



Opening Pathways to Employment for Travellers in South Dublin County Council

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EQUAL AT WORK
A DUBLIN EMPLOYMENT PACT INITIATIVE

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Executive Summary

Introduction

- This report reviews a pilot project undertaken by South Dublin County Council (SDCC) in 2005 and early-2006 in relation to the employment of Traveller men and women;
- The project took place against a backdrop of continuing high unemployment in the Traveller community in Ireland;
- The project comprised two distinct programmes – a Training Employment Programme for General Operatives (GOs) with the Parks Department of SDCC and a Training Employment Programmes for Clerical Officers (COs) in areas of the Council with administrative work;
- Support for the project was provided within the Council by the County Manager and by the elected members. A senior HR Manager was mandated to spend time in a hands-on way managing the project;
- The design of the project drew not only on the HR expertise of SDCC but also on inputs relating to previous training and employment programmes for Travellers from Pavee Point, Tallaght LES and others.

Training Employment Programme for General Operatives

- This programme aimed to recruit and train 8-10 GOs for work in the Parks Department. The project involved six months during which participants trained for three days a week with FÁS and worked two days a week as part of teams in the Council's Parks Department;
- Recruitment of people to the programme involved a number of steps:
 - Co-operation with local Traveller groups in identifying potentially suitable participants in the 17-19 year old age group;
 - Informal interviews to establish level of capabilities and interest;
 - Offer of full pay (at General Operative entry level grade) during the six months;
 - Promise of a job if the training was successfully completed.
- Following the selection process, 12 young Traveller men from Tallaght were selected for the programme;
- The FÁS element of the programme was delivered by an instructor with previous experience of working with the Traveller community;
- For the work part of the programme, the Traveller men were allocated to different teams within the Department. Diversity training was provided to Parks Department employees in advance of the project and the process was supported by the SDCC trades unions;
- Eight participants successfully completed the six month programme, which was accredited by FETAC. They received certificates from Minister Frank Fahey TD at a graduation ceremony in South Dublin County Council;
- Seven of these eight were working through their standard probationary periods with the Council in early-2006. They were due to become permanent employees in April 2006;
- SDCC said that it was happy with how the GO programme had worked. It believed the focus on 17-19 year olds; the offer of full pay during the training period; the availability of permanent jobs thereafter; and the ongoing involvement of a senior HR manager, were important success factors;
- The other stakeholders agreed that the Programme had worked well and thought it could potentially be replicated with older workers, if appropriate supports were in place. The participants said they could easily find other young Traveller men to participate future projects;
- SDCC plans to repeat the Programme in the Clondalkin area in 2006.

Training Employment Programme for Clerical Officers

- This element of the project did not have a formal training course but involved hiring people with good literacy skills, some computer skills and (generally) some work experience to work on temporary contracts or work experience, with a view to preparing them to take part in Clerical Officer competitions;
- This format meant that people could be selected one-by-one, on a rolling basis;
- The young people entering the CO Programme were identified in association with local organisations working with the Traveller community and by the local Traveller school liaison teacher;
- Participants were paid at the entry rate on the Clerical Officer payscale;
- By early 2006, two young women had successfully moved into full-time permanent positions and a further two women and one man were in full-time temporary positions, with the Council optimistic that they would become permanent after the next Clerical Officer competition;
- As with the GO Programme, the CO participants said there would be no problem getting more people from the Traveller community for this Programme;
- The Council plans to continue the Programme during 2006 and may use the clerical work placements as an incentive for young Travellers to stay in school to sit their Leaving Certificate exams.

Conclusions and Learning

- Both elements of the SDCC pilot project in relation to Traveller employment worked well. By Spring 2006, SDCC was well on its way to having 12 Traveller employees;
- SDCC plans to extend both parts of the pilot project in 2006;
- While modest in itself, if the project was replicated by other local authorities, it has the potential to make a good contribution to tackling unemployment in the Traveller community. This would fit with the increased emphasis of many local authorities on promoting social inclusion. Adoption of the Programmes elsewhere could also greatly improve relations between local authorities and Travellers;
- Successful implementation of the SDCC project involved a range of factors. Key among these were the following:
 - Leadership from the County Manager and from elected members;
 - Good management – building on the leadership provided to run the project in a competent way, with an attention to detail;
 - Existence of a ‘champion’ for the project within the HR Department, who helped maintain the momentum of the project;
 - Good relations with local Traveller organisations and with organisations working with Travellers (important in the sourcing of suitable candidates for the Programmes);
 - Appropriate, informal processes to select individuals with the relevant competencies for the positions;
 - The ability of the Council to offer full-time jobs at the end of the process if the training outcomes were successful, reinforced by the Council paying full-time wage levels while participants were training;
 - Early responses to problems and issues arising by a senior HR manager;
 - The welcoming and co-operative attitudes of existing employees - supported by the Council’s diversity training programme and by the trades unions;
 - Co-operation from other agencies, including FAS, and provision of a FETAC accredited course by an experienced instructor;
 - Flexibility to respond to issues and challenges that are bound to arise.
- Given the above list, and other characteristics of the pilot listed in this report, replication of the project in other local authorities, or elsewhere, is likely to require good local planning, and adjustment to local circumstances.
- The SDCC pilot project shows, however, that once careful planning and good management are in place, any obstacles arising can be overcome and good new employees can be sourced from the Traveller community.



Chapter 1: Introduction and Context for Project

1.1 Introduction

Equal at Work is an initiative of the Dublin Employment Pact that brings together fifty organisations working in partnership to create a more equal and a more accessible labour market in the Dublin region. Its fourteen projects focus on adapting, improving and introducing innovations to the policies, cultures and structures that restrict access and progression in the workplace. The projects will benefit people who experience inequalities and discrimination in the labour market as well as employers facing problems with recruitment, retention, progression and skills shortages. Partners from the health services, community/voluntary, local government and private sectors work in four clusters to concentrate their resources, expertise and insights in the most effective way to ensure a rich mix of experience and perspectives.

Local government projects concentrate on promoting the employment and integration of groups who experience obstacles gaining entry into the labour market and progressing within the workplace. South Dublin County Council is pioneering an initiative which aims to model best practice in opening pathways to employment for members of the Traveller community and Dublin City Council focuses on the development of supports for workers at entry level grades who want to progress within the workplace.

The Dublin Employment Pact

The Dublin Employment Pact (DEP) Ltd was established in 1998 to tackle employment and policy development issues in the Greater Dublin Area through highlighting development needs and promoting practical solutions to the problems of urban disadvantage, social exclusion, early school leaving and access to the labour market.

EQUAL Community Initiative Programme

Equal at Work is part funded under the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme¹ which aims to promote employability and improve access to and opportunities for employment, in particular for those who are disadvantaged, those suffering from discrimination and inequalities and those who wish to return to the labour market. Over eight years (2000-2008) the activities of the Programme will contribute towards the achievement of goals established in Member States' National Employment Action Plans² (NEAPs), which in turn support the European Employment Strategy³. Its policy context is formed primarily by the Amsterdam Treaty⁴, which provided for a co-ordinated strategy for employment in the EU as well as a legal basis for combating discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation. The Programme operates through the work of Development Partnerships (DPs) whose projects function like laboratories and provide opportunities to try out new ideas, question established ways of dealing with situations and encourage new and creative ideas – all of which may change future policy and practice. Funds provided by partners are matched by funding from the European Social Fund and 22 DPs have been approved for funding under the Programme in Ireland for the period 2005 – 2007 by the Managing Authority in Ireland, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

1.2 SDCC – Opening pathways to employment for Travellers

This project implemented by South Dublin County Council commenced in Spring 2005 and piloted two programmes. Both were designed to open sustainable paths to employment for Traveller men and women. Key partners in its development and delivery were FÁS, the Tallaght Local Employment Service, St Basil's Traveller Training Centre, Tallaght and the Tallaght Travellers Development Group.

The project aimed to attract, train and retain young men and women on two training/employment programmes - one for General Operatives with the Parks Department and the other for Clerical Officers with the Council's administrative services.

The Training Employment Programme for General Operatives (GOs):

Participants undertook FETAC accredited external training, provided by FÁS for three days per week at a training centre in Cookstown, and worked with Parks Department teams throughout South Dublin County for two days per week. The programme lasted six months during which time the participants were employed by the Council as GOs on a temporary basis and at the entry level salary point. Those who successfully completed the training continued their employment with the Council on permanent contracts, with a six month probationary period.

The Training Employment Programme for Clerical Officers (COs):

Participants for this programme were recruited one-by-one into temporary full and part time positions and work placement opportunities throughout the administrative departments at the Council's offices. Training was provided on an ongoing basis and participants were employed by the Council as temporary COs at the entry level salary point. With the experience, new skills, confidence and encouragement acquired through the Programme, participants have been enabled to compete in CO competitions as they arise. A number of participants have been successful and now continue their employment with the Council on permanent contracts, with a six month probationary period.

The remaining sections of Chapter 1 set out some background information to place the project in context. Section 1.3 presents statistics from Census 2002 in relation to unemployment in the Traveller community and Section 1.4 presents the background to the project within South Dublin County Council. Chapter 2 describes the *Programme for General Operatives (GOs)* and Chapter 3 sets out the views of the various stakeholders involved in this Programme. *The Programme for Clerical Officers* is outlined in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 presents conclusions, issues arising from both programmes and learning for future initiatives.

An annex to the report presents the key findings of previous Equality Authority research on Traveller participation in labour market training programmes, and elements of best practice which can attract and sustain Traveller participation in training and employment programmes.

¹ EQUAL CIP is one of four CIPs – the other three are URBAN, LEADER + and INTERREG.

² To view Ireland's NEAP, see www.entemp.ie/publications/labour/2003/nationalemploymentactionplan.pdf

³ The overarching objective of the European Employment Strategy (EES) is to create the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. For further information on all aspects of the EES, see http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_strategy/index_en.htm

⁴ For further information about the Treaty, see <http://europa.eu.int/abc/obj/amst/en/>

1.3 Traveller Community and the Labour Market

Employment and Unemployment Data

Table 1 shows the economic status of members of the Traveller community in 2002.

Table 1: Breakdown of Traveller Population aged 15 and over by Principal Economic Status, 2002

	Men	Women	Total
At Work	1,264	993	2,257
Unemployed	3,487	1,657	5,144
Total in Labour Force	4,751	2,650	7,401
Student	502	642	1,144
Other Activities	1,367	3,768	5,135
Total	6,620	7,060	13,680

Source: CSO, Census 2002, Volume 8, Table 8

Table 1 shows that:

- In 2002, the number of Travellers available for work was 13,680. Of these, 2,257 (16.5%) were in paid employment;
- 5,144 people (37.6% of the total) were unemployed;
- The female labour force participation rate (37.5%) was considerably lower than the male participation rate (71.8%).

Table 2 shows equivalent data for the population as a whole in 2002.

Table 2: Breakdown of Total Irish Population aged 15 and over by Principal Economic Status, 2002

	Men	Women	Total
At Work	963,253	678,334	1,641,587
Unemployed	100,258	59,088	159,346
Total in Labour Force	1,063,511	737,422	1,800,933
Student	166,155	184,619	350,774
Other Activities	292,454	645,614	938,068
Total	1,522,120	1,567,655	3,089,775

Source: CSO, Census 2002, Volume 5, Table 2

Comparing both tables shows:

- 52.3% of the population was in employment compared to 16.5% of Travellers;
- 5.2% of the population was unemployed compared to 37.6% of Travellers;
- The female labour force participation rate was 47% compared to 37.5% for Traveller women.

These stark figures show the high level of labour market disadvantage experienced by Travellers. At a time of unprecedented economic growth, almost three out of every four Traveller men were unemployed in 2002.

1.4 Background to Project in South Dublin County Council

South Dublin County Council is one of two local authorities represented on the High Level Group on Traveller Issues⁵ and is represented by its County Manager – Joe Horan. The idea for this project originated with the Council's involvement with this Group. In addition, of 23,681 members of the Traveller community in Ireland, 1,824 (7.7%) live in South Dublin County. This is the third highest Traveller population by local authority area, after Dublin and Galway City Councils.

The County Manager's commitment to the work of the High Level Group and his support for the project ensured the project was discussed with elected councillors; regularly mentioned at management briefings, and supported in the budgetary process. The project was viewed as a strategic initiative to recruit Travellers to the Council's staff thereby contributing to meeting a priority objective – to be "an equitable and inclusive county" This leadership created the opportunity for a senior HR Manager to dedicate time working directly with the project – especially in its early stages. The commitment at a senior executive level within the Council to the pilot project was supported and encouraged by elected members of the Council. This was seen by Council executives as another important contributory element in the pilot project.

Despite efforts to ensure that recruitment processes are open and fair, no member of the Traveller community has ever been employed by the Council. The standard recruitment process involves advertising in the press inviting applications for a panel at General Operative or Clerical Officer grades. Whether due to literacy difficulties, lack of confidence in a fair recruitment system or negative attitudes to the Council, almost no members of the Travelling Community ever applied for such positions. Those Travellers who did apply tended not to be successful in the interviewing/ selection process (for reasons not associated with their being Travellers)⁶.

⁵ This group was established by the Government in December 2003 to give impetus to the implementation of the recommendations of the 1995 Task Force on the Travelling Community. It is chaired by the Dept of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and reports to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion.

⁶ This reflects the findings of wider research by Pavee Point which has examined a range of hidden barriers that have prevented Travellers taking up employment in the Irish civil service.

1.5 Research Undertaken for this Report

In preparing this review of the pilot project, the Formative Evaluator of *Equal at Work*, Hibernian Consulting, held discussions with the following:

- Mr. Billy Coman, Senior Executive Officer, Human Resources Department, South Dublin County Council, who was responsible for all aspects of the project in the Council;
- Mr. Tony Nolan of Tallaght Local Employment Service and Ms. Orla McCafferty, Tallaght Travellers Development Group, who were involved in identifying participants for the programme and who had ongoing contact with participants during the programme;
- Mr. Barney Joyce, Clondalkin Travellers Development Group;
- Mr. Micheal O’Riordan, Manager, and Mr. David Corcoran, Instructor, FÁS Cookstown Training Centre;
- Three of the young Traveller men who participated in the General Operative Programme, whose names are not given for reasons of confidentiality;
- Four of the young Travellers who were participants on the Clerical Officer Programme – again their names are not given for reasons of confidentiality;
- Ms. Bríd O’Brien, Pavee Point Travellers Centre.



Chapter 2: Training Employment Programme for General Operatives

2.1 Identifying, Attracting and Selecting Participants

Identifying Potential Participants

SDCC worked with a range of local organisations to identify participants for the General Operative (GO) Programme. Specifically, these were:

- The Tallaght Travellers Development Group;
- The Clondalkin Travellers Development Group;
- St. Basil's Traveller Training Centre;
- Tallaght Local Employment Service;
- The Council's own Social Worker Service.

SDCC asked these groups to identify young men who might be interested in working in the Council's Parks Department, aged 17-19 if possible. Reasons for seeking a younger group for the pilot project were two-fold. Firstly, the project allowed for a six month period in which to train and prepare participants for full-time and permanent positions. Older men were likely to have been unemployed for long periods and the six month training period would not be adequate for their needs. Secondly, younger men were unlikely to have family responsibilities with the supporting income from social welfare – this would help to overcome the barrier of foregoing such income experienced by those taking up short term opportunities.

Those likely to be settled in the area for the longer term were also prioritised. This would permit them to be available both for the six months training programme and subsequent employment with the Council.

The organisations provided SDCC with the names of 23 young Traveller men. To ensure that literacy difficulties did not present a barrier, SDCC ensured a written and verbal invitation was sent to all to invite them to an Information Workshop on the project.

Key Elements in Identifying Potential Participants:

- The best conditions for optimum participation taken into account in advance;
- Consultation with a range of local groups working with Travellers;
- Informal as well as formal contacts with potential participants;
- Information Workshop and initial contact with potential participants.

The Information Workshop was held in a local hotel in March 2005. Of the 23 people invited, 17 attended. The tone of the day was very informal and designed to encourage the participants to see the Council and the project in a positive light. It began with a presentation from SDCC on the project using slides and photographs of the work that would be undertaken. There was also a presentation of the training which would be provided by FÁS and time for participants to have one-to-one discussions with representatives from SDCC and FÁS. Senior HR Executive Billy Coman from SDCC managed the project and used this day to build relationships with potential participants from the start. He became the key link for the participants with the Council right throughout the project and played a crucial role in its success.

A core part of the presentation outlined the agreement the Council would make with each of the participants. For those chosen to participate in the programme, if they attended the training and work elements of the programme and passed their exams, then they would progress to jobs with the Council. Also, during the training period, they would receive the entry level salary for a General Operative employed by the Council. As many participants were unlikely to have had experience of undertaking interviews, Billy Coman outlined the format of the interview process, the questions he would be asking and what he would be stressing

Key Elements of Initial Contacts with Potential Participants:

- Information provision did not assume literacy among target group;
- Senior level commitment shown by Council from the start;
- Provision of a manager who would link to participants throughout the process;
- Psychological contract with participants – “If you do X, then we will do Y”;
- Participants were paid by SDCC at the General Operative entry-level salary during their six month training/work programme.

Selecting participants

All of those who attended the Information Day were invited for interview the following week. In addition, three people who had not attended the Information Day came for interview, giving a total of 20 people. The interviews took place in a very informal setting (no desk or table – just three chairs) and were conducted in an informal manner by Billy Coman and an SDCC colleague. Each interview lasted about 15 minutes and explored the questions about which the applicants had been informed in advance - exploring applicants' reasons for wanting to undertake the programme and the commitment they were willing to give to completing it.

Although SDCC had envisaged selecting 10 participants, they finally selected 12. All those not selected had the opportunity to get constructive feedback and were offered help from SDCC in applying for other jobs – two people subsequently took up this offer. Two applicants were just 16 years and considered to be too young. Where more than one family member applied, at least one was selected. Of the 12 selected, 4 lived in group housing; 2 in standard housing and 6 in official halting sites. 11 were between 17-19 years old, and one was 21 years old.

Key Elements of Selection of Participants:

- Interviews were informal;
- Applicants were informed in advance of topics for discussion at interview;
- Feedback and support was given to unsuccessful candidates to ensure the experience was not a negative one.

2.2 Delivery of the GO Programme and Sustaining Participation

Introduction to Six Month Programme

A couple of weeks after the interviews, in April 2005, the six-month training/work programme began. On the first day, the “deal” between SDCC and the participants was again emphasised: if participants stuck with the programme for the six months, attended the training and the work elements, and passed their exams, then they would be offered full-time jobs with the Council.

For a 22-week period, participants spent Monday-Wednesday with FÁS and Thursday and Friday working in teams within the SDCC Parks Department. As the participants were employed on temporary full-time contracts by the Council, FÁS was effectively engaged by the Council to provide the training course. The participants were paid by SDCC during their training and participants were covered by SDCC insurance. SDCC pointed out that the status given to participants reflected the fact that they were working during their training period.

FÁS Training

The FÁS training began with participants completing the Safe Pass Programme, to allow them to work with the Parks Department without creating any health or safety risks for themselves or others⁷.

Over the following months, participants covered three training modules, on paving, kerbing and concreting. All three were FETAC accredited.

Course delivery took literacy difficulties into account. Courses were kept as practical as possible and were held outdoors as often as possible, which was helped as they were delivered over the summer months.

The training was overseen by a small group including Billy Coman of SDCC and three FÁS personnel from the Cookstown Training Centre. The Council felt that the role of the experienced FÁS instructors, who had worked previously with young Travellers made a very big contribution to the way in which the training was managed and delivered.

From time to time, there were reports of discipline and behavioural difficulties such as poor time keeping and general “messaging” in class. FÁS emphasised that such problems emerge on many of their courses on an ongoing basis.

During the first month, two participants left the programme – one left due to poor attendance and one because he felt there was too much of such “messaging” going on. SDCC intervened to remind participants that maintaining good attendance and punctuality and showing respect for their trainers and colleagues were part of the requirements to complete the programme and secure full time employment with the Council. The need to regularly communicate messages of this kind reinforced SDCC’s view that the programme was most suitable for younger men.

Key Elements of FÁS Training Programme:

- FÁS training was fully accredited;
- Training was overseen by senior managers from the FÁS Training Centre, with SDCC having ongoing contact;
- An instructor with prior experience of working with young Traveller men delivered the training course;
- Training was practical, did not assume literacy skills and was undertaken outdoors as much as possible;
- Training period was extended to ensure all participants ended at the same time, reinforcing the ‘team’ spirit as opposed to competition between individuals;
- Where there was evidence of any behavioural problems these were addressed in a way which kept the majority of participants on the course and supported them in completing the training.

Working in teams within the Parks Department

Participants were assigned to small groups in the Parks Department (groups normally contain 4-5 people) and no two participants were placed in the same group, to encourage maximum integration by participants into the relevant teams. The fact that the participants generally did not have access to cars was taken into account in deciding of the location of work and locations were chosen that were close to participants’ homes or easily accessible by public transport.

Prior to commencing the project, the Council had taken time with the teams to discuss how it would work and to address any concerns that staff may have had. The project had the full support of the trades unions and employees were willing to give it a chance. (The unions were also reassured by the fact that participants were being paid at normal GO rates that the Programme would not undermine wages or rates in the Council in any way.) Tensions had arisen previously between Parks Department employees and Travellers related to the rounding up of horses. The Travellers had been advised that, in the event of a disagreement, if a reference were made to their background, it would be better not to escalate the situation. In the event, such situations did arise on a couple of occasions but did not escalate. Prior to the programme, as with other employees in SDCC, workers in the Parks Department had received diversity training and this was seen as a contributory factor to making this programme work⁸. By the second month, any reservations had largely disappeared, participants had integrated into their teams and work relationships were very good. This was aided by a senior HR Officer being available to participants if needed in extreme circumstances, as is the case for all staff of SDCC.

The actual work involved all the functions of the Parks Department - laying footpaths, helping gardeners, tending shrubs, collecting litter etc. Some of these tasks are more attractive than others but the nature of the job is that it is invariably outdoors and covers a broad range of tasks.

The Council felt that the combination of doing some of the less attractive work (e.g. picking up litter) and receiving “slagging” from their friends and families contributed to the early departure of two of the participants. This is one of the risks associated with locating participants close to their homes.

Key Elements of working in teams within the Parks Department:

- Participants were spread across different groups to maximise integration with the existing work teams;
- Diversity training was delivered to existing employees before the project began;
- The project received the full support of the trades unions;
- The participants were advised and supported to react wisely if derogatory references were made to their background;
- A senior HR manager maintained ongoing contact with participants, who were encouraged to contact him if any problems arose;
- Locations were chosen to minimise difficulty commuting to work.

⁷ The FÁS Safe Pass Programme is aimed at the construction sector and local authority workers. It covers a range of health and safety issues, e.g. accident prevention, manual handling, working at heights etc. On completion of the programme, participants receive a Safe Pass registration card. For further information, see www.fas.ie/environmental_training_unit/safepass.html

⁸ This was part of a wider programme of diversity training provided by South Dublin County Council to selected employees in all parts of the organization. Most employees in the Parks Department had received such training in advance of this programme.

2.3 Programme Outcomes and Transition to Employment

Graduation Ceremony

Eight of the twelve participants who started the programme completed it successfully, underwent all of their training and passed their exams. The formal end to the six-month period of working/training was closed with the presentation of certificates to the participants by Minister Frank Fahey TD at a graduation ceremony held in the Council Chambers in September 2005. The participants' families were present, along with the Mayor of South Dublin, Cllr. Therese Ridge, the County Manager and staff. The occasion was designed to recognise the participants' achievements and increase their confidence and self-belief.

The ongoing support received from their families was a big contributing factor enabling participants to complete their training and the recognition and praise they received throughout the programme and at the ceremony to mark their achievement was very important. For some, it was the first time they had successfully completed a course or received a certificate.

Key Elements of Graduation Ceremony:

- Organisation of formal end to six month training/work programme;
- Ceremony organised so that the achievement of the participants was central;

Transition to Employment with the Council

Having completed the six-month programme, the eight participants were offered full-time employment with South Dublin County Council in November 2005, commencing with the standard six-month probationary period.

One participant moved away from the area on completion of the course for personal reasons but the other seven men accepted the positions and were working through their probationary period when the research for this review was undertaken in early-2006. All were continuing to earn the entry level salary on the General Operative scale which they had been paid throughout the six-month training programme. However, they were receiving additional allowances which are part of the GO remuneration package.

The seven men had been offered support under the Council's *Return to Learning* Programme, which offers one-to-one or group support on literacy and a range of other areas. In December 2005, four opted to take up one-to-one training and this was being arranged in January 2006.

Key Elements of Transition to Employment:

- Continuing support provided in relation to education and training needs;
- Continuing involvement by Senior HR Manager in Council, in receiving ongoing feedback both from the participants and from their supervisors in the Parks Department;
- Further allowances awarded to employees on successfully completing training and moving into period of probationary employment – employees treated identically to all other employees in probationary stage.



Chapter 3: Views of Stakeholders in GO Programme

3.1 South Dublin County Council

SDCC was very happy with the General Operative Programme believing it had generally worked well and had succeeded in its aim by getting seven young Traveller men to the point of being employed by SDCC. The Council was confident that most, if not all of these would successfully complete their probationary periods and take up full-time employment with the Council.

Elements of the Programme that the Council believed contributed to its success were:

- The support of the County Manager, the wider management team and the elected members;
- Dedication of a Senior HR Officer to the project – this signalled the importance attached to the project and allowed practical problems to be addressed quickly;
- The chance of progression from a training programme to a full-time job – i.e. this was not just another training programme that would not lead to a job;
- Careful selection of participants and their age profile;
- Partnership and good working relationship with established local Traveller groups;
- Diversity awareness training for staff prior to the start of the project;
- Well designed training programme, tailored to the Council's needs and delivered by experienced instructors who had worked previously with Travellers;
- Support of the trades unions;
- Commitment of all parties involved, including SDCC, trades unions, existing Council workers, FÁS, community groups and the participants to making the initiative work.

3.2 FÁS

From the outset, FÁS was happy to respond to the Council's needs. As there was a group of 12 participants, this allowed for a stand-alone training group. The training was largely practical with the classroom element limited to one hour per day, which was adequate. Originally intended to be about 16 weeks long, the course was extended to 22 weeks to ensure all participants were able to complete it successfully, and at the same time.

FÁS considered adding literacy modules to the course but decided that this training need would be more effectively addressed subsequently through one-to-one tuition. Literacy difficulties in undertaking the exams were overcome through reading questions aloud and offering multiple choice answers, which is normal practice.

There were some issues of discipline but no more than what would arise with any group. The combination of the "carrot" of an end job with the Council and the "stick" of being excluded were sufficient to deal with any issues - which were always dealt with promptly by SDCC.

Attendance throughout the course was reasonably high – due partly to the payment of GO entry-level salaries – a more significant incentive than FÁS training allowances

3.3 Tallaght Local Employment Service

The LES⁹ has observed an improvement in educational attainment by members of the Traveller Community in Tallaght in recent years. A few years ago, there was on average only one young person undertaking the Leaving Certificate per year but this number increased to 17 in 2005, with over 40 taking the Junior Certificate.

Negative attitudes towards Travellers from local employers are widespread and undertaking training courses never led to a real possibility of a job – this has been the experience particularly of Traveller men and is very de-motivating.

A number of the participants' parents (in particular mothers) were involved in community development work and were likely to have had sufficient belief in the system as well as the confidence to believe that the project could lead to positive outcomes for their sons. The LES also observed that participants came primarily from homes where they received support and encouragement to persist with the programme. They considered this to be an important factor given the length of time involved and the challenges that arise on such a programme.

The LES thought the informal interviews worked well. However, it said that some people not selected might have been able to do the jobs and wondered if a one-day introduction to the work prior to the interview might help to get everybody to the same starting points.

The FÁS training was also perceived to have worked well, indeed surprisingly so, given that some participants would have had previous bad experiences of formal education and training courses.

The LES felt that had the necessary rotation of different types of work been explained better, it may have circumvented the early departure of two of the participants. The LES Co-ordinator was in contact with participants during the period and the pride they expressed in other aspects of their work may have compensated for elements which were challenging for them.

The success of the venture could have long-term positive consequences. The Traveller Community is relatively close-knit and many members are now aware that seven men have started working with the Council. This demonstrates that that it is possible for members of the Community to obtain such jobs and encourages young men looking for similar work in the future. This will be reinforced if the men stay in the jobs, undertake further training or are promoted in the future. The project has also broken down barriers between the Traveller Community and the Council. Previous contacts would often have been confrontational, e.g. in relation to evictions or to do with the impounding of horses. The LES felt that this project will have challenged members of the Traveller Community to look afresh at SDCC.

3.4 Tallaght Travellers Development Group

Prior to this pilot project, the Tallaght Travellers Development Group¹⁰ had identified a lack of training and employment for Traveller men in Tallaght. The CDP had previously engaged with SDCC's social work section, with FÁS and with others to plan construction training for Traveller men. This had led to building up some of the relationships which formed the partnership for this project.

The CDP identified gaps in the initial information provided by the Council but these were filled in at the Information Workshop - for which the CDP had sourced potential participants using direct contacts, through distributing flyers and via a local teacher. Although this informal sourcing worked well, some people reported that they had not heard about the Programme in time to apply. This could be helped next time by a second Information Workshop.

Although the CDP did not expressly target participants from families that would be supportive, it was primarily these that subsequently emerged. The CDP proposed that, in future, it may be possible to consider putting supports in place for people who might not receive such family backing. This could be provided through the services of an outreach worker who would be available to participants throughout the programme.

The CDP also proposed that men outside the 17-19 age range might be interested in such programmes and rather than exclude them, they could be approached on a case by case basis. Having observed that the people who succeeded on this programme tended to have come from previous structured environments, whether in education, training or work, it may be that extra supports would be needed for older men, e.g. a pre-training course could help prepare people for the 22 week full-time course.

⁹ The work of the LES and of Tallaght Partnership with Travellers is linked through their close organisational links.

¹⁰ The Tallaght Travellers Development Group is one of 170 Community Development Projects funded nationally by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

The CDP was happy with the role of the Council during the project, which it felt was very supportive to participants. It also felt the Council had interacted well with the local Traveller support groups, which was important.

The CDP believed it was important that the training covered the work being undertaken so participants could see the relevance. It also considered the accrediting of the courses to be important as it gave the men transferable skills on which they can build. Finally, they felt the graduation ceremony was organised in a way that boosted participants' confidence.

3.5 Clondalkin Travellers Development Group

Participants on the General Operative Programme were drawn from the Tallaght area. The South Dublin County Council area also covers Clondalkin, which has a large Traveller population.

The Clondalkin Travellers Development Group said that the reasons there had been no participants from Clondalkin were:

- Outstanding issues in relation to accommodation between Travellers in Clondalkin and South Dublin County Council had created difficulties in the relationship between local Travellers and the Council;
- While there had been a previous construction-related training programme in Tallaght involving some of the participants and the Tallaght Travellers Development Group, there had not been a similar programme in Clondalkin. While there had been previous work in Clondalkin with older men, the Council was focusing in this Programme on the younger age cohort, where existing relationships had aided the recruitment process in Tallaght;
- The Group felt that the initial information on the project supplied by SDCC was somewhat vague and this also made it harder to recruit people.

The Group acknowledged that the pilot project appeared to have operated successfully and had been well managed by South Dublin County Council. It expressed the hope that a further project could be run in the Clondalkin area and said it would be happy to co-operate with the Council in recruiting participants.

3.6 Project Participants – General Operative Programme

Participants who were interviewed were positive about the programme and how it had operated.

They had heard about the project informally – through St. Basil's Traveller Training Centre and through Development Workers. They said that clearer information could have been provided at the start. However, the Information Workshop clarified many issues and filled information gaps. They appreciated both the convenient location of the interviews as well as the way they were conducted.

They found their training useful and praised the FÁS Instructor. They talked of a number of further areas of training not covered by the course which they would have liked but these are likely to be provided by SDCC later in 2006 (e.g. driving motorised mowers, operating chainsaws etc.).

They enjoyed the graduation ceremony. They mentioned that they would like to have small cards, (such as the laminated Safe Pass cards), listing the skills and qualifications they had earned in their training. They believed this would make the skills more marketable and would provide evidence of their certification.

All three of the participants said they were happy working with the Council and had no plans to leave in the coming years. Since participating in the project, they had received a large number of queries from other men in the Traveller community in Tallaght and they believed they would be able to recruit further participants from their own families without any problem.



Chapter 4: Training Employment Programme for Clerical Officers

4.1 Description of the Clerical Officer Programme

The Clerical Officer (CO) programme was more straightforward than that for GOs as there was no formal training course required. SDCC could identify participants with the relevant skills on a case-by-case basis and commence their placement, one by one, on work experience or on a temporary contract basis, on full pay at the minimum rate on the CO scale.

The first two young women commenced on temporary contracts. Both had obtained their Leaving Certificate qualifications (which remains unusual in the Traveller community) and had some clerical experience from Summer jobs. One had undertaken a work experience placement in the civil service the Summer following after her Leaving Certificate exams and also had an ECDL qualification from school. They were assigned to different departments in SDCC and integrated in the normal way into their respective teams. Billy Coman got to know each of the participants individually and also kept in contact with their line managers to monitor how they were progressing in the organisation.

By early-2006, they had moved from the Clerical Officer panel to full-time permanent jobs with SDCC. In addition, the Council had a further three people (two women and one man) on full-time temporary contracts and two young women working in the mornings. SDCC was confident that, when the next Clerical Officer competition was held¹¹, the three people on full-time temporary contracts would also succeed in becoming permanent Clerical Officers.

Not all of the seven people had Leaving Certificates and two did not have Junior Certificates. The abolition of the Leaving Certificate requirement for Clerical Officer positions by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in April 2004 opened the way for the Council to employ people based on competency skills. This opened the recruitment pool to those who had left school early without qualifications but who had undertaken some relevant training (e.g. computer skills) and received local work experience. They could be taken in on temporary contracts, where they could develop further skills and build their confidence. In association with the local Traveller-School liaison teacher, the Council is encouraging young Travellers to complete their Leaving Certificate by favouring those who have undergone the examinations for temporary CO posts.

SDCC worked in partnership with local Traveller support organisations on the CO Programme. St. Basil's Traveller Training Centre and the school liaison teacher working with the Traveller community were particularly important in identifying people. The Council perceived a supportive home environment as being an important factor in ensuring the young people joined and stayed with the Council.

There were no problems of any kind with the behaviour or attitudes of the COs and they were integrating well by early-2006. While gender may have played a role, integration may also have been helped as the lack of a formal training programme meant the young people were integrated more fully into Council teams from the start.

Key Elements of Clerical Worker Part of Pilot Project

- Identification of participants in association with local organisations working with Travellers;
- Lack of formal training course meant greater emphasis on people having the requisite skills at the start. The lack of a formal training course also allows good candidates to be taken on one-by-one;
- Imaginative use of work placements and temporary contracts to demonstrate what the work involves and to build skills and confidence;
- Experience provided to the young people in different areas of the Council;
- Training provided on-the-job and through normal in-house training;
- Encouragement and support to proceed to Clerical Officer competition when the young people are ready;
- Once the young people are employed, further training can be provided as required/requested, and paid for by the Council in the normal way. The issue of whether to stay in formal education or earn money (as faced by many Travellers in second-level education) is avoided as these two activities are not in conflict.

4.2 Views of Stakeholders on Clerical Officer Programme

South Dublin County Council

SDCC was happy with the Clerical Officer Programme. It involved less organisation than the GO Programme as the Council already had processes for taking on staff on temporary contracts. A key success factor was the quality of the selected participants. In this regard, the relationships with local organisations working with Travellers was crucial – their help in identifying participants with the necessary skills and aptitudes, together with the Council screening interview, meant that the process was seen as very smooth.

Views of CO Project Participants

Four participants were interviewed who were working in the IT Department, Housing Customer Care and in the HR Department. All had undertaken short internal up-skilling courses since they started with the Council (e.g. advanced MS Excel, Office etc.). They said that the interview and integration processes had gone well and they had been made feel welcome by their colleagues.

As regards their identification as Travellers in the work environment, some said that they would have no problem telling people they were Travellers and do so while others felt it was a private matter and, unless asked specifically, would not mention the fact. This was not because they were ashamed of the matter – they just felt it was not relevant to their work.

They indicated that interest in the programme exists among their peers and that there would be no difficulty attracting more participants.

¹¹ Clerical Officer competitions arise in SDCC approximately every two years



Chapter 5: Conclusions and Next Steps

5.1 Conclusions

The pilot project reviewed in this report was developed by experienced HR personnel in South Dublin County Council, drawing on their own experience and on consultations with Traveller representative groups with experience of initiatives that had and had not worked on previous occasions. As such, the design of this pilot project was carefully considered. The project, relating to the employment of people from the Traveller community in South Dublin County Council has worked well. Indeed, given the lack of Traveller employment in Ireland, the project represents an exciting and potentially breakthrough initiative. Based on this review, there appears to be learning from the project for all Irish local authorities and for other Irish public and private sector organisations.

The potential of the project arises from the fact that South Dublin County Council is well on the way to having 10-12 permanent employees from the Traveller community shared between General Operatives in its Parks Department and Clerical Officers in administrative functions. In both of these areas, there is potential to employ further members of the community, and SDCC is aiming to perhaps double the number of Travellers it employs to 20 or so in the next couple of years.

If each Irish local authority were to employ 10 people from the Traveller community, the over 300 jobs so created would be equivalent to about 15% of all jobs held by Travellers in 2002 or almost 5% of the available Traveller labour force. This number of permanent jobs, with steady incomes, involving a range of skills and with ongoing training would in itself make a big dent in Traveller unemployment. Given the close-knit nature of the community, there would be a larger knock-on effect in terms of cultural change and in terms of relations between Travellers and local authorities. Such an outcome would fit well with the increasing levels of work in relation to social inclusion undertaken by local authorities in recent years.

The success of the project in South Dublin County Council, as described in this report, relied on a careful and focused approach by the Council. Chapters 2-4 identified many of the project's success factors, including the following:

- Leadership within the Council (from the County Manager and from elected members) set the employment of Travellers as a priority for the Council. This had knock-on effects in terms of motivating people at all levels of the organisation, in generating goodwill towards the project and in the amount of management time that could be devoted to the project;
- Good management – building on the leadership provided to run the project in a competent way. A key learning point from Chapters 2 and 4 is the attention to detail given at all stages of the project to ensuring that problems were overcome – in many cases, relatively minor interventions ensured the participants (or most of them) stayed with the project to the end. In fact, the management time required decreased over the lifetime of the project;
- Existence of a 'champion' who helped maintain the momentum of the project. This links to the previous point but a 'champion' tends to be important for any new initiative, providing momentum to ensure that the challenges that inevitably arise are overcome;
- Good relations with local Traveller organisations and with organisations working with Travellers are important – the extra tension that existed in the Clondalkin area due to outstanding accommodation issues, for example, made it harder to recruit people there (although this may change in 2006). Organisations working with Travellers have a crucial role in the identification of people likely to be suitable for training and employment programmes. In the case of SDCC, the project was organised through its HR Department, rather than through the Council's Traveller Accommodation Unit – allowing a distance from any ongoing issues relating to accommodation;
- The selection process is important, as in any employment decision – the ability to identify people with the competencies to do the job or to be able to develop to do the job. In the case of the pilot, the Council chose those people it felt were most likely to succeed, i.e. in terms of age etc., and designed selection processes to ensure no barriers would exist to these people being selected;

- The ability of the Council to offer full-time jobs at the end of the process if the training outcomes were successful was very important. Unlike many training courses, it provides a genuine "carrot" for participants, and a motivation to stick with the programme. In the case of SDCC, it was reinforced by the Council paying full-time wage levels while participants were training;
- Early responses to issues arising by a senior HR manager meant that these were generally defused in a quick and informal way. In fact, there were no major problems but issues of discipline can arise on any course. An informal mechanism can allow issues to be diffused quickly;
- The generally welcoming and co-operative attitudes of existing employees helped a lot. This was supported by the Council's diversity training programme, and by the support of SDCC trades unions;
- The pilot project showed that, while detailed planning is important, an element of flexibility must remain. Issues and challenges are bound to arise in projects with a target group so under-represented at present, but the positive message from the South Dublin County Council experience is that it is possible to address these challenges.

Given these success factors, and the key elements of the stages of the pilot listed in Chapters 2 and 4, replicating the project successfully in other counties will require careful local planning and adjustment to local circumstances. It may be that certain characteristics of this pilot (such as the focus on people in the 17-19 age group) will be modified and further learning will arise from further projects. However, if the same kind of planned approach is adopted, there is every reason to be confident that similar programmes can be implemented successfully by other Irish local authorities.

5.2 Dissemination of Project Outcomes in 2006

Local Dissemination and Mainstreaming

Given that the project did not include people from Clondalkin, and given a requirement for new General Operatives in the Parks Department in Clondalkin, South Dublin County Council is planning to repeat the Parks Department element of the project in Summer 2006 with young Travellers from Lucan/Clondalkin. In early-2006, the Council was looking for suitable premises in which to hold the FÁS training element of the project.

The Council is open to recruiting more Clerical Officers from the Traveller community on temporary contracts. In early-2006, it was in discussions as to whether these should be targeted at young people who stay in school to complete their Leaving Certificates.

The Council is interested in disseminating the model to other organisations in its area and would like to see both public and private sector organisations take actions on Traveller employment. Initial contact has been made with the local Chamber of Commerce in this regard, with the aim of informing local companies about this untapped source of local workers.

Pavee Point noted that, notwithstanding the success of this project, which it hoped could be extended by SDCC and replicated in other local authorities, it would not meet the needs of all Travellers. Many wish to work on a self-employed basis, e.g. in areas linked to the Traveller economy¹². Pavee Point said that local authorities can also play an important role in this regard, e.g. through making sure that regulations on issues such as recycling are implemented in ways that make it possible for business opportunities to be exploited by Travellers. In this regard, South Dublin County Council sits on a National Committee trying to identify opportunities to develop the Traveller economy.

¹² Pavee Point is working with FÁS on initiatives in four areas around the county to promote the Traveller economy. It is also working with FÁS and the HSE to train and place Travellers as primary health care workers for their own community

National Dissemination and Mainstreaming

Arising from the graduation ceremony for the eight participants on the Parks Department element of the project in September 2005, Minister Frank Fahey TD has been supportive of disseminating the model developed in the pilot project to other local authorities. In late-2005, South Dublin County Council had a visit from Galway and Clare County Councils and further such contacts are planned.

As an ongoing member of the national Higher Level Group on Traveller Issues, and given SDCC's work on Traveller issues, the County Manager has talked about this project to the County and City Managers Association (CCMA) and at the Common Purpose organisation (an organisation for leaders from the public, private and community/voluntary sectors)¹³.

Interest has also been shown by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government which is hoping to disseminate information on the pilot action to all local authorities. These efforts are being supplemented by the Local Government Management Services Board, a member of the *Equal at Work* Development Partnership. It may be that other local authorities are already undertaking initiatives and there can be an exchange of learning¹⁴.

The *Equal at Work* project has access to other networks and channels through which it plans to disseminate information on the project. These include being part a cluster of projects under the EU EQUAL Initiative in Ireland. *Equal at Work* itself will organise a number of project events to which policymakers and HR managers from mainstream organisations will be invited.

In conclusion, this review supports the following view of Minister Fahey¹⁵:

“In a time of unprecedented economic success, it is vital that Travellers are facilitated in sharing the benefits of increased wealth. Access to employment is an issue of huge significance and State agencies can take a particular role in developing their skills and expanding their range of employment options beyond what is often referred to as the Traveller economy”.



Chapter 6: Postscript – Update from March 2007

¹³ For further information on the Common Purpose organization, see "www.commonpurpose.org.uk" www.commonpurpose.org.uk

¹⁴ For example, Offaly County Council began a series of workshops in November 2005 on inter-culturalism, in association with the Tullamore Traveller Movement.

¹⁵ Taken from speech by Mr. Frank Fahey TD at the Seminar to Explore Approaches to Promoting Tolerance and Understanding between the Settled and Traveller Communities, 19th October 2005

6.1 Purpose of Update

The previous five chapters were prepared in March 2006 and disseminated over the following months, including at a seminar held in Portlaoise in July 2006 attended by representatives of 18 Irish local authorities.

It was decided to undertake a follow-up seminar on 28th March 2007 in Tullamore and, in advance of that seminar, this update chapter was prepared. The update was based on further consultation with South Dublin County Council and did not involve consultations with the other project stakeholders.

6.2 Update on General Operative Programme

Of the seven men offered work by South Dublin County Council in its Parks Department in late-2005, four were continuing to work there in March 2007. Of the three who had left, two had done so because they had left the Tallaght area and it was unclear why the third person had left. The four remaining men had received further training during the year as part of their ongoing work and were seen as having settled in well and having become fully part of their teams in the Parks Department.

For some of the seven men, there had been problems with attendance from time to time. The Council was unsure to what extent this may have reflected a lack of employment history for the men, who may not have had the experience of working for five days per week over a period of years before. The Council said that it was prepared to be flexible on an individual basis with workers (e.g. perhaps offering a three-day week) but there was a limit to this flexibility, especially as these workers were part of teams.

Overall, the Council remained very happy with this initiative and said that, of the original 12 who started the training in April 2005, they were happy that four were working as full-time employees two years later. Those who had left after taking up full-time employment had both their accredited training qualification and work experience with a large employer to take with them.

The Council was planning to repeat the General Operative scheme during 2007 in Clondalkin. This had been planned for 2006 but was delayed due to difficulty in finding an appropriate local training facility.

6.3 Update on Clerical Officer Programme

Of the seven people (six women and one man) employed under this scheme in early-2006, five of these people were still employed by the Council in March 2007.

The Council said that its experience was that people who had obtained a Leaving Certificate qualification had settled in well with the organisation. By March 2007, these people had moved to different areas (e.g. one in Libraries; one in Legal Services; etc.) and the Council hoped that all five would settle in as long-term employees. SDCC was happy with the attendance and performance of all of these employees.

The people who had been taken on as Clerical Officers but who did not have a Leaving Certificate had found it difficult to cope with the demands of the work. This group included two people who had been working with SDCC in early-2006 and a further two people subsequently employed. Over time, this situation had led to poor attendance levels and the Council said that, while there may be exceptions, its belief was that the experience showed the general need for a Leaving Certificate as a base qualification for work as a Clerical Officer.

The Council intends to hire further young Travellers with the relevant Leaving Certificate standard to work at Clerical Officer level in the coming years.

6.4 Other SDCC Traveller Employment Initiatives

Based on the success of the General Operative and Clerical Officer initiatives, South Dublin County Council moved in late-2006 to adopt a five-year perspective on its Traveller employment initiatives. Consistent with its wider remit on social inclusion, the Council wishes to increase further its employment of Travellers over this period.

As well as working through the initiatives described above, SDCC has put in place several other initiatives since March 2006.

Graffiti Removal Initiative

In response to demand from citizens in the area, articulated frequently by local elected representatives, the Council decided in 2006 to put together a team to remove graffiti from walls and buildings in the area. A team of five people was put together for this task and these people were drawn from the Traveller community. These young men (with average ages of 17 or 18) work under the supervision of an experienced South Dublin County Council employee, who transports the team around the area to where they are required.

The initiative began in mid-2006 for an initial period of six months. It was in its second six-month period by March 2007. Three of the initial five young Traveller men were still on the team and the two who had left had been replaced by two other young Travellers. All team members have received the Safe Pass and other appropriate training from the Council. They are paid on the entry level rate for a General Operative and have appropriate GO terms and conditions.

This initiative was seen by the Council in March 2007 to be working well, although a long term decision on the future of the scheme had not been taken at that time.

Summer Placements Initiative

South Dublin County Council has a history of employing people for a period of three to four months over the Summer to cover for other employees taking holidays. In Summer 2006, a specific initiative was undertaken to provide summer placements for members of the Traveller community. Nine members of the community were employed in undertaking clerical work from early-June to late-August 2006, across various departments in the Council. These were generally young women who had completed the junior cycle at school and were now either finished Transition Year or fifth year in the senior cycle. The people employed were paid at the entry point on the Clerical Officer scale.

This initiative was viewed as a success with positive feedback from the different Council departments, and excess demand from young Travellers. The Council was planning to repeat the initiative in Summer 2007.

Other Interaction with Local Secondary Schools

Based on its contacts with local schools in recent years, South Dublin County Council now interacts with local secondary schools in a number of ways:

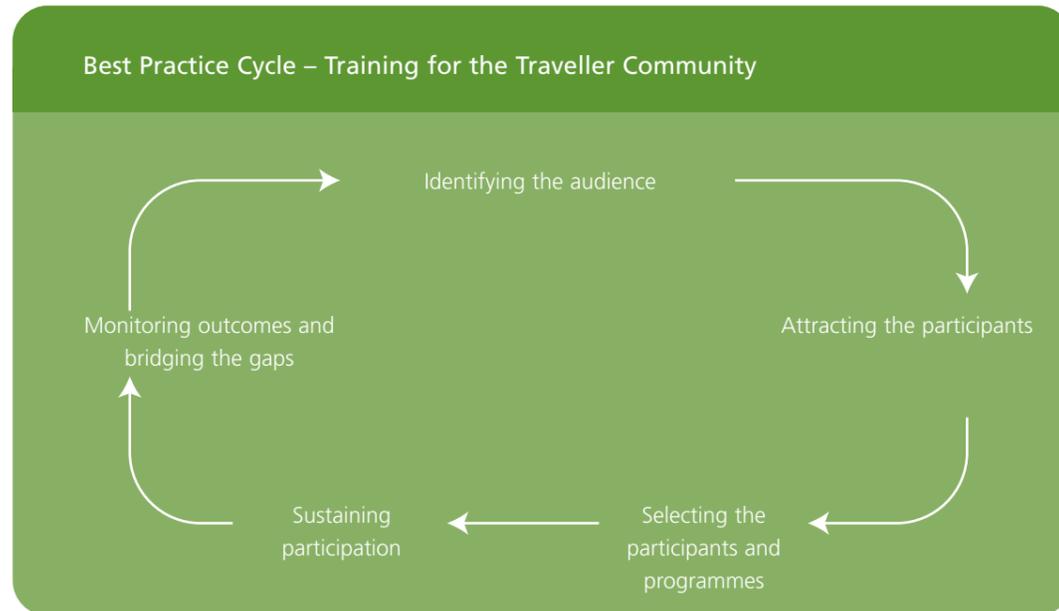
- Its Summer Placements Initiative (described above) and its wider initiative to employ Clerical Officers from the Traveller community both provide incentives to Traveller boys and girls to stay in school to a Leaving Certificate level. The fact that this will increase their chance of employment in the Council is communicated to the young people. Attendance record in the previous school year is a criterion for the summer placements initiative;
- The Council provides short work experience placements to Traveller students undertaking transition year in secondary school – these placements normally last for two weeks;
- The Council provides personnel from its HR Department to undertake mock interviews and support students with CV preparation. This applies to students (including Traveller students) in transition year preparing to enter the world of work.

The Council is therefore attempting to use its employment initiatives not only to provide employment for members of the Traveller community but also to support local work to retain young Traveller people in the formal education system for as long as possible.

Annex: Traveller Experience of Labour Market Programmes

The Equality Authority published a report entitled *Travellers' Experiences of Labour Market Programmes*¹⁶ in November 2003. This study reviewed literature relating to Traveller participation in labour market programmes, undertook interviews and focus groups with over 100 members of the Traveller community, met with 18 providers of training programmes of relevance to Travellers and spoke to seven employers.

The study presents a series of best practice guidelines, which it presents in the context of a "Best Practice Cycle", shown below. Guidelines are presented for each part of the cycle, as well as findings regarding current practices.



Source: Pearn Kandola (2003), page 16

This report provides a framework and a set of criteria for the development of labour market programmes for members of the Traveller community and the findings most relevant to this report are presented in the following paragraphs:

Step 1: Identifying the Audience:

"For mainstream programmes, failure to consider the Traveller community can often lead to their exclusion in subtle and indirect ways such as in the choice of venue, setting the hours of attendance or the setting of criteria for participation ... In the majority of cases, there was little evidence of consultation with representatives of the Traveller community such as interest groups, to share ideas about the provision of mainstream programmes ... In summary, it is best practice to build networks and consult with key stakeholders to identify how Travellers might benefit from programmes."

Step 2: Attracting the Participants:

"Attracting participants from minority groups and diverse cultures such as the Traveller community requires creativity and perseverance... Learning how to tailor messages for the Traveller community can only be achieved through consultation. Really persuasive messages can only be created once the concerns, perceptions and potential barriers for Travellers have been identified ... Both Travellers and programme providers view the fear of losing out on social welfare benefits as a deterrent to potential training course participants".

In terms of targeting publicity about courses: "The better examples of tailoring media come from the providers of Traveller specific programmes. Face-to-face contact, site visits and building trust are the most effective tactics. It is clear that many members of the Traveller community do not feel they will be treated fairly and with respect when interacting with representatives of the state."

Step 3: Selecting Participants and Programmes:

"It is important to ensure that the standards specified in the criteria (e.g. Leaving Certificate performance) are absolutely necessary, particularly if they could have an adverse impact on the participation of any particular sub-group ... There was a strong perception among Traveller participants that in some cases the criteria set for programmes were too high and, indirectly, discriminated against Travellers ... There was little evidence of mainstream programmes being adapted to accommodate the Traveller culture ... "

The report also says that stereotypes (e.g. as regards a lack of interest in education) will be self-fulfilling and that "career planning involves exploring the individual's long-term career goals and how these can be met".

¹⁶ Pearn Kandola Occupational Psychologists (2003), *Travellers' Experiences of Labour Market Programmes*, published by the Equality Authority as part of its Equality Research Series.

Step 4: Sustaining Participation:

"In trying to increase the representation of Travellers on programmes, the achievement and communication of positive experiences is crucial. Positive role modelling is an agent for change and should be exploited at every opportunity, but this is only possible when participation is sustained". The report talks of meeting basic needs (e.g. location of training or childcare) and "higher level needs" (e.g. "ensuring a sense of belonging, increasing confidence and building participants' self esteem"). "In terms of self-esteem, ensuring that some of the programme content is culturally tailored, helping people to see the potential benefits of their achievements or giving people responsibility as a means to engage their commitment will all help."

Step 5: Monitoring Outcomes and Bridging Gaps:

"Monitoring outcomes and bridging the gaps is about ensuring the participants achieve a tangible goal and evaluating the programme to see if it is making a difference. Sometimes the tangible goal for the participant, such as employment, might be out of the control of the programme provider. However, it is vital that every effort be made that positive outcomes are obtained. Maintaining links with participants is important to ensure their successful progression to the next stage in their development."

The report concludes: "The research suggests that Travellers cannot adequately and fairly participate in mainstream labour market programmes without the reasonable accommodation of their particular needs and culture at each step in the cycle of programme planning and provision". In the Foreword to the report, the Chief Executive of the Equality Authority states that the research: "requires programme providers to name Travellers as a key part of the audience they seek to reach and to reach and to identify and address the practical implications of the Traveller identity experience and situation for the design and delivery of their programmes."