

CASE STUDY - ACCESS TO SERVICES

Introduction

Ballyhoura Development want to increase the numbers of clients we work with, to take up the range of progression opportunities available to them. This is achieved in two ways:

1. Outreaching the delivery of our services, to key areas of concentrated disadvantage in the market towns and across areas with dispersed rural disadvantage.
2. Delivering a range of targeted information activities and events.

The need for the two pronged approach to information provision relates back to:

1. The CSO and Pobal socio economic data, highlighting the key areas of disadvantage.
2. The area settlement pattern of peri urban, market towns and weak, isolated rural communities.
3. The low levels of awareness and access to services amongst the LCDP target groups.
4. The limited number of main stream services based in the area, for example training, social welfare, transport, and at a time of unprecedented demand, no Local Employment Service.
5. Engagement with, and the desire to support, the most disadvantaged and marginalised to break the cycle of disadvantage.

The approach of highlighting information on services in a coordinated manner and by having outreach offices close to target communities is crucial in that it:

1. Greatly enhances the client engagement process.
2. Enables greater awareness, greater accessibility and greater trust for clients.
3. Leads to increased client uptake of services and supports.

Activities

An example of how the service is delivered in practice may be useful to highlight the linkages between the research, consultations, the delivery approach and the target clients.

There are approximately 8,200 people unemployed across the Ballyhoura Development area. Ballyhoura Development organised a 'Ballyhoura Employment and Enterprise Seminar' in Mitchelstown on Thursday 22nd October.

Based on consultations with unemployed clients and support services operating the area the seminar was aimed at two groups of targets clients:

1. Long term unemployed people.
2. Unemployed young people.

Preparation for the seminar took on board research and feedback from consultations with all stakeholders including:

1. Long term unemployed individuals.
2. Young unemployed individuals.
3. Local employers.
4. Employment support agencies.

Feedback highlighted

1. Older job seekers negative experience of sending out CV's and not progressing to interview.
2. Younger job seekers not having any employment experience beyond education.
3. Employers limited knowledge of employment activation programmes and experiences of having jobs available and not receiving suitable CV's.
4. Employment support agencies seeking quality engagement with clients.

The 'Ballyhoura Employment and Enterprise Seminar' event was promoted through a variety of channels including:

1. An eight week targeted press release and local radio campaign.
2. Flyers, newsletters and posters.
3. Online social media including the Ballyhoura Development twitter, facebook and blog.
4. Information and engagement with stakeholders for two months leading to the event including:
 1. Ballyhoura Development Employment client database.
 2. Local Employers.
 3. Community, youth and business groups.
 4. Individuals and families in key target estates in Mitchelstown.
 5. Employment Support Agencies.

Lessons Learned

A key agenda for the event was to be positive, be engaging and to have jobs, internships and training places available. A great effort was placed on:

1. Engaging with employers prior to the event with potential to recruit staff, offer graduate internship opportunities and speak at the event to bring employers and job seekers closer.
2. Engaging intensively with key groups and estates in Mitchelstown to facilitate long term unemployed participation.
3. Preparation of information on a comprehensive list of local training places from unaccredited to FETAC L 5 through to third level opportunities.
4. Approaching clients progressed into graduate internships to provide insights and motivation from their experiences of progression.
5. Creating facilitated exercises to focus participants on developing and communicating their unique story for potential networking and interview situations.

Conclusions

The outcomes of the event include:

1. 170 unemployed individuals attended, 130 of whom were long term unemployed.
2. Long term unemployed men and women in the 40-50 age bracket formed the majority of the group with young unemployed people and early school leavers making up the remainder.
3. The absence of those in the 25-40 age bracket was noticeable highlighting the increasing emigration and migration to the larger urban areas.
4. 15 graduate placements were created in the local area prior to the event.
5. Local employers attended the event with 33 jobs on offer.
6. 25 external agencies and training businesses took part to promote their service and supports.
7. There were 20 places on a FETAC L 5 Antique Restoration Programme, 14 places on a FETAC L 5 Outdoor Recreation Programme, 14 places on a FETAC L 5 Sales Representative Course, 40 places on FETAC L 5 Health Care Courses along with a variety of short term unaccredited programmes and the range of third level spring board programmes. Ballyhoura Development also received an offer of one free place on a four year degree in child and adolescence care at the Irish College of Humanities and Sciences.

The event created a lot of follow up one to one work with existing and new long term unemployed clients.

CASE STUDY - BALLYHOURA RURAL ENTERPRISE SERVICE

Introduction

This service aims to support long term unemployed people to progress to self employment and viable businesses.

Delivering the service, Ballyhoura Development seek to proactively facilitate the change of economic outlook for long term unemployed clients, by building their capacity and including them in the entrepreneurial opportunities of their local economy. Of the 8,200 people unemployed across the Ballyhoura Development area an estimated 220 people made the transition to the BTWEA in 2010.

Ballyhoura Development deliver the service in five complementary ways:

1. Provide long term unemployed people with advice, training, mentoring, finance and continued support to start up and grow a business.
2. Develop the capacity of socio economic partnerships in the key market towns to create opportunities for enterprise, appropriate enterprise infrastructure and local support networks for those entering self employment.
3. Create enterprise growth strategies in four key sectors tourism, energy, food and community services to develop potential for future enterprise start up opportunities.
4. Support the social economy sector to provide enterprise experience and activation options in target areas and dispersed rural communities.

5. Work with local employers to assess where long term unemployed and under employed clients could provide outsourced support services.

The focus on the individual, their community and the wider economy ensure a multi faceted approach to supporting long term unemployed to successfully transit to self employment.

Delivery mechanisms are reviewed regularly and adapted to the client's needs and changes such as the economic climate, opportunities and programme frameworks.

Activities

This example demonstrates how the Rural Enterprise Service is linked to other services, the socio economic data, consultations, the delivery approach, and target clients.

In Doneraile an integrated package of interventions including a focus on enterprise is required to overcome the negative consequences for the area given the current economic situation.

Doneraile and its surrounds have high levels of disadvantage across a number of variables including unemployment, deprivation, lone parents, housing, age dependency and low education levels. Data highlights the historical high prevalence of local unemployment, the three fold increase of both males and females under 35 on the live register, a decreasing population and high outmigration of people in their 20's.

Community socio economic planning facilitated by Ballyhoura Development in 2008 was followed by sustained support to develop the capacity of a number of local groups and implementation of a variety of community projects. The Doneraile Development Association formed in February 2011 as a representative group for all groups in the village. A key focus of the group is to optimise the historical asset of Doneraile Court and Demesne to benefit a range of social and economic projects across the village.

Ballyhoura Development are working with the Doneraile Development Association intensively since February identifying needs, devising strategies and brokering resources on a number of projects to overcome the barriers to the areas long term unemployed progressing into education, training, employment and enterprise.

Lessons Learned

Consultations with unemployed people in Doneraile highlighted the limited availability of:

- Access to supports and information.
- Adult education and skills courses.
- Facilitated linkage to quality training and employment progression opportunities.
- Available space for meeting, training courses and enterprise start up.
- Transport services to access jobs in nearby towns.
- Opportunities for those with construction and farming skills.

Ballyhoura Development undertook an audit of local businesses. The audit and consultations identified that a key economic sector in Doneraile was antiques. The antique dealers collectively operate 16,000 sq ft of antique showroom and auction space making it the second largest grouping of such businesses in Ireland. Consultations with the antique business owners identified the unfulfilled opportunity for antique restorers with demand arising from the existing businesses should the right skills be available.

An opportunity to create a dedicated “Centre of Excellence” in antiques was agreed as achievable over the medium term. A steering group of local business and community people was formed to develop a proposal for training courses that would enable unemployed people to develop appropriate skills to enter the antiques sector.

Past experience was that locally based training initiatives are a successful way of supporting and progressing marginalized individuals into further education, recognised qualifications and employment. A plan was prepared for a Furniture and Antiques Restoration Local Training Initiative and submitted to FAS.

Simultaneously a plan was developed to create a furniture and antiques restoration social economy business. The social economy enterprise will enable long term unemployed people, unemployed young people, low income underemployed farmers and lone parents to become involved in employment, enterprise and develop skills. The social economy enterprise will also allow for progression of individuals from the Local Training Initiative into an enterprise environment.

The creation of the social economy enterprise is important to enable people gain skills in preparation for progression to self employment.

To further encourage enterprise creation a submission has been made to Cork County Council to examine a rates reduction as a stimulant for entrants to the antiques and restoration trade on the main street in Doneraile. It is planned that the potential utilisation of Doneraile Court and Demesne for antique restoration uses would provide increased economic and cultural synergy between the Court and the village, creating a culturally rich working environment, attractive to all.

Conclusions

Although the plan is in its infancy the following has been achieved.

1. A local training initiative is starting in October for 20 long term unemployed people.
2. Funding is being sought to create an antiques social enterprise.
3. An old convent church has been leased by the community as a training facility.
4. A multi agency plan has been developed for the future of the Court and Demense with employment and enterprise opportunities at its core.
5. The Doneraile Development Association is seeking a graduate internship to lead change.
5. Tus and RSS participants are being employed within the town on a number of projects.
6. A rates based proposal to stimulate new enterprise start ups on the main street has been developed.

CASE STUDY - BALLYHOURA RURAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Introduction

The Ballyhoura Employment Service is about activating long term unemployed and underemployed to enter employment.

There are approximately 8,200 people unemployed in the area. Young people, lower skilled workers and craft persons face long term unemployment and many in the older age groups fear that they may never work again.

Ballyhoura Development tackles long term unemployment in four ways based on feedback from clients, research into unemployment and local opportunities.

1. Develop the capacity of long term unemployed clients in target estates and dispersed rural areas through advice, appropriate training opportunities and one to one support.
2. Create local training progression routes.
3. Create local employment progression routes for long term unemployed and underemployed clients through developing employment activation opportunities with local employers and communities.
4. Develop and implement strategies to build on community resources, training and upskilling programmes and social economy employment opportunities.

The focus on the unemployed client, the employment opportunities in their community and development of employment in the wider economy ensures a multi faceted approach to supporting long term unemployed clients to progress to employment.

The complex nature of the needs of many long term unemployed clients means that for many it takes between two and four years to progress to employment. Clients need pre-training and interpersonal skill development before they are ready to participate in targeted group work, one-to-one support and community development approaches.

Activities

An example of how the Rural Employment Service works in practice will highlight how Ballyhoura Development Enterprise and Employment officers identify needs, devise appropriate responses, link long term unemployed clients to potential employers, collaborate with partner agencies to broker the necessary training supports and support clients through the transition to achieve progression.

As part of the continued support to established self employed clients under the BTWEA, Ballyhoura Development operates a number of branded promotion events at key local agriculture shows. The coordinated collective approach enables:

1. New start up businesses to promote their services cost effectively.

2. Continuation of client relationships beyond the initial support period.
3. Opportunity for the Ballyhoura Enterprise Officers to reconnect with employers, discuss business opportunities, raise awareness of employment support schemes and hear of future employment opportunities.

At the Charleville show in June 2011 an employer indicated that he had recently received new product sales contracts. A follow up meeting to see how Ballyhoura Development could support his company indicated that there would be initially up to 15 full time sales people recruited to start from November. The recruitment process had started informally but had not identified any suitable candidates locally. Further consultation with the employer highlighted that the employer was open to recruiting long term unemployed individuals should they have the right personality traits and be open to up skilling.

Lessons Learned

Ballyhoura Development:

- Supported the employer to refine his recruitment needs.
- Planned and managed a pr campaign to raise awareness.
- Undertook an audit of client skills sets available.
- Talked with clients to see if there were sufficient numbers interested in reskilling.
- Discussed and agreed with the employer FETAC modules to suit the positions available..
- Brokered a FETAC Level 5 Sales Representative Course from FAS contract training.
- Met with individual clients on a one to one basis to tailor cv's to suit sales opportunities and prepare them for the course.
- Sourced suitable venues. The village where the jobs are located has no training venue, highlighting the barriers to rural reskilling and employment.

Conclusions

A total of 26 interested candidates were identified for the course. A FETAC L 5 Sales Representative Course was delivered in Kilmallock with 14 participants. Ballyhoura Development continue to work with potential clients for the sales jobs, clients undergoing the training, the clients who did not receive a place on the course and the company to ensure progression for the course to employment. Ballyhoura Development is confident that the clients on the course will progress to employment in the local area.