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Evaluation of the Work of the Blanchardstown EQUAL Initiative 2002 - 2005

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Foreword

Back in 2001, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment sought proposals from groups working with people who were out of work and experiencing exclusion from the labour market. The call for innovative pilot projects was made under a newly-launched EU initiative called EQUAL.

Blanchardstown, like most of Ireland, had seen strong economic growth in the late-1990s, but this did not reach all parts of the area. Those of us working on the ground knew that target groups such as people with disabilities; ex-offenders; drug users; Travellers; non-nationals and disadvantaged young people were not moving into the new jobs being created. Standard routes for entry or re-entry into the labour market did not seem to work for many people from these groups.

Following extensive local consultation, a successful application for a Blanchardstown EQUAL project was submitted in 2001, with Blanchardstown Area Partnership as the Designate Partner. Nine specific pilot actions were identified, covering:

- New approaches to interacting with the six target groups mentioned above, to support people in moving into the workforce;
- Pilot supports for young people already in low-skilled jobs, to support career progression and up-skilling;
- An effort to bring together different agencies working with drug users locally to see if common protocols could be developed to help the agencies to significantly increase their co-operation;
- Work to build relationships with local employers, and increase their knowledge of equality and diversity issues.

In implementing its pilot actions, the Blanchardstown EQUAL project involved a huge amount of work over the past three years. The work involved over 25 local organisations, ten of which took a direct role in a management committee that met every six weeks or so over the period. The work of the DP was greatly enhanced by four strong working groups which operated over the life of the project:

- A working group to lead the pilot action on inter-agency protocols;
- A working group to lead the equality and diversity work with employers;
- A working group to oversee the commitments in our Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA); and
- A financial working group to oversee all aspects of project expenditure.

Like all EU EQUAL projects, the transnational element is of vital importance to generate new ideas and new ways of working at a local level. Our partner projects in Portugal, Germany, France, Britain and the Czech Republic provided many opportunities to share best international practice. Our TCA ensured that we developed cross-border actions, bringing together the best elements of our transnational experiences. Blanchardstown played a key role in transnational actions on linking with employers, on inter-agency protocols and on client consultation processes. Aspects of the ideas shared by Blanchardstown have already been adopted in Portugal and the UK. Our project also benefited greatly from the transnational dimension of EQUAL and this has already effected change in local work practices, especially based on learning from our French, Portuguese and UK partners

The EU EQUAL Initiative provides a space for new ideas to be piloted on labour market inclusion. A crucial part of EQUAL is that these ideas are recorded and disseminated and, to this end, Blanchardstown EQUAL commissioned this independent Evaluation of the project's work. For my part, having been involved in Blanchardstown EQUAL since its initiation, and having chaired this dynamic project over the last three years, I would say it has generated four strong outcomes:

1. A better understanding of, and greater links to, employers in Blanchardstown;
2. Better inter-agency co-operation and methods of working;
3. Better consultation processes with end target groups.
4. A better appreciation of national and international best practice.

The Evaluation describes in detail the work undertaken by Blanchardstown EQUAL, the outputs of the project actions, and the lessons emerging. Chapter 6 identifies learning arising for mainstream organisations, including the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; the Department of Education and Science; the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; the Health Service Executive; FÁS; the Prison Service, the National Drugs Task Force; the National Disability Authority and the Equality Authority. There are also lessons for employer organisations and trade unions.

As Chairperson of Blanchardstown EQUAL, I have witnessed the real commitment of local statutory and voluntary agencies in delivering on this initiative. I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of people in this regard. I sincerely thank all members of the Development Partnership for their commitment to the project, especially the Designate Partner - Blanchardstown Area Partnership - and in particular Derek Hanway, Linda Curran and Helen Purcell. I want to acknowledge the financial contributions by NAHB, the Probation and Welfare Service, FÁS, Fingal County Council and the LES by way of match funding - these allowed us to draw down our full financial allocation from EQUAL. I want to thank Terry McCabe and Margaret Hughes, the Project Co-ordinator and Administrator, for their support to the project actions, and in ensuring the project was managed so effectively. I would like to thank the Chairs of our working groups which ensured the project ran so smoothly - Susan Bookle (BAP), Cathal Morgan (NAHB), Ann-Marie Farrell (Fingal County Council) and Niall Mulligan (CDT). Thank you to Tommy Murray and William Parnell from the Dept. of Enterprise, Trade and Employment for their guidance and support. Thanks also to the staff at the WRC, in particular Tony Tyrrell, Ciara Monahan and Tony Ward, for their technical support. Thanks to Finbar McDonnell of Hibernian Consulting for his work with us during the project, and on this Evaluation. And finally, thanks to the Committee and staff of BOND (Blanchardstown Offenders for New Direction) for allowing me the time and space to act as Chairperson of the Blanchardstown EQUAL project over the past three years.

The Evaluation confirms, and documents, what those of us involved in Blanchardstown EQUAL already knew - the project has generated exciting new ideas to support a range of target groups, and has been a catalyst for community and statutory organisations in Blanchardstown to come together in common cause. I hope the Evaluation will be widely disseminated and will inform mainstream policies and practices. Our main actions and outcomes are posted on our transnational website www.sapiens.net or can be accessed via the Blanchardstown Area Partnership website.

The challenge in Blanchardstown as the project comes to an end is to maintain processes which allow local organisations to work together, to ensure the good work under EQUAL from 2002 to 2005 is built upon. If this happens, and the area receives its fair share of funding under national labour market programmes, then major progress can be made in the coming years to ensure a more equal labour market for all of the people of Blanchardstown.

Mr. Pat Doyle,
Chairperson, Blanchardstown EQUAL Project
May 2005

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The EQUAL Programme

EQUAL is an EU-wide programme that runs from 2000 to 2006. Overseen by the European Commission's DG for Employment and Social Affairs, and part-funded by the European Social Fund, the European Commission describes EQUAL as follows :

"EQUAL forms part of the European Union strategy to create more and better jobs and to make sure that no one is denied access to these jobs. As the Community Initiative of the European Social Fund, EQUAL is the learning platform that finds new ways of achieving the policy objectives of the European Employment Strategy and Social Inclusion Process. EQUAL differs from the mainstream European Social Fund programmes in that it is a laboratory to develop new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality in the labour market. EQUAL presents evidence of good practice for these innovative approaches, with an emphasis on active co-operation between Member States, thus ensuring that the most positive results are adopted and shared across Europe.¹"

Key to EQUAL, therefore, is that it aims to avoid replicating existing ideas and approaches from mainstream programmes, but to create a space in which new and innovative ideas around labour market inclusion can be piloted and reviewed.

When EQUAL was designed in 2000, it was decided to fund innovative projects under the (then) four 'pillars' of the European Employment Strategy:

- Employability, to support individuals outside the labour force in re-entering work;
- Entrepreneurship;
- Adaptability, to support organisations in adapting to change; and
- Equal Opportunities.

In Ireland, EQUAL has a budget of €47m for 2000-06. Of this, €33.9m is contributed by the ESF, €11m by national public funding and €2.1m by the private sector. While this amount is tiny compared to the spending of mainstream HR and labour market programmes², the idea, as stated above, is that EQUAL should encourage new thinking, with good ideas that emerge being transferred into mainstream practice and policy.

EQUAL in Ireland is overseen by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and by a national Monitoring Committee, which includes representatives of those Government Departments and agencies whose work is linked to issues of equality or the labour market, the social partners, the Regional Authorities and the Special EU Programmes Body (which promotes North/South co-operation). The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment has set up a Technical Support Structure for EQUAL, which supports projects on a day-to-day level. Since 2003, a national Mainstreaming Policy Group has supported the mainstreaming of learning arising from EQUAL projects.

The programme has been divided into two 'rounds', and the first call for projects was made in Summer 2001, leading to 21 Irish projects being chosen for funding in November 2001. Blanchardstown EQUAL was one of these projects.

1 European Commission (2003), Communication establishing guidelines for Round 2 of EQUAL - COM (2003) 840. For further information, see www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal

2 The EQUAL budget of €47m for 2000-06 is equivalent to one-third of 1% of the budget of €14,200m (€14.2b) for the mainstream Employment and Human Resource Development programme

1.2 The Blanchardstown EQUAL Project

1.2.1 Overview of Blanchardstown EQUAL Project

The Blanchardstown EQUAL Project is funded under the Employability 'pillar' of EQUAL. After a six-month development phase between November 2001 and May 2002, the project ran for a three-year period to May 2005. This broke into a number of phases, broadly as follows:

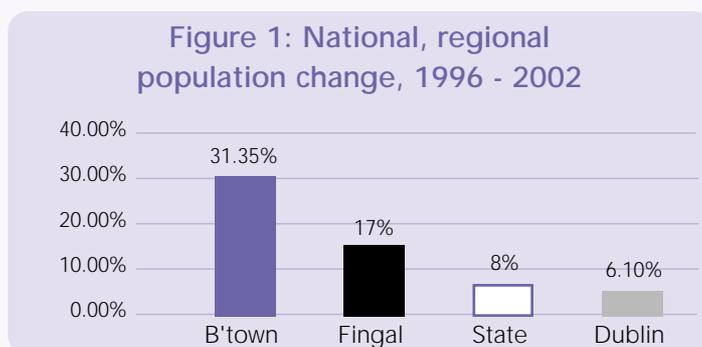
- The period from May to December 2002 involved an intensive phase of project planning, with plans developed for each of the project's individual actions (see below), and a Project Manager recruited;
- The period during 2003 and 2004 involved nine innovative actions being piloted in Blanchardstown – and the key work of the transnational partnership of which the project was part also took place;
- Starting in 2004 and continuing into 2005, outcomes emerging from the project actions were disseminated to interested organisations and policy makers.

The total budget for the Blanchardstown EQUAL Project was €949,000 of which €712,000 (75%) came from the European Social Fund, with the remaining €237,000 provided as match funding by the project partners. Over the project lifetime, the spending was €176,000 in 2002; €289,000 in 2003; €459,000 in 2004 and €25,000 in 2005.

1.2.2 Labour Market Context for EQUAL Application

This section presents some background information on the labour market in Blanchardstown³, with a specific focus on its four RAPID areas, in which many of the people experiencing labour market exclusion in Blanchardstown live. The section draws on April 2002 Census data and, while this was collected six months after EQUAL funding was provided to the project, it reflects well the labour market situation pertaining when the Blanchardstown EQUAL application was drawn up in mid-2001.

As an outer-suburb of Dublin, the population of Blanchardstown grew from 38,600 in 1996 to 50,600 in 2002, an increase of 31%, or almost four times the national level of increase. These figures mean that the population of Blanchardstown had surpassed that of counties such as Carlow, Leitrim and Longford in 2002



Significant employment was generated in Blanchardstown in the years before 2001 by the new Institute of Technology, the Blanchardstown (retail) Centre and the establishment and/or expansion of multinational companies, particularly in the IT and pharmaceutical sectors. However, the period also saw a number of company closures in traditional sectors of the economy. .

³ The area referred to as Blanchardstown in this report is the area covered by Blanchardstown Area Partnership.

Four areas of Blanchardstown are designated under the national RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) programme, which identifies and targets areas of concentrated disadvantage.

These areas are:

- All of the Corduff DED;
- The Wellview and Parslickstown Estates in the Tyrrelstown DED;
- The Dromheath Estate in the Mulhuddart DED;
- The Whitestown, Sheepmoor, Fortlawn and Whitechapel estates in Coolmine DED.

Unemployment rates for the four DEDs with RAPID areas in the 2002 Census were: Corduff 16%; Tyrrelstown 23%; Mulhuddart 18%; and Coolmine 15%. The equivalent national figure in 2002 was 5.7%.

Other distinctive characteristics of the labour market in Blanchardstown and in the four RAPID areas in 2002 were as follows:

- The four RAPID areas had much higher proportions of people who left school early than in the state as a whole. For example, the rate was 48% in Tyrrelstown (compared to 22% for the state);
- The proportion of households headed by a lone parent was significantly higher than the national average;
- Blanchardstown had a large non-national population – over 5,500 people;
- Blanchardstown had a significant Traveller population, some 650 people;
- Blanchardstown had a younger population profile than the national average, with 32% of the population aged 0-14 compared to 23.7% for the state as a whole – the figures rose further for areas such as Tyrrelstown (51%) and Mulhuddart (50%);
- Local agencies working with Blanchardstown Area Partnership were reporting an increase in the number of those in paid employment, but still at risk of poverty.

Local economic growth in the years up to 2001 therefore occurred side by side with ongoing high levels of labour market exclusion in particular parts of Blanchardstown, especially in the four RAPID areas. The 2002 Census showed these areas to have rates of unemployment of between 15% and 23%, well above the national average. The data suggests that these unemployed people were excluded from the employment being generated locally, and in the wider Dublin labour market.

1.2.3 Blanchardstown EQUAL Project Application

Following a series of local consultations in 2001, a 'Development Partnership'⁴ (DP) for a Blanchardstown EQUAL Project was formed, containing the following organisations:

- Blanchardstown Area Partnership (Designate Partner);
- FÁS;
- Northern Area Health Board;
- Probation and Welfare Service;
- Fingal County Council;
- Blakestown-Mountview Youth Initiative;
- Blanchardstown Travellers Development Group (CDP);
- Centre for Independent Living;
- BOND (Blanchardstown Offenders for New Directions) Project;
- BARN (Blanchardstown Asylum-seeker and Refugee Network);
- LDA (Learning Development Agency);
- Blanchardstown LES (Local Employment Service) - Joblink;
- Blanchardstown Youthreach Centre (part of County Dublin VEC);
- Blanchardstown Youth Service;
- Blakestown-Mountview Community Drugs Team.

⁴ Projects under the EQUAL Programme must be established as 'Development Partnerships' with multiple organisations coming together to implement pilot actions and document learning arising

An EQUAL funding proposal submitted by these 15 organisations was approved in November 2001.

These organisations formed the core of the project over its 2002-2005 lifetime. However, a number of other local organisations (e.g. other Community Drug Teams, the Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce and local companies) became involved in specific project actions – these are listed in Chapters 3-5 in relation to the specific actions in which they were involved.

1.3 Objectives and Actions of Blanchardstown EQUAL

1.3.1 Overall Project Objective

Documentation developed during the project development phase of the Blanchardstown EQUAL Project sets out the project's overall aim:

"The aim of the Blanchardstown EQUAL Project is to tackle the factors that lead to discrimination and inequality, and to effect structural change within organisations and companies (statutory, voluntary and private) in the Blanchardstown area for the benefit of individuals and groups trying to access employment opportunities."

This overall aim was supplemented by six specific project objectives:

- To effect long-term structural change (and attitudinal change) in organisations and service providers working in the area through pilot actions;
- To provide support to individuals and groups experiencing discrimination from public services and employers so as to facilitate greater representation of the target groups in employment in the Blanchardstown area (and elsewhere);
- To address the lack of, or the poor, co-ordination and integration of the health and social services directed at the target groups and to facilitate access to employment by developing service standards, models of best practice and inter-agency protocols;
- To work with employers, service providers and individuals/groups to secure broad employment supports for groups experiencing discrimination and inequality;
- To identify and measure the outcomes throughout the process, and arising from it, and to implement a dissemination and mainstreaming strategy in the partner organisations to ensure that the project learning is disseminated and policy change is effected;
- To facilitate the holistic and integrated delivery of services to the target groups.

1.3.2 Project Actions

Given the above objectives of the project, a key challenge in 2002 was to identify specific actions to achieve the objectives. Following a period of consultation at local level between the 15 organisations involved in the EQUAL application, and discussions with the EQUAL Technical Support Structure at national level, nine pilot actions were identified. It was realised that some of these might not be a success but that, in the spirit of EQUAL being a "laboratory to develop new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality in the labour market", a range of actions should be piloted.

These actions, described in Chapters 3-5, are listed in Table 1 on the following page.

Table 1: Pilot Actions under Blanchardstown EQUAL Project

Actions targeted at groups experiencing labour market exclusion (Chapter 3)
1. Innovative training and supports for drug users
2. Innovative training and supports for people with disability
3. New ways of reaching the hardest-to-reach ex-offenders
4. Innovative training and supports for Traveller men
5. Life Skills courses for asylum seekers and refugees
Actions targeted at Young People (Chapter 4)
6. Innovations in delivery of Youthreach training
7. Work Clubs to support young people in low-skilled employment
Actions targeted at Labour Market Intermediate Organisations and Employers (Chapter 5)
8. Development of common protocols by agencies working with drug users
9. Promotion of greater equality and diversity in local companies

Table 1 shows that the project undertook a range of diverse innovative actions, both in terms of the nature of the actions and the target groups identified.

As well as the above actions, implemented by a range of local organisations, the EQUAL Programme requires that projects have a transnational partnership, i.e. with like-minded EQUAL projects from other EU Member States. The idea is that organisations involved in EQUAL projects in different Member States will learn from each other, and innovative pilot actions will transfer internationally

The Blanchardstown EQUAL Project was part of the SAPIENS transnational partnership, which included partners from the UK, Portugal, Germany, the Czech Republic and France. The work this partnership is described in Chapter 2.

1.4 Objectives, Methodology and Structure of Evaluation

This Evaluation has a number of objectives:

- to describe and comment on the operation of the Development Partnership, and the achievements of the SAPIENS transnational partnership (Chapter 2);
- to record the work undertaken under the nine pilot actions of the Blanchardstown EQUAL Project, and the outputs arising from them (Chapters 3-5) – this is an important objective in that it allows for dissemination of the work of the project;
- to draw some conclusions on the potential of the pilot actions to influence mainstream policy and practice (Chapter 6).

Undertaking the Evaluation involved a number of phases of work.

The first phase involved a review of project and other relevant documentation. Specifically, this involved a review of:

- Wider material and literature on the EU EQUAL Initiative;
- The original project proposal submitted by the Blanchardstown EQUAL project, as well as the revised Action Plan submitted in 2002;

- The nine Action Plans that had been prepared by the pilot actions under Blanchardstown EQUAL in late-2002 and early-2003;
- Reports produced subsequently by individual actions, such as specific pieces of research, forms completed by trainees regarding training received and evaluation reports on individual actions;
- Outputs arising from the transnational work of the project.

Having reviewed the secondary materials, a meeting was held with the people responsible for each of the nine pilot actions. This series of meetings began in Summer 2004 and further meetings were held as specific actions finished their work. Meetings were supplemented by further telephone discussions with people involved in specific actions. The focus of the meetings was on understanding the work of the actions and the outputs arising, obtaining any quantitative information on participants and progression, and discussing the successes and failures of each action compared to the original plan.

The process was underpinned by a number of meetings with the Project Manager, who provided information on the administration of the project over its lifetime, and provided background information and data on the project actions.

Having completed these research steps, a draft Evaluation report was circulated to DP members for comment before a final report was completed.

The research for the Evaluation was largely undertaken in the second half of 2004 and in the first quarter of 2005. Hibernian Consulting would like to thank all of those involved with the project who gave their time to support the process. In particular, we would like to thank Mr. Pat Doyle (Chairperson, Blanchardstown EQUAL), Ms. Terry McCabe (Project Manager) and Ms. Margaret Hughes (Project Administrator) for their input and assistance.

Chapter 2: Blanchardstown EQUAL as a Development Partnership

2.1 Importance of Partnership in EQUAL

Partnership is a core principle of the EQUAL Programme. This is intended to manifest itself both at local level, through the formation of 'Development Partnerships', and at international level through transnational partnerships.

In relation to the idea of a DP, the European Commission states ⁵: "The objective of partnership ... is to bring together actors who co-operate in a Development Partnership to develop an integrated approach to the multi-dimensional problems of discrimination by pooling their efforts and resources in pursuit of innovative solutions to jointly defined problems and common goals. This necessitates the involvement of a wide range of actors; where those involved in the implementation of activities should also take part in decision making; on the basis of a commonly agreed (and written) work programme ...".

In relation to the formation of partnerships with EQUAL projects in other countries, the European Commission states: "Co-operation across Member States is a fundamental aspect of EQUAL and ... considerable policy innovation can be achieved through transnational collaboration. Transnational partnership can deliver:

- Insights into the nature of discrimination, inequality and labour market exclusion;
- Improved strategies and actions in the light of experience in other Member States (at national as well as at Development Partnership level);
- Benchmark strategies and actions across several Member States;
- Credibility to the work carried out by the DP as far as opinion leaders and decision makers are concerned".

Chapter 2 looks at both the local DP and the transnational partnership of the Blanchardstown EQUAL project.

2.2 Blanchardstown EQUAL Development Partnership

2.2.1 Project Structure

The structure of the Blanchardstown EQUAL project was as follows:

- The wider Development Partnership of 15 organisations oversaw the project, was kept informed of the work of the project through briefings from the Project Manager and provided overall direction to the project;
- A DP Management Committee, with representatives of 10 of the 15 organisations in the Development Partnership met every six weeks or so between May 2002 and May 2005;
- There was a full-time Project Manager and part-time Project Administrator, based in the offices of Blanchardstown Area Partnership;
- The nine innovative actions piloted by Blanchardstown EQUAL were each implemented by one member organisation of the DP. This meant implementation of the pilot actions was quite decentralised, with organisations having developed an Action Plan for approval before beginning their work, and then reporting to the DP Management Committee at its regular meetings.

⁵ European Commission (2003), Communication on Round 2 of EQUAL, COM (2003) 840

Table 1: Pilot Actions under Blanchardstown EQUAL Project

Innovative Pilot Action	Lead Implementing Agency
Actions targeted at groups experiencing labour market exclusion	
1. Innovative training and supports for drug users	Blakestown-Mountview Community Drugs Team
2. Innovative training and supports for people with disability	Blanchardstown Local Employment Service (LES)
3. New ways of reaching hardest-to-reach ex-offenders	Blanchardstown Offenders for New Directions (BOND) Project
4. Innovative training and supports for Traveller men	Blanchardstown Travellers Development Group
5. Life Skills courses for asylum seekers and refugees	Blanchardstown Asylum-seeker and Refugee Network (BARN)
Actions targeted at Young People	
6. Innovations in delivery of Youthreach training	Blanchardstown Youthreach Centre
7. Work Clubs to support young people in low-skilled employment	Learning Development Agency
Actions targeted at Labour Market Intermediate Organisations and Employers	
8. Development of common protocols by agencies working with drug users	Northern Area Health Board
9. Promotion of greater equality and diversity in local companies	Blanchardstown Area Partnership and Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce

2.2.2 Central Project Functions

Ongoing Tasks during the Lifetime of the Project

Over the lifetime of the project, there were a number of roles undertaken by the Project Manager and Project Administrator at a central level:

- Overseeing the work of the nine actions, including visiting the actions on a regular basis;
- Keeping members of the DP who were not directly involved in actions informed of project activity, as well as ensuring information on the project was available more widely (through leaflets and development of a project website);
- Work relating to the finances of the project. While the actions were responsible for the funding at their own level, the project at a central level reported quarterly to the national EQUAL Technical Support Structure on the overall project finances. It was also responsible for ensuring the project accounts were audited annually;
- Promoting ongoing contacts with other EQUAL projects and speaking at events to promote the profile of the project. This included attending meetings of a thematic network established for Employability projects under EQUAL and speaking at national EQUAL conferences;
- Provision of support to the transnational dimension of the project, including preparation for overseas trips, building itineraries for the visits by overseas partners to Ireland and co-ordinating the Evaluation of the transnational partnership on behalf of the five partners in the Sapiens Network;
- Dissemination of learning arising from the project actions, including the organisations of seminars and conferences (see below);
- Feeding into the development of labour market policy at EU level. A Policy Brief produced by EQUAL at EU level entitled *Harnessing Diversity and Corporate Social Responsibility in Favour of Disadvantaged Groups* specifically cited Blanchardstown EQUAL as an example of successful engagement with SMEs.

Three seminars and conferences were organised by Blanchardstown EQUAL during the period of the project as well as two 'business breakfasts':

- To coincide with the visit of the project's transnational partners in September 2003, a half-day seminar was organised in conjunction with IBM Ireland on the theme of Corporate Social Responsibility. This allowed for the different approaches to the topic in the different partner countries to be presented and discussed, and the seminar was attended by local employers as well as labour market practitioners;
- A seminar was organised with the pilot action relating to ex-offenders. Entitled Changing the Mindset – Inclusion of Ex-prisoners in the Labour Market, speakers included Niall Crowley, Chief Executive of the Equality Authority, Professor Ivana Bacik of Trinity College and Mr. Pat Delaney of the Small Firms Association. The seminar took place over a half-day on 29th June 2004;
- A conference was organised to launch the inter-agency protocols for working with drug users that emerged from the pilot action led by the Northern Area Health Board. Held in Croke Park on the morning of 1st October 2004, this had a large attendance of professionals working with drug users in a variety of contexts;
- As part of the pilot action to improve equality and diversity practices with local employers, two breakfasts were organised in conjunction with Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce to which local employers were invited, and at which the project spoke. At the first of these, research (funded by the Equality Authority) on local employer practices relating to equality was launched.

2.2.3 Functioning of the Development Partnership

Based on the research for this Evaluation, and discussions undertaken with the different actors involved with Blanchardstown EQUAL, a number of outcomes can be identified as regards the Development Partnership.

The project was the catalyst for developing strong local working relationships between a number of organisations working to combat labour market exclusion. These were the organisations who became involved in the DP Management Committee, especially those who also had successful pilot actions, and who became involved in other aspects of the project. In particular, the transnational exchange visits allowed considerable networking to take place between organisations in the DP. These include Blanchardstown Area Partnership, Mountview-Blakestown CDT, BOND and the Northern Area Health Board.

Outside of the organisations directly involved in the DP, the ethos of partnership suggested by the DP led to pilot actions developing new partners. This was particularly evident in the actions of the Northern Area Health Board and with local employers – see Chapter 5.

An off-shoot of the project which led to new ideas and relationships was the process in 2004 of preparing an application for a second round of EQUAL funding. This led to new contacts with large local employers, including a new hotel development, the Blanchardstown Institute of Technology and different departments within Fingal County Council. As the project ended in May 2005, it was planning how to build on these contacts to promote local labour market inclusion.

Overall, the Blanchardstown EQUAL experience showed the value of the idea of the Development Partnership. It supported the emergence of some long-term relationships between local organisations and labour market practitioners, which will benefit their respective target groups. These organisations include statutory bodies as well as community organisations, so the learning that took place is likely to have included a better understanding of the different types of organisation cultures and approaches, as well as the personal relationships that emerged. The challenge post-EQUAL will be to create an opportunity for these relationships to continue to develop, and to consider how this will occur even if specific individuals involved move to new jobs.

2.3 SAPIENS Transnational Partnership

2.3.1 Objectives of SAPIENS Partnership

Following a process of meeting possible partners in 2002, the Blanchardstown EQUAL Project became part of the SAPIENS transnational partnership. This involved the following other partners:

- The i-Work project based in Reading (UK);
- The AIR (Recruitment and Progression) project in Lille (France);
- The 'Artisans Network' project with drug users in the Algarve Region (Portugal);
- The Job Rotation – New Paths project in Hamburg (Germany); and
- The Flexible Workplace project based in Prague (Czech Republic), funded under the EU Phare Programme.

A Transnational Co-operation Agreement between the partners was agreed in April 2002 and set out four objectives for the partnership:

- Developing joint tools and methods to tackle barriers to sustainable employment
- Facilitating an international network of professionals in coming together and sharing best practice
- Tackling employer attitudes to recruiting from marginalised groups by improving methods of interaction with them ('social marketing')
- Supporting cross-national strategies on labour market inclusion.

2.3.2 Work of the SAPIENS Network

Three of the six Sapiens partners had previously worked together in the area of Job Rotation and, in the early stages of the Sapiens project, the structures reflected this earlier work. However, from mid-2003, the work was re-organised into three main 'Special Interest Groups (SIGs)' reflecting the wider interests of the partners. Blanchardstown EQUAL played an important role in structuring the work of the partnership in this regard. The project also took the role of Chair of the partnership Steering Group and an evaluation of the work of the Sapiens Network found that the Sapiens partners felt that this role had allowed for open discussions at Steering Group level, facilitating decisions being made quickly and, generally, by agreement.

The work of the three SIGs of the Sapiens Network is described briefly in the following paragraphs.

The SIG on Drug Users involved intensive inputs from the Irish, British and Portuguese partners. Processes of interacting with this target group were compared across the three countries and a trip was organised by Blanchardstown EQUAL for participants on local projects who took part in activities with their Portuguese counterparts. In 2004, processes on inter-agency co-operation being developed by Blanchardstown EQUAL were piloted by both the British and Portuguese partners. Two outputs were produced by the SIG, with the Blanchardstown EQUAL project taking a lead role in both:

- A document called Avoid Consultation at Your Peril! on consultation processes with drug users
- A document on how different agencies working with drug users in a locality can work together based on agreed protocols relating to confidentiality and definition of a lead agency.

The SIG on Job Rotation attempted to customise this labour market tool (commonly used in other EU countries) for new situations. Job Rotation involves taking existing workers out of companies to up-skill them based on the needs of the company. While they are being trained, unemployed people (specifically trained) take their jobs. After the period of training, if the company workers who were trained progress within the organisation, this can create space for the unemployed people to move from the work placement situation to taking permanent jobs. This SIG developed a six-step generic model for Job Rotation, gathered information

on the use of Job Rotation in different EU Member States, developed guidelines for practitioners implementing a Job Rotation project and identified successful and unsuccessful case studies in Job Rotation. Blanchardstown EQUAL played a full part in the work of this SIG.

The SIG on Social Marketing was led by the French, British and Irish partners. Following an exchange of information on how the different partners interacted with employers, a training programme for labour market practitioners who deal with employers was developed and was piloted over two days in January 2005. Blanchardstown EQUAL played an important role in the work of this SIG. During 2004, it helped to define what precisely the output of the SIG should be, when there were different views being expressed on this matter by different partners. In mid-January 2005, it hosted a meeting to plan in detail the work that would be undertaken at the Brussels training days, and to finalise the training modules. It then provided a facilitator (the Deputy Manager of Blanchardstown Area Partnership, who was a member of the SIG) for most of the pilot training sessions in Brussels, as well as sending a number of practitioners. The efforts of Blanchardstown in this SIG were important in keeping the work to a planned timeframe and in ensuring that the agreed outputs were delivered by all partners.

The outputs of the Sapiens Network are posted on the website – www.sapiensac.net – or can be accessed from Blanchardstown Area Partnership.

To undertake this work, and to facilitate study visits to organisations in the home cities of the partners, the following meetings were attended by Blanchardstown EQUAL.

Table 3: Meetings of Sapiens Network Steering Group and Special Interest Groups

Group(s) Meeting	Location of Meeting	Date
Steering Group	Reading, England	8-9 July 2002
Steering Group	Berlin, Germany	15 September 2002
Steering Group	Aalborg, Denmark (linked to Job Rotation conference)	14-15 November 2002
Steering Group	Berlin, Germany	3 March 2003
Steering Group, first meetings of SIGs	Tampere, Finland (linked to Job Rotation conference)	12-14 June 2003
Steering Group, SIGs	Dublin, Ireland (linked to seminar in IBM Ireland on Corporate Social Responsibility)	25-27 September 2003
Steering Group, SIGs	Lille, France (linked to conference on life-long learning and social inclusion)	20-22 November 2003
Steering Group	Brussels, Belgium	5 February 2004
SIG – Drug Users	Slough, England	5 March 2004
Steering Group, SIGs	Reading, UK (linked to conference on Corporate Social Responsibility for employability)	25-27 March 2004
Steering Group, SIGs	Faro, Portugal (linked to conference – From Exclusion to Inclusion)	21-23 April 2004
Job Rotation SIG and Training Seminar	Prague, Czech Republic	25-28 May 2004
Social Marketing SIG	Lille, France	18 June 2004
SIG – Drug Users	Brussels, Belgium	15-17 July 2004
Steering Group and SIG – Job Rotation	Slough, England	17 September 2004
Steering Group, SIGs	Hamburg, Germany (linked to conference on Diversity and the European Employment Strategy)	18-20 November 2004
Steering Group	Dublin, Ireland	19 January 2005
Social Marketing SIG and Training Seminar	Brussels, Belgium	27-28 January 2005
Steering Group and Final SIG Meetings	Lille, France (linked to conference on tools to bring companies and jobseekers together)	9-11 March 2005

Table 3 shows that formal transnational meetings were hosted by Blanchardstown EQUAL in September 2003 and January 2005. The former included attendance by the transnational partners at a specially organised conference hosted by IBM Ireland in Blanchardstown on Corporate Social Responsibility. Partners were also given presentations on the work of a number of member organisations of the Blanchardstown EQUAL DP, including BOND, the Local Employment Service, the Northern Area Health Board, the Community Drug Teams and the methods of interaction with local employers.

In addition to these two formal visits, representatives of the UK and Portuguese partners attended a conference held in Dublin in October 2004 to launch the work of Blanchardstown EQUAL in relation to inter-agency protocols for drug users (see Chapter 5) and the UK partner spoke at this conference. The British partner separately organised a study trip to Blanchardstown for a number of professionals working with drug user rehabilitation and visited several organisations to understand Irish approaches to this target group.

2.3.3 Comment on SAPIENS Network

The evaluation of the work of the Sapiens Network in early-2005 found that the Network had generally achieved its aims as set out in the 2002 Transnational Co-operation Agreement. When asked about the benefits of the work of the Sapiens Network for their own projects and DP organisations, the partners cited a range of benefits relating to the building of relationships (within and between DPs); the building of personal skills and confidence both of DP employees and target group participants, and the building of knowledge on how to run successful partnerships. Each partner was also able to cite examples of the impact of transnationality on its own actions and methods and Blanchardstown EQUAL cited specific examples of learning in relation to all three SIG areas (drug users, Job Rotation and social marketing) as well as the generation of a range of useful contacts for the future.

This element of the Blanchardstown EQUAL project was therefore a success, and a source of learning and innovation. Those involved in the project believe that the proportion of the project budget devoted to the transnational dimension generated benefits to a value considerably greater than this amount.

Chapter 3: Actions with Groups Excluded from the Labour Market

3.1 Introduction

This is the first of the chapters that reviews the nine actions piloted by the Blanchardstown EQUAL Project. Chapter 3 covers five actions focused on different target groups, all of which were identified by the project as experiencing labour market exclusion in Blanchardstown.

For each of the actions, the idea that was piloted, the work undertaken during the project and efforts to disseminate any learning arising are described. Outputs of the pilot action are listed, and each section ends with a comment on the action.

3.2 Action 1: Tailored Training for Drug Users

3.2.1 Innovative idea of Action

This action was targeted at drug users in the Blanchardstown area. Heroin use grew in the area from the 1980s onwards and the area was identified as one of 12 national areas 'with the highest levels of drug misuse'⁶ in the late-1990s, meaning a Local Drugs Task Force was established. It is estimated that over 1,000 people in the Blanchardstown area are opiate users⁷. In the years before the EQUAL project, three Community Drugs Teams (CDTs) emerged in the area, focused on Mountview/Blakestown, Hartstown/Huntstown and Corduff/Mulhuddart. Their establishment was linked to an increase in funding to help drug users, and publication of the National Drugs Strategy for 2001-08.

The Foreword to the National Drugs Strategy states: 'Drug misuse is one of the great social ills of our time'. One of the seven aims of the Strategy is: 'to enable people with drug misuse problems to access treatment and other supports to re-integrate into society'.

This action arose from the experience of the CDTs in Blanchardstown in 1999-2001. The CDTs worked to support individuals in moving from active drug use to stabilisation, and then towards education, training and employment. However, their experience was that it was difficult for the target group to access, and sustain, training or employment. Reasons included employer attitudes to people who had criminal records, lack of information about methodone among trainers or employers, literacy problems, low skill levels, low levels of personal confidence and unstable or chaotic personal circumstances.

The result was that people who successfully stabilised on methodone found it difficult to progress towards further reintegration into society. This action focused on the 'stabilised' target group, i.e. a sub-set of the wider target group of drug users. It aimed to design a pilot intervention to bridge the identified gap into mainstream training and employment in a planned and supportive manner.

3.2.2 Description of Work Undertaken

A Steering Group for the action was established at its outset (and continued throughout), containing representatives of the VEC, the Learning Development Agency (a local education and training agency), the Northern Area Health Board's Rehabilitation/ Integration Team and the three CDTs. The action was co-ordinated by Mountview/Blakestown CDT. (If repeated, this CDT noted that the programme would need a full-time co-ordinator as running the action while undertaking its existing work programme put significant pressure on staff.)

⁶ As stated in the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008, Section 3.1.6

⁷ Based on data for numbers in treatment and estimates of those not in treatment.

The Steering Group developed an outline for a six-month training programme during Summer 2003 and this was presented to a group of drug users for discussion at an 'away day' in Autumn 2003. This consultation facilitated the client group in saying that it felt the draft programme was too focused on standard education modules (with FETAC certification) and direct job-related material. Their view was that drug users would find a programme targeted more on personal development, self-esteem and self-confidence more effective in supporting progression. This was confirmed in a further half-day of discussion, and the content of the programme was revised. The group also felt a short 'pre-programme' course would enable the group to get to know each other and to decide if they wanted to progress to the full programme.

This demonstrates the value of consulting the end target group (as EQUAL encourages through its 'empowerment' principle) and suggests learning on the requirements of this target group, i.e. too rapid a move towards vocational training may not be what is required as people pass through rehabilitation.

Participants were sourced from the three CDTs and the NAHB Rehab/Integration Team. Some 13 people were chosen to participate and further applicants had to be turned away – indicating a pent-up demand among the target group for such programmes. There was a 7/6 female/male balance on the programme.

A first four-week programme was run in November/December 2003, covering:

- Group development, including the setting of group guidelines;
- Drug issues in work and training;
- Guidance (work and training);
- Social events; and
- Guide to the full six-month programme.

This period was important in identifying practical issues that participants needed to address to participate in the full programme (e.g. childcare or benefits) and in providing a period when people could get into a routine of turning up each morning at 10am for a three-hour programme session. During this stage, each participant was assigned a 'key worker', from their own CDT or from the Rehab team, who provided support over the programme.

This CDTs felt the 'key worker' model worked well over the programme.

The full programme began at start-January 2004 and ran until end-June 2004. Of 13 people who went through the pre-programme stage, 10 entered the full programme and all of these stayed with the programme to the end. The loss of the other three people reflected both circumstances that could arise on any training programme and issues more likely to arise in relation to this target group (e.g. health issues or a crime conviction). The CDTs said that personal networks are very important for people on such programmes to support them at vulnerable times.

The modules in the six-month programme were:

- Personal development;
- Life skills;
- Literacy and creative writing;
- Health and fitness;
- Art and crafts;
- Computers;
- Work preparation;
- Woodturning (optional), with Blanchardstown Youthreach.

Guest speakers talked to the participants on nutrition, health issues and linking to the Local Employment Service. The modules were combined with regular social events and a visit to a similar project being undertaken by the Portuguese transnational partner of Blanchardstown EQUAL (see below).

The CDTs felt that participants found the programme useful and interesting. They particularly praised the art and crafts module, run in association with the Irish Museum of Modern Arts, as being good for participants' confidence levels. They also pointed out the importance of facilities being supportive for this target group, e.g. one module was partly delivered in a building where it was felt other workers were somewhat suspicious of the target group and this negatively affected the participation and attitudes of the people on the programme.

The CDTs noted the importance of talking to participants on an ongoing basis during the programme. For example, some people were drifting away from the programme but it turned out they simply felt that a particular module was progressing too slowly and this was remedied once the issue was identified.

While the action received funding of €33,000 from the EQUAL project for its core programme, and funding for the international exchange visit, its actual cost was higher than this, as it would include:

- The cost of the computer training module, provided 'free' by the VEC;
- 'Out of pocket expenses', paid by the Department of Social and Family Affairs;
- Extra time dedicated to the programme by the Mountview/Blakestown CDT.

In April 2004, eight participants and six supervisors visited the Portuguese partner of Blanchardstown EQUAL. This project ('Artisans Network') involved a one-year rehabilitation programme for drug users, with nine months divided between horticulture or carpentry and interaction with a psychologist; and a three month job placement. Both participants and supervisors found the visit interesting and enjoyable, and it was perceived to have boosted participants' confidence levels. The CDTs felt that the use of a psychologist, the idea of a horticulture work module and the direct links with employers all contained learning for Irish policy. The links with employers in the Portuguese case were forged via a Social Economy project, which offered progression routes into employment for participants after the training programme.

While the different aspects of the pilot action under this action therefore went well, progression of participants afterwards proved difficult.

The participants finished on the programme at end-June 2004. At the outset, the action had hoped that participants would progress to job placements with local employers but this did not occur. The action had contact with the LES during the programme but the transition of people from the programme to working with LES mediators was difficult. The LES mediators work with different target groups and the participants felt the mediators did not fully understand the issues that arise for this specific target group. The LES, on the other hand, felt that the CDT and the LES had somewhat different understandings of each other's roles and that, in some instances, the support required by participants may have been more appropriately provided by the CDT, rather than being the training, education and work related support provided by the LES.

In May 2005, 10 months after the programme ended, the 10 participants were in the following situations:

- One was in employment and two on Community Employment programmes;
- One person was in training and another person was looking for a training course;
- Two people had temporarily disengaged from services, although one was in the process of re-engaging;
- One person was in prison;
- Two people had left the area.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, this action was a key player in developing a transnational document entitled *Avoid Consultation at Your Peril!* This built on the experience of consultation in this action and sets out the benefits and possible drawbacks of consulting with clients, outlines potential methods for client consultation and implications of consultation for service development, as well as asking 'What happens after consultation?'

3.2.3 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

Mountview/Blakestown CDT commissioned an in-depth evaluation of the action⁸. This documents the action in detail and contains recommendations on running of such a programme again. This report was circulated to the different organisations involved in the action, including the Northern Area Health Board, and to FÁS.

3.2.4 Outputs from Action

- Syllabus for six-month training programme for drug users to support (re)entry into mainstream training or employment;
- Piloting of training programme;
- Syllabus for, and piloting of, associated four-week pre-programme course;
- Foundation-level FETAC accreditation received by six people in computers and five people in art ;
- Progression by one person to employment, two people onto CE programmes and one person into training;
- Obtaining of 15,000 extra funding under the Back to Education Initiative;
- Documenting of learning in specific evaluation report on action.

3.2.5 Comment on Action

The difficulty experienced by the three CDTs in supporting progression of their clients indicates that a need exists for a 'bridge' into mainstreaming training courses or employment for drug users. The demand for this pilot programme confirms this need.

In attempting to fill this gap, the design of the programme generated an interesting discussion. The instinct of the mainstream training agencies was towards education-based, accredited training modules whereas the target group itself felt a need to focus on personal development and self-confidence. This has implications for the design of courses for this target group and creates a challenge to ensure quality control if non-accredited courses are widely used. This debate also showed the usefulness of discussing course content with end users.

The programme itself was well designed and delivered and significant credit is due to those on the Action Steering Group, especially the staff of Mountview/Blakestown CDT.

The Portuguese project visit may have implications for Irish policy. That project has an input from a psychologist in its work, which may be a useful support for people going through drug rehabilitation. Could such a dimension be piloted on regular training programmes for this target group in Ireland⁹? The use of a horticulture module in Portugal also seems to work well for this target group.

⁸ The evaluation report, prepared by Dr. Cormac Sheehan, is available from Mountview/Blakestown Community Drugs Team, or from Blanchardstown Area Partnership.

⁹ Such a dimension has already been piloted in relation to a number of target groups of unemployed people in Ireland, some of these pilots being funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs

The lack of placements with employers reflects a wider difficulty of engaging employers with this target group (and other target groups distant from the labour market).

The difficulties in the transition of participants to the LES may have partly reflected a lack of agreed criteria for client referral. To some extent, this was the starting point for the local EQUAL action on inter-agency protocols, piloted for the drug user target group, which is described in Chapter 5.

3.3 Action 2: Training and Support for People with Disabilities

3.3.1 Innovative Idea of Action

The Blanchardstown Equal Disability Action was implemented from January-June 2004. It targeted people with disabilities from the local area and assisted six people to improve their access to mainstream through a needs-based training initiative. Mainstream employment services provided participants with training, education and information supports to help them to develop a career plan. The LES/Joblink assigned a Mediator to each participant to ensure consistent support throughout the project and beyond.

The action arose because of data from the 2002 Census showing that 3,100 individuals or 6.2% of the population in Blanchardstown had a disability. Of these, over 2,200 were between the ages of 15 and 64. While this EQUAL action targeted a very small number of unemployed people with disabilities, relative to the overall numbers in Blanchardstown, it was hoped that the learning arising would benefit greater numbers in the medium-term.

This action was planned because, despite the large numbers of people with a disability, there was little engagement by the target group in mainstream employment services in Blanchardstown. In addition, from the experience of LES/Joblink, the target group perceived there to be barriers affecting their participation. This was compounded by a lack of local networks, local customised training opportunities and employer links to assist people with disabilities to access employment.

The action was therefore to be designed to be innovative primarily at a local level:

- through bringing local employment-related organisations together for the first time regarding this target group;
- through piloting a more 'hands-on' system of support for participants.

3.3.2 Description of Work Undertaken

The action involved a number of stages of development, with some overlap between the various stages in terms of time.

A. Setting up Working Group and Recruiting Co-ordinator

It was felt that a cross section of agencies working on disability issues in Blanchardstown coming together would make for more inclusive and cohesive delivery. LES/Joblink therefore convened a working group, comprising representatives of:

- The Local Employment Service/Joblink (LES);
- Blanchardstown Area Partnership;
- FÁS;
- Blanchardstown Centre for Independent Living (CIL);

- Daughters of Charity - Weavers;
- Central Remedial Clinic (CRC);
- The Eastern Regional Health Authority through its Rehabilitative Training and Guidance Section;
- Blanchardstown/Dublin 15 Citizens Information Centre (CIC).

A part-time co-ordinator for the action began work in January 2004. Her role was to engage with a number of people with disabilities to make them aware of opportunities available in education, training or work and to assist them to accessing these opportunities through mainstream services. She also monitored participants' progress, reported to the working group and documented the action.

The working group met monthly to review progress. At the end of the action, participants and LES staff involved gave their views on the experience and learning arising to the co-ordinator, who documented these in a short report on the action, including recommendations arising from the experience of the action (see below).

B. Recruitment of Participants

Following consultations with, and by, members of the Working Group, six people became involved in the initiative. Of these, two were referred from Weavers, two from Hartstown Day Activity Centre, one from the LES and one from Blanchardstown Area Partnership.

To be as inclusive as possible, while bearing in mind the budget and scope of the action, potential participants were considered using the following criteria:

- They had a disability;
- They were keen to take up further training (where necessary) and employment (i.e. the action targeted people with a relatively strong level of motivation);
- They had not already engaged in any real way with mainstream services like FAS or the LES in seeking training or employment opportunities;
- They were committed to engaging in the person-centred career planning process offered by the action and to progressing towards employment.

As regards the disabilities involved, two participants had mild intellectual disabilities, two were wheelchair users, one was deaf and one was deaf and had epilepsy. In terms of gender, two females and four males engaged in the action.

An issue that arose in recruiting participants was the fact that there was no existing mechanism for engaging people with a disability, who were not already engaged in a local service. This action identified people via the Working Group but this points to a wider gap in provision.

C. Co-ordinating and Supporting Participant Progress and Identifying Outcomes

The six participants had very different backgrounds, experiences, skills, abilities and interests. Generally, this was the first time they had engaged with the LES and other state employment support services over an extended period of time.

A personalised approach was adopted to meet the needs of each person as they were guided and supported through their engagement in the mainstream employment services. This involved ongoing consultation with the action co-ordinator, referral to and meetings with the LES Mediators and Guidance Officer where appropriate, investigation on behalf of participants into employment and/or training options and referral to other employment support services in some cases. The majority of participants also received support from staff within their own referring agencies.

For the duration of the project, the action co-ordinator maintained contact with the participants, meeting them to check on progress, sourcing information where appropriate and liaising with agencies. In situations where participants required extra assistance around a particular issue, the co-ordinator provided this support.

At the end of the work of the action, i.e. in June 2004:

- One participant had secured a full-time position in a company based a short distance from Blanchardstown;
- One person had secured a place on a BAPTEC part-time course in computer skills, one had signed up for a FAS full-time training course in photography, while another was exploring local part-time training options in office skills;
- Two participants required work experience to test their skills and suitability for their career choices. They were exploring options, either in conjunction with the LES or support staff within their referral agencies.

D. Issues Arising for Participants

Transport

For two participants, the availability and cost of transport required to access services was a major issue. Both were wheelchair users and they said the buses were not consistently wheelchair accessible, and therefore unreliable, while taxis frequently would not turn up if ordered by wheelchair users. Accessible taxis were expensive and often late. On the action, the participants were funded to use the Vantastic taxi service, which operates from Baldoyle providing transport around Blanchardstown and other areas. However, outside of the action, the lack of accessible transport is a problem.

Full-time Nature of State Training Courses for People with Disabilities

For two participants, their work interests required further training. Options on FAS training courses were explored, in particular courses for people with disabilities. However, this training was full-time and located in the city centre. To attend, participants would have to give up other local support structures, e.g. a day centre under the ABLE (Adult Basic Learning Education Scheme) and a training centre under the FETAC Award scheme. For one participant, a mainstream part-time training course was sourced locally which met their needs. The other person was exploring local options.

Occupational Assessment Options

Having identified their work interests, one participant would have benefited from an occupational assessment of their ability to carry out the job, either before or during a work experience. Having investigated this possibility with their referring agency and mainstream employment services, however, the service did not exist.

Accessibility of State Horticulture Training Courses

In exploring state training courses in horticulture for one participant, a wheelchair user, it was found that some such facilities were not wheelchair accessible. This barrier ruled out involvement in such training during this project. It also has implications for other wheelchair users who would wish to avail of the training offered by the centres.

E. Issues Arising for Agency Staff

LES Role on Disability

The LES staff worked hard to provide a good service to participants on the action. However, the report by the action co-ordinator states that, while LES staff receive disability awareness training, further training could enhance the support provided, particularly in relation to intellectual disabilities. This is likely to be applicable most Local Employment Services in Ireland and suggests a need for a discussion on the boundary between the specific role of the LES on work, training and education and the supports that may be required by different target groups.

Information on State Training Courses for People with a Disability

When LES mediators wanted to explore state training for people with disabilities (in the first half of 2004), there was no comprehensive list of FAS approved or FAS run training. This made it difficult and time consuming for Mediators to locate training for clients.

Access to Additional Supports in Engaging in Mainstream Services

This action funded a co-ordinator to support participants, liaise with agencies, maintain information exchange and deal with issues that arose for clients. She had the time to investigate training and work experience options, assist mediators in gathering information and present barriers to the working group. Such resources are not normally available for people with disabilities and, without them, the risk of people dropping out of the service is greater.

Perception of the Role of Employers

Staff in intermediate labour market agencies reported that some employers resist employing a person with a disability. This implies a need for awareness training with employers to open up employment options.

3.3.3 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

The first stage of dissemination and mainstreaming was within the organisations involved, and in the local area. The working group for the action was effective in this role. This was the first time a group of agencies working with people with disabilities in Blanchardstown had worked together and this was an important achievement of this action. When the action ended, the organisations involved committed themselves to sustaining links (and to following up on the immediate participants involved).

Contact was made with an EQUAL disability project called Access Ability. This focused on maximising employment opportunities for people with disabilities by addressing the structural, attitudinal and policy issues which currently prevent employers accessing individual's abilities. The working group organised a meeting with that project's Employer Liaison Officer to learn about its work and to share expertise.

Attempts were being made to mainstream elements of the action through contact with FAS and the North Dublin Disability Consortium. This work was led by LES/Joblink, which proposed that a Job Coach be located in Dublin 15, to be available to people with disabilities looking for employment. The Working Group for this action believed that a dedicated Job Coach for people with disabilities would greatly benefit the target group.

As stated earlier, the co-ordinator for the action prepared a short report on the action at its completion, based on her experiences and those of the Working Group. This report was circulated to organisations locally and to organisations contacted in the dissemination and mainstreaming process. It included the following shown overleaf:

Table 4: Recommendations in Report of Co-ordinator on Action for People with Disability

1. A dedicated support in the employment services should be provided to co-ordinate services and assist people with disabilities to access employment services and opportunities in Blanchardstown.
2. Part-time local, flexible and client-centred vocational and skill-based training options should be provided for people with a disability. At entry level, "skills sampling" training can give clients a sample of different types of jobs and allow them to experience such work.
3. Mainstream employment services staff should receive disability training on issues such as systems or protocols in dealing with people with a variety of disabilities.
4. Disability awareness training should be provided to local employers to help meet their needs while opening employment possibilities for people with disabilities and raising awareness of state supports available.
5. An initiative such as the system of protocols designed for drug users by Blanchardstown EQUAL (see Chapter 5) should be explored to improve co-ordination between services and agencies working with people with disabilities.
6. Further tools and materials appear to be necessary as regards the provision of guidance services for this client group.
7. An inter-agency occupational assessment service would assist people with disabilities and employers in assessing their suitability for particular work.

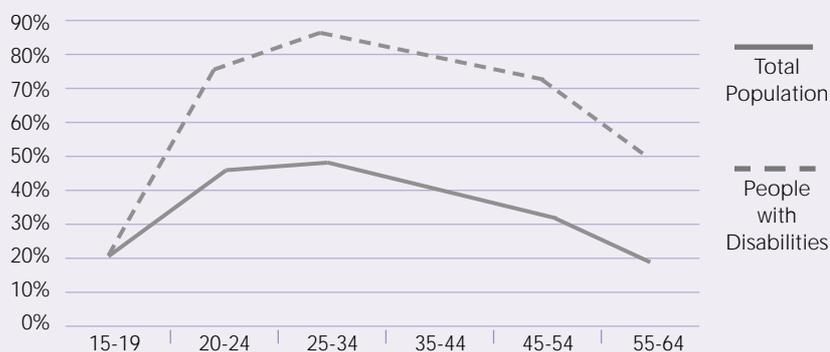
3.3.4 Outputs from Action

- Intensive intervention with six people with different types of disability from the Blanchardstown area.
- One of these people progressed during the work of the action into employment with two progressing to training courses. The other three people were reviewing options for progression once the support process funded by EQUAL had finished.
- Production of a report by the Co-ordinator hired to run the action.
- Development of new contacts and ways of working between organisations who work in Blanchardstown with people with disabilities.
- Learning from the implementation of the action, and from the networking.

3.3.5 Comment on Action

A number of national reports in recent years have drawn attention to the labour market exclusion experienced by people with disabilities. The data shows that people with disabilities, many of whom want to work, experience much lower levels of inclusion in the labour force at all ages, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 2: Labour Force Participation by age for People with Disabilities and for Total Population, 2002



This action represented an attempt at a local level in Blanchardstown to bring together the organisations working with this target group, to start them working together for the first time, and to develop an intervention building on the existing work of LES/Joblink in particular to provide a high level of support to six individuals. The action worked as planned locally and good progress was made by the individual participants. Learning was documented locally for the LES (which co-ordinated and led this action) and new networks were developed.

From a wider policy perspective, the action represents another local attempt to pilot ways to work with this target group. A large number of such actions have taken place in recent years in different areas around the country (often involving the NDA or Area Based Partnerships). The action points to a need at national level to develop methods of intervention for this target group (and perhaps others), involving more hands-on interventions, with a mediator or support person guiding individual participants through the process of identifying their career goals, and then identifying an appropriate route to achieve them. Such support is required by many people, and is likely to be strongly cost effective in the medium and longer term.

The action also points to a need to raise the awareness of employers of the benefits of employing people with disabilities – as was piloted by the Access Ability project under Round 1 of EQUAL in Ireland.

3.4 Action 3: New Ways of Engaging with Hard-to-Reach Ex-Offenders

3.4.1 Blanchardstown Offenders for New Directions (BOND)

BOND was founded in 1997 by people living and working in Blanchardstown. This followed a realisation that while a number of agencies provided, or were willing to provide, a service for young offenders, there were gaps in the service provision. Young people tended to lose their links with home while in prison, which made reintegration on release difficult. On their return to the community, issues would arise which affected these young people negatively and, typically, young people would find themselves in a chaotic routine with no clear goals. Whatever motivation they had when leaving prison was diminished by the unchanged circumstances facing them in the community. Many young people would again indulge in excessive drinking, substance abuse and would return to a pattern of re-offending.

It was against this background that a group of people formed the BOND Project was formed in May 1997. Its aim was to develop a community-based response to the needs of young people returning to the community from prison or place of detention.

Early research by BOND highlighted that young people leaving prison need:

- a person to link with, on return to the community
- a structured individualised programme
- access to drug treatment services
- support to acquire job seeking and accommodation seeking skills
- access to diversionary activities.

With regard to service provision for young people returning to the community from prison, the research highlighted that:

- Each agency has a valuable service to provide to these young people
- The agencies are unable to seek out and engage with these young people
- No one agency has a particular mandate for this group
- There is a lack of co-ordination between the agencies and the prisons, and amongst the agencies themselves.

The research recommended the establishment of a multi-faceted response involving the community and locally based agencies, to track the young people and ensure the relevant agencies work closer together. BOND became the mechanism to focus the energy of the relevant agencies and the management committee of BOND took on the task of developing an integrated community response to the needs of young offenders in Blanchardstown. BOND now provides the services to support the reintegration of young people leaving prison, by focusing and directing them towards appropriate supports in the community. A key role for BOND is to act as a bridge between the prison and community based supports.

The BOND Executive Committee contains representatives of the following organisations: Probation and Welfare Service, County Dublin VEC, Northern Area Health Board, Blanchardstown Area Partnership, The Arrupe Society, An Garda Síochána and local business and community representatives.

3.4.2 Innovative Idea of Action

The aim of the BOND EQUAL action was to engage with, and integrate into its services, the most severely marginalised young people (aged 18-23) from the Blanchardstown area through specialised outreach/in-reach service. The goal was to enhance participants' employment prospects through education, training, skills enhancement, personal development and awareness. This action was innovative in that it targeted the most chaotic young people. These people had not previously been targeted, as BOND resources did not permit such outreach. Instead, people were invited to avail of services at the BOND premises, although not all people would then visit the project.

The project worked with young people who are returning to community from prison or place of detention. Research in the Blanchardstown area showed that most BOND participants do not access services in the greater Blanchardstown area. The New Directions report (produced by BOND in 1998) showed that participation rates of this target group with local agencies were low or non-existent. The aim was to see if the hardest-to-reach people from this target group could be successfully targeted.

BOND had previously made some attempts to reach those people who would be classified as hardest to reach, and to introduce them to other local services. BOND's research showed that the more marginalisation, alienation, and chaos that exists among the target group, the less willing the target group is to engage with service providers. This action aimed to engage with these individuals and to introduce them to the appropriate services to enhance their employment prospects.

Key specific aims of the BOND action were as follows:

- To target and engage severely affected young people through an outreach service
- To ensure these young people are engaged in designing and implementing the Ambitions Programme that will enhance their employment prospects through education, training and personal development
- To carry out a needs analysis with each young person targeted for the programme and to assist them in designing a personal plan
- To link the target group with relevant training and employment agencies locally and in the greater Dublin area
- To provide support to the young people on the Ambitions programme with other relevant issues re: their integration into the community, to enable them to fully participate in the programme
- To establish working links with local service providers and relevant agencies
- To establish working-learning links with the EQUAL trans-national partners

3.4.3 Description of Work Undertaken

A. Outreach and In-reach Work

The main focus of the innovative work of the BOND Ambitions action was around outreach to those hardest to reach in the target group. This included both ex-offenders from Blanchardstown who had returned to the area and people from the area still in prison in advance of their return to the area (in-reach work). The labour intensive work of targeting and engaging with the target group was undertaken during Spring and into the Summer of 2003.

While BOND already had an Outreach and Prison Community Links Services, a number of participants demonstrating difficulty in engaging with BOND were targeted for the Ambitions Programme. This was a core innovation of the EQUAL work and the approaches used are described further in the following paragraphs.

Targeted Outreach

While BOND already offered Outreach as a service of which participants could avail, it began to use Outreach as the primary contact point for people having difficulty in engaging. It was envisaged that by developing a trusting relationship with those targeted that, over time, they would develop the confidence and interest to access other services.

Identifying and targeting peer groups.

A number of people targeted for the Ambition Programme were part of a peer group who engaged in BOND. To encourage those targeted, the peer group was targeted for existing programmes such as Diversionary, Education and Training, Relaxation and Employment Mediation.

Identifying and targeting marginalized groups in specific communities.

In specific communities, BOND identified marginalised groups who expressed and demonstrated a difficulty in accessing BOND services. These were targeted for Outreach, Diversionary, Education and Training Opportunities.

These outreach and in reach activities were carried out by designated staff and included meeting with those targeted in their

- Homes
- Communities
- Other agencies with whom they were working,
- Prison or place of detention
- Other appropriate places where the participant felt comfortable, e.g. local coffee shop, shopping centre etc.

In line with good practice and to ensure the safety of staff, outreach and in-reach was supported by other Project staff who were advised of where visits would take place, with whom, and the expected duration of visits. Staff carried mobiles phones at all times and made contact with the office upon completion of each visit. The use of a car proved essential to the efficient and cost effective delivery of the outreach/ in-reach activities.

Outreach and In Reach had the following objectives:

- To provide an opportunity to engage with participants who found it difficult to engage in the BOND Services.
- To build relationships with participants to enhance their access to centre based programmes particularly Education, Training and Employment Mediation.
- To facilitate Individual Needs Analysis and Individual Personal Planning.

Each Outreach/In-Reach session took approximately 30 minutes. Over the period of the programme, 30 contacts were made on Outreach/In-Reach visits to the 15 Ambition Programme Participants. This was in addition to the participants' engagement in other programmes including Diversionary, Education and Training, Relaxation and the receipt of one-to-one support from a Project Worker.

B. Education, Training and Facilitation

Having met with 25 people, 15 engaged with the BOND Ambitions Programme (the target number under the EQUAL project). Reflecting the prison population as a whole, these were mainly male, with 14 males and one female, all in the 18-25 age group.

These 15 people were introduced to, and offered, the normal suite of BOND services, as listed below.

Table 5: Typical Services Provided by BOND

1. Prison Community Links (In-Reach)
2. Individual Needs Analysis
3. Individual Personal Plan
4. Intensive Personal Support
5. Information
6. Programmes (Education, Training, Employment, Diversionary, Relaxation)
7. Advocacy
8. Court Support
9. Outreach
10. Family Support
11. Professional Counselling
12. Ongoing Contact
13. Transitional Residential Facility

Reflecting the fact that the EQUAL action had focused on those people hardest to reach, a number of participants experienced homelessness, mental health issues and relapses into offending and/or drug use during their work with BOND. Considerable support was provided on a one-to-one basis to address these issues, including increased resources in the BOND professional counselling service.

Participants were also offered employment mediation services on the BOND premises (an example of a basic service coming to people from the target group rather than the other way around). This was part of wider work being undertaken by BOND in association with the Local Employment Service and this linkage worked well. In Spring 2004, as the EQUAL work was ending on this action, the 15 EQUAL participants and 11 other ex-offenders had accessed the LES service through BOND, of which 21 had never accessed the LES previously.

In addition to the regular services offered by BOND, an evening programme was developed using the EQUAL funding. This was targeted both on those people targeted as hardest to reach and others, especially those ex-offenders who had started working. The Evening Course set itself the following objectives:

- To allow participants who were unable to access the day service for whatever reason to partake in our evening programme
- To avail of support from Project Workers
- To provide an opportunity for BOND staff to offer practical employment support to ensure participants sustain their employment

- To allow participants the opportunity to receive information around improving their job skills and personal development
- To allow participants to access computer facilities to build on existing skills
- To offer programmes identified by the participants e.g. photography, drama, art/design, to boost confidence and reduce isolation

Of the 15 people reached by BOND in Spring and Summer 2003, and who took part in training and other activities during the second half of 2004, the following table (completed by BOND itself) shows their situations at end-May 2004, i.e. 5/6 months after completing their time formally on the BOND Ambitions action.

**Table 6: BOND Ambitions Action –
Status of Participants 6 Months after Finishing Formal Involvement under EQUAL**

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In full time employment. Still in contact with BOND
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in BOND's Transitional Residential facility which facilitates the supports and structures to continue to engage in BOND. • Has had a number of part time jobs and is actively seeking employment.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still in contact with BOND. Has had a drugs relapse and is accessing support from BOND on this.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No longer in contact with BOND
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully completed FAS pre-apprenticeship course - seeking apprenticeship. In contact with BOND, using supports on employment/ further training. • Accessing BOND's evening Programme or the above supports.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still in Contact with BOND. In full time Employment. • Being targeted for BOND's Evening Programme
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In full time employment. Still in contact with BOND • Completing Gym Instructors Course • Is accessing BOND's Evening Programme for support.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still in contact with BOND. In full time employment • Is been targeted for BOND's Evening Programme
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returned to custody. Still in contact with BOND through Outreach –In reach Service (Prison Community Links)
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In full time employment. Still in contact with BOND.
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In full time employment. Still in contact with BOND.
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still in contact with BOND but has moved to another country. • Has successfully gained further training and employment in that country
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still in contact with BOND
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still in contact with BOND. Engaged in Temporary Release Programme, which BOND is supervising. This includes Education and Training. • In the process of completing correspondence course in Gym Instructing
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still in contact with BOND. Engaged in Education and Training Programme to address barriers to employment, especially literacy

Given the target group involved, and the fact that those targeted were the hardest to reach in the ex-offenders target group, this table demonstrates that the innovative outreach approaches used, and the hands-on support provided during the education and training phase, successfully moved people from this target group much closer to the labour market and, in some cases, into employment – in a relatively short timeframe.

BOND also participated fully in the transnational dimension of the Blanchardstown EQUAL project and built especially strong links with the UK and Portuguese partners, which it hopes to develop further after the EQUAL project.

3.4.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

Early in its action, BOND printed leaflets describing the organisation and the specific work being undertaken under the EQUAL programme. These were distributed as shown in Table 6.

Table 7: Delivery of BOND EQUAL Leaflet on Action with Ex-Offenders

Group/Organisation	Number Delivered
Circuit Court Judges	30
District Court Judges	30
<i>Irish Prison Service</i>	
• Governors	19
• Chaplains	13
Probation & Welfare Service	31
Solicitor used by BOND Participants	15
Local Drugs Task Force Co-ordinators	14
National and International Equal Partners	55
Rapid 1 Co-ordinator	18
Rapid 2 Co-ordinator	20
NEVA Members	10
National Crime Council	1
Law Society of Ireland	1
Council for Civil Liberties	1
Planet Partnership	37
Political Parties Justice Spokesperson	4
Local Counsellors	9
Miscellaneous groups/Individuals, e.g. College/University Libraries & Law Faculties, Newspaper and other relevant people	20
Affiliated groups & individuals, e.g. e.g. Local Community groups/projects	266
Total	594

Following completion of the action, BOND, funded by the Blanchardstown EQUAL Project and by the Combat Poverty Agency, organised a conference entitled: 'Changing the Mindset – Inclusion of Ex-Prisoners in the Labour Market'. Held on 29th June 2004 in Smithfield in Dublin, contributors included

- Mr. Pat Delaney, Director of the Small Firms Association;
- Professor Ivana Bacik of Trinity College Dublin;
- Mr. Barry Vaughan of the Institute of Public Administration;
- Mr. Niall Crowley, Chief Executive of the Equality Authority;
- Mr. Pat Doyle, Manager, BOND;
- Mr. Barry Cullen, Chairperson of the Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce.

As well as discussing the specific outputs arising from the Ambitions action undertaken by BOND under the Blanchardstown EQUAL project, the conference provided a forum for discussing wider discrimination issues facing ex-offenders in the labour market. This was a timely discussion as the government had begun a process of reviewing the grounds under which discrimination is outlawed in Ireland, and was considering whether to add 'ex-offender' as one of four new categories under which discrimination would be outlawed in relation to the labour market.

3.4.5 Outputs from Action

- New, innovative methods for undertaking outreach work with the target group of hard-to-reach ex-offenders. These were developed during the action (building on previous BOND work) and piloted successfully;
- Development of training materials and ways of operating for an Evening Programme for ex-offenders – this extended BOND's support to ex-offenders who have begun working, and who are less available during the day;
- Short document prepared for June 2004 conference setting out information on BOND, on the situation of ex-offenders in the labour market and on the other actions under the Blanchardstown EQUAL project.

3.4.6 Comment on Action

ADM implements the Local Development and Social Inclusion Programme at national level. In April 2003, it published a report entitled: 'The Integration of Ex-Prisoners and Offenders'¹⁰. The report noted that:

- There are over 12,000 committals each year to prison and other places of detention in Ireland – in addition, over 5,000 people receive community-based sanctions;
- Over 9,500 people were actually sent to prison in 2001;
- Almost 25% of prisoners are aged under 20, and 97% of prisoners are male;
- The study quotes the Governor of Mountjoy Prison as estimating that half of its inmates leave school before the age of 15; 88% are unemployed before going to prison and 77% are drug users.

Ex-offenders therefore constitute a target group that has experienced severe educational exclusion and is likely to experience severe labour market exclusion. Ex-offenders are

also more likely to have health, drug and other issues complicating the situation of labour market exclusion and making movement to a steady job harder to achieve.

This action built on the considerable work undertaken by BOND in Blanchardstown since it was founded in 1997. It extended its services to people who don't naturally go into the BOND premises to avail of its services. It did this by developing a number of innovative approaches to undertaking outreach work, including work with prisoners before release from prison. The approaches were highly successful, with all of the people targeted not only agreeing to work with BOND but actually completing their programme of activities. The action also allowed for some new and incremental training modules to be developed, particularly as regards an evening course. Progression data for the 15 participants from almost six months after the EQUAL-funded work had finished shows a large number had made progress towards the labour market.

Given the general exclusion of this target group, and the high level of success of this action, there would appear to be a high potential for this action to be of interest to all RAPID areas in Ireland, and more broadly. Given the long-term social and economic costs to society arising from not integrating ex-offenders into the labour market (and the high personal costs for the people involved), it is likely that there would be a strong positive benefit/cost ratio in further developing the approaches piloted by this action.

¹⁰ ADM (2003), The Integration of Ex-Prisoners and Offenders, prepared by Stephen Rourke.

3.5 Action 4: Training and Supports for Traveller Men

3.5.1 Innovative Idea of Action

Statistics available at the start of the Blanchardstown EQUAL project showed that approximately 200 Traveller men were living in the area, a relatively large population. Most of these men were not in employment, yet they had a low level of interaction with community based education and training services. Many had left school early and there was a low level of skills among the target group.

The Blanchardstown Travellers Development Group also reported that a proportion of those people interacting with mainstream employment support services felt that they were experiencing discrimination from the state services, and also from potential employers. Low levels of progression of individuals through training and into sustainable employment were being achieved.

The work funded under EQUAL followed from training provided in 2000 and 2001, including a forklift driving course. It aimed to combine a number of elements:

- Outreach to engage with Traveller men, based on a model of capacity building used previously mainly by youth workers, where there is a focus on building relationships with participants, and engaging with participants at a pace driven by them;
- Needs analysis of a group of Traveller men, based on previous experience that many Traveller men prefer to work in a self-employed capacity if possible;
- Delivery of a number of training modules, but not in a formal classroom setting.

These elements were both individually and collectively innovative as regards the delivery of training to Travellers in Blanchardstown.

3.5.2 Description of Work Undertaken

The work of this action involved a number of steps.

In Summer 2003, the Blanchardstown Travellers Development Group advertised for an outreach worker/trainer to work with a group of Traveller men over a 12 month period. A co-ordinator was hired in September 2003 and worked with the project until September 2004.

The first period of work was around building up relationships with members of the Traveller community and trying to identify people who would be interested in the action. In fact, five men were identified as being both interested and likely to be sufficiently motivated to work with the project over a 12 month period. These men were living in the Ballycoolin part of Blanchardstown.

The delivery of the training modules and the preparation of work ideas for the period after the project would finish ran in parallel over the following 10 months or so. Early on in the work, it became clear that the men would prefer to work for themselves, if possible. By covering training modules related to personal and career options, and personal development, it was identified that establishing a business related to environmental recycling would be an optimal outcome.

Over the 10 months, the following training modules were covered:

- Personal and Career Options;
- Personal Development;
- Site visits, i.e. to sites already running businesses similar to that being considered by the group – six such visits were arranged and undertaken;

- Balancing home and work, including money management;
- Personal and Interpersonal skills;
- Planning for Success;
- Self marketing, including personal presentation skills;
- Communications;
- Pre-enterprise training; and
- Skills required in running a business, including book-keeping, management, HR, planning and administration.

A training room was available in Mulhuddart Community Centre, within walking distance for the participants, although delivery of the modules was not just classroom based, but was integrated into all of the work over the 10 months.

Based on the six site visits undertaken to other recycling projects, and following discussion with the participants (some of whom had previous experience in this sector in the UK), an outline of an idea for a local recycling project was agreed. The five Traveller men, working with the action co-ordinator, then worked to develop a Business Plan for the business. This plan (30 pages in length) was a major output of the action.

The Introduction to the Business Plan gives an overview of the proposed project:

"It is proposed to develop a recycling facility specifically designed to meet the needs of the local community. The proposers have considered a number of development models including green-field site development; brown-field site regeneration; the use of existing commercial properties and local amenities in Blanchardstown. It is proposed that the ideal facility would be an enclosed, secure site, ideally located within an existing waste management facility, such as that operated by Fingal County Council at Coolmine in Dublin 15.

The facility would be designed and developed, in partnership with the local authority, to facilitate on-site segregation; temporary storage and processing (shredding, baling) of nominated waste streams. The materials will then be sent for further processing to approved and suitably permitted/licenced commercial waste operators.

On-site activities will be conducted by trained, competent staff including the five promoters together with an experienced site manager."

The remainder of the Business Plan backs up this vision, including with financial figures. It identifies skill gaps that existed among the group at the time and how these would be remedied. (This led to members of the group applying for a theory test for a C1 driving licence and learning to use computers.)

3.5.3 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

The action did not operate in isolation and worked with the wider Blanchardstown Traveller Community Development Project. It also met and shared experiences with the national EQUAL Round 1 project operated by Pavée Point, and the Co-ordinator from the Blanchardstown action spoke at a Pavée Point conference in 2004.

The main targets for the dissemination of the Business Plan were local. In particular, the action worked with Fingal County Council and Fingal County Enterprise Board in developing the plan and trying to move it forward. As the direct project ended in late-2004, it seemed likely that the Traveller men would probably not be able to work through an existing local authority site (as identified above) and would need to see if the business could get started in another way.

Information on the Business Plan and the training modules undertaken was shared locally through the Travellers Development Group and via Blanchardstown Area Partnership. The co-ordinator on the action contributed to a wider study undertaken locally (outside EQUAL) which reviewed options for the development of the local Traveller economy (report published in March 2004).

The action was covered in an article in the newspaper/magazine – Changing Ireland – the national newspaper of the Community Development Programme. This involved a full-page report in the Summer 2004 issue.

3.5.4 Outputs

- Training modules for Traveller men, partly developed in co-operation with the Learning Development Agency in Blanchardstown.
- Engagement with five Traveller men, who worked through different training modules and developed a Business Plan, over a 10-month period.
- Costed Business Plan for the development of an Environmental Recycling Project in Blanchardstown.

3.5.5 Comment on Action

This action targeted members of the Traveller community, whose members experience labour market exclusion. National data from Census 2002 shows that, of 13,680 people aged 15 and over in the Traveller community, only 2,531 were classified as employed. There was both a low general participation in the labour force (30.4%) and, of those who were in the labour force, an extremely high level of unemployment (39.2%).

In this context, there is clearly a need for action on a national basis, not just in Blanchardstown. However, this action attempted to take some local action. It was innovative in providing a full-time co-ordinator for a year to the target group. This allowed for a more relaxed approach to developing relationships with Traveller men, which seems to have paid dividends (the five people engaged with after a matter of weeks stayed with the action to its completion). The hands-on approach also allowed for training to be delivered in a more informal way, in a variety of settings, and at a pace that suited the participants.

The development of the Business Plan will have contributed also to the skills of the five men participating, and its comprehensive nature provides an example of how traditional Traveller skills can be used in the modern economy. As the action ended, it was unclear if the business would actually be able to start – a lack of success in this regard may have adversely affected the confidence of the men involved, after their work to develop the Plan.

There is a view among many of those working with groups whose members tend to be excluded from the labour market that it is challenging to support members of the Traveller Community from unemployment into employment. This is so for a variety of reasons, including institutional and workplace discrimination, often low levels of literacy and skills, and a suspicion on the part of the Traveller Community of getting involved with mainstream agencies. This action shows that, while it is very time consuming, it is possible to engage with members of this community, to support them in engaging in training, and to move them to a point where they are ready to enter mainstream employment. It also shows that members of the Traveller community, as with most other citizens, are fundamentally motivated to seek employment and value both the income and other benefits that accrue from productive employment. As such, specific insights from the action, available from Blanchardstown Area Partnership and other local organisations working with the action, can contribute to the development of coherent national labour market inclusion strategies for this target group.

3.6 Action 5: Information and Life Skills for Non-nationals

3.6.1 Innovative Idea of Action

When the Blanchardstown EQUAL project started, there was no hard data on the number of refugees, asylum seekers and non-nationals in Blanchardstown. However, there was a recognition that these groups were growing (the 2002 Census showed 5,500 people living in Blanchardstown had been born outside Ireland). Research by the Blanchardstown Asylum-seeker and Refugee Network (BARN) indicated that people of 30 nationalities were living locally, with many having poor information on local services and experiencing labour market exclusion.

BARN, which led this action, is a coalition of the following organisations:

- Blakestown Community Development Project
- Corduff Community Development Project
- Greater Blanchardstown Community Development Project
- Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group (CDP)
- Local Employment Service Network
- Blanchardstown Area Partnership
- Vocational Educational Committee
- Blanchardstown Youth Service
- CLANN Housing Association
- Blanchardstown Men's Outreach Project
- AkiDwa
- Mountview/Blakestown Neighbourhood Youth Project
- Blanchardstown Citizens Information Centre

The action aimed to provide basic information on local services to non-nationals living in Blanchardstown in a range of languages. It also aimed to run three courses on personal development, each for up to 15 participants, to improve people's social skills and access to services. There would be a particular emphasis on reaching women in immigrant communities.

3.6.2 Description of Work Undertaken

In relation to the provision of information, the action led to two 'expand-out' leaflets being produced, each in three languages. These languages were chosen so the leaflets would be accessible to the broadest possible range of people in immigrant communities. The leaflets contained:

- Findings from a BARN survey of refugee and asylum-seeker households;
- A list of emergency and other useful numbers;
- Information on general relevant services and organisations in Dublin 15;
- Information on groups established in Dublin 15 for non-nationals.

Some 1,000 copies of each of the two leaflets were produced and were distributed through the BARN organisations, through Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce and at the Blanchardstown shopping centre. BARN reported a high level of demand for the leaflets.

As regards the training courses, BARN attempted to organise two courses in the second half of 2003 and one course in Spring 2004. The first two of these were to be held during the day, with the third course to be held in the evening.

BARN found it difficult to get participants to sign up for the courses. For this reason, the second of the three proposed courses was dropped. This left two courses – the course in 2003 went ahead with seven participants and the course in 2004 had five participants. All 12 participants were women and the single largest nationality represented was Nigerian.

The courses ran for eight weeks, with a half-day session each week for participants. The material followed the Life Skills programme which focuses on personal development skills. Childcare was provided for all participants.

For those people who attended, BARN said that their commitment was good and they stayed to the end of the courses. As well as the benefits of the material, the participants stated that they enjoyed meeting other local people and 'getting out of the house'.

3.6.3 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

The 'expand-out' leaflet was disseminated widely in Blanchardstown and copies were forwarded to the national EQUAL Technical Support Structure and the Equality Authority as possible models for a similar exercise in other areas.

3.6.4 Outputs

- Two 'expand-out' leaflets, each in three languages;
- Life Skills course put together with eight modules, focusing on personal development issues;
- 12 participants who undertook training and completed courses.

3.6.5 Comment on Action

Production of the leaflets locally was a useful contribution to the integration of non-nationals living in Blanchardstown. The design of the leaflet and the production of each leaflet in three languages was innovative and may be of interest to other areas. The demand for the leaflet shows the need for such products.

The response to the core part of the action, the organisation of training courses for non-nationals, was poor. Given the large number of people from this target group in Dublin 15, it is likely that the design of, or publicity around, the training courses was at fault, rather than it being the case that there was not the demand among the target group. The evidence is that the people who entered the training found it beneficial and felt that the training provider had done a good job. Possible reasons for the poor take-up of places on the training courses could be:

- The emphasis of the course on personal development rather than more vocational training;
- A lack of consultation with the target group during the course design phase – the action with drug users shows that the target group may have a different view of what their needs are than the support organisation may have;
- The difficulty of engaging with the target group, covering both cultural and language factors;
- The need for a greater level of outreach work with this target group, to allow local organisations to get to know people and identify people likely to be interested in such courses.

BARN itself said that the response to the courses shows the need for the immigrant communities to become organised themselves so that they can define their own needs and begin to take action to meet these needs. It said that such organisation was beginning to happen during 2004, with a group of Bosnian women having been facilitated in starting a support network.

Chapter 4: Actions with Young People

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 described five pilot actions undertaken by the Blanchardstown EQUAL project that dealt with different groups experiencing exclusion from the labour market. Chapter 4 reviews two actions undertaken with young people – the first with people still in education who are looking towards entry into the labour market; and the second with young people with low levels of skills who are in jobs, but who are likely to need further skills to achieve career development and progression over time.

4.2 Action 6: Innovations in Youthreach Training

4.2.1 Innovative Idea of Action

The national Youthreach programme is designed for young people who:

- Have left the formal school system without qualifications.
- Have not received or completed vocational training.
- Are 16-21 years old.
- Are not in full-time employment.

The Youthreach Centre in Blanchardstown opened in 1989 and, when the EQUAL project was starting in 2002, it catered for 94 young people - 70 places funded under the Youthreach programme and 24 places funded under the Back to Education Initiative.

Trainees recruited into the Centre tend to have a variety of presenting issues that can include violence in the home, substance abuse by parents, emotional disturbance, pregnancy and/or involvement in crime. Some trainees may have a mild mental disability or a learning difficulty. Others still will have left school or dropped out simply because they wanted to, or because school did not suit them.

This action aimed to augment the existing services provided by Blanchardstown Youthreach in two ways:

- Through adding the option of the Leaving Certificate to the educational options provided. The aim was to do this through use of methods normally used to deliver the Leaving Certificate Applied syllabus.
- Through provision of professional career guidance to supplement the education and training provided.

4.2.2 Description of Work Undertaken

As the Youthreach Centre was already in existence in 2002, when the planning for the Blanchardstown EQUAL project was being undertaken, this pilot action was implemented in the 2002-03 academic year.

As regards the first part of the action (provision of a Leaving Certificate option using new methods of delivery), this was provided for some 54 young people in the academic year to June 2003. (Funding for 40 of these people came from EQUAL, and EQUAL assisted with the employment of three tutors for the period.) A report prepared by the tutors involved explains that, while the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) would normally be used with the Youthreach target group, the traditional Leaving Certificate was appropriate in Blanchardstown, because:

- Trainees could not guarantee attendance of 90%, as required by the LCA;
- Trainees preferred a one-year programme rather than the two-year LCA programme;
- The completion of tasks outside the set hours in the Youthreach Centre (as required by the LCA) would create problems for some participants;
- Some trainees wanted to take the more academic route to allow for further progression.

The tutors (who had recently completed Diplomas in Education and Training in DCU) implemented the Leaving Certificate. In doing so, they incorporated the use of Information and Communication Technology; field trips; demonstrations; focus groups; brainstorming exercises; multi-media supports; group work sessions and visual aids. They also drew on Gardner's work on multiple intelligences. In other words, the tutors drew on the methods used in delivering the Leaving Certificate Applied to deliver the 'traditional' Leaving Certificate syllabus.

Five subjects were taught, although not all of the 40 participants (29 females and 11 males) undertook all subjects. The subjects were English; Mathematics; Home economics; Geography; and Business studies. A breakdown of the results obtained was provided to the Evaluator and shows that most participants succeeded in passing the vast majority of subjects taken.

The tutors themselves noted a number of issues arising from this pilot action:

- A challenge of using the 'traditional' Leaving Certificate syllabus was that the attention spans of some participants were short, and this was a difficulty;
- The mix of methods mentioned above worked differently for different tutors and with different participants – as such, ongoing adaptation was a challenge for the tutors;
- The Centre had limited resources (overhead projectors, computers and even books/calculators etc.) which affected delivery – this was improved for the following academic year.

In Summer 2004, one year after this part of the action was delivered, of the 40 EQUAL participants:

- 21 were in employment;
- 14 were still in full-time education – either with the Youthreach Centre or elsewhere;
- 3 were on maternity leave;
- Information could not be obtained on the two final people.

The second part of the action was the supplementing of the training/education delivery with career advice. A Career Guidance Counsellor was hired to deliver one-to-one sessions to those likely to be finishing courses in Summer 2003. This was the first time such a service had been offered (although there had been some group-based workshops previously, delivered by the Local Employment Service). The view of the Manager of the Youthreach Centre was that the sessions worked very well. More information was provided to people, and at an earlier stage than previously. Specialist information (e.g. on joining the army) was provided where required. Furthermore, people's expectations were affected, both in ensuring they were not unrealistic and in trying to expand them to see possibilities that could exist.

4.2.3 Outputs

- New Leaving Certificate stream started in Blanchardstown Youthreach Centre.
- Methods from Leaving Certificate Applied used to deliver 'traditional' Leaving Certificate – with short report on the experience prepared by the tutors involved.
- Leaving Certificate subjects undertaken by 40 young people – with 35 in employment of full-time education one year later.
- Provision of career guidance counselling for participants in Blanchardstown Youthreach Centre.

4.2.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming – Targets and Progress

On a local level, both parts of this action were continued after the pilots funded under EQUAL were completed. The Leaving Certificate has now become part of the suite of courses offered by Blanchardstown Youthreach and a number of the methods used under the EQUAL action were maintained for the 2003-4

academic year. In relation to the career guidance, funding was obtained from the Interreg programme to employ a full-time Career Guidance teacher, following from the results of the work under EQUAL.

On a national level, both parts of this action deal with issues being faced by many Youthreach centres around Ireland. Youthreach in Blanchardstown is in ongoing liaison with Youthreach nationally (under the auspices of the Departments of Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment) and informed the relevant national co-ordinators of Youthreach of the actions taking place under EQUAL, and their outcomes. In this way, the work fed into the ongoing work to develop further the services offered through the Youthreach programme.

4.2.5 Comment on Action

The actions piloted by Blanchardstown Youthreach were specific and allowed for two incremental improvements in the Youthreach services offered to early school leavers in Blanchardstown. In both cases, these were based on pre-identified needs, meaning the action could be implemented quickly. The outcomes achieved show that the needs identified were genuine. The successful mainstreaming of the Leaving Certificate option, and the career guidance service, represent concrete outcomes for the EQUAL project.

At a national level, the national website for Youthreach states: "Early school leavers are at particular risk in the labour market. Of those who enter the labour market after school, the unemployment rate is 47.5% for those with no qualifications, compared to 9.6% for those with a Leaving Certificate". It also states that Youthreach is a flexible programme, designed to change and respond to needs on the ground over time. In this context, the work of this action would seem to provide useful evidence of local innovation to inform the national evolution of the Youthreach programme.

4.3 Action 7: Work Clubs for Young People in Employment

4.3.1 Innovative Idea of Action

This relatively small action was conceived as a way of supporting young people from Blanchardstown who had moved into employment. Often, these people had a low level of skills and, while they had obtained employment, were likely to be on low wages, and would have a low chance of progression. The idea was to provide supports and training to this target group, to help them to settle into their employment, to support them in their work and to provide a basis for general career development.

This was innovative in that it had not been undertaken previously in Blanchardstown and was not common, for people in work, in other areas. It also required new training materials, not designed to equip a young person for a job (or to obtain a job) but providing the skills to support workplace progression.

The idea was to link with local employers, as well as the Local Employment Service and the Youthreach service to identify young people in low-skilled jobs. These would then receive group-based training through a 'Work Club', which would meet perhaps six times and provide a different training module at each session.

The action was proposed by the Learning Development Agency, a small local non-profit training agency established by Blanchardstown Area Partnership.

4.3.2 Description of Work Undertaken

The work of the action fell into two broad phases.

In the first phase, the action began to develop its training materials for the young people (see below) and to try to engage with local employers and participants. While the materials were developed, the action found it extremely difficult to obtain 'buy-in' to the idea of the Work Clubs, either from the employers or from the young people. This led to an adjustment in strategy and the materials developed were instead piloted, in the second phase of the work of the action, with two non-profit employers in Blanchardstown.

As with all EQUAL actions, the elements of piloting and innovation have the potential to lead to actions not proceeding as intended and this can be a source of learning. With the Work Clubs, the view of the employers was that they had already employed the young people who were doing the jobs for which they were employed. As such, employers were not convinced of why they should encourage young employees to attend a Work Club, and didn't see the reason to provide time or financial incentives for them to do so. Indeed, some expressed the fear that up-skilling the young people would be likely to increase their chance of leaving their jobs and seeking other employment.

The action also tried to contact young people directly and wrote to over 60 people, with names supplied by local agencies (such as the LES and Youthreach) that had supported the young people into employment. However, the response was very low – from the perspective of the people involved, having obtained employment, they seemed to think they had already obtained the benefits of training, they had now moved on, and they no longer needed such interventions.

Given the difficulty the LDA was finding in engaging private sector employers, it was decided in early-2004 to try to engage other local employers, to ensure the materials developed by the action were piloted. Two such employers were identified:

- St. Brigid's Community Centre (Work Club in second quarter of 2004);
- Mountview/Blakestown Community Drugs Team (Work Club in fourth quarter of 2004).

The Work Clubs delivered involved six sessions to St. Brigid's and seven sessions with the CDT. The six sessions designed in advance were entitled:

1. Teamwork skills and team building
2. Communication at work 1
3. Roles and responsibilities at work
4. Inclusion in the workplace
5. Communication at work 2
6. Workplace charter and group endings (drawing the modules together and drawing up an individual charter to support each person in their work).

The seventh session for the CDT dealt with change processes in organisations, as the CDT was going through a process of change when the Work Club was being implemented.

In both cases, the feedback from the participants involved was very positive and this was demonstrated through the completion of individual evaluation forms at the end of the training.

4.3.3 Outputs

- Training materials for delivering a Work Club to people in employment – the materials developed and piloted were brought together in a folder by the Action Facilitator.

- Successful delivery of training to approx. 10 employees of two organisations, with strong positive feedback from participants.
- Learning arising from the difficulty experienced by the action in engaging both employers and employees.

4.3.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming – Targets and Progress

The successful delivery of the training modules in 2004 led this action to consider if there were better ways to link to local private sector employers. It was decided to ask the Employer Group linked to Blanchardstown Area Partnership (which was involved with a separate EQUAL action – see next chapter) if it would consider the issue. In Spring 2005, the Employer Group agreed to review if it could progress the work of this action.

In this regard, it was planning to link to other work being undertaken in 2005 by the Dublin Employment Pact, which was aiming to reach young people in employment. The Employer Group had also already developed relationships with a number of local employers (and with the Greater Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce), and had adopted throughout a needs-based approach to the work with employers. While the action was therefore still evolving, there was evidence of potential dissemination and mainstreaming taking place at local level.

4.3.5 Comment on Action

The strong economic growth of recent years in Ireland has led to jobs being available more easily for at least a proportion of those young people who leave school early or who have low levels of skills. While this has the positive effect of moving people into employment, and into a general culture of employment, some jobs offer limited or no progression options, and are not structured in ways that allow an employee to learn new skills in an ongoing way. As such, both from the perspective of the individual employee and in terms of the general life-long learning agenda required by the economy, this creates a challenge of providing ongoing up-skilling to such employees.

This action shows that the provision of such training is not straightforward and neither employers nor the employees may immediately see the need for such training. A lesson is that any interventions in this area need to take on board the practical difficulties of gaining the engagement of the employees, and the employers.

That said, the action developed materials that were successfully piloted in two non-profit organisations, with the materials and the way they were delivered gaining positive reactions from the trainees involved. This provides a base for the local Employers Group to consider again how local employers might be involved in a Work Club initiative. It may also provide insights for FÁS, and the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, and Education and Science, who are driving the national agenda on life-long learning.

Chapter 5: *Actions with Intermediate Organisations and Employers*

5.1 Introduction

As well as working directly with end target groups, the Blanchardstown EQUAL project recognised the key roles played in labour market inclusion by both intermediate labour market organisations and employers. In relation to the former, it decided to support greater co-operation between agencies that work with end target groups and designed an action to foster increased practical co-operation between local organisations that work with one target group - drug users. In relation to the latter, the project designed an action around increasing employer awareness, and usage, of equality and diversity practices.

5.2 Action 8: Common Protocols for Agencies working with Drug Users

5.2.1 Innovative Idea of Action

The rationale for this action was set out in the plan prepared by the action in early-2003: 'As drug users move through the different stages of treatment and rehabilitation, there is a perception that there is not currently a smooth delivery of services between agencies. There is also a perceived lack of co-operation and duplication/overlap of services, which can block client progression ... In short, many agencies perceive that clients fall into gaps and are not in a position to assess the appropriate services at a given time'.

Given this situation, the action was 'designed to bring together agencies (voluntary and state) to establish a co-ordinated approach to providing quality supports and services for former/current drug users. In broad terms, the idea is to bring all agencies that work with former/current drug users together to establish clear inter-agency protocols as well as working relationships. The aim is a substantial change in how agencies interact with each other and with the target group'.

The action also started from a belief that, while public sector inter-agency co-operation is much discussed and encouraged, good interaction is rare in practice. For this reason, this action was needed on the ground.

The three explicit objectives envisaged for the action at its outset were:

- improvement of the quality of services offered by the agencies involved;
- development of a 'lead agency' approach to case management, i.e. one agency would take a lead role in assisting service users and would co-ordinate the input of other support agencies;
- development of a clear and workable protocol with regard to service/client confidentiality.

The action was led by the Northern Area Health Board through its Rehabilitation/ Integration Service. Other partners in the action were:

- the three Blanchardstown Community Drug Teams (CDTs), namely Mountview/ Blakestown CDT, Hartstown/Huntstown CDT and Mulhuddart/Corduff CDT;
- Blanchardstown Local Employment Service (LES);
- BOND (Blanchardstown Offenders for New Directions);
- The Coolmine Therapeutic Community;
- The Tolka River Rehabilitation Project.

At the outset of the action, consideration was given to the idea of also involving FÁS, VEC and the Department of Social and Family Affairs, and preliminary discussions were held in this regard. However, given the timeframe of the EQUAL project, it was decided to restrict the pilot action under EQUAL to the agencies listed, at least in the first instance.

5.2.2 Description of Work Undertaken

The action commissioned research to ascertain the views of both clients and, primarily, frontline staff as a baseline for judging satisfaction with the level of inter-agency information sharing and co-operation prior to the Initiative. It aimed to add to understanding of the nature and frequency of the sharing of information between services in Blanchardstown, as well as gauging levels of satisfaction amongst agency staff and clients in relation to interagency co operation.

Questions related to sharing information encouraged respondents to consider the nature and frequency of inter-agency contact and to identify their concerns about this activity. Results on the nature of inter-agency agreements supported the idea of a unified agreement protocol, by showing that personal working relationships often determined inter-agency contact and referral, leading to inconsistencies and problems when a known contact was unavailable. The research results also revealed different formal and informal relationships and understandings between agencies, based on word-of-mouth and written agreements, before the EQUAL project began.

The research identified a need to increase the level of satisfaction of agency personnel with regard to the sharing of information.

Given that a significant amount of work was required under the action with the different agencies involved, it was decided to work with a neutral, independent facilitator throughout the action. A facilitator¹¹ was appointed in mid-2003 and met the participant agencies individually during Autumn 2003. Two one-day sessions were also organised with all of the organisations involved in the action participating.

Arising from this work, a document was produced in December 2003 containing:

- A more detailed exposition of the aims of the action;
- Draft inter-agency protocol with regard to lead agency working;
- Draft inter-agency protocol with regard to client confidentiality;
- A draft form to facilitate the release of information between agencies;
- A draft form to facilitate inter-agency referral;
- Draft criteria to cover inter-agency referral;
- Draft guidelines to cover multi-agency meetings with a client;
- A draft form to contain information relating to 'individuals' care plans,

This 23-page document formed the basis for two workshops in January 2004 with frontline workers from the eight agencies involved in the action. These presented the protocols and other documentation to the staff and received feedback on them. The workshops were supplemented by training provided to frontline staff within each of the organisations, i.e. each frontline worker therefore received information and training on the new protocols twice.

To support this training, and to provide easy access to a summary of key points in the larger document, a leaflet was prepared by the action in early-2004, summarising the actions and the draft protocols. This was widely circulated within the organisations involved.

11 Ms. Rita Burtenshaw of Burtenshaw Kenny Associates.

Despite having the inter-agency workshops, the frontline staff felt they wanted further knowledge of the other organisations involved, i.e. while they knew their missions and objectives, they felt they did not really know, in practical terms, what the other organisations did.

This led to two 'familiarisation' workshops at end-March 2004 (during the period when the draft protocols were being piloted), where each agency was asked to present its work using innovative means (i.e. role plays, use of props, visits to sites etc. rather than through a conventional presentation). Some 23 people attended the first of these workshops and 37 people attended the second. These workshops were considered a great success by the staff involved, the general feeling being that people really understood, for the first time, what their partner organisations on the action did.

Having agreed the draft protocols and supporting documentation, and become familiar with each other's organisations, the protocols were piloted over a three month period, from February to April 2004. Minor clarifications to when and how the protocols apply (e.g. when is a three-way meeting necessary?) were made in response to issues arising during the pilot phase.

Data collected on inter-agency co-operation over this 2004 period is shown below.

Table 8: Indicators of Inter-Agency Co-operation between Organisations in 'Protocols' Action

Activity	February	March	April
Number of Inter-agency referrals	22	25	26
Number of 3-way meetings	0	7	10
Number of Lead Agency referrals	0	2	4
Total number of Inter-agency Activities	22	34	40

Table 8 shows that, from a situation where there were no three-way meetings or lead agency referrals taking place, both of these activities began following introduction of the protocols and grew in number over the pilot period. There was also an increase in inter-agency referrals over the period.

A review day for the action was held on 28th May 2004. The following areas of positive impact were identified by the Northern Area Health Board Re:

- The three-way meetings were consistently reported as being positive both for introducing clients to new agencies and for the resolution of issues arising for clients between agencies;
- The move to a 'lead agency' approach was cited by half of the agencies involved as having clarified roles and focused the client interventions. It was felt the lead agency now lets the other services know where they stand;
- All agencies reported an increase in communication and activity between the agencies involved, and the emergence of a greater understanding of the range of different services that exist, and their roles;
- The structures put in place around referral were welcomed;
- It was felt that the confidentiality protocol provides clear parameters within which agencies can work.

A number of concerns were also raised:

- The new systems require more paperwork (although complaints in this regard decreased as people got used to the new systems);
- It was felt that even more three-way meetings were appropriate, i.e. more such meetings would have prevented some difficulties arising;

- One service encountered a difficulty in getting clients to agree to the protocols;
- It can be difficult to explain the confidentiality protocol to clients
- Not all staff in all agencies were following the protocols fully;
- The multi-agency approach can be confusing for some staff and some clients;
- The new approaches take time to develop, to embed and to implement.

However, the conclusions of the managers involved were that the objectives of the pilot action were achieved and that gradual embedding of the protocols in the practices of the different organisations would have positive long-term implications for clients.

A number of amendments were made to the protocols and the supporting documentation following feedback provided at the 28th May review meeting. Revised versions of all documents were circulated in June 2004.

A meeting between the Evaluator and frontline staff from the eight agencies was held in mid-July 2004. Their overall view echoed that of the managers, i.e. that the protocols were useful and would improve the combined service being provided to the client group. Their support for the continuation of the protocols shows that the issue identified at the outset (i.e. a need to increase the level of comfort of agency staff in relation to sharing information) has at least partly been addressed by the protocols. As well as the concerns listed above, a number of further issues were raised:

- The need for a shortened or summary version of the protocols that could be displayed in offices;
- A need for further training – the feeling being that it takes a considerable amount of time to embed the new ways of working;
- A need for a mechanism to flag problems arising, e.g. if an agency does not respect another agency's lead role in relation to a particular client;
- A suggestion that some case studies on inter-agency co-operation would provide a good mechanism for the dissemination of good practice.

Clients were also interviewed during the research process and a number expressed concerns about issues such as the ownership of information, its release on a controlled, need-to-know basis and the need to be informed about what information is shared, in what circumstances and when. These concerns were taken into account in the development and revision of the protocols during the project.

5.2.3 Outputs

The following items were agreed, on an inter-agency basis, between the eight agencies involved in this pilot action, working with drug users in Blanchardstown:

- Protocol on Lead Agency Working
- Policy on Confidentiality
- Inter-agency Release of Information Form
- Inter-agency Referral Form
- Inter-agency Referral Criteria
- Guidelines for Multi-agency Meetings with a Client
- Guidelines for Multi-agency Individual Care Plans.

These documents are available from the Northern Area Health Board or from Blanchardstown Area Partnership.

The action also led to a measurable increase in the number of inter-agency referrals, three-way meetings and lead agency referrals in Blanchardstown.

5.2.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

The first work as regards the dissemination and mainstreaming of this action took place with the organisations directly involved. As stated above, these organisations felt the action had worked well and had the potential to improve services to clients, through its facilitation of greater inter-agency co-operation.

At the review meeting of 28th May 2004, the organisations agreed to a number of actions to embed the work of the action into their organisations. These included:

- A decision to continue to use the protocols, after the pilot action ended;
- A decision to extend the use of the protocols further in the organisations (i.e. so that they would apply to more clients – but, given the organisations involved, this still related to the drug user target group);
- A decision to continue to collect information on inter-agency contacts and referrals on a more formal basis and to develop a common template in this regard;
- A decision to increase the level of training provided within the organisations as regards inter-agency knowledge and co-operation.

A number of other issues were noted for future discussion, e.g. the inclusion of inter-agency co-operation in people's job descriptions and in induction processes; the provision of mentors to support this work; and the possible placement of people from the different organisations involved in each other's organisations for periods of time.

Once the decisions listed above to embed the protocols further had been implemented in the eight organisations involved in the pilot, it was felt that there was the potential to include other organisations in the process.

These actions were agreed by the Steering Group for the action on 19th July, when a detailed set of actions for embedding the protocols in the organisations involved, and their possible extension to other organisations, was agreed.

Senior management in all eight agencies involved 'signed off' on the protocols by 10th September 2004. This facilitated a formal launch of the model of good practice developed under this action within the eight agencies at a half-day conference in Croke Park on October 1st 2004. This was attended by a large number of professionals from the health sector and from other organisations working with drug users. The keynote address at the conference was given by Mr. Brian Lenihan TD, Junior Minister.

To record the work under this action in a form that would be accessible to organisations not involved in the pilot action, a document was produced by the facilitator for the action in September 2004.

As part of the Blanchardstown EQUAL transnational partnership, this action developed strategic links with the partners from Portugal, Germany and the UK. The work of this Blanchardstown EQUAL action on a transnational basis included several activities.

1. Information on the development of interagency protocols was disseminated to the transnational partners via the Sapiens Network's communication system.
2. Both an information sharing session and discussion regarding this interagency action was facilitated at a March 2004 transnational seminar of those partners working with drug users. The action found this session useful in receiving feedback from its transnational partners on striking a balance between formal and informal interagency co-operation.
3. A detailed and comprehensive presentation was made at the i-Work International Conference in Reading, England, in March 2004.

4. Draft guidelines on developing formal interagency co-operation were discussed at a meeting of those partners working with drug users in Portugal in April 2004.
5. Information on the interagency protocols formed part of a presentation made by Blanchardstown EQUAL at a Portuguese international conference on integration in April 2004.
6. The Northern Area Health Board co-facilitated a one-day session in Brussels on developing guidelines for 'formal interagency co-operation' and 'consultation with service users', with its transnational partners.
7. Agencies connected with the transnational group on drug users described the process used/learning outcomes achieved by this action as being particularly useful. The following quote is from a UK-based therapeutic community offering residential rehabilitation to drug and alcohol free service users.

"As the resettlement manager of Yeldall Manor, I oversee the transition of men in recovery from care into the community and work with several different agencies. Having experienced complications with a statutory agency over the sharing of information concerning the disclosure of using drugs, I was particularly interested in the interagency protocols. Hearing it explained gave me the confidence to try to establish something similar. As a result of this, I understand that Yeldall Manor is the only agency that this statutory organisation has such an agreement with, and this has strengthened our working relationships."

The National Drug Rehabilitation Co-ordinator in Portugal is interested in using the process used in this action as part of its dissemination and mainstreaming, a process which the project (the 'Artisans Network') began in the Algarve region in late-2004.

In terms of extending the action on a local level, the action was in discussions in Spring 2005 with the national Technical Support Structure for EQUAL and, through it, with the National Mainstreaming Policy Group. The discussions were reviewing whether it would be possible to extend the EQUAL pilot action locally, with a view to using this period as a transition to a more widespread mainstreaming of the action.

5.2.5 Comment on Action

This action provides an example of both process- and context-oriented innovation, as defined by the EQUAL programme. The action has been innovative from a process perspective in that it involved the creation of new processes involving eight organisations working together to support drug users in Blanchardstown. It was innovative as regards context in that the new processes both stemmed from, and drove, changes in the ways the organisations saw themselves and their work. Further embedding of the protocols over time has the potential to generate further context innovation and to change these organisations' 'existing settings' (or 'views of the world') to some extent.

Given the timeframe for the action, and the limited budget, the action has had considerable success in generating increased co-operation between eight service delivery organisations in Blanchardstown work with drug users. The work involved organisations of different sizes, coming from both the public and community/voluntary sectors. The data gathered by the action show that inter-agency co-operation increased substantially following the introduction of the new protocols in Spring 2004. Meetings with both the managers and the frontline staff involved in the action indicate that the protocols developed were welcomed by the service organisations involved in the action.

Generating change in how organisations work is difficult, and this has been evident across the Irish public sector in recent years. The goal of inter-agency co-operation ('joined-up government') has proven difficult to achieve in practice. Specific aspects of the process under this action which appear to have been important in allowing the change to occur are as follows:

- The appointment of a neutral facilitator at the outset may have allowed all of the organisations to feel their views would be equally valued in the process. A facilitator from one of the large organisations, for example, could have generated suspicion from the smaller, community-based groups;

- While there was a neutral facilitator, the action also had a lead driver in the Northern Area Health Board. The process needed a sense of urgency and a single leader ensured that the process had sufficient energy to succeed;
- The development of an action plan at the start of the work meant that there was an agreed end-goal for the action, even if the precise definition of this was for the organisations involved to work out during the pilot. Also, the end-goal (protocols to allow improved inter-agency co-operation) was widely perceived as addressing an issue which needed to be addressed by the organisations involved;
- The action was overseen by a committed Steering Group;
- The action demanded a considerable amount of work on the part of the managers and the frontline staff of the organisations involved, and the people involved were generally willing to put in this effort;
- A high level of communication and consultation throughout the process were key factors in the work. Insofar as time allowed, frontline staff were involved in the process and the atmosphere generated allowed people to talk about problems arising as well as successes;
- In any change process, some level of resistance can be expected. In this case, the action brought together organisations with different missions and cultures, and generated extra paperwork and meetings. Ongoing communication, early 'successes' and a defined action plan were the tools that overcame any resistance arising. As the pilot action went on, the level of resistance appeared to fall, and the new ways of working became established;
- The changes that were occurring during the pilot process, and afterwards, were reinforced by the documents produced and by the involvement of the wider group. The process of getting the eight agencies to formally 'sign off' on the new processes institutionalised the new ways of working in September 2004.

A number of the organisations involved in the action noted that, while the action aimed to develop inter-agency protocols, it turned out that protocols were a practical manifestation of a wider process in which trust was built up between the organisations involved. Without trust, protocols on their own would not have facilitated change.

The action appears to have potential for further mainstreaming in a number of ways:

- There is potential for the organisations involved to embed the protocols and the associated work practices more deeply into their structures and cultures. Both because organisations recruit new people on an ongoing basis, and because the normal internal cultures of organisations can be expected to re-assert themselves over time, the action cannot be successful if viewed as a one-off event (after which inter-agency co-operation occurs) rather than as the start of a process to support inter-agency co-operation. For example, the 'familiarisation workshops' need to be repeated at defined intervals;
- There is potential to involve other organisations that deal with current/ former drug users in Blanchardstown, including organisations working more directly on labour market issues (e.g. FÁS and the Department of Social and Family Affairs) and others;
- There is every reason to believe that similar improvements in inter-agency co-operation could be obtained in other parts of Ireland for drug users. In particular, there is an onus on the health authorities and the Drugs Task Force to ask if this pilot action can be extended to other areas;
- While this action focused on drug users, there is no reason to believe that similar work could not occur (and services be improved) in relation to other target groups;
- The reaction of the Portuguese and UK partners of the Blanchardstown project indicate that this action contains elements of learning that may be useful not just in a national perspective but at an EU level.

5.3 Action 9: Promoting Equality and Diversity with Local Employers

5.3.1 Innovative idea of Action

Chapter 1 showed that a number of parts of the Blanchardstown area experience above average unemployment. Chapters 3 and 4 described pilot actions taken by Blanchardstown EQUAL to address issues arising for different target groups experiencing labour market exclusion and for young people entering the labour market.

Besides working directly with the target groups, a further part of the picture is the engagement of employers with people from the target groups. Ultimately, if people are to move into employment, then local employers will have to recruit from the relevant target groups. Prior to the EQUAL project, efforts had been made by Blanchardstown Area Partnership (BAP) to engage with local employers. However, these efforts were still at an early stage and EQUAL was seen as an opportunity to pilot further actions in this regard.

This action grew directly from a piece of research commissioned in 2002 by Blanchardstown Area Partnership and Greater Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce on diversity and equality in employment in the area. The aim of this research, funded by the Equality Authority, was to identify the barriers, supports and attitudes to diversity among employers. The research was seen as a first step of building information so as to provide a platform for future projects on diversity and equality in employment.

This research demonstrated mixed results. For example, on the one hand, a majority (62%) of employers had an equality policy in place but, on the other hand, two-thirds of staff (and 54% of HR staff) had received no equality and diversity training. Furthermore, some three-quarters of SMEs were not familiar with equality legislation.

The results of the research provided a solid evidence base on which to build this action. The research was also timely as it was launched in January 2003 at a business breakfast in Blanchardstown (see below). The publication of the research, and the breakfast, were funded by the EQUAL project. At the launch, it was decided to establish a sub-group of employers, within the EQUAL project, to build on the findings of the research.

This 'Employer Sub-group' contained representatives of BAP, local employers (large and small), community organisations and the EQUAL project. A key role was played by Blanchardstown Area Partnership, which facilitated the work of the group and played an ongoing co-ordination role. Following consultation over a period of months, three sub-actions were identified for the project by the group:

- General strengthening of relationships with local employers;
- Support for employers in relation to equality in recruitment and selection;
- Broader support for employers on equality legislation and equality policies.

These sub-actions were presented to the DP Management Committee in June 2003 and adopted by the wider project.

5.3.2 Description of Work Undertaken

Having undertaken the above series of steps, and reached a point where sub-actions had been agreed, the implementation of the sub-actions took place from early-2003 to mid-2004. In relation to the second and third sub-actions, a report was prepared on the work undertaken, and this Evaluation draws on information in that report.¹²

12 Prepared by Keelin O'Reilly and Associates (2004) – available from Blanchardstown Area Partnership.

General Strengthening of Relationships with Employers

The Employer Sub-group established in this part of the EQUAL project was itself a key mechanism for building relationships between local employers and organisations working to support people into employment. This group involved a commitment throughout from the Greater Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce as well as representatives of:

- Blanchardstown Area Partnership – playing a co-ordination role;
- Two local SMEs - Barrington Insurance and Merge Print Post Services;
- Two ICT multinationals – IBM and Symantec;
- Forum 15 (an umbrella organisation for community groups from Dublin 15) and the LES/Joblink service.

Over the period of the EQUAL project, these organisations built working relationships based on undertaking real tasks together. Participants said that this led to changed perceptions on both sides.

Besides the specific training for employers (described below), a number of other actions arose from the work of this group:

- Two breakfasts were organised with local employers. These involved guest speakers on equality and diversity issues facing employers – in January 2003, the Chief Executive of the Equality Authority and, in June 2004, the Global Manager from Symantec on Diversity and Inclusion. Almost 100 business people attended the first breakfast with approximately 30 people attending the second breakfast;
- A seminar on Corporate Social Responsibility was hosted by IBM as part of the visit to Ireland by the project's transnational partners in September 2003, attended by a number of local companies as well as participants from the other local EQUAL actions and the overseas partners;
- In the second half of 2004, IBM worked with the LES and community organisations to source two new employees with disabilities and was seeking further such employees in 2005. Contact was made with the developer of a local hotel and it was hoped this would lead to further work placements in 2005;
- In March 2005, representatives of two local employers (IBM and Barrington Insurance) travelled with Blanchardstown EQUAL to Lille as part of the last transnational project visit. As well as further strengthening relationships with local community organisations, this trip included a presentation by the French EQUAL partner on how employers can forge better links with local communities, and how investment in such links results in mutually beneficial outcomes. These French interventions were seen by the local businesspeople who travelled as being highly interesting.
- Following from its interaction with the Employer Sub-group, IBM agreed to fund further initiatives relating to labour market exclusion in Blanchardstown in 2005.

Support for Employers on Equality in Recruitment and Selection

Keelin O'Reilly and Associates delivered the training to employers on recruitment and selection, and on wider equality issues. On the former, the aim was to support local employers in adopting recruitment and selection techniques that accord with equality legislation and best practice.

The original idea was to host a workshop for local employers. However, due to considerable demand, three workshops were organised – in October and November 2003 and in January 2004. Workshops were organised to contain a mix of big and small firms, and community organisations. Questionnaires completed by participants in advance of the training indicated that motivations were to update their knowledge on equality legislation and on recruitment and selection techniques.

The content of the programmes included modules on:

- Towards a Definition of Equality and Diversity
- Roles and Responsibilities of Organisations and Individuals
- The Recruitment and Selection Process.

- Making an appointment
- Ongoing Employment and Promotions
- Actions to Promote Equality and Diversity in the Workplace.

Feedback from participants was very positive, with the overwhelming majority saying they were "very satisfied" with the programmes. Moreover, feedback to the programme facilitator showed an appetite for further training on related areas (e.g. employment law and supporting staff progression in small organisations).

Support for Employers on Equality Legislation and Equality Policies

The findings from the Equality Authority funded research undertaken in 2002 provided a platform for defining the training required on equality issues. It was decided to provide support for companies in two steps:

- A policy workshop where elements of an Employment Equality Policy would be described, and attendees encouraged to develop a policy for their organisation;
- Follow-up support for organisations in developing such a policy.

It was decided that one workshop would be organised in February 2004, with another in April. Due to three of the enrolled seven participants pulling out of the April workshop at the last minute, that workshop was cancelled. However, the February workshop went ahead, with seven participants – six from the community/voluntary sector.

The workshop covered the following topics:

- Overview of Equality Legislation.
- Items for Inclusion in an Employment Equality Policy.
- How to develop an Employment Equality Policy.
- Preparing a draft Policy.
- Implementing and Promoting the Policy.
- Supports available to Employers to facilitate implementation and promotion.
- Development of an Action Plan for equality and diversity in the workplace.

Reaction to the content of the workshop from the participants was very positive. A number of participants thought further training would be useful on 'equality in the workplace', as well as on organisations' obligations to customers, suppliers etc.

Following the workshop, support was provided to the organisations involved (by telephone and e-mail) by the workshop facilitator to support the development of employment equality policies. The facilitator's report states that, of five organisations in the workshop that did not already have employment equality policies, three were finalising such policies in April 2004.

5.3.3 Outputs

- New relationships established between local employers and community organisations, with a central role for Blanchardstown Area Partnership.
- Placing of two people with disabilities in work with IBM, with possibility of further placements during 2005.
- Funding from IBM for further local labour market inclusion initiatives in 2005.
- Organising of two successful 'business breakfasts' on equality and diversity issues for local employers.
- Production of report on Diversity and Equality in employment in Blanchardstown (research funded by Equality Authority but publication funded by EQUAL).

- Organisation of three workshops on equality and diversity issues in recruitment and selection, attended by 33 people from local organisations.
- Organisation of two workshops on developing an employment equality policy in an organisation – one cancelled due to low expected attendance; seven participants at the other workshop.
- Development of employment equality policies by three organisations that did not previously have them.
- Preparation of an 18 page report by the Facilitator on the training provided through both sets of workshops.

5.3.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming – Targets and Progress

On a local level, the work of this action was disseminated in three ways:

- Through the Greater Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce, which publicised events organised by the action, and encouraged its members to partake in them;
- Through Blanchardstown Area Partnership – its Deputy Manager sat on the sub-group organising this action and, through her, the work of the action fed back into the Partnership;
- Through the EQUAL DP Management Committee, to which updates were provided on an ongoing basis and, through it, to community organisations.

In terms of local mainstreaming, the action represented a significant advance in terms of co-operation between employers and community organisations. When the specific EQUAL-funded actions were completed in 2004, there was a desire to keep the group together. The group was continuing to meet in Spring 2005 and was hoping to obtain funding for further initiatives. Blanchardstown Area Partnership was also considering if (and how) it could establish an Employer Liaison Unit to support links to employers in the longer term.

On a national level, this action complements work undertaken by a number of other EQUAL projects in trying to forge local employer links. These links have been discussed by Blanchardstown EQUAL as part of its membership of the EQUAL Employability Thematic Group at national level. This action also complements work undertaken by the Equality Authority in recent years in providing training to companies on issues relating to equality. In Spring 2005, Blanchardstown Area Partnership was preparing to publish further Equality Authority research on local equality issues. Through this work and the contacts it generated, the Equality Authority is familiar with the work of Blanchardstown EQUAL in working on equality issues with employers.

5.3.5 Comment on Action

Given the importance of employers to moving people from the different project target groups into jobs, it is appropriate that there was an action in Blanchardstown EQUAL relating to engagement with employers. This action can be divided into the work of building relationships between the community and local employers (these were weak before EQUAL) and the provision of specific training – on recruitment/selection and on wider equality issues. Both elements seem to have worked well.

The building of relationships took time and, by its nature, is hard to measure in terms of simple outputs. However, good relationships were established with large multi-national companies based locally and with smaller companies via the Chamber of Commerce. These connections moved employer links from being an idea for Blanchardstown Area Partnership to being a reality, and potentially provide a solid foundation for BAP to develop longer-term links (as exist, for example, for Northside Partnership).

Both sets of training workshops were well designed and implemented. There was considerable demand and enthusiasm from organisations (including from the private sector) for the workshops on recruitment and selection, with over 30 people receiving training on this topic. There was less demand (especially from the private sector) for the workshops on wider equality issues. However, the workshops indicate a demand from at least some organisations to improve their policies and practices on equality.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Policy Implications

6.1 Work of Blanchardstown EQUAL

6.1.1 Objectives and Pilot Actions of Blanchardstown EQUAL

The Blanchardstown EQUAL project ran from May 2002 to May 2005, with funding of approximately €950,000 over that time. In advance of its work, the project stated:

"The aim of the Blanchardstown EQUAL Project is to tackle the factors that lead to discrimination and inequality, and to effect structural change within organisations and companies (statutory, voluntary and private) in the Blanchardstown area for the benefit of individuals and groups trying to access employment opportunities."

This overall project aim was supplemented by six specific objectives:

- To effect long-term structural change (and attitudinal change) in organisations and service providers working in the area through pilot actions;
- To provide support to individuals and groups experiencing discrimination from public services and employers to facilitate greater representation of the target groups in employment in the Blanchardstown area (and elsewhere);
- To address the lack of, or the poor, co-ordination and integration of the health and social services directed at the target groups and to facilitate access to employment by developing service standards, models of best practice and inter-agency protocols;
- To work with employers, service providers and individuals/groups to secure broad employment supports for groups experiencing discrimination and inequality;
- To identify and measure the outcomes throughout the process, and arising from it, and to implement a dissemination and mainstreaming strategy in partner organisations to ensure that project learning is disseminated and policy change is effected;
- To facilitate the holistic and integrated delivery of services to the target groups.

To achieve these objectives, Blanchardstown EQUAL brought together a Development Partnership of 15 organisations, which in turn defined nine innovative pilot actions.

Table 9: Pilot Actions under Blanchardstown EQUAL Project

Actions targeted at groups experiencing labour market exclusion

1. • Innovative training and supports for drug users
2. • Innovative training and supports for people with disability
3. • New ways of reaching the hardest-to-reach ex-offenders
4. • Innovative training and supports for Traveller men
5. • Life Skills courses for asylum seekers and refugees
• Actions targeted at Young People
6. • Innovations in delivery of Youthreach training
7. • Work Clubs to support young people in low-skilled employment
• Actions targeted at Labour Market Intermediate Organisations and Employers
8. • Development of common protocols by agencies working with drug users
9. • Promotion of greater equality and diversity in local companies

6.1.2 Outputs of Project Actions

Chapters 3-5 outlined in some detail the work undertaken by the nine pilot actions. As one would expect from an EQUAL project, some actions succeeded better than others – this fits with the idea of EQUAL as a laboratory for new ideas on the practices and policies required to combat labour market exclusion and discrimination.

All nine of the originally defined actions were undertaken over the 2003-04 period, even though some were modified in response to circumstances encountered during implementation. Their outputs, and the outputs arising from the project's transnational work, are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10: Outputs from Actions of Blanchardstown EQUAL Project

Action	Outputs
<i>Innovative training and supports for drug users</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus for six-month training programme for drug users to support (re)entry into mainstream training or employment; • Piloting of training programme; • Syllabus for, and piloting of, linked 4-week pre-programme course; • Foundation-level FETAC accreditation received by six people in computers and five people in art ; • Progression by one person to employment, two people onto CE programmes and one person into training; • Obtained 15,000 extra funding under Back to Education Initiative; • Documenting of learning in specific report on action.
<i>Innovative training and supports for people with disability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive intervention with six people with different types of disability from Blanchardstown • One of these people progressed during the period of the action into employment with two progressing to training courses. The other three people were reviewing options for progression once the EQUAL support process had finished. • Production of report by the Co-ordinator hired to run the action. • Development of new contacts and ways of working between local organisations that work with people with disabilities. • Learning from implementation of the action, and from networking
<i>New ways of reaching hardest-to-reach ex-offenders</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New, innovative methods for undertaking outreach work with hard-to-reach ex-offenders. These were developed during the action (building on previous BOND work) and piloted successfully • Development of training materials and ways of operating for an Evening Programme for ex-offenders – extending BOND's support to ex-offenders in work, who are less available during the day; • Short document prepared for June 2004 conference setting out information on BOND, on the situation of ex-offenders in the labour market and on the other actions under the Blanchardstown EQUAL

Table 10 (cont'd): Outputs from Actions of Blanchardstown EQUAL Project

Action	Outputs
<i>Innovative training and supports for Traveller men</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training modules for Traveller men, developed in co-operation with the Learning Development Agency in Blanchardstown. • Engagement with five Traveller men, who went through the training modules and developed a Business Plan, over a 10-month period. • Development of costed Business Plan for development of an Environmental Recycling Project in Blanchardstown.
<i>Life skills courses for asylum seekers and refugees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two 'expand-out' leaflets, each in three languages, on services for non-nationals in the Blanchardstown area (and other issues); • Life Skills course put together with eight modules, focusing on personal development issues; • 12 participants who undertook training and completed courses.
<i>Innovations in delivery of Youthreach training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Leaving Certificate stream started in local Youthreach Centre. • Methods from Leaving Certificate Applied used to deliver 'traditional' Leaving Certificate – short report by tutors involved. • Leaving Certificate subjects undertaken by 40 young people – with 35 in employment of full-time education one year later. • Provision of career guidance counselling for participants in Blanchardstown Youthreach Centre.
<i>Work Clubs to support young people in low-skill employment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training materials for delivering a Work Club to people in employment – materials developed and piloted brought together by the Action Facilitator. • Successful delivery of training to approx. 10 employees of two organisations, with strong positive feedback from participants. • Learning from the difficulty experienced in engaging with both employers and employees.
<i>Development of common protocols by agencies working with drug users</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement, on an inter-agency basis, between eight agencies working with drug users in Blanchardstown of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protocol on Lead Agency Working - Policy on Confidentiality - Inter-agency Release of Information Form - Inter-agency Referral Form - Inter-agency Referral Criteria - Guidelines for Multi-agency Meetings with a Client - Guidelines for Multi-agency Individual Care Plans. • Measurable increase in inter-agency referrals, three-way meetings and lead agency referrals in Blanchardstown.

Table 10 (cont'd): Outputs from Actions of Blanchardstown EQUAL Project

Action	Outputs
<p><i>Promotion of equality and diversity practices in local companies</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New relationships established between local employers and community organisations in Blanchardstown, with central role for Blanchardstown Area Partnership. • Placing of two people with disabilities in work with IBM, with possibility of further placements during 2005. • Funding by IBM of further local labour market inclusion initiatives in 2005. • Organising of two successful 'business breakfasts' on equality and diversity issues for local employers. • Production of report on Diversity and Equality in employment in Blanchardstown (research funded by Equality Authority but EQUAL funded publication of report in 2003). • Three workshops on equality and diversity issues in recruitment and selection, attended by 33 people from local organisations. • Organisation of two workshops on developing an employment equality policy in an organisation – one cancelled due to low expected attendance; seven participants at the other workshop. • Development of employment equality policies by three organisations that did not previously have them. • Preparation of an 18 page report by the Facilitator for the training provided through both sets of workshops.
<p><i>Work of the Transnational Dimension of Blanchardstown EQUAL – the SAPIENS Partnership</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A document called Avoid Consultation at Your Peril! on consultation processes with drug users • A document on how different agencies working with drug users in a locality can work together based on agreed protocols relating to confidentiality and definition of a lead agency. • Six-step generic model for Job Rotation, with guidelines for implementation of a Job Rotation project. • Training programme on how labour market practitioners should interact with employers ('social marketing' programme)

6.1.3 Meeting of Project Objectives

Overall, the work of the actions, and the outputs listed above, meet the objectives set out by the project in 2002:

- In terms of working with specific individuals and groups experiencing discrimination, the first seven of the nine actions (as listed above) did so, working in different ways to move individuals closer to employment, filling local service gaps and identifying learning for local organisations working with these groups;
- In terms of supporting inter-agency work, the best example of this is the action led by the NAHB for drug users. However, other actions (such as those working with people with disabilities, ex-offenders and the CDT action with drug users) also brought agencies together in new ways to work with specific target groups;

- Significant work was undertaken to promote the engagement of employers and a solid foundation was put in place for Blanchardstown Area Partnership, and other community organisations, to build on in this regard. This will require further sustained work in the period following May 2005;
- There was some evidence of structural (and attitudinal) change in service providers arising from EQUAL, mainly due to the requirement for practical co-operation of statutory and non-statutory organisations around specific pieces of work. Indeed, attitudinal change may also have arisen for local community organisations as they saw the challenges facing statutory agencies, and employers, as regards working on labour market inclusion issues.

The idea of the Development Partnership was perceived by those involved in Blanchardstown EQUAL to have worked well. Chapter 1 noted that Blanchardstown has undergone rapid change in recent years, with the population increasing dramatically and major infrastructural changes occurring. While these changes have brought benefits, they create challenges for organisations trying to respond to issues of labour market exclusion. New issues have emerged (e.g. non-national communities), it can be hard to identify individuals experiencing labour market exclusion and there is little time to co-ordinate responses with other organisations. While Blanchardstown Area Partnership provides a forum for organisations to co-ordinate responses, the EQUAL project deepened this co-operation and its placing of statutory and non-statutory organisations on an equal footing as DP members, aided the building of good relationships.

The transnational dimension of the project worked well, with especially strong partnerships forged by Blanchardstown EQUAL with the project's Portuguese and British partners. The organisation of the work of the transnational partnership through Special Interest Groups was successful in maximising input from different DP members and in ensuring that a number of practical outputs arose from the transnational work. Members of the project DP were strongly of the belief that the innovative ideas accessed during this part of the project were well worth the cost and effort involved in this part of the project

6.2 Policy Implications of Blanchardstown EQUAL

Chapters 3-5 set out the detail of the work of the nine actions undertaken by Blanchardstown EQUAL. The preparation and distribution of this Evaluation is an important part of the dissemination strategy of the project and, as such, it is hoped that organisations concerned with mainstream labour market policy will review these actions and identify potential areas of learning arising. These mainstream organisations are likely to best know themselves which elements of the work in Blanchardstown are likely to be innovative and relevant for current national policy and practice. Supplementary information is available on all of the actions from Blanchardstown Area Partnership, which can also arrange visits by policy-makers to the organisers of specific actions.

Chapters 3-5 indicate potential learning for a range of organisations concerned with policies to combat labour market exclusion – examples are as follows:

- FÁS – potential learning across most of the pilot actions, including the actions relating to end target groups and young people in employment, and the work of the NAHB on inter-agency protocols;
- Department of Education and Science, especially from the Youthreach action;
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment – potential learning across all of the actions but perhaps especially of interest will be the practical difficulties encountered in providing training to young people already employed in low-skill jobs. This may also be of interest to employers and trade unions, given the recognised national need for national life-long learning strategies;
- Health Service Executive – learning from the work of the Northern Area Health Board and its Rehabilitation/Integration service on developing multi-agency protocols for dealing with drug users. This action (which may receive funding from EQUAL for further piloting) has potential applicability in all HSE regions. It is also likely to be of interest to the National Drugs Task Force.

- National Disability Authority, especially from the action relating to the provision of supports for people with a disability;
- Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, and the Prison Service – the work of the action providing new kinds of outreach services to ex-offenders shows that even those who are hardest-to-reach can be integrated into services, with positive implications for re-offending rates and the individuals themselves;
- The Equality Authority is likely to learn from the project's efforts to engage with employers on equality and diversity issues.

The work on inter-agency protocols has a potential application outside of drug users. The action addressed the widely acknowledged problem of different agencies working to help a specific target group, with those agencies not working in a 'joined-up way'. The action provides a template for a process to overcome this problem, with potentially major benefits for end target groups, and for the efficiency of mainstream organisations.

Several project actions were essentially about providing a much higher level of one-to-one support to individuals, with the supports tailored by knowledge of the particular target group involved. This was true for the actions on disability, ex-offenders, drug users and Traveller men. The results from these actions show that such interventions can be effective in moving people who are some distance from a job towards employment. Such interventions are more expensive than current mainstream interventions in the short-run. However, a longer-term measurement of the benefits and costs of such interventions may suggest a quite different ratio of benefits to costs.

Having risen between 2001 and 2003, Irish unemployment fell in 2004 and, by end-2004, there were 85,600 people registered as unemployed¹³. With strong economic growth in 2005, and forecast to continue into 2006¹⁴, there is an opportunity to reduce this number further. However, many of the people who now remain unemployed find it difficult, of their own accord, to move into employment. They tend to live in specific geographic areas (generally defined RAPID areas). Insofar as they are members of specific target groups such as people with disabilities, Travellers or ex-offenders, they may experience discrimination from potential employers.

The Blanchardstown EQUAL project piloted a range of actions to support people who continue to be excluded from the Irish labour market. The actions collectively show that innovative policy approaches, backed up by proper funding, can support people from all target groups and areas towards mainstream long-term employment. As Blanchardstown EQUAL ends its work, the challenge locally is for organisations to continue the work of labour market inclusion, with Blanchardstown Area Partnership, and the LES, well placed to co-ordinate this work. At a national level, the challenge is for mainstream labour market organisations and policy makers to build on the learning from this project, and from other EQUAL projects.

13 CSO, Quarterly National Household Survey - Quarter 4 2004, published in March 2005

14 Central Bank, Second Quarterly Bulletin for 2005, May 2005

