

BLANCHARDSTOWN AREA PARTNERSHIP FÁILTE ISTEACH CASE STUDY

Background

The integration of non-Irish nationals is vital to Ireland's future social and economic cohesion. With more than 140 nationalities now living in the catchment area of Blanchardstown Area Partnership, the challenge is greater than ever. The analysis of 2011 census data illustrates that non-Irish nationals now account for 23.5% (23,183) of all residents in Dublin 15. This is almost double the State average of 12%. Citizens from 'the rest of the world' (9,393), 'other EU 27' (5,678) and Poland (4,448) represent the largest numbers of non-Irish nationals resident in the area. In some small areas of Dublin 15 there are now more non-Irish nationals than Irish nationals living in the community.

A specific question on ethnic or cultural background was originally included on the 2006 census form. Significant growth occurred within most of the non-Irish ethnic groups. From a longer-term policy integration perspective it is important to point out that unemployment levels nationally are higher among than foreign nationals than Irish persons e.g. 38.8% for Romanians, Nigerian 38.7%, Other African 48.9% and Asian 48.3%, 15.8% for Irish nationals. For the first time ever in a national census, the ability of speakers of foreign languages to speak English in households was included as a distinct question. 824 persons indicated that they spoke English 'not at all well', and an additional 3,573 stated they spoke English 'not well' in Dublin 15. This data provides evidence of the challenge in integrating non-Irish nationals, which is matched by national and international research¹.

Strategies and Objectives



One of the key actions taken by Blanchardstown Area Partnership, in conjunction with our targeted employment and training actions, has been the provision of English language support through the Fáiilte Isteach programme. This initiative was first established by the Third Age Centre based in Summerhill, Co. Meath 2006, and it was introduced to Dublin 15 by the Partnership's Community Development team in 2011.

Fáiilte Isteach involves older persons volunteering their time to teach conversational English language skills to non-Irish nationals. Participants' English language skills are tested by tutors, several of whom have TEFL qualifications. Programmes are delivered at beginner, intermediate and advanced level English, including grammar tuition. Specific materials are used by tutors to facilitate instruction. The project is being run from the Partnership's main office in Dillon House, and also from two outreach centres in Mountview and Tyrrelstown Estate.

¹ European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, *Access to employment for vulnerable groups*, Foundation Paper No.2, Luxembourg, Office for the Official Publications for the European Communities, 2002

Monitoring, Evaluation and Outcomes

Individuals who attend Fáilte Isteach are recorded under GOAL 2 of the Local Community Development Programme via the IRIS monitoring system. They can be tracked in terms of their progression status, e.g. increased confidence levels, referral to accredited training, registering with Local Employment Service and access to employment. Random surveys of participants are undertaken to ascertain labour market status prior to registration on the course, and six months after completing the course. The types of short, medium and longer term outcomes the interventions intend to achieve are as follows:

Short Term - Participants gain access to a new network of contacts and friends through regular interaction at the sessions; they are able to build their confidence levels in communicating; they become much more aware and knowledgeable of services available in their local community; they exhibit higher self-esteem; and they identify improved aspirations and expectations for their life in Ireland.

Medium Term – Participants are recognised as having improved English language proficiency; they are provided with links to the outreach offices containing community development services; by being linked into the Partnership’s Local Employment Service, participants are supported to be more active in accessing the labour market; and volunteer tutors and participants have registered with the Fingal Volunteer Centre which has its base in the Partnership’s main office.

Long Term - Fáilte Isteach is helping to support the integration of non-Irish nationals within the community of Dublin 15; it is also breaking down prejudices between non-Irish nationals and Irish nationals; the programme provides both cultural and employment related information to new residents of Dublin 15; through access to the partnership’s employment and training services, participants are able to improve their CV and build their job seeking skills; and the initiative is helping to promote the value of older persons’ contribution to society after retirement.

Funding for the Fáilte Isteach programme is provided through the Local Community Development Programme, supported by participant contributions. In addition, and in recognition of the need for more advanced English language training, Blanchardstown Area Partnership has provided more focused English language courses during the summer months. These short term courses enable students to progress and free up spaces for new students.

A total of 192 participants have enrolled in the Fáilte Isteach English language programme over the years 2011 to 2013. Each participant availed of up to 40 sessions per year, and new participants are enrolled as others progress out of the programme. In the first half of 2014, up to 750 sessional places have already been provided through the Fáilte Isteach programme, and this level of provision will continue to the end of the year.

Blanchardstown Area Partnership and our partners, the Department of Social Protection and Fingal County Council, were successful in our application to the European Integration Fund for Third Country Nationals. This is enabling us to deliver an additional level of English language training in 2014 which is specifically focused on Third Country Nationals on the Live Register. This training includes job seeking skills and career guidance, and is vital for this target group to progress towards the labour market.