

AN EVALUATION

of the

Northside Partnership/Department of Social &
Family Affairs

Preparing for Employment Programme For People with Disabilities

The Preparing for Employment Programme was funded by the Department of Social &
Family Affairs

This evaluation was undertaken by Finbar McDonnell of Hibernian Consulting,
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Acknowledgements

The Northside Partnership would like to acknowledge the contribution made by the Department of Social & Family Affairs who funded the development and implementation of this innovative pilot initiative for people with disabilities.

There are many other contributors to the success of this programme, without their commitment and support the Preparing for Employment Programme – for people with disabilities - would not have achieved its ambitious objectives and outcomes. We would therefore like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations:

- Mairead Price & Paddy Hughes – Department of Social & Family Affairs
- Miriam Magner Flynn & Allison Keating - Career Decisions Limited
- Adrienne Hayes – STEPS Programme Co-ordinator
- Jane Foreman & Jane Watson – National Training & Development Institute
- Cepta Dowling – Disability Task Force Co-ordinator – Northside Partnership
- Local Employment Service Network team & Glin Centre Jobs Club
- Northside Business Network
- The Grange Community College, Donaghmede

Finally the Partnership would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Anne Hanley who co-ordinated the programme on their behalf and to the programme participants without whom this highly innovative and creative initiative would never have achieved its full potential.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	3
Pilot Actions by Northside Partnership	3
Scope of Evaluation	5
Chapter 2 Context for Northside Partnership Pilot Actions	7
2.1 People with Disabilities and the Irish Labour Market	7
2.2 Labour Market Training for People with Disabilities	9
Chapter 3 Preparing for Employment Pilot Actions	15
3.1 Recruitment of Participants for Programme	15
3.2 The Enabled for Life Programme	16
3.3 Intensive One-to-One Mediation Programme	23
3.4 Contact with Employers	26
Chapter 4 Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations	27
4.1 Findings Arising from Research	27
4.2 Conclusions	30
4.3 Recommendations	32

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Pilot Actions by Northside Partnership

1.1.1 Context for Pilot Actions

Northside Partnership is one of 38 Area Based Partnerships operating in Ireland under the Local Development and Social Inclusion Programme, overseen by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. A key objective of Area Based Partnerships is 'to improve the prospect of accessing suitable and gainful employment and to counter social exclusion of particular target groups'. Ten specific target groups are listed, including people with disabilities. Northside Partnership's strategic plan for 2000-2006 noted that there were over 2,600 people with disabilities in its catchment area.

The Partnership's objective to improve the labour market prospects of people with disabilities fits with EU labour market objectives, where guidelines have included a section on equal opportunities for people with disabilities since 1998. An EU Council decision of July 2003 on employment policy guidelines specifies that member states 'will foster the integration of people facing particular difficulties in the labour market, such as ... people with disabilities ... by developing their employability, increasing job opportunities and preventing all forms of discrimination against them'. In addition, the EU Council notes that 'access to the labour market is a major priority with respect to people with disabilities who are estimated to represent some 37mn people in the European Union, many of whom have the ability and the desire to work'.

These objectives are shared at national level and the National Employment Action Plan for 2003-2005 reaffirms the goal of 'integrating people with disabilities into the open labour market'. It states that a key way in which this goal will be pursued is through facilitating the progression of people with disabilities into sustainable employment through the development of their skills.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs has an ongoing involvement with many people with disabilities through its role in disbursing social welfare payments. It also has responsibility under the Employment and Human Resources Development programme of the National Development Plan for a measure entitled 'Employment Support Services'. This provides funds for the Department to provide advice and support services to unemployed people. In 2002 and 2003, the Department used these funds to run pilot training programmes (in Cork and Donegal) for people with disabilities and it was

interested, in 2003, in organising a further pilot programme through an Area Based Partnership.

As part of its ongoing work to support people with disabilities, Northside Partnership's Local Employment Service Network submitted a proposal to the Department of Social and Family Affairs in Spring 2003 to pilot the delivery of more intensive training and support for people in receipt of a disability payment. The proposal was successful and funding of €79,450 was provided to Northside Partnership in Autumn 2003 to deliver the training and supports. This was added to funding (in cash and in kind) of €30,850 provided by Northside Partnership, giving a total cost for the pilot actions of €110,300.

1.1.2 Overview of Pilot Actions

Under the common heading of 'Preparing for Employment', two different strands of training were delivered by Northside Partnership:

In the first, the training was largely group based, with participants going through the 12 week 'Enabled for Life' programme. This was delivered by Career Options Ltd., a private sector training company that had developed the programme, and involved group training five mornings a week. These sessions were supplemented by a one-to-one session with the trainer who delivered the course (who was a psychologist) for one hour each week. Two of these programmes, each of which started with 15 participants, were delivered during the period. When the groups finished their 12-week programmes, they moved to working with local LES mediators, from whom they received practical support in seeking progression options.

The second strand of 'Preparing for Employment' worked with a further 15 participants. This work was one-to-one based and each participant worked with an assigned LES mediator over a period of time. To prepare for this one-to-one work, participants went through seven half-day training modules on personal development topics, part of the STEPS programme (commonly used in local development). These sessions were delivered by an experienced trainer.

More detail on the pilot programmes is provided in Chapter 3.

The timeframe for delivery of the programme is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Broad Timeframe for 'Preparing for Employment' Programme	
Time Period	Work Undertaken
October/November 2003	Preparation for training courses and recruitment of participants
10 th November 2003 to 20 th February 2004	Delivery of first 'Enabled for Life' programme (not including subsequent work with LES mediators)
23 rd February 2004 to 28 th May 2004	Delivery of second 'Enabled for Life' programme (not including subsequent work with LES mediators)

15 th March 2004 to 28 th May 2004	Delivery of one-to-one interventions involving 15 people with LES mediators
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1.2 Scope of Evaluation

1.2.1 Objectives of Evaluation

This evaluation has a number of objectives:

- to record the work undertaken under the 'Preparing for Employment' programme;
- to record the completion and (where available) progression rates of participants, and the views of different stakeholders involved in the training;
- to place, and comment on, the pilots in a wider policy context.

1.2.2 Evaluation Method

Undertaking the evaluation involved two modules of work:

- Reviewing documentation and data relating to the training programmes
- Interviewing the different stakeholders in the programmes.

As regards documentation, Northside Partnership provided the Evaluator with a copy of the original proposal submitted to the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the course outlines provided by the trainers, progress reports made by the trainers and the minutes of the meetings of the Steering Group overseeing the two strands of the 'Preparing for Employment' programme.

Data on participants was available up to early-September 2004. This allowed progression data to be obtained six months after completion of the first 'Enabled for Life' course, three months after completion of the second 'Enabled for Life' course and three months after the one-to-one interventions. While this data provides useful indications of how the participants were progressing, it would be interesting to track the participants over an even longer period, and (in order to draw policy conclusions) for a larger sample. Such data would give further insights into the longer-term impacts of the training and supports provided.

Interviews were undertaken with the following people:

- Ms. Fiona Nolan, Employment Project and Enterprise Development Manager, Northside Partnership
- Ms. Anne Hanley, Northside Partnership, Programme Co-ordinator¹
- Ms. Cepta Dowling, Co-ordinator, Northside Partnership Disability Employment Task Force
- Ms. Allison Keating, Career Decisions Ltd., Deliverer of 12-week courses

¹ Anne Hanley also provided data and documentation to the Evaluator and was of considerable assistance in supporting the practical arrangements for the Evaluation.

- Ms. Adrienne Hayes, Trainer, Deliverer of STEPS programme
- Ms. Moira Burke and Ms. Helen Smartt, Local LES Network Mediators
- Ms. Jane Watson, Manager, National Training and Development Institute (NTDI), Coolock/Swords Area
- Mr. Paddy Hughes, Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Yvonne, Sean and Stephen, Trainees (met individually – full names not given for confidentiality reasons)

The focus of the Evaluation is on viewing the programme from a public policy/labour market perspective, i.e. it does not evaluate the psychology-related aspects of the interventions.

1.2.3 Structure of Report

The Evaluation has three further chapters:

- Chapter 2 discusses the national situation as regards people with disabilities and the labour market and the existing provision of training for this target group;
- Chapter 3 reviews the 'Preparing for Employment' pilot programme. After describing the recruitment of participants to the programme, it reviews the group-based and one-to-one pilot parts of the programme in turn, and briefly describes elements of interaction with employers;
- Chapter 4 brings together the findings of Chapters 2 and 3, draws some conclusions and makes recommendations for the future.

Chapter 2

Context for Northside Partnership Pilot Actions

2.1 People with Disabilities and the Irish Labour Market

2.1.1 People with Disabilities in Ireland

Census 2002 (undertaken in April 2002) contained a section on disability for the first time. It showed that 323,700 people in Ireland have a disability. Given a total 2002 population of 3.92mn people, this means that 8.3% of people consider themselves to have a disability. These 323,700 people classified their disabilities in the following way (following the questions in the Census).

Type of Disability	Number of People Affected
Blindness, deafness or a severe vision or hearing impairment	78,320
A condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities	175,830
Difficulty in learning, remembering or concentrating	106,026
Difficulty in dressing, bathing or getting around inside the home	86,245
Difficulty in going outside the home alone	118,142
Difficulty in working at a job or business	181,270
Note: The total number of disabilities is greater than the number of people with disabilities as people could answer in more than one category.	
Source: Census 2002, Volume 10, Table 4A	

These numbers refer to the population as a whole. However, the proportion of people stating that they have one or more disabilities increases with age. For example:

- Of those aged 15, some 2.8% of people say they have a disability;
- Of people aged 30, 4.2% say they have a disability;
- Of people aged 40, 6% say they have a disability;
- Of people aged 50, 9% say they have a disability;
- Of people aged 64, 17.2% say they have a disability.

For people in the potential working population (i.e. aged 15-64), their chance of having a disability is therefore strongly correlated with age.

2.1.2 Labour Force Participation

Based on data from Census 2002², Figure 1 shows the proportion of Irish people with disabilities and the proportion of the population as a whole in the labour force (i.e. either in paid employment or actively looking for paid employment).

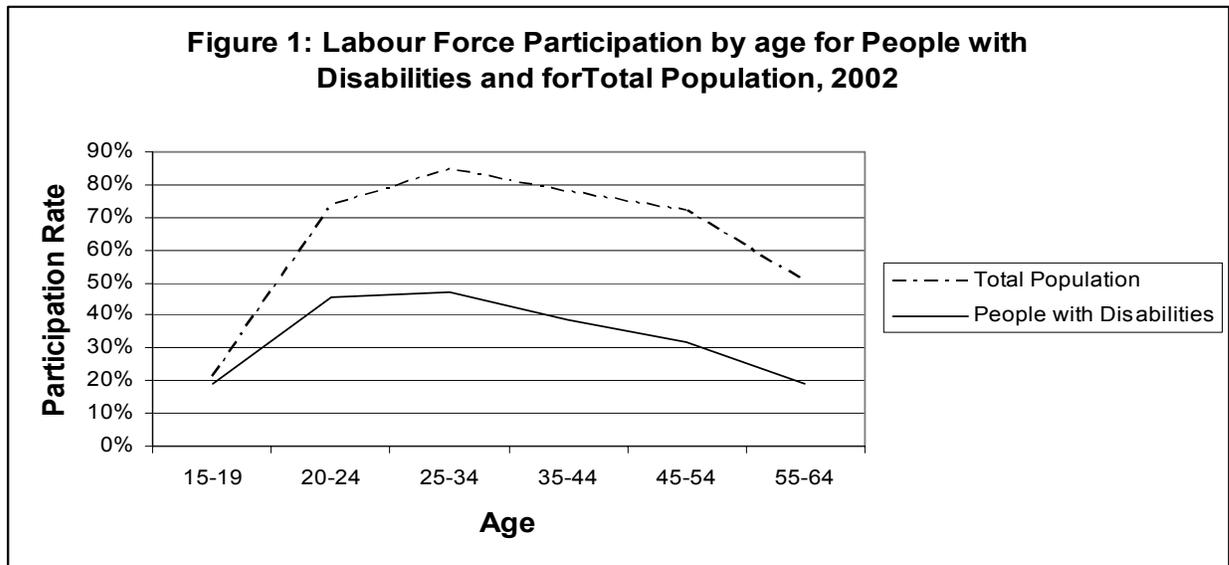


Figure 1 shows a large difference in labour force participation in Ireland between people who have a disability and people who do not have a disability. Aggregating across the different age cohorts shown, the average labour force participation rate for people with disabilities is 32% (i.e. under one-third), whereas that for the total population is 67% (i.e. just over two-thirds).

The relative rates of labour force participation by gender are shown in Figure 2 (based on Volume 10 of the census results, Tables 9B and 9C).

² Volume 10, Table 9A.

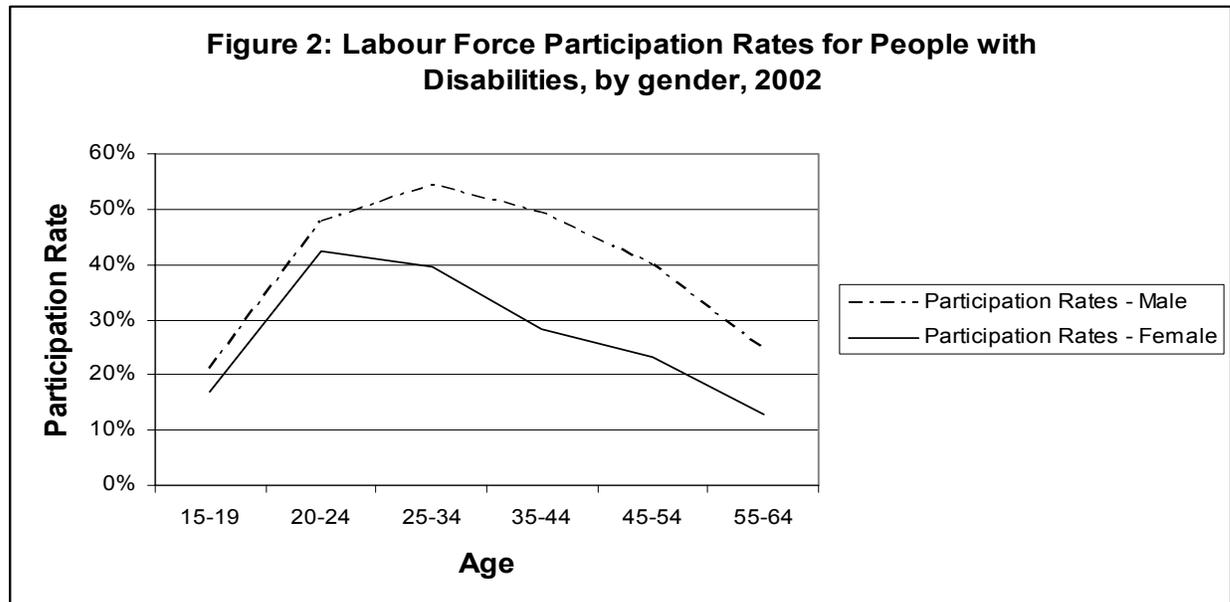


Figure 2 shows that, for all age cohorts, the labour force participation rates for males with disabilities are higher than the labour force participation rates for females with disabilities.

Census 2002 also provides data on the unemployment rates of those in the labour force. It shows that, for the population as a whole, the unemployment rate is 5.1% but, for people with disabilities, the rate is over twice as high, at 10.3%³.

As regards work patterns, data from Census 2002 shows that the average number of hours worked per week across the total population is 38, but that this falls to 34.3 for people with disabilities⁴.

2.2 Labour Market Training for People with Disabilities

2.2.1 Perspective of the National Disability Authority

In January 2004, the National Disability Authority published a comprehensive report on the further education, employment services and training services for people with disabilities in Ireland⁵. This report acknowledges that progress has been made in relation to employment and training services for people with disabilities in recent years. It notes the 'mainstreaming' of most training provision into FÁS and praises the decision to pay the same training allowances to trainees with disabilities as are available to other trainees.

³ Census 2002, Volume 5, Table 29 and Volume 10, Table 14A.

⁴ Census 2002, Volume 5, Table 32 and Volume 10, Table 14A

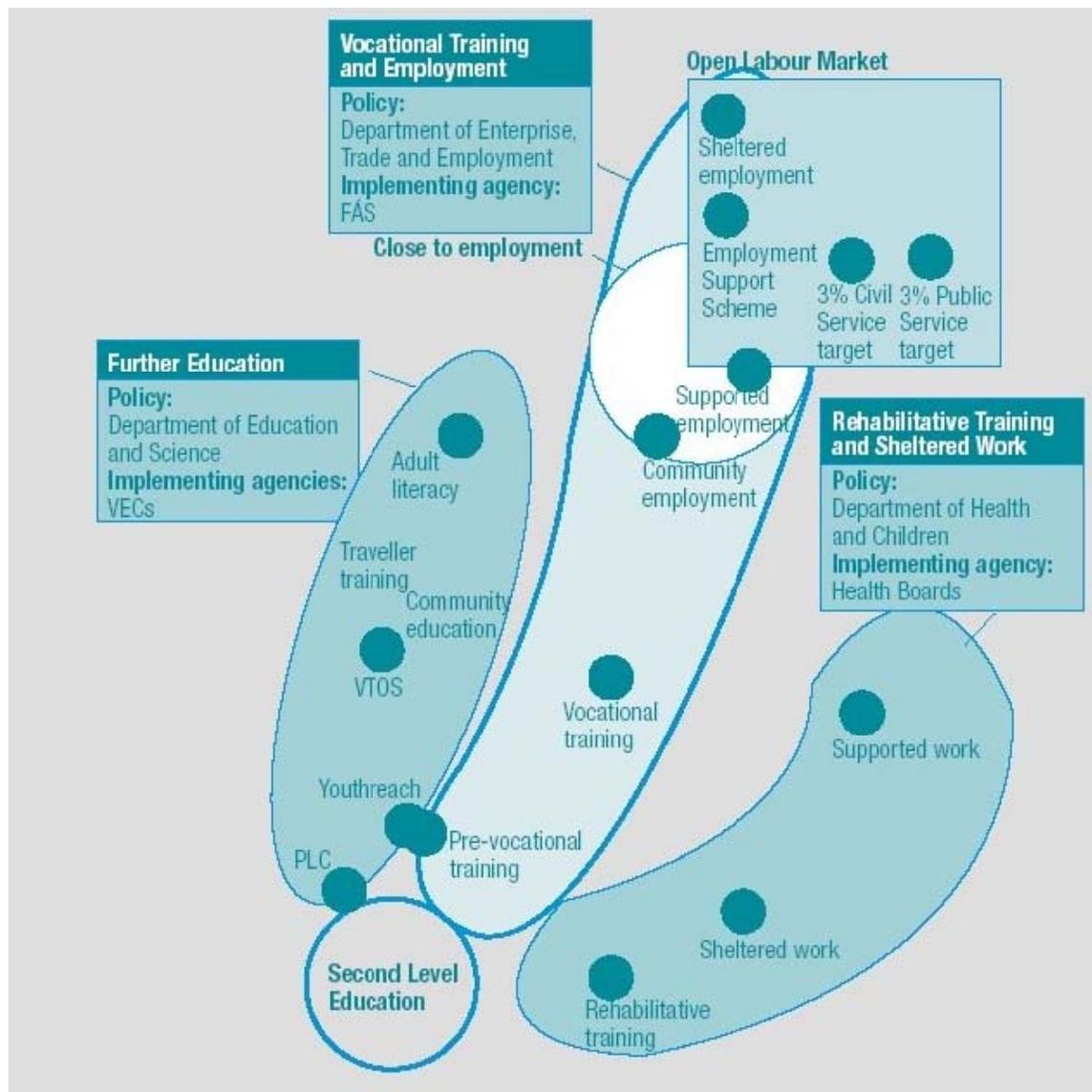
⁵ This report, 'Towards Best Practice in the Provision of Further Education, Employment and Training Services for People with Disabilities in Ireland, is available at www.nda.ie

The report describes the main supports for people with disability in relation to education and training and these are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Key Supports for People with Disabilities, categorised by Lead Government Department	
<p><i>Department of Education and Science</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme (VTOS) • Youthreach • Senior Traveller Training Centres • Post Leaving Certificate Courses • Adult Literacy • Adult and Community Education Programmes • Back to Education Initiative 	<p><i>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/FÁS</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Employment • Social Economy Programme • Employment Support Scheme • Supported Employment Programme • Sheltered Employment • FÁS Grant Schemes (e.g. job interview interpreters, workplace adaptation etc.) • FÁS pre-vocational/foundation and vocational training (e.g. apprenticeships, traineeships etc.) • (Employment targets for the public sector)
<p><i>Department of Health and Children</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitative training • Sheltered Work 	<p><i>Department of Social and Family Affairs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Disregard (for employment considered rehabilitative) • Back to Work, Back to Enterprise and Back to Education Allowances
<p>Source: Derived from NDA (2004), Towards Best Practice in the Provision of Further Education, Employment and Training Services for People with Disabilities in Ireland, Chapter 3</p>	

The NDA report classifies the different interventions in relation to their proximity to (or distance from) the open labour market. This classification is presented graphically as Figure 1 of the NDA report, which is reproduced below. It shows both the range of interventions that exist and possible pathways for people towards the open labour market.

Figure 3: Classification of Employment Supports for People with Disabilities by Distance from Labour Market



Following a review of the different Irish supports, the NDA draws conclusions that may be relevant to Northside Partnership's 'Preparing for Employment' pilot actions:

- Departments and services do not take account of each other to a sufficient extent, which results in a lack of coherence and planning. Indeed, 'though there have been some improvements in the mainstreaming of service provision to people with disabilities, this has been at the expense of greater fragmentation of responsibility for policy development and service delivery'. This fragmentation has led to 'communication gaps between the main implementing agencies, with adverse consequences for people with disabilities'. Also, 'linkages between the three implementing agencies, Health Boards, FÁS and the VECs, are not

- sufficiently developed to allow people with disabilities to make a smooth transition from one sector to another’.
- While there have been a number of studies of the mainstreaming policy in Ireland in recent years, ‘none of these studies has taken into account a more holistic approach, which focuses on the individual pathways for people with disabilities’.
 - ‘The results of interviews with key stakeholders would suggest that the main implementing agencies do not carry out detailed needs assessments on the vocational needs of people with disabilities for the majority of their service provision. This raises issues in relation to the appropriateness of existing service referrals and the adequacy of the monitoring of service provision. Comprehensive needs assessment must be introduced, delivered as a right ...’
 - There is a lack of data on the impact of the different supports, particularly as regards the *progression* of people that pass through the different education or training supports.

2.2.2 FÁS Supported Employment Programme

Of the supports listed in Table 3, one that would appear to have some similarities to Northside Partnership’s ‘Preparing for Employment’ programme is the FÁS Supported Employment Programme, implemented in areas around Ireland by local consortia (e.g. of Area Partnership Companies) working with FÁS. The NDA report says that this programme was launched in 2000 and has twice been extended (as a pilot). It ‘provides people with disabilities with the support of a job coach whose role it is to assess their career aspirations and match these with suitable job opportunities in the open labour market’.

The programme is different to Northside Partnership’s ‘Preparing for Employment’ programme in that the FÁS programme assumes that the participants are job-ready, and designs a programme around this. By contrast, the Northside Partnership pilots made judgements as to who was job-ready, who was training/education ready and who was neither at the *end* of the career orientation process. (The Supported Employment Programme could therefore potentially be a progression option for people considered ‘job ready’ at the end of programmes such as those piloted under the ‘Preparing for Employment’ programme.)

An evaluation of the Supported Employment Programme was undertaken in 2002⁶. This divides the supports provided into four stages.

⁶ This evaluation is available at the FÁS website – www.fas.ie – see under Supported Employment Programme in the A to Z subject index

Table 4: Stages in Supported Employment Programme	
Stage 1: Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of vocational profile by Job Coach • Discussion with participant as to preferred work • Assessment of skills • (With permission) contact with others (e.g. family of participant) to get opinions on skills/desired work
Stage 2: Work Trials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangement of two-week work placement (unpaid) if participant is interested in a sector but has no experience
Stage 3: Job Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Coach seeks work placement using FÁS, LES contacts as well as newspaper advertisements, cold calling etc. • Support with CV and interview preparation • Job Coach may also assist in induction training and in provision of advice to employer
Stage 4: Job Retention and Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular contact by Job Coach with participant during first few weeks of work • Assistance on paper work to be completed • On-call service for employers in case of queries or issues arising
Source: FÁS (2002), Evaluation of Supported Employment Programme, Chapter 5	

As regards participants in the FÁS Supported Employment programme, the evaluation shows that, between its launch in 2000 and June 2002:

- some 1,918 people with disabilities participated in the pilot programme, with 60% between the ages of 18 and 34;
- people with a learning disability accounted for 47% of participants, people with mental health difficulties for 24%, people with physical disabilities for 19%, people with sensory disabilities for 6%, with 4% of people having hidden disabilities;
- at the time of registration, some 36% of participants were unemployed, 40% were in vocational or rehabilitative training and the remaining 24% were in employment or in sheltered workshops;
- the programme is targeted at people with low to medium support needs.

Following completion of the Supported Employment Programme;

- some 20% of participants left the Programme prior to the point at which placements are made;
- some 40% of participants were placed in employment;
- the average number of hours worked per week by those placed in employment was 15.9;

- almost all of those progressing to employment (96%) retained their state benefits (87% maintained a disability benefit) and 38% were engaged in other state sponsored activities such as sheltered workshops or day activity centres;
- the average hourly wage of those placed in employment was between 5% and 10% above the level of the minimum wage;
- some 70% of jobs came from two broad sectors – retail/wholesale/hotel/catering (40%) and 'other services', including tourism and personal services (30%)
- some 22% of those progressing to employment had left the employment to which they had progressed by the time the evaluation was undertaken.

Employers surveyed as part of the evaluation reported a high degree of satisfaction with the people employed and with the ongoing support provided by the Job Coaches.

2.2.3 NTDI Fresh Start Programme

The National Training and Development Institute (NTDI) is the largest non-governmental training organisation in Ireland. It is a national, community-based, not for profit organisation that provides training (and other supports) to people with disabilities and others who are distant from the labour market. Of the 46 courses offered by the NTDI in 2004, a course called *Fresh Start* is the one most similar to Northside Partnership's 'Preparing for Employment' pilots.

Fresh Start provides participants with the opportunity for vocational/occupational exploration and personal development. It lasts for six months (30 hours per week) and leads to NCVA certification at foundation level. In the Swords/Coolock area, *Fresh Start* (funded by FÁS) is aimed mainly at people with mental health issues. Each participant develops an individual action plan over the course of the programme and the NTDI estimates that some 50% of participants progress to employment and a further 15% to 20% progress to further training or education.

Chapter 3

'Preparing for Employment' Pilot Actions

3.1 Recruitment of Participants for Programme

The 'Preparing for Employment' programme was comprised of the two group-based ('Enabled for Life') programmes (for 30 people) and the intensive one-to-one LES mediation work (for 15 people). The process of recruiting people to fill these places took place in October and November 2003.

The aim was to target people in receipt of disability assistance from the Department of Social and Family Affairs who were living in the Northside Partnership catchment area. The course was not explicitly described as for people with disabilities as some people in receipt of a disability payment might see themselves as having an illness or an injury rather than being disabled.

A number of means were employed to identify and contact people:

- With the co-operation of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, a list of people in the area in receipt of Disability Allowance was drawn up and a letter sent by the Department⁷ to 207 people identified;
- An advertisement was placed in the Northside People newspaper;
- Local LES mediators were briefed on the programme and asked to draw it to the attention of their clients with a disability;
- Local training centres, including the NTDI centre, and disability groups were informed of the upcoming programmes.

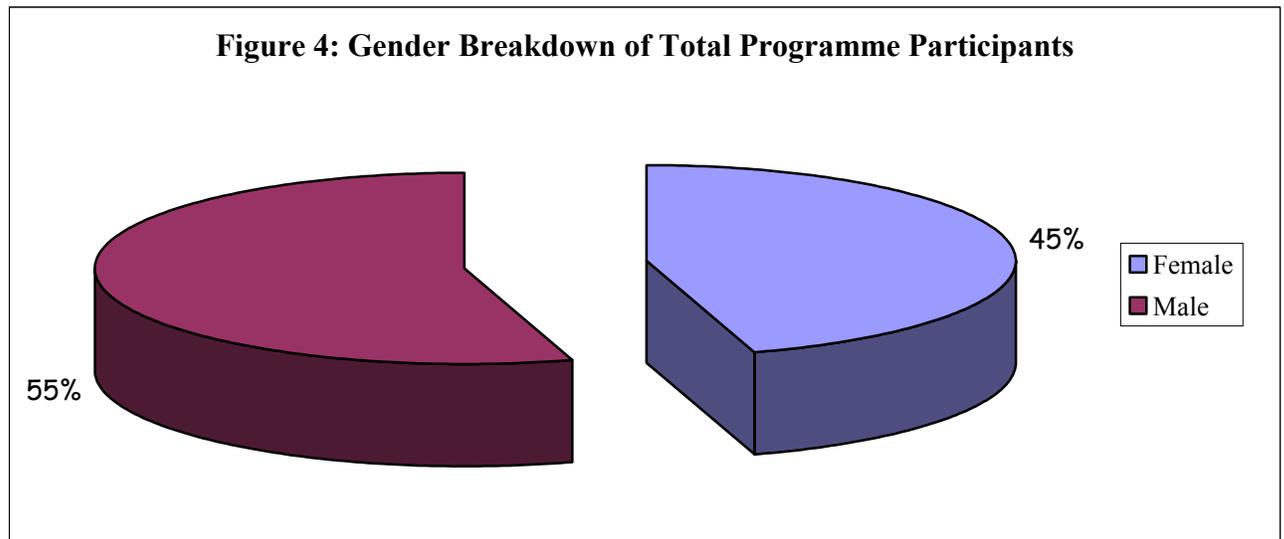
People contacting Northside Partnership following these efforts were invited to an Information Session held in early-November 2003. Some 39 potential participants attended this session and many of these progressed to the programme. Some people who did not attend the session had one-to-one discussions with Northside Partnership and also progressed to the programme.

A key issue for potential participants at the Information Session was the status of their disability payments from the Department of Social and Family Affairs if they participated in a programme. They were reassured that they would continue to receive their payments (generally worth €134.80 per week) while on the programmes and if, at the end of the programme, they did not progress to employment, their benefits would not be affected.

⁷ For confidentiality reasons, the Department of Social and Family Affairs managed this process and this list of names was not provided to Northside Partnership.

The recruitment process indicates that there is a sub-section of those people in receipt of disability payments that is interested in gaining full-time or part-time employment.

Both women and men in receipt of disability payments were interested in the 'Preparing for Employment' programme. Of 45 people recruited to the programme, 41 participated in the pilot initiatives, of which 23 were men and 19 were women.



As well as recruiting participants, a further significant challenge was to find a premises where the 'Preparing for Employment' programmes could take place. It took some time to find a premises that was both accessible for people with disabilities and within the project's budget but these conditions were met by Grange Community College in Donaghmede.

3.2 The Enabled for Life Programme

3.2.1 Content of Enabled for Life Programme

For this part of its 'Preparing for Employment' programme, Northside Partnership wrote to a number of training providers to ask them for proposals to deliver 'an intensive training and support programme' for people with disabilities. The tender documentation stated: 'The aim of the programme is to provide participants with the confidence and skills required to assist them in identifying appropriate career options, further education/training needs and/or progression into sustainable employment'.

Career Decisions Ltd. was chosen to deliver the two Enabled for Life training programmes. This company had previously delivered similar pilots for the Department of Social and Family Affairs in Cork and Donegal, and also had experience of working with

other disadvantaged target groups to support re-entry into the labour market. 'Enabled for Life' is the name used by the company for its training programme for people with disabilities.

The Enabled for Life programme, as used with Northside Partnership had five modules:

1. Marketing and Recruitment. This included support to Northside Partnership in providing information to potential participants and meeting potential participants on a one-to-one basis in advance of the programme to help them decide whether the programme was for them.
2. Career Decision Making System. This is 'the cornerstone of the model as it is here that participants identify the career to which they are best suited'. This work itself has four sub-steps entitled:
 - 'Who am I?', where participants identify and examine their motivated skills, their interests, their personality and their values;
 - 'Where am I now?', where participants examine their values to discover their achievements (what worked and what did not) and the lessons learned along the way;
 - 'What do I want?', where participants identify suitable occupations that use their motivated skills, suit their personality, meet their interests and satisfy their values. In the Northside Partnership pilot, this involved organising an 'Opportunity Fair', where participants received information on a range of possible careers; and
 - 'How can I get what I want?', where participants complete a career development plan to outline the steps to achieve what they want.
3. Coping with Change. This encourages participants to be open to change and to learn strategies to help them to cope with change. This module is tailored to the kinds of change that participants can expect on taking up employment.
4. Life Skills. As appropriate, Modules 2 and 3 are supplemented with training around other skill areas. Different skills listed in the Career Decisions training proposal relate to self-esteem, self-talk, self-empowerment, communications, behaviour skills, social skills, developing a positive mental attitude and maintaining health and welfare.
5. Job Hunting and Employability Programme. This moved the participants into more practical steps related to progression to employment. The six steps covered were:
 - Managing the smooth transition to the workplace;
 - Defining your unique selling points;
 - Creating a CV and cover letter that sells;
 - Sourcing and targeting suitable employers;
 - Winning the interview; and
 - Retaining the job.

The Enabled for Life programme is normally delivered over an 18-week period but, given the available budgets, the two programmes delivered on the Northside Partnership's 'Preparing for Employment' programme were each delivered over a 12-week period. The

modules are broadly delivered sequentially (as listed above), although Module 4 (Life Skills) is used to supplement Modules 2 and 3 as appropriate.

In terms of fitting Enabled for Life on the 'landscape' of employment supports set out in Figure 3 (as prepared by the NDA), the programme contains elements of further education, rehabilitative training and focused vocational training. As such, it does not fall neatly under one category. In fact, while containing elements of each, its real goal is to help participants identify precisely where they are as regards the open jobs market, where they would like to end up, and what trajectory is therefore appropriate. In this objective, it combines both elements of employment support and a dimension of needs assessment, which the NDA had concluded is generally absent before people with disabilities engage with training programmes offered by mainstream providers.

A distinctive feature of the Enabled for Life programme (as opposed to the FÁS/NTDI courses on career decision making for people with disabilities) is that it is delivered by a fully qualified psychologist. Given its mix of personal and work skills development, and one-to-one counselling, this gives the programme the possibility of dealing with the 'holistic' development of the person towards employment.

The course was delivered through five three-hour morning sessions for each of the 12 weeks. Each participant also had a one-to-one one-hour afternoon session each week with the trainer/psychologist to review progress and discuss any other issues arising from the programme.

3.2.2 Operation of Enabled for Life Programmes

The two Enabled for Life programmes ran in the Grange Community College in Donaghmede from:

- 10th November 2003 to 20th February 2004;
- 23rd February 2004 to 28th May 2004.

One of the issues that arose from the programmes, and particularly from the one-to-one mediation/counselling sessions, was that many of the participants had other personal or psychological issues to address, in addition to the disability they presented at the outset. In particular, a number of instances of childhood abuse experienced by participants emerged, something which had not been anticipated by Northside Partnership. Where such issues arose, participants were referred to suitable counselling services after completion of the programme.

The summary report on the first Enabled for Life programme, prepared by Career Decisions Ltd. stated: 'The majority of the group have multiple special needs. Most of the group have very low self-esteem/confidence levels and suffer from depression'. However, 'Each participant has benefited enormously from the career, personal, development workshops and personal coaching over the 12 weeks. It is also noteworthy that most of the participants are interested in progressing into employment'.

The participants from the first Enabled for Life programme that were perceived as job ready at the end of the programme (see next section) spent six half-day sessions with the Northside Partnership Jobs Club at the end of the programme. They then progressed to work with the LES mediators (to whom they had been assigned, and with whom they had had initial meetings before the Enabled for Work programme finished). The second set of participants progressed directly to working with the LES mediators.

The work with the Job Club covered practical topics such as work skills, CV preparation, telephone and interview techniques and setting goals. The interaction with the LES mediators involved an initial meeting and then subsequent meetings every 2/3 weeks, or when required. The LES mediators interviewed for this Evaluation said that, at that point, the participants were treated like other LES clients working with a mediator.

3.2.3 Completion Rates and Progression Data

As regards completion of the Enabled for Life programmes, some 13 of the 15 participants completed each of the two Enabled for Life programmes.

Progression of People from First Enabled for Life Programme

Of the 15 participants on the first Enabled for Life programme, the view of the Career Decisions Ltd. trainer on completion of the programme was that:

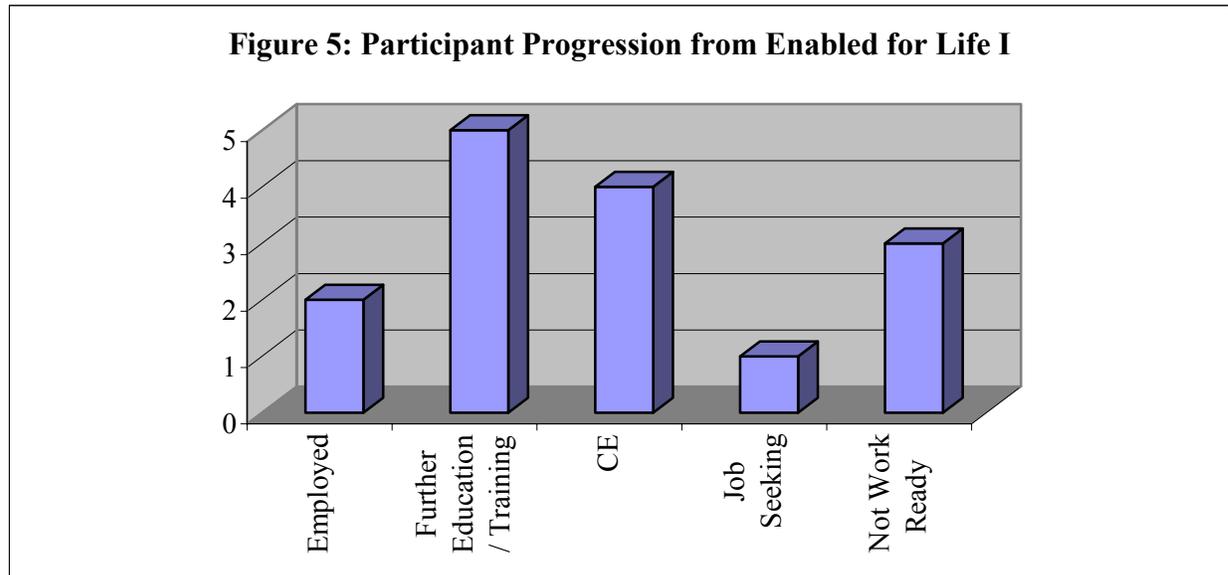
- Six of the 15 were employment-ready;
- Five of the 15 were training and education ready;
- Four of the 15 had severe special needs and required specialised support for progression.

Follow-up by Northside Partnership in early-September 2004 provided data on where the participants from the first course were six months after completing the programme. Of the 15 people who started the course:

- One person had progressed to a job in Tesco;
- One person had received work experience with Dublin Bus and was working fulltime as an attendant in a local petrol station;
- Five people had progressed to further training – one had completed a Fáilte Ireland bar course and has progressed onto a FIT PC maintenance course; two were undertaking literacy training (one of whom finished a welding course previously not completed); one was doing JAWS (software for visually impaired people) training; one was undertaking an NTDI course in retail work
- Four people attained CE positions: one attained a CE Gardening / Maintenance position; one attained a CE position with Speedpak, a non-profit manufacturing and packaging facility that offers work experience and training to long-term unemployed clients of Northside Partnership; and two other people (who had not completed the full 12 weeks of the programme) were on CE programmes;
- One person was actively seeking jobs or entry to vocational training, i.e. undertaking interviews, submitting applications etc.

- Three people had decided either that they did not want to move into employment or did not want to move into training at this time (e.g. were concentrating on a process of counselling).

The breakdown of progression is shown in Figure 5.



In seeking information on progression in September 2004, Northside Partnership asked participants how long they had been on Disability Assistance before this programme:

- Three people had been on DA for 1-3 years;
- Four people had been on DA for 4-6 years;
- One person had been on DA for 7-10 years;
- One person had been on DA for 10-15 years;
- One person had been on DA for over 15 years;
- Precise information was not available for five people.

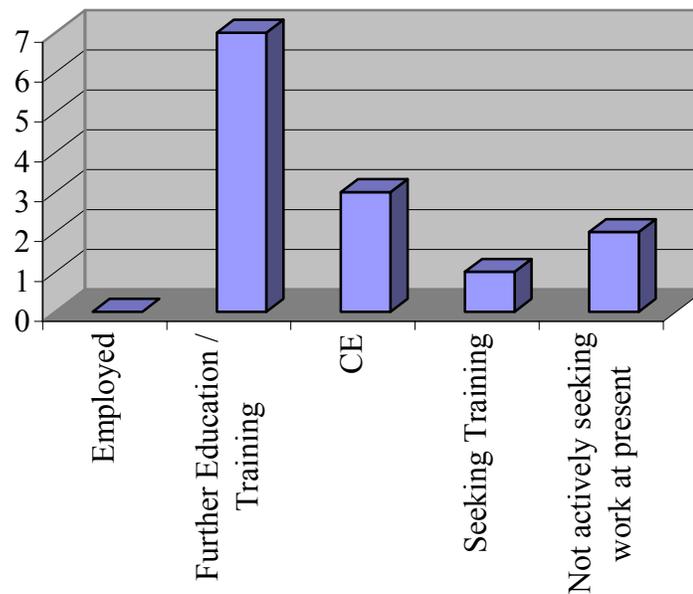
Progression of People from Second Enabled for Life Programme

Of the 13 people who finished the second programme, the following information on their status was collected in early-September 2004:

- Seven people were on training or education programmes – one with NTDI; one doing an interior design course in Rosary College; one in Coláiste Dhulaigh attending a computer course; one on a FIT (Fastrack to Information Technology) programme; one doing literacy training; one attending a Fás childcare programme and one attending Plunkett College's Access programme;
- A further three people were on CE programmes;
- One person was in an interview processes for access to Northside Partnership's Labour Integration Programme (LIP), which supports ex-drug users;
- Two people were not actively looking for training or education at that time.

The progression of the participants from the second Enabled for Life programme is shown visually in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Participant Progression from Enabled for Life II



In relation to the time periods that this group had been on Disability Allowance:

- Four people had been receiving DA for 1-3 years;
- Three people had been receiving DA for 4-6 years;
- One person was receiving DA for 7-10 years;
- One person was receiving DA for 10-15 years;
- Two people had not been receiving a disability payment;
- Information was not available for two people.

3.2.4 Views of Stakeholders

Points made by the trainer who delivered the Enabled for Life programmes were:

- The programme is not specifically designed for people with disabilities but is for any person interested in career change and has been used in a range of other contexts. She felt that this was a good feature of the programme – i.e. it does not simplify the choices required by participants but does provide extra supports if required by people with disabilities;

- As a facilitator on the course, her job is not to ensure change occurs but to act as a catalyst for people to change, if they wish to change;
- She said that many of the changes that occur on the course can be 'transformational' for people's lives, not just their careers;
- She felt the combination of the different aspects of the programme, under the guidance of a psychologist, offered the opportunity for a 'holistic' approach, and for significant change in people's lives. Often, this may involve changes to fundamental attitudes that are not directly related to work, but which may constitute 'invisible' barriers to people progressing to work. Such wider issues tend to emerge from the process of thinking through one's career, values etc.;
- She said that people become noticeably more confident in themselves over the period of the programme;
- Enabled for Life is a programme that challenges the participants – to achieve progress, participants must take up some of these challenges;
- While the aim of the programme is to support people, a related task is to ensure people are realistic about their potential careers;
- The operation of the course in 12 weeks instead of the usual 18 meant that the time was 'tight' and, if possible, she said an 18 week period (or even 21-24 weeks) would be optimal;
- The 'handover' to the LES mediators at the end of the programme is an important point as most participants are very enthusiastic at this point and want to make changes in their lives/careers. She said that it is important the LES mediators are well informed about the different disabilities, and are enthusiastic and ready to support people in these changes. If people do not progress, there is a danger that some people can slip back into pre-programme routines.

The three participants (across the two Enabled for Life programmes) met by the Evaluator were enthusiastic about it. They liked the psychology-based materials and all three felt their motivation had increased as a result of the programme. The participants felt the one-to-one sessions were very useful and praised the trainer for her commitment to the programme and to them individually.

The views of these participants were reflected in evaluation questionnaires completed by participants for Northside Partnership on completing the programmes. Of 12 completed questionnaires at the end of the first programme:

- Nine described the course as 'excellent' and three as 'very good'
- All 12 said they were happy with the course content
- These favourable responses were backed up in answers to open questions with positive comments on how the course had helped people to progress

Other informants for this evaluation were less directly involved in the Enabled for Life programmes but generally had very positive opinions on it. In most cases, this was based on knowing one or more individuals who had participated in the programme, and for whom the programme appeared to have been very beneficial.

While being positive about the programme, an issue raised by two people was whether it was best to have the inter-linking of people's wider life issues (as emerged largely through the one-to-one sessions) and the more practical career development on the same programme. Contrasting with the arguments that this allows for a person's holistic development and that such issues arise naturally in a programme on career options was the view that the two different roles of the trainer may become blurred in participants' minds. This could lead to personal issues being raised during the more vocational aspects of the course. The question was also asked as to whether an Area Partnership Company should set itself up to have any involvement with people's personal or psychological needs – i.e. is a natural instinct to help people leading the Partnership into areas it would be best leaving to others to address?

3.3 Intensive One-to-One Mediation Programme

3.3.1 Content and Operation of STEPS Programme

Before moving into the process of intensive one-to-one mediation, participants in this part of the 'Preparing for Employment' programme undertook a number of personal development modules, based on the STEPS Programme. This programme enables people 'to become independent, self-directed and fully accountable' and contains 12 modules:

- Unit 1 – Breaking Barriers
- Unit 2 – Search for the Truth
- Unit 3 – Thought Processes
- Unit 4 – Perception and Beliefs
- Unit 5 – Self Talk
- Unit 6 – Self Esteem
- Unit 7 – Comfort Zones
- Unit 8 – What do you think about?
- Unit 9 – Goal Setting
- Unit 10 – Motivation
- Unit 11 – Affirmations
- Unit 12 – Staying on Track

STEPS is already used to support people with disabilities into employment as part of the approach of the Dublin 12 LES Network and as part of an ongoing course in Greendale Community College in Tallaght. It was previously used by Northside Partnership in relation to other target groups, e.g. with a group of long-term unemployed people being supported to gain employment in a new TESCO store.

The STEPS Programme was delivered as part of Northside Partnership's 'Preparing for Employment' programme over six half-day sessions, with a seventh session a few weeks later, as a kind of revision session. The six sessions were delivered on consecutive days in February 2004 in Grange Community College in Donaghmede.

3.3.2 One-to-One Mediation Work with LES Mediators

Of 14 people chosen to participate in the STEPS programme, two did not turn up for the first session. Given the fact that the programme was running over a short period of time, it was too late at that point to recruit new participants for the programme.

Of the 12 people who started the programme, 10 completed all modules and stayed to the end of the programme. Two people did not complete the programme due to illness.

Of these 10 people, the trainer considered that one was not ready to progress to employment or further training. The remaining nine people were assigned an LES mediator work with from early-March 2004.

The work of the LES mediators covered many of the career-related modules of the group-based work, e.g. working with people on their individual strengths and weaknesses; their previous training and skills; their interests etc. The interaction was less intensive than the group-based work in that it usually involved one meeting every week or fortnight (depending on the client), but was more practically focused on the direct progression options.

The work drew on the different elements of support offered by Northside Partnership's LES Network:

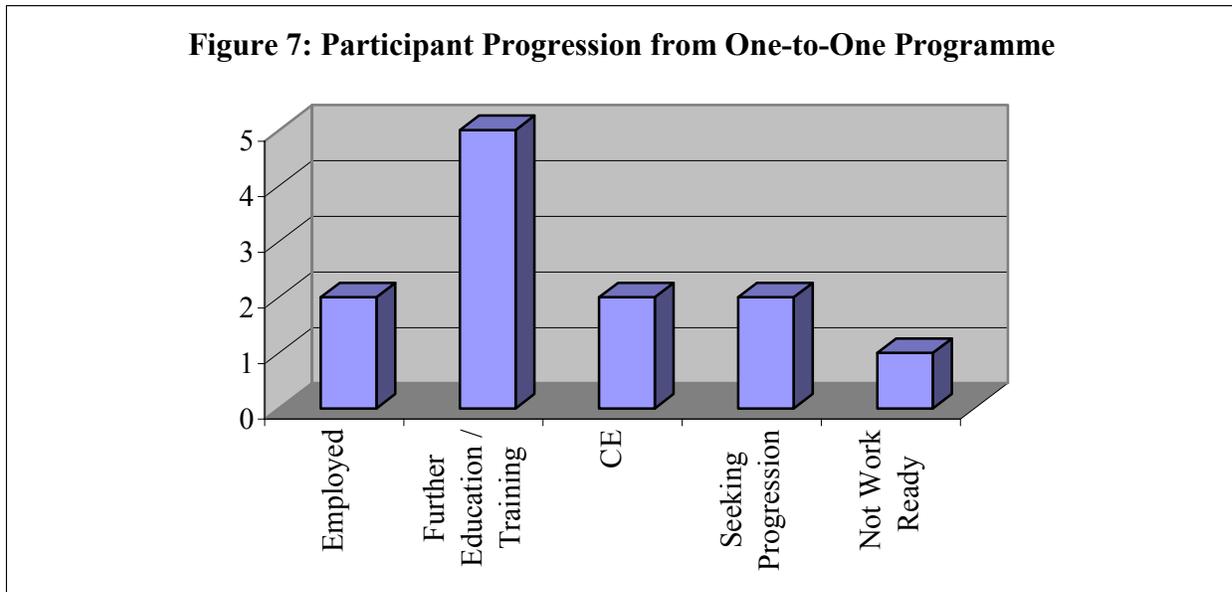
- One-to-one support
- A free and confidential service
- Career path planning
- Access to tailor-made training
- Access to a wide range of employers through the LES's Business Network
- Ongoing support.

3.3.3 Completion Rates and Progression Data

Northside Partnership contacted the 12 people who started the programme three months after the end of the intensive phase of their one-to-one LES mediation (i.e. in early-September 2004). It found:

- One was working with a telecoms company;
- One person were working with the Irish Wheelchair Association;
- Five people had progressed to further education and training - one was taking up a place with Dublin City University; one was starting a horticulture course; one was starting a FIT course; one was on Irish Wheelchair Association training programme and one was starting a course with the NTDI;
- A further two people were on CE programmes;
- Two people were in an active process of seeking progression options;
- One person was sick and was not actively looking for a work or training option at that time.

The progression achieved by the participants on the one-to-one programme is shown visually in Figure 7.



In terms of the time periods the group of people (i.e. the original 14 who committed to the one-to-one programme) had previously been on Disability Allowance:

- Five people had been receiving DA for 1-3 years;
- Two people had been receiving DA for 4-6 years;
- One person had been receiving DA for 7-10 years;
- Five people had been receiving DA for over 15 years;
- Information was not available for one person.

3.3.4 Views of Stakeholders

Points made by the trainer who delivered the STEPS programme were:

- While the STEPS programme can be run over six sessions, it would be better, especially for this target group, to run the programme over 12 sessions. This is the case in the Greendale Community Centre. Also, STEPS may not be suitable in its standard form for people with more severe disabilities.
- Given the short timeframe, it would be optimal if groups could be put together that would have broadly the same severity of disability. This would make it easier to pitch the speed at which material was covered in a way that would satisfy all participants.

Points made by the LES mediators were:

- While the one-to-one LES-based work was less intensive than the group-based work, not all people might be comfortable in (or ready for) a group-based situation and it was good to have a one-to-one option.

- A key output of the mediation work is to establish if the client is job-ready or, if not, what steps need to be taken to move to this point. This judgement (essentially a needs assessment) can mean that any subsequent progression option chosen has a greater chance of success.

3.4 Contact with Employers

As well as aspects of 'Preparing for Employment' focused on training people with disabilities, the pilot programme also had a small element of contact with employers. This aimed to run awareness raising workshops with local employers on employing people with disabilities, and perhaps invite guest speakers from companies that have already done this.

However, partly due to the relatively short timeframe involved, and partly due to a lack of interest by local companies, this element of the work was not completed. Northside Partnership was disappointed with this outcome and said that time, and new approaches, were needed to engage with employers on this issue. In September 2004, the Partnership and its Disability Employment Task Force were considering how to develop such new approaches.

Chapter 4

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Findings Arising from Research

4.1.1 Context for 'Preparing for Employment' Pilot Programme

A number of summary points can be drawn from the brief overview of the context for the two pilot programmes presented in Chapter 2:

- There are over 170,000 people with disabilities in Ireland between the ages of 15 and 64. The proportion of people with disabilities rises from under 3% of those aged 15 to over 17% of those aged 64.
- Under one-third of people with disabilities participate in the labour force, compared to over two-thirds of the total population.
- The labour force participation rate of women with disabilities is lower than the labour force participation rate for men with disabilities.
- People with disabilities work fewer hours on average than the population as a whole.
- There is a range of education, training and employment supports available for people with disabilities interested in entering employment.
- These supports are offered across three government departments (Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Education and Science; and Health and Children) with a fourth (Social and Family Affairs) offering supporting incentives. The NDA has found poor integration between these departments, and relevant agencies, in terms of delivering holistic services to the end client.
- People are generally not assessed comprehensively as regards their needs before entering a training course.
- There is a lack of data on the progression of people from training courses.
- A number of courses exist which provide orientation and career planning services to people wishing to move towards employment. These include the Supported Employment Programme (FÁS) and *Fresh Start* (NTDI).
- For the FÁS Supported Employment Programme, a progression rate of 40% into employment was achieved, although one-fifth of people had left the jobs within months and some people may have been in employment before the programme. Almost all of the people who progressed to employment continued to receive their social welfare benefits.

4.1.2 Comments on Group-based Enabled for Life Programme

A number of points emerge from the review of the Enabled for Life programme in Chapter 3.

- The interest in the training programmes, and the fact that almost all participants remained in the programmes until their completion shows a clear demand for such programmes by at least a portion of the people in receipt of disability payments from the Department of Social and Family Affairs.
- The generally very positive reactions to the programme from all stakeholders, and in particular from the participants, shows that programmes combining work and life skills are useful, and can motivate people to make efforts to (re)enter the labour market.
- A majority of people had been receiving Disability Allowance for at least four years before they participated in the Enabled for Life programme.
- The progression data for participants three and six months after completion shows that a good proportion of people used the programme as a stepping stone to real progression, in particular to further training and education. Of the 28 people (out of 30) for whom data was available:
 - Two people were working
 - Twelve people were on mainstream training or education programmes
 - A further seven people were on CE programmes
 - Four people were engaged in active process of seeking a progression option
 - Three people were not seeking a progression option when the follow-up was undertaken (for various reasons).
- All of the stakeholders believe that the programme led to personal development and the development of skills that will be useful in an employment context. This is a positive aspect of the course, although these benefits were not measured in these pilot actions.
- The emergence of a range of deeper issues relating to the lives of the participants was an unexpected aspect of the programme. It may be that, without working on these issues, it would be difficult for participants to progress to, and maintain, regular employment.
- This aspect of the pilots also raises the question as to whether higher proportions of people with disabilities face issues such as depression, difficult family backgrounds or abuse. Research in the United States has found that disabled children are 3.4 times more likely to be abused or neglected⁸.
- If such issues exist (to a greater or lesser extent), the pilots raise the issue as to whether it is useful and appropriateness to surface and discuss these in the context of a programme primarily about supporting people in moving towards employment. From the interviews held, a coherent case has been made on both sides of this issue. Forming a conclusion on this issue is beyond the scope of this

⁸ Sullivan P.H. and Knutson J.F. (2000), Maltreatment and Disabilities: A population-based epidemiological study. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 24(10): 1257-1273. As quoted on the UK's NSPCC website – www.nspcc.org.uk

Evaluation but, in the particular context of these pilots, with these trainees, and this trainer, the combining of the different issues over the 12 week period did seem to be appreciated by the participants, and did not disrupt the more vocational parts of the programme.

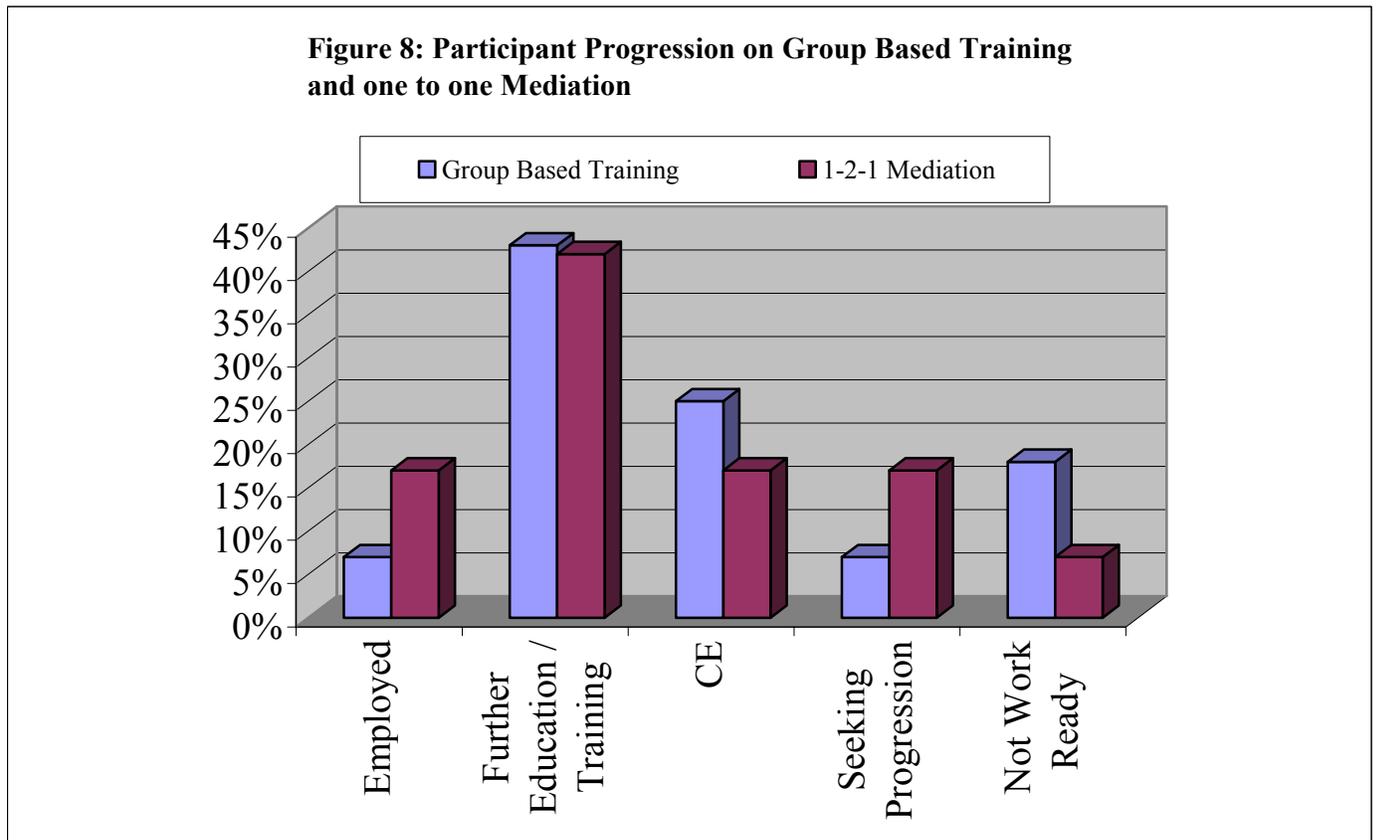
- The Enabled for Life programme, as developed by Career Decisions Ltd., has similarities to the FÁS Supported Employment Programme and some NTDI courses (particularly the Fresh Start programme). It also has differences, however, in particular relating to the greater dimension of psychology-based approaches, the one-to-one sessions and the focus on incorporating a range of elements in reaching a career strategy.

4.1.3 Comments on One-to-One STEPS/LES Support Programme

Points arising from the review of this aspect of the programme in Chapter 3 are as follows:

- As with the Enabled for Life programme, there appears to be a demand among people with disabilities for such a programme.
- The STEPS programme addresses a number of topics related to personal development and supports people in developing personal skills which will be useful in moving to employment. Feedback from the trainer involved and the LES mediators indicated that participants found the STEPS modules useful in building skills and confidence before entering an active search for progression options.
- The one-to-one work of the LES mediators with the participants covered a range of topics related to career path planning and advice on progression options, in line with the confidential services offered by Northside Partnership's LES Network
- The profile of the participants in terms of their receipt of Disability Allowance showed that most had been receiving DA for a considerable time.
- The three-month progression data available on the 12 participants who had undertaken the one-to-one programme was broadly similar to that for the Enabled for Life programme. It showed that:
 - Two of the participants were working (one with a disability organisation)
 - Five were in mainstream training and education programmes
 - A further two people were on CE programmes
 - Two people were actively seeking a progression option
 - One person was not looking for a progression option when the follow-up was undertaken.

A comparison of the progression achieved in the two parts of Northside Partnership's 'Preparing for Employment' programme is shown in Figure 8.



4.2 Conclusions

4.2.1 Conclusions on 'Preparing for Employment' Programme

Based on the research undertaken, and the findings outlined above, a number of conclusions can be drawn in relation to the pilot actions undertaken by Northside Partnership.

1. The 'Preparing for Employment' pilot actions were well managed by Northside Partnership. They operated smoothly and were successfully implemented. This involved a focused management effort over a period of almost nine months.
2. The programmes were well delivered by the trainers involved. Credit is due to Career Decisions Ltd. for the energy and enthusiasm it brought to the pilot actions over a period of months, aside from the expertise involved in designing the programme material. The same is true for the STEPS trainer and the LES mediators involved. This energy was one of the factors that meant that the programmes were well regarded by all stakeholders.

3. The ongoing support from Northside Partnership, and in particular from the ongoing co-ordinator it appointed to the programme, was also crucial in the successful running of the pilot programmes.
4. The excess demand from potential participants on the pilot programmes and the evidence that participants found the programme useful and interesting indicates that at least a sub-section of the people in receipt of disability payments in the Northside Partnership catchment area is interested in progressing into part-time or full-time employment.
5. In terms of personal development, the group-based programme (Enabled for Life) was more intense than the one-to-one programme and was able to deal with a wider range of issues. However, both programmes included a personal development dimension and all stakeholders felt that this dimension was important in supporting the progression of the individuals involved.
6. Progression was similar from the two programmes and, in both cases, appears to have been strong, especially given that most participants had been on Disability Allowance for over four years prior to the programme. Of 42 people for whom information was available three or six months after completion, four were working; 17 were in mainstream education and training programmes and a further seven were on CE programmes. Most of the others were still actively seeking a progression option. While it is difficult to draw firm conclusions based on the number of participants involved, the data reinforces the point that at least a sub-section of this target group wants to progress and will do so if the opportunity arises.
7. The strong progression from both the group-based and one-to-one programmes, at least after three months, may partly reflect the levels of motivation of the people who applied to be part of the pilot programmes.
8. The Enabled for Life programme, as delivered, seemed to have a powerful transformational effect on some of the participants' lives. This may perhaps have been due to the programme being delivered by a qualified psychologist and also incorporating a one-to-one mediation/counselling dimension. There was some debate among stakeholders as to whether such a career-related course was the appropriate home for raising wider issues in participants' lives, with a strong case being put forward on both sides.
9. Participants across both parts of the 'Preparing for Employment' pilots were buoyed up at the end of their courses. This creates a challenge for LES mediators (and others) to support participants in maintaining and focusing this enthusiasm.
10. The small intended part of the pilot linked to employer involvement did not occur due to time constraints and a difficulty in finding employers interested in being involved. New approaches are needed to work with employers in this area.

4.2.2 Conclusions relevant to Wider Employment Policy

11. Given the number of people with disabilities in Ireland between the ages of 15 and 64, their relatively low rate of labour force participation, and the strong demand for these pilot actions, this suggests that scope exists to increase the rate

- of labour force participation for people with disabilities in Ireland. This fits with the aims of the National Employment Action Plan for 2003-2005.
12. The lack of systematic needs assessments in mainstream programmes (as identified by the National Disability Authority) can be addressed by programmes such as Enabled for Life, although some people may prefer a shorter programme.
 13. The total cost of the pilot actions amounted to €110,300. For 45 participants, this gives an average cost per participant of €2,450 (although this would be higher for a group-based participant and lower for a one-to-one participant)⁹. There were no direct FÁS/NTDI benchmarks available with which to compare this figure. However, if participants were genuinely to progress to employment, the benefit/cost ratio would become positive for the state within a short period of time (even excluding the social benefits to the people involved).
 14. It is important for people considering entering such pathways to employment to be reassured in relation to social welfare benefits. In particular, they do not want to risk losing their benefits by entering a process that may or may not lead to employment. Without an ability to keep their benefits while partaking in the programmes, many people will not be willing to do so.
 15. Useful cross-learning may exist between the FÁS Supported Employment Programme, the NTDI *Fresh Start* programme and Enabled for Life. In relation to the issue of needs assessment and career orientation, issues appear to arise (or could arise) that would have a relevance for the Departments of Health and Children; Social and Family Affairs; Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Education and Science in relation to the progression of people with disabilities towards employment or training/education. Ideas also arise as to the optimal level of one-to-one mediation/counselling during such programmes.
 16. A potential worrying issue arising from the 'Preparing for Employment' programme is whether disproportionate numbers of people with disabilities have experienced abuse, and continue to experience depression. The number of people involved in the pilot actions was small and may be unrepresentative. However, international research has suggested that this scenario may have some validity. Such a scenario would have implications both for employment support programmes and potentially for other programmes.

4.3 Recommendations

A number of recommendations follow from these conclusions.

1. Given the demand demonstrated in the Northside Partnership pilot actions by people with disabilities for employment support programmes, and the stated aims of national labour market policy, further such programmes, or variations of these programmes, should be undertaken. This is true both in the immediate Northside Partnership catchment area and more widely.

⁹ This figure excludes the cost of social welfare benefits to participants, which were being paid in any case, and the cost of the time of the LES mediators, as the work was taken to be part of their ongoing roles.

2. The NDA has pointed up the plethora of employment supports available for people with disabilities. A decision across relevant departments (but particularly involving the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment), should identify what the training needs of people with disabilities are, and what programmes are required. If needs assessments are to be introduced more widely, then elements of the Enabled for Life and STEPS programmes appear to lend themselves to this.
3. If further Enabled for Life programmes are being funded, if possible the funding should cover a programme of 18-21 weeks.
4. If further STEPS programmes are being funded, if possible the funding should cover a programme of 12 half-day sessions.
5. Future pilot programmes should monitor the progression of all participants as a matter of course. Funding of pilot programmes should reflect this. This should relate to immediate post-programme progression and progression say after three, six and 12 months. (Where possible, the same should hold true for mainstream programmes, as this will then provide benchmarks against which the pilots can be measured.)
6. The progress of participants in relation to 'softer' issues should be measured. Methods have been developed in recent years (linked to the European Social Fund) in this regard. For example, the UK's Institute for Employment Studies has prepared a 'Guide to Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled'. This shows how attitudinal skills (motivation, confidence, self-esteem etc.) and personal skills (presentability, attendance, timekeeping etc.) can be measured, as well as work skills and practical skills (completing forms etc.). Methods to measure soft outcomes should be incorporated into future pilot actions (and indeed in similar mainstream programmes).
7. While the LES mediators provided follow-on support, somewhat more intensive involvement is needed with people with disabilities than is normally provided to LES clients. This will also capitalize on the enthusiasm of participants completing programmes. The level of involvement given by the FÁS 'Job Coaches' to people with disabilities might provide a model for people emerging from future similar programmes.
8. Where people with disabilities are prepared to go through personal and career change with a view to seeking employment, they should not be worse off for entering such programmes. To ensure this may require co-ordination between regarding benefits and training allowances.
9. Area Partnership Companies need to develop new ways to engage with local employers on the issue of disability in the workplace. It may be possible to learn from the Access Ability project, which is piloting a number of innovative ideas in this regard under the EQUAL Initiative in Ireland between 2002 and 2005.