

Employability Access Project - Action 1 Evaluation



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North Belfast...
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Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Employability Access Project brings together organisations from the public, voluntary and community sectors in North Belfast with the aim of managing a health sector specific training and employability programme funded under Equal. The Equal programme is funded by the European Social Fund and aims to test new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those in work and those looking for a job, with a view to developing new ideas to change policy and practice in employment and training. The Employability Access project aims to develop new and innovative training and employability programmes and policies for people furthest from the labour market in a very disadvantaged area.

1.1.2 The Employability Access Project is an initiative to investigate new and innovative ways to tackle unemployment and economic inactivity within North Belfast through addressing, and where appropriate amending, the recruitment and selection practices in the health sector in order to develop comprehensive and effective linkages between the supply and demand for jobs within North Belfast. It aims to:

- Test human resource models of recruitment and selection to promote social inclusion and employment.
- Lead engagement between health sector employers, employability services and beneficiaries.
- Improve the supply of and demand for quality jobs in the health service.

1.1.3 The members of the Development Partnership represent a variety of sectors including health sector employees, training and education providers, statutory agencies and community based providers of local employability services. In order to achieve its goals, the Development Partnership will:

- Deliver a health sector targeted pre employment, personal skills development programme incorporating one to one mentoring support, job shadowing and

guaranteed interview. The programme will be available to any long term unemployed or economically inactive resident of North Belfast, aged 18 or over.

- Address, review and where appropriate amend the recruitment policies and practices of the North & West Health & Social Services Trust and the Mater Hospital in order to make these more accessible and inclusive for those potential employees currently furthest removed from the labour market.
- Additional activities identified at D.P. Board level to assist in addressing the project objectives.

1.1.4 The members of the Development Partnership include:

- Belfast Partnership (lead partner)
- North & West Belfast Health & Social Services Trust
- The Health Action Zone
- The Mater Hospital
- North City Training
- South Belfast Partnership
- Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education
- North Belfast Employment Centre
- The Ashton Centre
- The Department for Employment and Learning
- The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
- Women's Tec

1.2 The Evaluation

1.2.1 North Belfast Partnership, as the lead partner of the Employability Access Development Partnership, has appointed Williamson Consulting to undertake an external evaluation of the activities of the Employability Access Development Partnership. The evaluation brief includes:

- Oral and written reports on the progress of both the domestic and transnational elements of the project at regular intervals;

- Submitting interim and final reports on the project, both domestic and transnational elements, covering:
- The extent to which the project has obtained its aims and objectives;
- How the project has achieved its aims and objectives;
- The transferability of results;
- Good practice and issues to be addressed within the project;
- Recommendations for the future development of the project.

1.2.2 This report outlines the findings of the evaluation of Action 1 and focuses on:

- the need for the project and fit with the relevant policy context
- the effectiveness of the Partnership
- the appropriateness of the project
- Agreements and Plans
- Activities, inputs and anticipated outcomes
- fit with EQUAL requirements
- Conclusions and recommendations

1.2.3 The evaluation of Action 1 involved:

- Initial meeting with the Development Partnership to discuss the project and the evaluation of Action 1 in more detail, including processes, rationale, involvement in EQUAL structures
- Detailed consideration of the Development Partnership Agreement (incorporating the Transnational Cooperation Agreement) and Action Plans to assess the extent to which key actions, outputs, outcomes, milestones, delivery agents and costs have been outlined and clarified and the extent to which it meets EQUAL requirements and the needs of the wider labour market.
- Consultation with each of the partners individually to discuss their involvement
- Consideration of resource inputs

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Strategic Context

2.1 The Equal Programme

2.1.1 The Employability Access Project is funded under the EQUAL Programme through the European Social Fund. This aims to test new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those in work and those looking for a job, with a view that new ideas could change future policy and practice in employment and training. The EQUAL Programme is briefly explained below, more detail is set out in the appendices.

2.1.2 EQUAL operates by bringing together the key players in a geographic area or sector into Development Partnerships (D.P.) to pool their expertise and experience. Development Partnerships must establish links with at least one partnership from another European member state. The EQUAL Programme has 5 key themes, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability, Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, and, Asylum Seekers.

2.1.3 The EQUAL programme in N.I. is the overall responsibility of the Department for Employment and Learning and support by Proteus N.I. It has adopted two of the 9 subsets within the 5 key themes as being appropriate to the needs of the N.I. labour market, employability and equal opportunities.

2.1.4 There are two funding rounds within the EQUAL programme. Round 1 commenced in November 2001 and will end in November 2005. Round 2 commenced in October 2004 and will end in December 2007. In N.I. 13 organisations received funding under the second round of EQUAL.

2.2 Public Policy

2.2.1 The European Employment Strategy which was originally launched in 1997 was revised in 2002 and more recently in 2005. It recognizes that economic success in Europe will depend on a range of factors including increasing the adaptability of both workers and enterprises, attracting more people into the labour market, investing more effectively in

human capital and ensuring effective implementation of reforms through better governance. The E.E.S. recognizes that all parties have an important role to play in this. Barriers to participation in the labour market need to be addressed by government and, in particular, adjusting the balance between taxes and benefits and removing structural obstacles which hinder participation in the workforce are highlighted within the document. The need to invest more in human capital due to changes in skills requirement and, more often in skills mismatches, is particularly pertinent in Northern Ireland where more service based employment increases the need for soft skills development. Employers are also encouraged to be more flexible in how they operate, how they respond to changes and to how they employ staff, making allowances for people's personal circumstances and wishes to create mutually beneficial outcomes. The planned actions by the Employability Access Project fit well with this overarching European policy framework.

2.2.2 The U.K. Government's plans for the next three years are set out in the document *Priorities and Budgets: 2005-2008*. This is the policy framework for Departments in Northern Ireland. The Government's vision for the future of Northern Ireland is for a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society, firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust and the protection and vindication of human rights for all. Within the *Priorities and Budgets* document there are three themes:

- economic competitiveness - to make Northern Ireland a more competitive and productive region.
- Building equality and community cohesion - to increase opportunity for all and ensure stronger communities.

- Better public services - to ensure excellent and efficient public services for all.

Some of the priorities include creating a more inclusive society, tackling poverty and disadvantage, and promoting good relations and reconciliation. Within this, tackling the problems within North Belfast are specifically mentioned. This project has the potential to make a positive contribution towards these priorities.

2.2.3 In December 2001, the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister and the Department for Social Development jointly commissioned the North Belfast Community Action Project. This followed a long period of sectarian unrest and violence between communities in North Belfast, highlighted by the well publicised disputes around the Ardoyne/Alliance and Glenbryn areas. In May 2002, the Project Team published its report (the Dunlop Report) setting out an analysis of the issues facing North Belfast.

2.2.4 The Dunlop Report was commissioned to assess the complex and deep seated problems in North Belfast and to recommend positive action to address these. It describes North Belfast as a patchwork of small communities, often separated by walls and peace lines, in which people have an intense sense of belonging. The report made a number of recommendations for positive action. Following publication of the Dunlop Report, the North Belfast Community Action Unit was established in August 2002.

2.2.5 Within Northern Ireland the Department for Employment and Learning carries statutory responsibility for employability and the interface between potential employees and employers. The departments activity's are focused around preparing people for work, supporting employers and the Northern Ireland economy, and promoting a learning culture.

2.2.8 In 2003 the Government introduced the Welfare Reform and Modernisation Programme in recognition of the need for a radical reform and modernisation of the current welfare system. The fundamental aim of the Programme is to achieve the Government's Vision of "work for those who can and security for those who cannot". The key themes of the Government's reform agenda include "Welfare to Work - promoting work as the best form of welfare for people of working age who are able to work". Welfare Reform is a major step towards increasing economic activity, reducing the number of workless households, and encouraging more people to take up work.

2.2.9 The Taskforce on Employability and Long-term Unemployment produced its report in 2002 and updated this in late 2004. Within this there is a clear recognition that employability involves personal attitudes, personal circumstances, structural aspects and management of the labour market. In developing its definition of employability, the Taskforce recognised that it is not sufficient to make people employable. Work needs to be done to manage the interface between employers and potential employees and change in both supply and demand sides are essential if employers and potential employees are both to benefit in the longer term. The implementation of the Taskforce recommendations are currently under way and include a range of targeted initiatives to tackle specific problems in specific locations.

2.2.10 The provision of Labour Market Intermediaries and Intermediary Labour Markets comes under D.E.L.'s remit and contributes towards a key element of its strategy. D.E.L. is the Government department with responsibility for employment, further and higher education and training in N.I. It has responsibility for a range of initiatives aimed at improving the employability of those seeking work. D.E.L. works in conjunction with a range of training organisations and voluntary and community

organisations in order to deliver initiatives at a local level. D.E.L. has responsibility for delivering New Deal programmes under the Government's Welfare to Work Programme, among other programmes aimed at tackling disadvantage and unemployment in deprived areas and socially excluded groups.

2.3 The Area

2.3.1 North Belfast suffers from very high levels of deprivation and division. Government statistics consistently reinforce this point. An overview of the area is set out below, more detailed information can be found in the appendices.

2.3.2 North Belfast has the reputation of being the most divided area in Northern Ireland. North Belfast has the highest number of "peace lines" dividing communities of any area in Northern Ireland and has also, in recent years, seen the most frequent and serious incidents of sectarian unrest and violence, particularly in the interface areas. The issue of territory, particularly of Protestant and Catholic areas, is particularly apparent in North Belfast and there are a number of interfaces, often marked by "peace walls" or derelict or blighted buildings. Interface areas are often also marked by high levels of social and economic deprivation, as well as frequent sectarian unrest and violence. Contentious territory has affected physical infrastructure, economic investment, housing, transport, health and employment. While the reasons for long term unemployment in North Belfast encompass the factors found in many areas, these are often compounded by people's reluctance to traverse perceived and real interfaces to access work.

2.3.3 There is a rapidly changing population profile in many parts of North Belfast, often with a young, growing Catholic population, compared to neighbouring, ageing and declining Protestant populations. Hence, Protestant communities frequently feel threatened and under siege, while Catholic

communities have a high demand for housing which cannot be met. Poor communication has contributed to a lack of understanding and mistrust of “the other side” and segregated living has become part of North Belfast’s spatial and social fabric. Communities have often become inwardly focused and dominated by fear and a defensive attitude. This has contributed to a lack of positive community leadership within and across communities.

2.3.4 The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures - 2005 provides an overview of deprivation in Northern Ireland at Super Output Area level. While the earlier Noble index measured relative deprivation for 566 wards in N.I., this has now been changed in the N.I.M.D.M. 2005. Some wards had much higher population levels than others and the Noble Index has now been updated to measure relative deprivation within 890 “Super Output Areas”, each of which has a population of approximately 2,000 people. (Some of the original wards have been split into 2 or more Super Output Areas to allow better comparison). Of particular relevance to the programme is the employment domain score. 18 of the 37 SOA’s in North Belfast rank in the worst 20% for employment deprivation in Northern Ireland.

2.3.5 High levels of unemployment exist in North Belfast. Almost all of the wards experience higher levels than the N.I. average, with two having over 10% unemployed. Also noticeable are the very low levels of economic activity in parts of North Belfast. Only one of the 11 wards exceeds the NI average. Four have less than 50% of the working age population in paid employment.

3

The Project

3.1 The Partners

3.1.1 The Employability Access project is based in North Belfast and seeks to develop ways of closing the gap between employers in the health sector and those seeking employment. It was perceived by people working in North Belfast Partnership, the Health Trusts and in the employability sector that there was a difficulty in relation to, on the demand side, filling posts in certain grades, and on the supply side accessing work in the health sector, despite a range of work undertaken in the past to address this. EQUAL provided a means to tackle this by creating a genuine partnership and piloting new approaches to recruitment and training.

3.1.2 The Partnership therefore needs to reflect the interests and needs of key stakeholders including employers, trade unions, the community sector, and those involved in employability programmes. The list of partners is as follows:

- North Belfast Partnership Board (lead partner) brings together representatives from the statutory, private, voluntary and community sectors across North Belfast.
- The Mater Hospital is a major employer in North Belfast.
- North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust is also a major health sector employer in North Belfast and has a number of centres.
- The Health Action Zone was established to tackle health inequalities in North Belfast and to promote a holistic approach to health including lifestyle and employment issues.
- North City Training is a community based training provider in the area.
- South Belfast Partnership brings experience of employment programmes targeted on disadvantaged areas.
- Belfast Institute for Further and Higher Education is the leading third level adult education provider in Northern Ireland.

- North Belfast Employment Centre is a Labour Market Intermediary and provides a range of services for unemployed people from North Belfast.
- The Ashton Centre is a Labour Market Intermediary in North Belfast and also provides a range of training programmes focused on those who are long-term unemployed.
- The Department for Employment and Learning has a statutory responsibility for programmes to tackle unemployment.
- Women's Tec is a community based training provider.
- The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority has a remit in terms of education qualifications.
- N.I.P.S.A. and U.N.I.S.O.N., from the public sector and health sectors respectively, represent the trade union sector.

3.1.3 The partners represent the main stakeholders involved in the key areas covered by the project in North Belfast. These are:

- **Employers** - the health sector is the biggest employer in North Belfast. Despite the fact that unemployment is high, the Mater Hospital and North and West Trust have both found difficulty in attracting and retaining staff in the services sector. Both play an active role in their local communities and are keen to look at the issue of how their employment and recruitment practices affect their ability to attract people in North Belfast.
- **Education and Training sector** - this sector is represented by B.I.F.H.E., North City Training, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and Women's Tec, as well as the Ashton Centre. These organisations provide a wide range of training opportunities.
- **The Employability sector** - this sector is represented by the Department for Employment and Learning, which provides

a statutory and strategic overview, and North Belfast Employment Centre and the Ashton Centre. The latter two organisations have a community base and work with unemployed people who find it difficult to access jobs. Both are Labour Market Intermediaries.

- **The Community** - the community sector is represented in a wide range of ways in the partnership, both through North Belfast Partnership and through community based organisations such as N.B.E.C. and the Ashton Centre. The community is also represented by most of the other organisations which also work in the community in North Belfast.

3.1.4 It is generally agreed that the Employability Access project has secured the commitment of all the right partners that will be needed for a project of this type in North Belfast. The project has representation from both the supply side and the demand side. In other words, the project has the commitment of organisations which work with unemployed people to provide training and support and also the commitment of employers who provide jobs and which are responsible for determining employment policy and practice. This partnership is very important both in terms of the operation of the project. I.e., it will provide training, jobs and support but will also target and recruit people who can benefit most. At the same time it will also influence employers' policies and practices and will seek to mainstream findings in best practice.

3.2 The Partnership

3.2.1 The initial driver for the Employability Access project came from North Belfast Partnership Board and arose from a concern that there was a gap between unemployed people and major employers in the area. It also followed exposure to other Equal programmes and networks through, for example, the Futures Project delivered through the Health Action Zone. While there are Labour Market Intermediaries which seek to tackle barriers to unemployment by providing training and

support, and employers with vacancies which they have had difficulty filling, there were not the links between the two to enable those who are unemployed to access those jobs and employers to access the labour market. North Belfast Partnership already had contacts with the two sectors and had been involved in facilitating networking activities focused on addressing the needs of both groups. The Partnership was keen to develop this in a more formal way and to challenge barriers that contribute to long-term unemployment and deprivation in North Belfast.

- 3.2.2 North Belfast Partnership put together the proposal for the Equal project and engaged with the key organisations to form the Development Partnership. The organisations approached also recognised that there was a need for a project of this type in North Belfast and were keen to become involved. The health sector employers had found it difficult to fill vacancies in service type posts (cleaners, home-helps, domestics, catering, laundry, etc.) and were open to looking at how to better access the available pool of unemployed people from North Belfast. Given the nature of the posts that were vacant, very often these suit unemployed people who live locally. Both the Mater Hospital and the North and West Trust were open to reviewing their recruitment qualities and practices to test how these present barriers to those who are unemployed.
- 3.2.3 From the community point of view, the Labour Market Intermediaries were already working with people who were unemployed and were keen to look at partnerships with major employers in the area. There were, understandably, some concerns about how this project would relate to other employability projects in the area that were ongoing, but these have been overcome.
- 3.2.4 The involvement of the other partners is also extremely important in terms of developing

good practice for training and support and ensuring that there is no duplication of provision. The establishment of the partnership has given training providers insight into the needs of employers and the needs of those who are long-term unemployed and has helped to establish better networks among key providers.

- 3.2.5 Most of the partners have been involved in funded programmes previously, including E.U. Programmes, and were aware of the needs and requirements of the Equal programme. Nevertheless, the establishment of the partnership has required significant input from all the partners. The partnership has brought together organisations with different cultures and needs and the process of bringing this together into one project has been challenging. Some partners have found the bureaucratic nature of the Equal programme demanding. Having said that, all of the partners are fully supportive of the project and committed to establishing and delivering the programme. All recognise that there are potentially, significant benefits for their organisation in terms of their policies and practices and outcomes for both unemployed people and employers. The project is seen as innovative and tackling genuine issues in terms of the gap between employers and the long-term unemployed in North Belfast.
- 3.2.6 All of the partners feel that the partnership is working well and that the partnership has formed robust structures to take the project to Action 2. There is a general belief that the partners have established a better understanding of each other and the different needs, constraints and aspirations of each member. The partners support the aims and objectives of the project and feel that they have the opportunity to make a positive contribution, both in the development of the project and into developing policy within their own organisations. The potential benefits from the project include better relationships and links between partners, where there is

mutual benefit, and the opportunity to develop new approaches to recruitment and employability in North Belfast. The partnership has been meeting regularly and the level of debate and discussion has been good.

3.2.7 There is a general consensus that the partners have already learned from each other, that there is better communication and that changes in systems and procedures have taken place. During the early part of the project, the partners were able to discuss the key issues for their organisations and for the target groups and this has already led to better understanding between the partners. This has had an impact on employers' practices, and employers are already seeing tangible outcomes in terms of recruitment practice.

3.2.8 The project structure seeks to provide a strategic and practical approach which covers all of North Belfast and the target groups. The Development Partnership brings together all of the key stakeholders in the area and it is responsible for the strategic development of the project, overseeing the programme and dissemination of best practice. The Development Partnership board meets every two months. The Development Partnership has also set up two subgroups to take forward specific aspects of the project. These are an Employability Subgroup and a Transnational Subgroup.

3.2.9 The Employability subgroup is responsible for taking forward the development of the programme, including the Pilot Pre-employment programme, job shadowing, and interviews. The Subgroup involves representatives from all of the Development Partner organisations. It meets monthly and is working closely with the Co-ordinator and relevant organisations to establish the pilot programme and the marketing of the programme. The Transnational subgroup is responsible for taking forward the

transnational aspects of the project (see section 3.3).

3.2.10 The Development Partnership is supported by a Project Co-ordinator, an Administrator, and two Project Officers. The staff will support the Development Partnership, provide administrative and financial monitoring and reporting, support the partners, organise the operation and delivery of the project, co-ordinate the work of the partners and undertake the day to day running of the project.

3.2.11 The project has set itself a number of objectives for Action 1. These are:

1. To establish the Development Partnership

- To initiate D.P. meetings and consultation
- Produce a D.P. protocol and operational guidelines
- Establish D.P. aims and objectives, including division of labour
- Produce D.P. agreement on equality and empowerment
- Agree Action 2 and Action 3 activities

This has been achieved. The Development Partnership is working well and the necessary structures are in place. Partners are aware of what is expected from them and their responsibilities.

2 Establish project terms of reference

- Conduct research, produce baseline analysis
- Produce D.P. Equality strategy
- Produce empowerment framework
- Produce monitoring and evaluation
- Secure Action 2 match funding

This has been achieved. The D.P. has prepared terms of reference, and a framework for progressing to Action 2.

- 3 Establish transnational partnership
- Identify and select transnational partners
 - Develop and agree joint working programme
 - Identify mainstreaming potential
 - Agree transnational roles and expectations
 - Agree practice sharing methodology, including dissemination models
 - Agree monitoring and evaluation methodology

This has been achieved. The Transnational Partnership is set up and working well.

3.3 The Transnational Element

3.3.1 All Equal programmes are required to have a transnational element which involves developing a partnership with Equal projects in other E.U. Countries. The Employability Access Project formed a Transnational Subgroup which met for the first time in June 2005 to oversee the work within the Transnational Partnership. The Subgroup members are listed in the Appendices.

3.3.2 The Transnational Partnership was developed on the basis of finding partners with similar projects or projects that were trying to achieve similar outcomes. It was believed that this would maximise the value of the partnership and help partners to learn from the experiences of the others. The four organisations involved in the partnership are seeking to identify access to employment and progression within the health sector and public sector. The group includes organisations with detailed understanding of the employment opportunities within the public sector and health sector and a common target group, i.e. those who are disadvantaged and furthest from the labour market.

3.3.2 In this case, the Employability Access Project is a member of the Transnational Partnership, Co-operation for Employment, which involves partners in the Republic of Ireland, Italy and Spain. These projects are:

- The Republic of Ireland - Tallaght Equal Assists aims to work with people who are economically inactive or who have low educational achievement to develop routes into caring as a profession.
- Italy - Qualificare il lavoro privato di cura seeks to work with people in informal employment in Milan to address issues in caring.
- Spain - the Inserempleo project is based in Castilla La Mancha and works with people who are economically inactive or socially excluded, to facilitate entry to the labour market.

3.3.3 All of the partners work in a similar area of employability and target similar groups, i.e., those who are economically inactive or economically excluded. They are also involved in the health sector and public sector and seeking to develop employment within this. There are therefore potentially significant benefits from the partnership working together in ensuring best practice.

3.3.4 All the partners recognise the potential benefits from partnership with projects in other countries within the E.U. As well as improving employment opportunities this also provides learning opportunities and helps promote understanding of different cultures. There are also potential benefits in looking at how culture affects barriers to employment and ways of tackling these. It was also noted that the Transnational Partnership would require significant commitment in terms of time and resources by the partnership and it is important to ensure that this does not impact on the delivery of the project at a local level. All partners are supportive of the transnational element and are keen to either participate or to look at how they could benefit from this.

- 3.3.5 The initial meeting of the Transnational Partnership was in March 2005. The partners have worked together to identify common themes and to form a common strategy to address common interests. The four working themes within this strategy are:
- Comparative critical analysis of public policies re the labour market;
 - Matching the supply and demand of labour;
 - Approaches to motivation, qualification and accreditation; and
 - Strategies for effective welfare to work transition.
- 3.3.6 The Transnational Co-operation Agreement (T.C.A.), titled Co-operation for Employment, sets out the common themes and interests of the partners and identifies the roles and responsibilities of the partners in relation to the Partnership. It also sets out deliverables, timescales, added value and methodologies for the work of the Partnership.

3.4 Finances

- 3.4.1 The table below summarises the expenditure during Action 1 compared to the budget. In most areas the actual expenditure is below the budgeted figure. This is largely because progress on Action 1 was slow at first because the letter of offer was delayed and staff were not recruited until later than had been planned.

E.A.P. Action 1 Summary Oct 04 - June 05

	Budget	Actual
Salary Costs	33,978	12,462.69
NBP Staff Support Costs	8,628	6,661.71
Staff Travel	351	61.39
Staff Training	3,000	461.83
Recruitment	0	2,441.88
Premises and Overheads	5,396	4,821.98
Admin Costs	2,795	2,451.15
Consumables	550	481.30
Small Equipment	3,609	7,755.31
Audit	500	0
Evaluation	1,200	0
Monit and Eval Framework	1,500	0
Transnational Costs	3,180	147.73
Overall Total	64,687	37,746.97

4

Conclusions

4.1 Conclusions

4.1.1 The Employability Access project has completed Action 1 and is now moving towards the point where it can start to deliver projects under Action 2 of the programme. To date, the project has focused on establishing the partnership and ensuring that the appropriate structures are in place to enable the partnership to move forward. This evaluation therefore focuses on Action 1. The conclusions that can be reached at this stage are as follows:

- 1 The Employability Access project has achieved its initial objectives of setting up the partnership, establishing terms of reference and establishing the Transnational Partnership.
- 2 The Development Partnership has secured the commitment of the key stakeholders in the sector. All of the relevant sectors are included.
- 3 The structures within the D.P. are robust and working well. There is good internal communication and decision making processes.
- 4 The project is primarily about looking at the relationship between employers, communities and the labour market whilst seeking to address the gap between those seeking staff and people from North Belfast seeking work. Its potential benefits are for employers, those who are unemployed and organisations who work with those who are unemployed in terms of improving communication, linkages and HR policies.
- 5 Initial progress in forming the partnership was slow, largely because of delays in receiving the letter of offer which meant that the project could not recruit staff until March 2005. Once the Co-ordinator was appointed on a full-time basis, the partnership has progressed significantly.

- 6 The project has secured the commitment and participation of all of the partners and there is good interaction between the sectors represented.
- 7 All of the partners are aware of the requirements of the programme and the potential benefits that could come from this.
- 8 The financial monitoring systems are robust and expenditure, while slightly less than budgeted is satisfactory.
- 9 The project is still working on developing its monitoring systems and these will be finalised over the next few weeks. The partnership is aware of the need for monitoring and the issues to be covered.

4.1.2 The Development Partnership, and the organisations within it, have made very significant progress during Action 1. There have already been achievements in terms of improving understanding, co-operation and communication between the partners which is already producing benefits in terms of human resource policies and practices.

4.2 Interim Recommendations

4.2.1 At this stage, the partnership appears to be working well and there is not much change to be recommended at this stage. The main recommendations are:

- It might be useful at an early stage in Action 2 to organise a residential to give all of the partners the opportunity to spend time reviewing the project and discussing its operation.
- The project is focused on recruiting those who are furthest from the labour market, who by definition are those hardest to reach. It will be important to look at and test a range of referral mechanisms, including community contacts, and this in itself will be a learning experience.

5

Appendices

5.1 The Equal Programme

- 5.1.1 The EQUAL Programme is funded by the European Social Fund and aims to test new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those in work and those looking for a job, with a view that new ideas could change future policy and practice in employment and training.
- 5.1.2 EQUAL operates by bringing together the key players in a geographic area or sector into Development Partnerships (D.P.) to pool their expertise and experience. Development Partnerships must establish links with at least one partnership from another European member state. The EQUAL Programme has 5 key themes, within which there are 9 subsets. The themes include Employment, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability, Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, and, Asylum Seekers.
- 5.1.3 The N.I. EQUAL Community Initiative Programme is positioned within the wider labour market policy context of N.I. and aims to ensure that:

Employment opportunities are spread more equally
--

Concentrations of unemployment among certain groups in society are reduced
--

Long term unemployment and inactivity are removed

Welfare dependency is reduced

5.1.4 The EQUAL programme in N.I. is structured as follows:

Managing Authority European Unit within D.E.L.	Overall responsibility for the implementation & delivery of EQUAL in N.I.
	Responsibility for payment and monitoring finance

National Support Structure Proteus N.I.	Assist with the provision of some of the more specialist D.P. Support roles.
	Monitor D.P. activity
	Assist with transnational co-operation
	Offer ongoing advice and guidance to Development Partnerships.
	Training (e.g. in monitoring/evaluation and partnership working)
Websites, newsletter, conferences, workshops, seminars	

National Thematic Network Representatives from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors & each D.P.	Adopting a strategic focus ensuring that EQUAL continues to focus on priority areas
	Identifying, selecting and analysing good practice
	Recommending projects for approval by N.I. EQUAL Monitoring Committee in the 2nd round of EQUAL
	Developing and agreeing a dissemination strategy

North/South Steering Group Managing Authorities in N.I. and R.o.I., National Support Structures in N.I. and R.o.I., the Equality Commission (N.I.) and the Equality Authority (R.o.I.).	Established to facilitate and promote cross border co-operation
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Joint Support Structure Managing Authorities and National Support Structures representing N.I., R.o.I., England, Scotland and Wales	Assist the co-ordination and standardisation of processes and procedures for EQUAL
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5.1.5 The N.I. EQUAL Programme has adopted two of the 9 subsets within the 5 key themes as being appropriate to the needs of the N.I. labour market. These are:

Theme	Subset
Employability	Facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or reintegrated into a labour market, which must be open to all
Equal Opportunities for men and women	Reducing gender gaps and supporting job desegregation

5.1.6 There are two funding rounds within the EQUAL programme. Round 1 commenced in November 2001 and will end in November 2005. Round 2 commenced in October 2004 and will end in December 2007. In N.I. 13 organisations received funding under the second round of EQUAL.

5.1.7 Each project potentially receives funding to complete three Actions, although this is dependent on successful delivery at each stage:

Action 1:	Setting up Development Partnerships and transnational co-operation
Action 2:	Implementing the work programmes of the Development Partnerships
Action 3:	Thematic networking, dissemination of good practice and making an impact on national policy (mainstreaming)

5.1.9 The EQUAL programme incorporates six key principles

Partnership	bringing together key players into development partnerships and ensuring links with other member states
Innovation	testing and promoting new ways of combating discrimination and inequality faced by those groups most disadvantaged in the labour market
Equal Opportunities	cross cutting feature of the programme
Transnational Co-operation	the transnational dimension ensures that lessons are learned across member states and examples of good practice are exchanged
Mainstreaming	EQUAL has been designed so that its actions inform policy developments and ensure that policy makers learn lessons from its activities
Empowerment	those who are targeted for support also have an opportunity to influence the design and the evaluation of the proposed activities

5.2 Public Policy

5.2.1 The European Employment Strategy which was originally launched in 1997 was revised in 2002 and more recently in 2005. It recognizes that economic success in Europe will depend on a range of factors including increasing the adaptability of both workers and enterprises, attracting more people into the labour market, investing more effectively in human capital and ensuring effective implementation of reforms through better governance. The E.E.S. recognizes that all parties have an important role to play in this. Barriers to participation in the labour market need to be addressed by government and, in particular, adjusting the balance between taxes and benefits and removing structural obstacles which hinder participation in the workforce are highlighted within the document. The need to invest more in human capital due to changes in skills requirement and, more often in skills mismatches, is particularly pertinent in Northern Ireland where more service based employment increases the need for soft skills development. Employers are also encouraged to be more flexible in how they operate, how they respond to changes and to how they employ staff, making allowances for people's personal circumstances and wishes to create mutually beneficial outcomes. The planned actions by the Employability Access Project fit well with this overarching European policy framework.

5.2.2 The U.K. Government's plans for the next three years are set out in the document Priorities and Budgets: 2005-2008. This is the policy framework for Departments in Northern Ireland. The Government's vision for the future of Northern Ireland is for a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society, firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust and the protection and vindication of human rights for all. Within the Priorities and Budgets document there are three themes:

- Economic competitiveness - to make Northern Ireland a more competitive and productive region.
- Building equality and community cohesion - to increase opportunity for all and ensure stronger communities.
- Better public services - to ensure excellent and efficient public services for all.

Some of the priorities include creating a more inclusive society, tackling poverty and disadvantage, and promoting good relations and reconciliation. Within this, tackling the problems within North Belfast are specifically mentioned. This project has the potential to make a positive contribution towards these priorities.

5.2.3 In December 2001, the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister and the Department for Social Development jointly commissioned the North Belfast Community Action Project. This followed a long period sectarian unrest and violence between communities in North Belfast, highlighted by the well publicised disputes around the Ardoyne/Alliance and Glenbryn areas. In May 2002, the Project Team published its report (the Dunlop Report) setting out an analysis of the issues facing North Belfast. This followed extensive consultation with residents, community groups and statutory bodies.

5.2.4 The Dunlop Report was commissioned to assess the complex and deep seated problems in North Belfast and to recommend positive action to address these. It describes North Belfast as a patchwork of small communities, often separated by walls and peace lines, in which people have an intense sense of belonging. The report made a number of recommendations for positive action, including:

- To set up a dedicated senior level unit to build community capacity, develop a long-term strategy for North Belfast, encourage partnership and take responsibility for addressing issues in interface areas.

- To create a community capacity building programme in North Belfast.
- To make available £3 million of additional funding per year for community capacity building.

5.2.5 Following publication of the Dunlop Report, the North Belfast Community Action Unit was established in August 2002. The primary functions of the Unit are:

- Building community capacity to empower local people to address their needs and to improve community relations.
- Building partnerships within and between North Belfast communities and statutory agencies.
- Addressing issues at interface areas.
- Development of a strategy for an integrated Government response to the problems of North Belfast.
- Redevelopment of the Crumlin Road Gaol site.

5.2.6 Within Northern Ireland the Department for Employment and Learning carries statutory responsibility for employability and the interface between potential employees and employers. The departments activity's are focused around three key elements. These are:

- Preparing People for Work
- Supporting Employers and the Northern Ireland Economy
- Promoting a Learning Culture

5.2.7 Under the heading of Preparing People for Work the Department's key criteria are:

- Implementing the Welfare Reform agenda to help all customers of working age to overcome their barriers to employment, supported by a modern, technology-enabled employment service.

- Providing, either directly or through delivery partners, training, education and employment programmes and services that will equip people with the skills and knowledge they need to obtain work.
- Providing, either directly or through delivery partners, an advice and guidance service to help people to take up training, education and employment opportunities that are appropriate to their needs and aspirations.

5.2.8 In 2003 the Government introduced the Welfare Reform and Modernisation Programme in recognition of the need for a radical reform and modernisation of the current welfare system. The fundamental aim of the Programme is to achieve the Government's Vision of "work for those who can and security for those who cannot". The key themes of the Government's reform agenda include "Welfare to Work - promoting work as the best form of welfare for people of working age who are able to work". Welfare Reform is a major step towards increasing economic activity, reducing the number of workless households, and encouraging more people to take up work. In practical terms the introduction of Welfare Reform has included:

- **The introduction of New Tax Credits** - Tax Credits have replaced Working Family Tax Credit and Disabled Person Tax Credit and the administration of Tax Credits has been transferred to the Inland Revenue.
- **Jobs and Benefits** - the introduction of combined Jobs and Benefits offices, delivered jointly by D.E.L. and S.S.A., across N.I. aims to help people who can work to do so and to ensure that those who cannot can obtain the security to which they are entitled, thus promoting social inclusion. During 2005 further "Pathways" pilot schemes have been introduced in parts of N.I. (with a view to rolling out across N.I.). They aim to help people on Incapacity Benefit move into work through a series of Work Focused

Interviews which focus on “capacity to work” rather than “incapacity”.

5.2.9 The Taskforce on Employability and Long-term Unemployment produced its report in 2002 and updated this in late 2004. Within this there is a clear recognition that employability involves personal attitudes, personal circumstances, structural aspects and management of the labour market. In developing its definition of employability, the Taskforce recognised that it is not sufficient to make people employable. Work needs to be done to manage the interface between employers and potential employees and change in both supply and demand sides are essential if employers and potential employees are both to benefit in the longer term. The implementation of the Taskforce recommendations are currently under way and include a range of targeted initiatives to tackle specific problems in specific locations.

5.2.10 The provision of Labour Market Intermediaries and Intermediary Labour Markets comes under D.E.L.’s remit and contributes towards a key element of its strategy. D.E.L. is the Government department with responsibility for employment, further and higher education and training in N.I. It has responsibility for a range of initiatives aimed at improving the employability of those seeking work. D.E.L. works in conjunction with a range of training organisations and voluntary and community organisations in order to deliver initiatives at a local level. D.E.L. has responsibility for delivering New Deal programmes under the Government’s Welfare to Work Programme, among other programmes aimed at tackling disadvantage and unemployment in deprived areas and socially excluded groups.

5.3 North Belfast Overview

5.3.1 North Belfast is defined as the area from Belfast Lough to the east, the city centre to the south, the Crumlin Road to the west and Rathcoole in Newtownabbey at its northern boundary. North Belfast contains some of the

most pleasant and affluent parts of Belfast but also some of the most deprived and troubled areas. As defined, it has a population of around 85,000.

5.3.2 North Belfast has the reputation of being the most divided area in Northern Ireland. North Belfast has the highest number of “peace lines” dividing communities of any area in Northern Ireland and has also, in recent years, seen the most frequent and serious incidents of sectarian unrest and violence, particularly in the interface areas. The issue of territory, particularly of Protestant and Catholic areas, is particularly apparent in North Belfast and there are a number of interfaces, often marked by “peace walls” or derelict or blighted buildings. Interface areas are often also marked by high levels of social and economic deprivation, as well as frequent sectarian unrest and violence. Contentious territory has affected physical infrastructure, economic investment, housing, transport, health and employment. While the reasons for long term unemployment in North Belfast encompass the factors found in many areas, these are often compounded by people’s reluctance to traverse perceived and real interfaces to access work.

5.3.3 There is a rapidly changing population profile in many parts of North Belfast, often with a young, growing Catholic population, compared to neighbouring, ageing and declining Protestant populations. Hence, Protestant communities frequently feel threatened and under siege, while Catholic communities have a high demand for housing which cannot be met. Poor communication has contributed to a lack of understanding and mistrust of “the other side” and segregated living has become part of North Belfast’s spatial and social fabric. Communities have often become inwardly focused and dominated by fear and a defensive attitude. This has contributed to a lack of positive community leadership within and across communities. Traditionally, North

Belfast differs from other areas of Belfast and lacks the sense of unity and shared identity that can be found in, for example, East or West Belfast.

5.3.4 The following table shows the community backgrounds for each of the wards in North Belfast (this information is not yet available at Super Output Area level). As can be seen wards such as Ardoyne, Ballysillan, Duncairn, New Lodge and Water Works are extremely polarised reflecting the nature of community division in North Belfast.

Community Profile - North Belfast wards

Wards	Catholic	Protestant	Other	All Persons
Ardoyne	6,363	212	26	6,601
Ballysillan	262	5,461	297	6,020
Bellevue	2,998	1,741	203	4,942
Castleview	1,520	3,136	222	4,878
Cavehill	2,712	2,383	187	5,282
Chichester Park	3,827	1,304	248	5,109
Cliftonville	3,704	1,584	133	5,421
Duncairn	221	3,616	170	4,007
Fortwilliam	1,579	3,075	144	4,798
Legoniel	2,082	3,273	173	5,528
New Lodge	5,086	115	24	5,228
Water Works	5,717	420	168	6,305

5.3.5 Deprivation

The following table provides an overview of the levels of deprivation in the 37 Super Output Areas in North Belfast as measured in the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures - 2005. While the earlier Noble index measured relative deprivation for 566 wards in N.I., this has now been changed in the N.I.M.D.M. 2005. Some wards had much higher population levels than others and the Noble Index has now been updated to measure relative deprivation within 890 "Super Output Areas", each of which has a population of approximately 2,000 people. (Some of the original wards have been split into 2 or more Super Output Areas to allow better comparison).

The following table indicates the ranking of the wards in relation to each deprivation measure. In each case the most deprived ward ranks 1 and the least deprived ranks 890. Wards which fall into those with highest unemployment are marked in bold.

Deprivation Profile - North Belfast wards

Super Output Area	Multiple Deprivation	Income	Employment	Health	Education	Proximity to Services	Living Environment	Crime & Disorder
Ardoyne_1	28	30	45	47	23	839	2	240
Ardoyne_2	20	25	32	21	19	772	1	341
Ardoyne_3	13	8	26	25	16	867	8	178
Ballysillan_1	92	125	100	71	41	615	347	364
Ballysillan_2	272	358	300	131	156	733	337	326
Ballysillan_3	264	314	278	119	236	625	540	202
Bellevue_1	479	545	472	187	747	495	507	86
Bellevue_2	189	175	227	173	202	823	300	81
Bellevue_3	260	245	307	152	325	695	422	70
Castleview_1	156	174	136	247	85	689	216	307
Castleview_2	651	616	575	401	852	667	557	146
Castleview_3	242	255	164	169	332	725	399	377
Cavehill_1	723	777	647	440	798	604	802	153
Cavehill_2	831	843	872	643	871	638	786	133
Cavehill_3	633	768	642	236	783	468	798	162
Chichester Park_1	100	105	93	51	445	878	186	8
Chichester Park_2	304	307	360	111	771	787	212	29
Chichester Park_3	302	295	329	96	693	731	378	84
Cliftonville_1	121	111	165	105	195	842	137	28
Cliftonville_2	420	471	366	200	633	785	299	111
Cliftonville_3	76	128	118	44	95	670	165	13
Crumlin_1	19	42	17	33	6	873	36	169
Crumlin_2	4	21	3	2	4	861	6	31
Duncairn_1	17	37	10	11	25	736	192	114
Duncairn_2	44	78	57	35	29	797	159	11
Fortwilliam_1	367	462	426	68	717	804	357	92
Fortwilliam_2	276	405	367	147	146	761	144	124
Fortwilliam_3	445	451	484	179	781	686	354	51
Legoniel_1	57	99	70	43	64	420	194	32
Legoniel_2	116	218	111	89	73	721	218	56
Legoniel_3	329	420	267	245	346	700	532	42
New Lodge_1	9	7	16	20	26	874	24	14
New Lodge_2	8	5	12	9	31	884	45	85
New Lodge_3	15	16	27	12	20	889	30	110
Water Works_1	22	17	23	29	86	881	22	19
Water Works_2	50	62	73	19	124	858	92	7
Water Works_3	54	69	53	23	291	856	38	5

Of particular relevance to the programme is the employment domain score. 18 of the 37 SOA's in North Belfast rank in the worst 20% for employment deprivation in Northern Ireland (Highlighted overleaf).

5.3.6 The table below shows the working age population, numbers employed, unemployed and economically inactive.

North Belfast Demographic/Economic Profile (Census 2001)

Ward	Population aged 16 - 64	Total Employment	Economic Activity Rates (%)	Total Economic Inactivity	Un employment Rates (%) Oct 2005
Ardoyne	3,841	1,078	28.1	2,042	7.2
Ballysillan	3,664	2,217	60.5	1,238	3.9
Bellevue	3,053	1,636	53.6	969	3
Castleview	2,907	1,828	62.9	929	3.8
Cavehill	3,249	2,356	72.5	740	1.4
Chichester Park	3,216	1,956	60.8	1,071	5.3
Cliftonville	3,278	1,918	58.5	1,113	3.9
Duncairn	2,306	1,082	46.9	1,057	7.1
Fortwilliam	2,876	1,926	67	834	2.5
Legoniel	3,357	1,992	59.3	1,150	3.6
New Lodge	3,184	1,086	34.1	1,775	7.9
Waterworks	3,780	1,761	46.6	1,713	8.7
N.I. Average			72.3		4.7

5.3.7 From the table above it is clear that high levels of unemployment exist in North Belfast. Five wards experience significantly higher levels of unemployment than the N. I. average. Also noticeable are the very low levels of economic activity in parts of North Belfast. Only one of the 11 wards exceeds the NI average. Four have less than 50% of the working age population in paid employment.

Jobs in North Belfast... Secure a healthy future

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