

# A Youth Guarantee – The Options



Submission to the Department of Social Protection



Youth Work Ireland

*'be part of*

## **Introduction**

Youth Work Ireland members deliver approximately 3,300 labour market relevant training and education places each year with support from a number of agencies. Our network of Youth Information centres recorded over 5,800 employment and training related contacts in 2012.

Working with over 100,000 young people throughout Ireland Youth Work Ireland and its members have long realised the importance of preparing young people for the world of work in delivering quality youth work. A number of projects and initiatives have been delivered locally and nationally with this aim in mind.

Naturally with the onset of Ireland's current economic situation and the steep rise in unemployment, youth unemployment and emigration this work has been accelerated. Most Youth Work Ireland members now deliver one or more dedicated youth employment projects. These are generally carried out in association with state agencies such as Fas or a local VEC/ETB, The Department of Social Protection and private sector employers.

Nationally Youth Work Ireland previously delivered the "Pathways" EU Youthstart Initiative. This ESF supported project delivered innovative and tailor made support to early school leavers and young unemployed people. Youth Work Ireland with support for the DCYA has long supported a network of Youth Information Centres which are core to our model of an integrated youth service and our youth work model. These centres offer support to young people in CV design, job search and interview preparation. This work could easily be extended to include coaching and skills recognition.

## **An Overdue Initiative**

The Advent of a Youth Guarantee represents an important opportunity to deal with a critical issue in our labour market today, the issue of youth unemployment. Despite recent decreases youth unemployment is still ahead of the EU average in Ireland and high levels of emigration and young people not eligible to sign on the Live Register further masks the true level of young people not in employment education and training.

The impact of our recession on young people is plain for all to see. A generation who had nothing to do with the Celtic Tiger or the excesses of the property boom are the ones to suffer most. The numbers of young people in employment has effectively halved since the beginning of the recession. About 1/3 of all young males in the labour force have no work. The ESRI and NESI have illustrated how this recession has impacted most on young people. Until now the general response to this amongst our people has been one of regret and sympathy. Similarly annual emigration figures and surveys show a huge increase in involuntary emigration by young people. This brain drain is a huge economic as well as social issue as it effectively takes a huge public investment out of our economy and gifts it to our competitors. It is hard to chart a recovery for any country in recession when a huge swathe of its productive population are leaving.

Nobody expects the Government to magic up jobs overnight and of course they merely set the environment for job creation. However the Government is front and centre when it comes to education, training and how we treat people who cannot find work. There have been numerous jobs initiatives and programmes launched in the last few years yet there has been no dedicated initiative

specifically focussed on the needs of young people, in fact it has been estimated there were only 2 dedicated youth focused measures in the Governments 2012 Action Plan for Jobs.

### **A Model for a Youth Guarantee**

While the Department of Social Protection has expressed the view that Ireland will not be able to deliver on a full Youth Guarantee in the timescale available we still feel it important to set out the high level goal and how it might look in Ireland. There are a few starting principles that it is important to state in this regard

- Youth Unemployment is heterogeneous with many strands and young people from differing backgrounds
- Lacking in professional networks and other labour market links, Guidance and Counselling is particularly important to young people
- Labour market factors applying to the entire population are still relevant to young people, such as educational attainment, the need to be close to the labour market and the importance of certification in education and training
- All employment and labour market programmes must contain certain features to deliver best to their client group. Youth Work providers need to be aware of these and how they need to feature alongside or combined with the youth work features mentioned above (See the work of David Blanchflower, Dartmouth College and Philip O'Connell in the ESRI) these include;

#### *Guidance and Counselling*

Young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, can find it hard to navigate the system. They may have left school early and can in certain cases be hostile to authority or the state. At the same time national policy and the OECD have stressed the critical nature of employment services and one to one help with the job seeking process. However it is clear that even the revamped employment services under Pathways to Work are only engaging with a fraction of those who are unemployed. The consequences of not engaging with this group of young people could be long lasting

#### *Outreach and Pre-Employment Services*

Youth Services could play a valuable role in this area by using their reach and infrastructure to reach out to young people not being engaged by the current employment services. Even the DSP in its briefing material for those interested in tendering for Job path (sub-contracted employment services) indicates a very low number of young people being covered. A youth guarantee will have to provide enhanced employment services to young people and youth services are well placed to fulfil this role. A pre-employment services system where youth services ensure young people are prepared and focused for interacting with the DSP may be a valuable initiative and would make young people aware of the guarantee, what it means and how it works.

### *Certification and Labour Market Relevance*

All labour market work needs to be certified, this builds credibility with employers and participants. A lot of work has been done to develop our FETAC system and this allows for the proper certification of all substantial labour market interventions. Similarly such an approach enables measurement of outcomes and facilitates progression. It is important to ensure young people do not go around in circles and moving from an existing level of certification to the next ensures this. Certification of any substantial work in this area is a must.

### *Capacity*

This is relatively simple; despite some increased funding and a number of initiatives and providers we simply do not have enough places in our current system. The youth guarantee needs to significantly increase capacity in the areas we know have good outcomes. It is also important to bring in new providers and those who are close to young people in their communities. This is also a possible role for youth services.

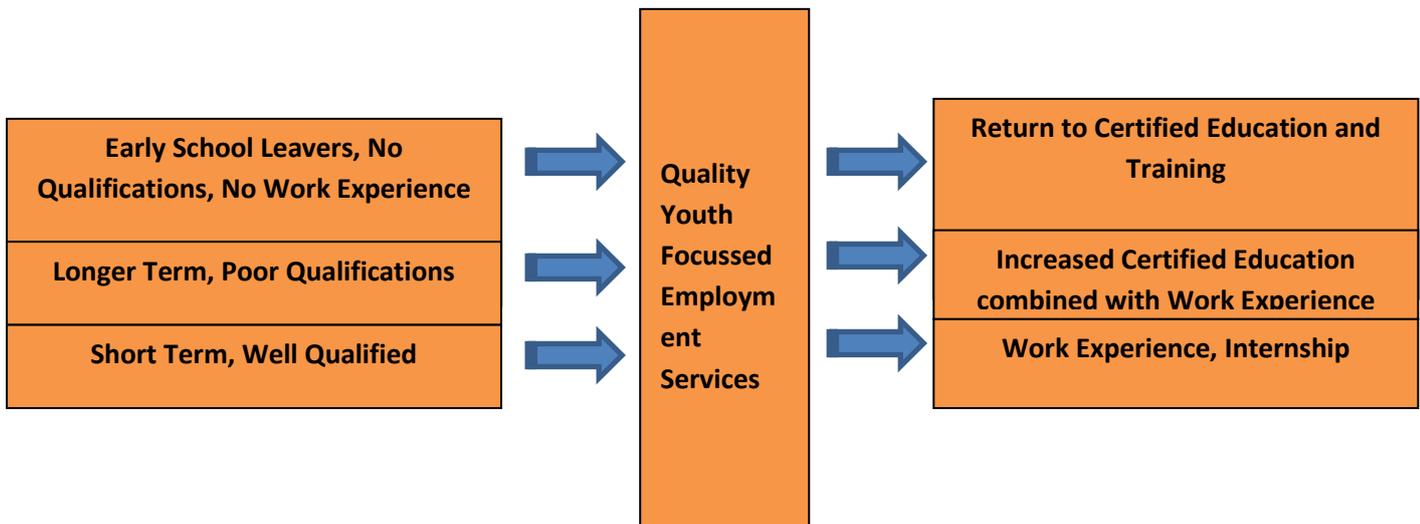
### *Entrepreneurship*

This is often overlooked. There has been a lot of good work done by NFTE in terms of training linked with schools and communities. However it is also important to link the creativity and start-up potential of young people directly to the County Enterprise Boards, University business links programmes and other existing enterprise supports to deliver actual start-ups which will inevitably have employment impact for young people as start-ups would often employ their peers.

### *Relationship with DSP*

All employment supports and programmes for young people need to be evaluated against targets particularly if resources are been committed. Generally youth services should be able to assist in getting young people off the live register. There are of course some other elements to this; many jobless young people living at home for example are not eligible to sign on. There may be a need to be flexibility in deciding what young people qualify for support but progress form the Live Register also needs to be a focus. One way of doing this would be to allow the Youth Service to recruit as is the case in the TRYS "Work Winner" programme but check the status of recruits with DSP so they can monitor and record progress or otherwise.

We can thus align young people's labour market provision then with other types of social provision in terms of Maslow's Pyramid



### Questions on the Youth Guarantee

We would address the questions set out in the recent DSP briefing as follows;

#### *Berlin Shortlist*

The Berlin shortlist offers a useful framework for looking at the Youth Guarantee, however it was only one snapshot at one point in time. Another major event is taking place in Paris in November and it is clear that there are differing views in Europe about the Youth Guarantee (for example the ILO and the European Youth Forum). It is important then to have a broad view of what is happening in Europe, what works, what doesn't and what can be translated in to practice in member states.

- There are a number of other guides and publications on the idea of a Youth Guarantee which should also inform the Department and the Steering Group.

#### *Dual Model*

Nowhere is the above clearer than in the discussions on a dual model system. Over and over the social partners state that they feel this will not work in Ireland yet we are constantly asked to consider it. Apprenticeships have suffered hugely due to the collapse in construction. Apprenticeships can play a role but their numbers will be limited and there is still inflexibility in the model. However Ireland has developed traineeships nearly 20 years ago which combine workplace and formal learning. These can play an important role in translating a dual model in to the Irish situation.

- We should utilise traineeships to build capacity in terms of dual model in Ireland

### *Internships*

The support and promotion of internships is sensible. Ireland has developed this model considerable in the last few years. However there have been quality issues in relation to Job bridge and the numbers illustrate that a minority of participants are young people. Extra reserved places in the budget may partially deal with this. The major evaluation of the initiative surprisingly did not have a control group analysis which is considered best practice in labour market evaluation. Most importantly there is poor systematic linking of internships with young people's educational attainment. In reality internship is a form of provision for those with better educational attainment to provide them with the work experience they don't have. Utilising it as a measure for people who are educationally disadvantaged is poor practice, people in this position need to be directed to programmes that address their educational attainment

- Jobbridge places for young people should be systematically linked to their educational attainment and career path

### *Intra-EU labour mobility*

There can be some assistance provided by this concept particularly in terms of the EU Youth Programmes where budgets have not been so badly affected. However it will be limited in terms of scope and volume

### *Employment Subsidies*

Again Ireland has a comprehensive regime and it has recently being consolidated. However the evidence on the impact of such measures is weak to say the least. Employers select staff based on their contribution and the needs of the workplace. Cost is down the list so the prospect of deadweight is very high here. Furthermore successive cuts to welfare rates for young people and the lower minimum wage means the cost wedge in employing them is almost non-existent. The cost and replacement ratios are highest amongst older workers with families. So citing this potential measure for young people is an example of poor joined up Government

- It is hard to see major impact for young people in these measures

### *Youth Entrepreneurship*

There is scope for more provision here and as mentioned elsewhere linkage and integration with existing supports would be best

### *Public Employment Services*

This is a key issue for young people and for employers. It is also an area where youth services and organisations should be utilised more. The National Youth Council of Ireland has shown the major issues many young people feel in engaging in aspects of employment services. Also we know that employment services currently are suffering from capacity issues. We feel that bespoke and focussed employment services are needed for young people.

Again we are in danger of re-inventing the wheel as a network of centres for providing advice and assistance in labour market activity already exist in Youth Information Centres. Similarly other

infrastructure has been developed to engage with young people in community settings such as youth cafes and a variety of drop in centres. It would make a lot of sense for the DSP to utilise this network

- The full network of Youth Information Centres, Youth Cafes and Drop in Centres should be supported to facilitate employment services for young people. These could be pre-employment services with youth workers trained to deliver them and linked with DSP I.T. systems

#### *Linking PES and Training Agencies and Employers*

This type of work is being done by some youth services already. Given how close in years young people are to the education system PEX type exercises should be easier and be carried out more efficiently

#### *Allocation of Scarce Resources – Groups in Need of Particular Attention*

The core principle of the youth guarantee is that it be preventative. The dilemmas of how to deliver on this with scarce resources surfaced at the consultation meetings. For example, morally we may want to provide for the most disadvantaged and long term unemployed amongst the youth population. However this would not be a preventive action. Longer term unemployed people may need more fundamental interventions. However they certainly should not be disadvantaged by the advent of a youth guarantee.

In many respects it is the fundamental components of disadvantage that matter. In terms of labour market opportunities clearly educational attainment is one of these

- We would not favour changing the four month timescale particularly for employment services type interventions. If any prioritisation is needed it should be in terms of lack of educational attainment as this group are most in need of a preventative approach

#### *One Thing You Could Insist on in the Youth Guarantee – A role for Youth Organisations*

We would insist on the central involvement in youth organisations and youth services in the Youth Guarantee. Youth Works contribution to a Youth Guarantee revolves around a number of important features youth organisations, youth workers and volunteers possess;

- **Relationship:** Youth Work stresses the relationship between young people and trusted adults. There are a number of areas where this relationship can reach in to young people's lives and assist them where often more official agencies cannot. Good examples of this would be case conferences with social services and the criminal justice system
- **Reach:** Youth services reach in to every corner of Ireland including remote rural areas, inner cities and towns and villages. Clubs and projects reach areas other parts of the state may find it hard. This reach could assist in the area of youth employment
- **Experience:** Youth services, workers and volunteers have tremendous experience working with young people. They know how they react in certain circumstances and what will and

what won't work. Delivering some employment programmes through or with youth organisations makes a lot of sense in terms of efficiency.

- **Infrastructure:** Through history and various partnerships many local youth services have a well-developed infrastructure. This is the physical infrastructure of community buildings but also their place and recognition in the community
- **2020 Skills:** The practice of youth work produces outcomes which for the young person are desirable and indeed considered essential to employers such as teambuilding, self-confidence, ability to take initiative, flexibility, project management etc. Such skills are transferable to any work environment and when one considers that the jobs we will be recruiting for in 5 years' time have not yet been invented, it is essential that young people entering the labour market now have the transferable flexible core skills to cope with the ever changing world of work.
- **Innovation:** There are a number of very innovative projects already operational and proved successful in this area in Youth Work Ireland. With appropriate supports (Human and Financial) these projects are transferable to other locations (see later)

### **Selected Example Projects and Provision**

We feel the Department should examine some of the following in terms of youth service led provision which have been delivered in recent times;

- **Work Winner (Tipperary Regional Youth Service)** A comprehensive programme in partnership with local employers, ETB and DSP. Providing bespoke dedicated support to young people in their labour market needs
- **Working to Learn (Ossory Youth Kilkenny)** Working with the most disadvantaged young people to provide mentoring and support to work in a private sector environment. Delivered in partnership with State Street Bank
- **Pathways (Youth Work Ireland Previous National Programme under EU Youthstart Community Initiative)** A previous EU Community Initiative delivered in a number of sites focussing on focused, dedicated employment related guidance and counselling for young people
- **Letterkenny Youth Information Centre (Donegal Youth Service)** Significant provision focussed on dedicated support to young people in their labour market needs including C.V. preparation, mock interviews, job search activity and general support and information on labour market issues (one of 14 Youth Information Centres providing such support under the auspices of Youth Work Ireland)
- **Youthlinks (Carlow Regional Youth Service)** Training and Progression Project aimed specifically at young people who wish to up-skill and improve their chances of entering into further education, training or employment. Youthlinks is a part-time programme designed

in response to needs identified for an entry level progression programme for young people  
in Carlow town