing. I can safely say that without this scheme I would have none of these opportunity's. I would be more than likely to still be unemployed with no qualifications.

As this was only a pilot scheme in Ballymun that I have participated in, from my personal experience I think this scheme would be a fantastic opportunity for young unemployed people nationally, particularly in disadvantaged areas. I feel that to improve the Youth Guarantee Scheme is to maybe have links with 3<sup>rd</sup> Level Education providers for example have a number of places allocated to youth guarantee participants.

Overall I am very happy with my experience with the Youth Guarantee Scheme. My life has changed for the better and I hope that I am on the first step to the rest of my career.

## Appendix 6

### Review of Peer Learning on Youth Unemployment in EU

The objective of this synopsis is to review and highlight key conclusions from selected peer reviews and evaluations of Public Employment Services (PES) approaches across Europe. The purpose of this is to inform participants of the National Steering Committee (and other participants) of the Ballymun Youth Guarantee Scheme (BYGS) of lessons learnt in similar or possibly relevant EU schemes.

Two reviews have been particularly considered and presented in a bullet point format to highlight relevant lessons learnt that may aid the development of the BYGS and other subsequent schemes. The two reviews are:

1. Peer Review: *'Youth Guarantees: PES approaches and measures for low skilled young people'* (AMS Vienna, 22-23 March 2011)
2. Dissemination Conference: *'New developments, good practices and lessons learnt'* (Brussels, 8-9 September 2011)

#### **1. Peer Review: *'Youth Guarantees: PES approaches and measures for low skilled young people'* (AMS Vienna, 22-23 March 2011)**

##### **Key points from Executive summary**

By identifying core elements of good practice, the Peer Review aimed to give impulses for the further development of PES services and in doing so, contribute to the implementation of youth guarantees... some indications on how to best implement youth guarantees in Europe.

##### **Key Points:**

##### **Ensuring early access to PES services: Go where young people are and use their language**

Evidence... shows that many young people who experience difficulties in gaining a foothold in the labour market only access PES services once they are already unemployed, or indeed not at all, particularly if they are not entitled to any form of benefit.

**Co-operation between all key actors** in the field of education and employment, as well as community groups is critical here. Three main routes were identified towards establishing such early interaction:

1. **Contact with schools**, with PES advisors visiting schools, school classes visiting local PES offices or innovative activities for teachers
  - However, a number of PES identified the relatively high cost of visiting schools and are therefore considering instead offering personal or on-line training to teachers and trainers in schools to render this process more efficient.
2. **Outreach activities** through links with NGOs, youth clubs, social or community actors
  - particularly relevant for those young people who have already dropped out of school
  - particular client groups such as migrant communities,

- young people with additional barriers (such as debt, drug or alcohol problems).

Such links tend to benefit from an age and culturally diverse profile within the PES services themselves.

3. **Use of modern media** which “speak the language” of young people.

Most PES are offering websites or web pages and other media campaigns particularly tailored for young people.

**Key Points:**

**Structuring core and youth orientated PES services:**

- **the role of specialist advice**
- **and positive buy-in from employers**

The provision of **specialist youth counsellors** ...was considered to be most successful

- Important to **rapidly identify young people in need** of more intensive assistance
- informed by a clear and effective assessment of requirements.
- Intensive, holistic assistance to young people who face multiple barriers to labour market entry

Equally important are **well developed contacts with employers.**

- Personal relationships with employers have to be built up in a longer-term process
- Similarly valuable was the use of innovative events which could bring employers and job seekers together in a more informal environment (e.g. speed dating events, assessment days, job fairs etc.).
- Ongoing support to employers willing to recruit young people facing multiple disadvantage must not be underestimated
- subsidies continue to play an important role in making up for “productivity deficits”

The precise nature of the “client journey” in different PES varies considerably

- structure of the services (one stop shop or separate provision of services and benefits)
- the level of use of e-tools (such as online registration),
- the timing of the preparation of individual action plans
- the planned duration of personal interviews.

**Key Point:**

**Importance of “real life” work experience in effective PES measures**

- It is largely considered that active labour market policy measures which ensure a close link to “real” work situations (such as longer term in-company placements and workplace based apprenticeships) are most effective in achieving high levels of rapid labour market integration rates.
- However, a link with education and vocational training provision adapted to the learning capacities is also important in making such employment sustainable in the long-term.

Obstacles experienced include the ongoing reticence of employers to offer opportunities to young people facing multiple barriers to labour market entry.

### **Need for a better knowledge base of what works to better target ALMP measures and resources**

- The possibilities of monitoring beneficiaries before and after entry into a measure.
- However, the collection of data on this scale was considered to be impossible in many countries
- Highlighting the need for more targeted evaluation studies or controlled trials.
- Even in countries with existing evaluation or monitoring systems, a stronger link is still to be made between the evidence base and how to use the findings for organisational learning and (future) policy design.

### **2. Dissemination Conference: 'New developments, good practices and lessons learnt' (Brussels, 8-9 September 2011)**

#### **Key points from Executive summary:**

#### **Key Point:**

#### **1. Finding the right balance between flexibility and accountability: the pros and cons of PES decentralisation**

Decentralisation can take the form of **managerial decentralisation**

- often involves the reorganisation of the centrally coordinated PES services
  - along the lines of management by objectives...
- The main issue is to find the right balance between flexibility and accountability
  - depend on the surrounding institutional structures...

#### **Increased flexibility is a clear advantage of decentralised institutions.**

- Local agents may be better informed of local needs, can innovate and adapt their policy tools as needed and may also be more accountable – at the local level at least.
- The development of strategic and service partnerships at the local level also requires a degree of local autonomy.
- However, this also **requires significant elements of devolved budgetary control**
- **and relies on strong local capacity,**
- **as well as a common monitoring framework to assist benchmarking of good practice.**
- minimum service standards have to be elaborated.

Some PES functions may best be kept centralised (flexible centralisation).

- For example, **efficient job matching services require a national database in order to support regional mobility**
  - data collection must be standardised in order to ensure high quality and comparable information.

**Key Point:**

**2. PES and personalised services: strengthening individualised approaches and the spectrum of services**

- ...more individualised service provision, particularly for the most vulnerable groups.
- A greater targeting of services ...
- As a result various profiling tools and different delivery channels have been developed in order to identify those most at risk,
- enable individual who can do so to help themselves (self service)
- meet customers changing requirements.

**Multi-channel management: short-term development costs v. long-term efficiency gains**

...increasingly offer **online services** such as: registration, vacancies advertisement, job search, automatic matching of jobseekers' profiles with jobs or communication via social media.

- **the experience of several PES suggests that financial savings may only come in the long run, although operational savings can be faster to realise** (e.g. giving advisors more time to work with the most vulnerable clients).
- Due to the complexity of these tools, it is essential that investments are carefully prepared and the **right channels are selected for the right services and the appropriate client group** (digital literacy among clients).

It is also important to realise that **multi-channelling is at least as much about change management than about information technology.**

- This requires the strong involvement of staff and the piloting of services from the beginning.

**Key Point:**

***New tools for profiling work better when staff are involved in development and trained at an early stage***

- ...**profiling** is becoming increasingly important to identify those individuals most at risk of long-term unemployment.
- However, recent experience has shown a certain **disillusionment with statistical profiling and self-help tools**, partly because the results of some purely self-help tools can lack reliability

- and partly because of hesitancy among PES staff to take-up even well-functioning tools.

- An increased understanding is emerging that the introduction of such tools needs to go hand in hand with **change management processes**

- involving staff in development and piloting.
- Communication and training for managerial as well as front-line staff is key to the success of such developments.
- In relation to in-depth dynamic profiling, partnerships with private providers are emerging who can offer specialist services which not every PES is able to provide in-house.

### 3. PES and Lifelong Guidance: opportunities for action and co-operation

An increasing number of PES see their role in the future as:

- „transition broker agency“ support many transitions during their working lives
- (Support) employers in matching the changing job profiles with... workforce available

#### **Key Point:**

**Partnership approaches are widely accepted and are also attractive as many PES are under resource constraints.**

- Service partnerships with educational institutions is especially important
- Liaising with employers ... to get more knowledge about changing occupational demand.
- EU level networks of PES and other institutions play an increasing role as platforms for mutual learning.

#### **Key Point:**

**4. PES and target groups: PES services and measures for vulnerable young people and older workers**

***Implementing youth guarantees and targeting young people most at risk***

- ... emphasises the need for early intervention
- ...some member states have developed... called **youth guarantees**...the right... oblige the PES to offer such services
- ...important to use an integrated approach and tackle all the barriers (ranging from learning difficulties to family problems) to employment. **This requires the PES to cooperate with multiple actors,**
  - **to identify vulnerable young people**
  - **to better reach them**
  - **to provide specialist services.**

several good examples of engaging with young people when they leave school

- providing services through specialised counsellors
- or multi-professional teams of counsellors.

Effective ALPMs effectively combine

- training
- with workplace experience and
- incentives for employers to recruit disadvantaged young people.

Though their long term efficiency is widely accepted, the cost of youth-oriented PES services and measures may be prohibitively high. However, total costs can be reduced by **careful targeting**.

## Appendix 7

### Selected (and edited) points relevant to the BYG from a UK report on a UK programme aimed at Youth Unemployment

#### Department for Education and Skills Connexions Service Advice and guidance for all young people Report by the Controller and Auditor General [UK] HC 484 Session 2003-2004: 31 March 2004

1 Connexions is at the heart of government policy to improve the skills base and increase participation in education and training. Prior to the launch of the Connexions Service, the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training had remained fairly constant for some years at about 10 per cent, or approximately 181,000 people<sup>82</sup>. As adults, these young people are much more likely than their peers to earn less in work, to be in poor physical health, and to have a criminal record. Non-participation at 16-19 is also a major predictor of unemployment at 21 and teenage motherhood.

2 The Connexions Service, which the Department for Education and Skills launched in England in April 2001, radically changed the way that young people are supported during their transition to adulthood (**Figure 1**). Through providing impartial advice and guidance, Connexions aims to help all young people aged 13-19 (and 20-24 year olds with learning difficulties and disabilities who are yet to make the transition to adult services) make the right choices, giving them the opportunity to learn the skills they need to make a success of their adult lives<sup>83</sup> and prepare for their future careers. It may also provide guidance on other issues which have traditionally been barriers to employment or undertaking education or training such as substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and youth offending. The service costs some £450 million per year. This is around double the budget of the careers services it replaces, but with a wider remit.

	Before Connexions	Now
<b>Access to a careers adviser</b>	Advice was supplied by careers advisers who visit the school. The careers advisers tended to hold a career interview with most pupils in the school. In 1998, policy changes focused the work of careers advisers on young people deemed to be 'most in need'.	Schools identify young people in need of support and arrange for them to see a Personal Adviser. Young people may choose to contact Personal Advisers themselves, for example via their school or college, by calling the Connexions Direct helpline or by visiting a Connexions one-stop shop. There is a presumption that not all young people need to see a Personal Adviser.
<b>Getting other types of advice</b>	Young people needing advice on issues such as drugs, sexual health and financial matters needed to seek out specialist	Personal Advisers can offer access to advice on a wide range of issues of concern to young people.

<sup>82</sup> Office for National Statistics/Department for Education and Skills Statistical Release SFR 31/2003.

<sup>83</sup> Connexions: the best start in life for every young person, Department for Education and Skills, 2000



	advice.	
<b>The role of schools</b>	Schools had a duty to deliver a curriculum based programme of careers education. They also had a duty to provide the careers service with access to young people in order to provide careers advice and guidance.	Schools still have a duty to deliver a curriculum based programme of careers education. At present this applies to Years 9-11 but from September 2004 will apply to years 7-11. They also have a duty to provide the Connexions Service with access to young people in order to provide careers advice and guidance.
<b>Performance targets</b>	Careers services had input-focused targets, such as number of careers plans completed.	Connexions has outcome-based targets, such as reduction in number of young people who opt out of education, employment and training.

**(Figure 1).**How advice and guidance for young people has changed since the

**3** Partnership working is key to Connexions. Across England, 47 Connexions partnerships have been established between April 2001 and April 2003. The management boards for each partnership include a wide range of agencies providing help to all young people, aiming to provide a single integrated youth support service. Partnerships commonly include organisations such as social services, youth offending teams, careers companies, youth services, local authorities and drugs action teams. To ensure that young people are not 'falling through the gaps', Connexions aims to maintain a comprehensive tracking system for young people aged 13 to 19.

**4** A new profession of Connexions Personal Advisers is being recruited and trained to provide advice and guidance to young people. Personal Advisers are not expected to be experts in all fields, but are able to identify individuals' needs, supply directly or broker the services they need and monitor their progress to ensure they are getting the necessary support. **Figure 2** shows the different ways in which a young person can contact Connexions to obtain advice.

### **Building effective partnerships with other agencies**

**22** If Connexions is to succeed, it needs to build effective partnerships with other agencies. These partnerships should be based on trust, a clear understanding of each others' responsibilities and objectives, joint working to avoid duplication of effort, and sharing of resources and information. Services for young people should be coherent, so that by approaching Connexions, they can be confident of receiving the right advice from the most appropriate source.

**23** The headquarters staff at the partner agencies and departments we consulted were broadly happy with their relationships with the Connexions Service and were clear about what Connexions wants to achieve.

The partnerships we visited agreed that local relationships and personalities were the crucial factors determining how quickly they were able to move to true partnership working.



**Figure 2** Different ways in which a young person can contact Connexions to obtain advice.

## Conclusion

**27** The Connexions Service has made good progress in improving the way that young people receive advice and guidance. It provides good quality advice to young people who are seen by Personal Advisers, and is working well to build strong partnerships with other agencies. The proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training fell by 8 per cent in the established partnership areas between November 2002 and 2003, indicating that the Service is on track for achieving the target of a 10 per cent reduction in the proportion of young people not engaged in education, employment or training. This would be a significant step forward as the proportion has remained static for some years. The fact that 181,000 16-18 year olds were estimated to be outside of employment, education or training in 2002 (ONS/DfES First Release SFR 31/2003) demonstrates the importance of preventative work at an early stage in a young person's life.

There is still a risk that not all young people who would benefit from advice are receiving it. This gap is due to Connexions operating with fewer resources than was originally anticipated, together with a lack of clarity regarding the respective role of schools and the Connexions Service in providing careers advice to young people. Closing this gap would help ensure that young people make the most of their opportunities.

## Recommendations

The Department should:

**1 encourage partnerships to set local targets for reducing the level of young people not in education, training or employment that best reflect local conditions.** The ten per cent target is a national target, but all partnerships are expected to achieve it. While all the partnerships we visited were confident that they would achieve it, there were marked differences of opinion as to whether the target was sufficiently

challenging. Each additional 1 per cent reduction nationally would mean 1,700 young people re-engaging in education, employment or training with economic savings of £165 million.

**2 use the data they now hold on young people and their case histories to analyse the optimum level of intervention for those who need intensive support.**

The national database, when fully operational, will allow insights into how often young people leave education, training and employment, and for how long. This information could be used to explore whether the level and type of interventions by Personal Advisers has any influence on these outcomes. Such an analysis could inform the discussion on how far Connexions can expect to achieve a continued reduction in the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training.

**3 review whether schools have the capacity to provide adequate careers education and guidance to young people.** At present, not all schools are confident that all their pupils enjoy an appropriate level of support. The Department should identify the causes of this gap and ensure that all young people who need it have access to high quality, impartial advice and guidance. For example, it may be necessary to train a higher proportion of schools staff in qualifications that allows them to coordinate and deliver careers advice and guidance. It will also be essential to clarify the respective roles of Connexions and schools in providing careers education, advice and guidance.

**4 set a clear target for when the Department expects the majority of Personal Advisers to have completed Connexions specific training.**

**5 revise the current approach to funding partnerships so that partnerships have greater certainty over the budget they will receive over a three-year period.**

At present, funds are allocated annually, so partnerships are wary of making long-term commitments to partners or making capital investments.

**6 develop measurable performance indicators for the full range of a partnership's activity.** These indicators could build on the research that the Department has already commissioned into customer satisfaction, looking at issues such as the value that young people place on advice and the perceived approachability and professionalism of Personal Advisers.

**7 continue to work with partner agencies to implement data-sharing agreements, learning from and replicating the successes that have already been achieved in some parts of the country.** Partnerships should, where possible, take advantage of web-based electronic data-sharing to enable information on young people to be shared systematically with local partners. The Department should also remain apprised of and contribute to the development of a unique identification number for young people, making it easier to track their progress.

**8 work with schools to ensure that all staff fully understand the role of Personal Advisers and know when to refer young people for specialist support.** Many Partnerships already work with schools to advertise the presence and role of Connexions in schools. The level of success for Connexions depends on the extent to which schools cooperate with Connexions to coordinate support mechanisms for young people.



### **Rachel - Personal Adviser**

A graduate with a Personal Adviser Diploma and careers guidance qualifications, Rachel works in an Education Out of School centre for children who can't be educated in mainstream. She also works within a secondary school, and works with the NEET group in her area. She says, "As well as offering careers advice and guidance we offer personal support in a vast array of areas - for poor attendance, family problems, not keeping up with homework, drugs and alcohol, teenage health, pregnancy - any issue preventing them having a successful life in and outside school."

**9 encourage front-line staff to cooperate fully with Connexions partnerships,** being aware that the Connexions Strategy is a cross-cutting approach that has been endorsed by seven secretaries of state. In particular, all staff involved in data-sharing with Connexions partnership should implement data-sharing agreements as soon as possible, learning from the successes that have already been achieved in some partnership areas within the framework of data protection legislation.

## Appendix 8

### Participating Partners in the BYG National and Local Structures

BYG is managed by a partnership of key stakeholders – Government Departments and agencies, employer and trade union representatives, education and training providers, local employment, development and youth organisations, led by the Department of Social Protection. It includes both a national and local partnership structure to manage implementation and to ensure that lessons feed back into national policy.

**The *National Steering Group* comprises senior representatives from the organisations that have a role in the development and delivery of the pilot Youth Guarantee:**

- **Activating Dublin** (a collaboration between Dublin Chamber of Commerce & Dublin City Council): Jamie Cudden
- **City of Dublin Education & Training Board**: Jacinta Stewart
- **Department of Education & Skills**: Paul Keating
- **Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation**: Paul Cullen
- **Department of Social Protection**: Paul Carroll (Chair & Project Manager), Kasey Treadwell Shine (National Coordinator of Ireland's Youth Guarantee) and Vincent Hegarty (Area Manager Ballymun and Chairman of BYG LIG)
- **Dublin City Council**: Brendan Kenny
- **Ibec**: Tony Donohoe
- **Irish Congress of Trade Unions**: Sylvia Ryan
- **Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)**: Ciaran Reid
- **National Youth Council of Ireland**: James Doorley
- **SOLAS**: Mary Lyons

**The *Local Implementation Team* comprises representatives of key stakeholders in the delivery of the Youth Guarantee, including:**

- **Ballymun JobCentre & Local Employment Service**: Mick Creedon
- **Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYR)**: Christine Lodge
- **Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership**: Fiona Descoteaux
- **City of Dublin Education and Training Board**: David Treacy, Maria Murphy, Michael Rohan and Celia Rafferty
- **Department of Social Protection**: Vincent Hegarty (Chair)
- **Fast Tack to Information Technology (FIT)**: George Ryan
- **North Dublin Chamber of Commerce**: Mark Kellett, CEO of Magnet Networks
- **Probation Service**: Rachael Lillis

## **“Ballymun Youth Guarantee Declaration”**

In order to increase the employability of young unemployed people and support them into sustainable jobs, Government agencies, local organisations and employers should work together and adopt the good practice principles identified by the Ballymun pilot Youth Guarantee including:

- *The partnership approach involving key stakeholders including relevant Government Departments and agencies, employer and trade union representatives, education and training providers, and local development and youth organisations can realise synergies, capitalises on the expertise of partners and can better identify gaps and solutions.*
- *Stakeholders should commit to partnership approaches. Effective partnership arrangements should be maintained, developed and supported as a means of facilitating stakeholders to work collaboratively to secure good outcomes for unemployed youth*
- *Young people need to be supported along a pathway to long-term sustainable employment through the provision of appropriate guidance and good quality education, training and work experience opportunities.*
- *Education and training provision should support the progression of participants to further education, higher skills and ultimately sustainable employment.*
- *State employment, education and training services should consider the views and respond to the needs of young people and employers.*
- *Employers should be encouraged to engage in shaping training programmes and providing quality work experience and employment opportunities that are of mutual benefit to young people and business.*

This Declaration is signed by the members of the National Steering Group and Local Implementation Group of the Ballymun pilot Youth Guarantee, comprising Ballymun Job Centre/LESN, Ballymun Regional Youth Resource, Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership, City of Dublin Education and Training Board, the Department of Education and Skills, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Department of Social Protection, Dublin Chamber of Commerce, Dublin City Council, FIT Ltd., Ibec, Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Irish Local Development Network, National Youth Council of Ireland, North Dublin Chamber of Commerce and SOLAS.

