



**EMPLOYABILITY TOOLKIT
CASE STUDIES**

**EMPLOYER AND SUPPORT
ORGANISATIONS**

INTRODUCTION

Many employers in Northern Ireland have developed employability strategies to help improve access to employment for marginalised groups. These strategies rely on support from employability support organisations to ensure their success.

This publication will highlight examples of these strategies and practical ideas that employers can consider in relation to employability. It will provide examples of some of the projects which are proving very successful in terms of improving access to employment for marginalised groups. These case studies should act as a guide for employers who have yet to develop similar strategies or who wish to further improve upon their current programme.

When considering the development of an employability strategy, employers must ensure that they consider the legal guidance within this toolkit before they proceed.

For advice and guidance in relation to the development of an employability strategy, please contact the Advice and Compliance team in the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on 028 90 500 600.

CASE STUDIES

(Click on each logo for information)



The Orchardville Company Ltd





Homebase is committed to serving our local community and supporting people in enhancing their skills to secure employment. We have built up a good working relationship with the Equality Commission over the years and this has opened up opportunities for us to work with a range of organisations to provide work tasters and work placements across our 9 stores in Northern Ireland.

Following a Bridge the Gap Seminar in November 2009, Homebase made contact with Jacinta at Include Youth and this has led to a great partnership and a series of work placements in our stores.

"Homebase has been good, I like getting the experience of the work, and I have good craic with the staff. They have been good at showing me what to do, taught me new things and made me feel like part of the team. So far I've enjoyed the experience."(Lee Gillard, Give and Take Young Person Placement Scheme)

"I was a bit wary of the job to begin with, but David showed me the ropes and now I know what to do- so when I go into work I can just get on with it."

(Lee Gillard, Give and Take Young Person at 4-week Placement Review)

"The change in Lee since he started his work placement in Homebase in Belfast Forestside has been fantastic. His confidence has soared and he gets a lot out of going to his placement. Lee works in the warehouse and has stated to me that he just feels like one of the team, and to him, this is really important. Lee is so proud to wear his Homebase uniform, and when I visit him is always busy- so much so that I get the blame of holding him back from his work! The staff at Homebase have been really supportive of Lee and are great at encouraging him to learn as well as challenging him to try new things. Although Lee is on a little break from Homebase at the moment, this flexibility has been a really positive thing, as previously he would have just left. However due to personal issues he requested a temporary break so that he would not 'mess up his placement'. Lee is definite that when he gets other things in his life sorted, he is looking forward to going back to placement in Homebase, and this has been made possible because of the support of the staff, in particular Bev."

(Donna Galbraith, Project Worker -Give and Take Scheme)

The concept of work tasters and work placements have been received positively across all of our stores and we truly see this as a great way to support people in gaining work experience in a retail environment and also to welcome people back into the workplace and provide a platform for them to learn new skills and enhance existing skills.

[Back to top](#)



The first initiative of its kind, the Health Employment Partnership was developed by local community based organisations, the trade union UNISON and Belfast Health & Social Care Trust. Within the local communities, the initiative was supported by the Employment Services Board, Job Assist Centres in West Belfast and Greater Shankill, local Area Partnership Boards and the Employer's Forum.

Established in 2007, the Partnership has helped unemployed people from deprived areas in West Belfast and Greater Shankill to skill up so that they could get hospital jobs. It has also provided training for lower-paid hospital workers so that they could move up the ladder through career progression, thereby creating vacancies for those coming behind to secure a job. The results are an overwhelming "good news" story for many participants, their families and communities, the health service, and for effective use of public monies:

- 143 people have got jobs with the Belfast Trust – most of these people had experienced long term unemployment and other barriers to getting jobs;
- 316 lower-paid staff in the Trust have received additional training to help them develop their careers, and 36 of these staff have already obtained promotion;
- £385,000 each year – the estimated Government saving on benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, and Incapacity Benefit;
- Up to £1.48 million each year – the added economic impact on the local economy in West Belfast and Greater Shankill.

These are the findings of an independent evaluation which concluded that the programme has been uniquely impressive and value-for-money; and that the "excellent results would not have been achieved in the absence of partnership working."

The next step is to widen the employment programme to work with people living in economically deprived areas across Belfast, building upon the partnership model that has been so successful in West Belfast and Greater Shankill. The Health Employment Partnership is currently in discussion with Government to continue the programme until 2014.

For further details please contact: Joan Peden (Co-Director for Governance, Equality and Improving Working Lives in the Belfast health and Social Care Trust) – email Joan.Peden@belfasttrust.hscni.net [Back to top](#)



Mencap has formed successful partnerships with leading employers in Northern Ireland through its corporate programme, where trainees with a learning disability complete a work trial leading to paid employment. One example of a trainee who has been successful through this programme is Martin.

Martin started with The Co-operative on a voluntary work trial where the employer was able to train him and assess his skills and abilities for the role. This was then used in place of the formal interview process.

Prior to the placement starting, staff were given learning disability awareness training from Mencap, which helped them understand how to support Martin. During his work trial, Martin worked with staff to learn the basics of stacking shelves and serving customers. With assistance from his Mencap employment officer, he developed in the role and soon learned new skills, including working in the bakery. Tasks were broken down and structure was devised to help Martin work independently, organise his time and prioritise his duties. Martin was also given set days and times as a reasonable adjustment to help him achieve a routine for work.

The employer was so impressed with Martin's work performance and his ability to become a valued part of the team, that he was offered a paid job in the bakery department. Mencap helped him fill in the paperwork for the employer and Martin was pleased to be successful in gaining a 20hr post.

The employer is impressed with Martin's development and says that he has added to staff morale. Martin says he really enjoys his job and the money has given him independence. He continues to be supported by Mencap to learn the paperwork involved in the bakery and meet compliance for health and safety.

Due to the success of Martin, the Co-operative have now agreed to create further work trials across Northern Ireland to provide opportunities for people with a learning disability to lead to paid employment and have developed an excellent working relationship with Mencap.

[Back to top](#)



DAVID

David is a 36 year old man with a learning disability working for Centra supermarket, and supported by Disability Action on the Workable NI programme.

David was made redundant in September 2008 when the company he had been working with for over 10 years closed down. He had been job seeking for over a year when an opportunity became available in November 2009 in the Centra store. The employer specifically wanted to give an opportunity to a person with a disability and was proactive in making appropriate adjustments to the job description.

David was interviewed with the support of an Employment & Training Officer from Disability Action. The employer was fully aware of David's learning disability and ensured that he clearly understood the questions and was given ample time and consideration to answer them. The employer was very impressed with David at interview and offered him the job.

David started work on the shop floor in December 2009. He has been given set duties that suit his capabilities. 2 members of staff have been allocated the role of Mentor and provide David with guidance and support. The staff in the store have been given Disability Awareness Training by Disability Action.

David's employer deals with challenging issues that may arise and with support from Disability Action ensure that David manages successfully in work. David is really enjoying being in employment again and working as part of a team.

[Back to top](#)



MARK

After successfully completing Independent travel Training and Workability with Stepping Stones NI, Mark progressed to the Employment Service. Through vocational profiling it was discovered that he has a very keen interest in vehicles and wanted to work in a role in this area. After some research a placement was sought with Translink in Lisburn. This work placement, supported by Stepping Stones NI, saw Mark thrive and over time led to an offer of paid employment.

Mark is autistic and during his placement, was provided with ongoing individually tailored support from Stepping Stones NI. This support included regular onsite visits from a Job Coach, regular reviews with both Mark and his employer, assistance during internal training sessions, disability awareness training for staff, and the provision of advice and ongoing guidance along the way. This support, although reduced and distanced over time in line with Mark and his employer's support needs, continues throughout his time in employment.

From the outset Translink and Stepping Stones NI worked closely to develop an individual job description that matched Mark's skills and abilities. This has been reviewed and adjusted over time to enable Mark to progress and reach his full employment potential. In addition to this his employer recognised that Mark learned and worked in a different way and made reasonable adjustments in both his daily tasks and the training processes used.

Mark says "Getting this job is one of the best things that has happened to me in my life. I'm glad I got the job and someone else didn't get it. I enjoy my job and I like the work I do, it's good to get paid as well."

Mark's employer has commented "Mark is with us 3 days a week on a part time paid capacity. Mark follows direction well and completes all his jobs to a high standard. At the start a new job needs to be demonstrated to him but Mark follows a very structured routine, is methodical, and very meticulous. He does things to the letter and is eager to learn new tasks as well. As he got more confident in the job he started to use his initiative and now when it's not busy he will head off and complete his list of duties. Over the time Mark has been with us he has become an asset to our team."

[Back to top](#)



SLIEVE DONARD
RESORT AND SPA

KELLYANN

Kellyann came to Stepping Stones NI after school and successfully completed two NVQs, in Food preparation & Cooking and Food and Drink Service. Alongside this she completed courses in Travel training and Workability through the training department.

Kellyann's vocational training officer recognised that she had great potential and that she was eager to seek work in a busy and vibrant kitchen. Kellyann joined the Employment Service as it was recognised that she required support to find a suitable job and work environment and that she needed ongoing support to develop and sustain that work role.

During her training at Stepping Stones Kellyann had been supported in a number of work placements in local businesses to help her to build upon and develop her work experience and skills in her chosen career path. With her qualifications complete and her work experience suitable Kellyann now wanted to find a paid job.

Kellyann is quite shy and lacks confidence until she gets to know people, her tasks and the environment. As a result, her Employment Officer decided that a work trial would be more beneficial to both Kellyann and any potential employer as a form of interview. This would allow Kellyann to show her skill and ability and the employer to see her in action.

In line with this, after a supported meeting with the Slieve Donard Hotel, Kellyann was given a work trial with the employer instead of a formal interview.

This allowed her to demonstrate her skills and ability in the kitchen environment in a more suitable way. After a successful work trial an Employment Officer liaised with Human Resources in the hotel to develop a job description for Kellyann and she continues to be supported through regular onsite visits, regular reviews with both her and her employer and tailored guidance and advice where required.

Kellyann says of her supported employment, "After I did my NVQ at Stepping Stones the Employment Service helped me to get work placements in different cafe's such as Pimento's, Atlas women's centre and Maud's ice cream shop. I recently got my first paid job in the Slieve Donard hotel Newcastle as a kitchen porter. I have to do

the dishes and clean the wine glasses. I really love my job and the people I work with are dead on”.

Kellyann’s manager commented “Kellyann started with us 31st May 2010 and works as a kitchen porter part time, we have found her to be hard working, willing and enthusiastic about her role, we are glad to have Kellyann as part of our professional team”.

Stepping Stones continue to support both Kellyann and her employer and she continues to thrive in her role.

[Back to top](#)



NIACRO's Jobtrack employment programme is a programme run by NIACRO and supported by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Prison Service. The programme aims to progress individuals into the labour market as a result of employment focused interventions and engages over 600 unemployed adult offenders per year.

Jobtrack activities are based on research that demonstrates a link between unemployment and offending. By supporting offenders to increase their employability skills and access the labour market Jobtrack's activities contribute to an overall crime reduction strategy - reducing crime and the fear of crime. Specifically the partnership model enables Jobtrack to attract significant European funding into the Criminal Justice System that adds value to both the Resettlement Strategy (NIPS) and Community Sentence Management. (PBNI)

This is challenging work. A recent evaluation demonstrated that those engaging with such services are disproportionately concentrated in the significant long term unemployment categories;

- almost 80% long term unemployed
- more than 50% very long term category (2 years plus)
- And 46 % out of work for three years or more.

In addition research consistently demonstrates that educational background and qualifications are low and the majority of offenders engaging in the services are assessed as either medium or high risk of re-offending.

On the demand side, there is a proven tendency for employers to be worried about recruiting individuals with convictions. Moving such individuals towards positive employability outcomes is a substantial task.

Jobtrack is based on an innovative model of intervention that incorporates:

- Individual case work and support in the management of offenders
- Individual and group work with employers
- Linking and brokering opportunities within local communities through existing Community Safety partnerships.
- A peripatetic service across Northern Ireland linked to the 3 prisons and all Probation Board offices.
- Mentoring support and a range of other motivational techniques

For further information please email: employer@niacro.co.uk

[Back to top](#)



Darren's progression towards employment started in 2007 with Triangle Transition Service whilst attending Hillcroft School, where he had a number of work experience placements. He commenced training with one of Triangle's Social Enterprises- Alternative Angles in Newtownabbey in June 08 after leaving school at the same time as studying cookery at the Northern Regional College. In September 09 Darren was assessed, by staff members as having reached his optimum training potential and was recommended for Triangle's Supported Employment. In October 09, Darren was successful in

securing a placement with Lavender Cupcakes of Greenisland, who are the exclusive supplier quality hand crafted quality cupcakes to a number of reputable Coffee houses, Delicatessens and Corporate events in the Belfast area.

Darren's role within Lavender Cupcakes is to be part of a team of people producing individual cake decorations and packaging products ready for delivery around the Belfast area. Alison Kane the owner and founder of Lavender Cupcakes has been very impressed by Darren's enthusiasm for his new role and how he has seamlessly fitted into the small team of people dedicated to producing high quality "yumminess". Alison said recently that *"Darren is just wonderful, he has a passion and spark for what he does and his personality shines through. He is so inspiring, he comes up with new innovative ideas each day, some of which we are looking to put into practice. His interest in catering and willingness to learn new things is so pleasing. I have to thank the Triangle staff team for the excellent professional support and friendly service I have received since becoming involved with the organisation. Darren's Supported Employment Officers have been a credit to the organisation in their dedication to both myself and Darren"*

Alison Kane—Owner Lavender Cakes



Introduction

Belfast City Council is one of the city's largest employers. Our responsibilities include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• arts and heritage• building control• cleansing• community and play provision• economic initiatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• environmental health• indoor and outdoor leisure provisions• parks and amenities• tourism, and• waste management |
|--|--|

To support these services we employ people to work in areas including administration, finance, accounting, law, human resources and information technology.

Many of our employees help maintain council properties. These include architects, building services officers, plumbers, electricians, drivers, labourers, security, cleaning and catering staff.

Community Outreach Programme

We launched our Community Outreach Programme in 1998 to promote Belfast City Council as an attractive, equal opportunities employer with wide and varied job opportunities.

As part of the programme, we operate an extensive, well structured and meaningful work experience placement scheme. This deals with an average of 180 unpaid work experience placement opportunities each year for students from schools and further education or university establishments. It also offers 30 unpaid disability work experience placements from various disability organisations. These placements are offered across a range of disciplines (outlined above).

As part of the programme, we also:

- attend local business education partnership meetings;
- attend jobs and careers fairs;
- conduct 'site visits' to promote the council as an attractive employer;
- provide training and development opportunities for young people on interview awareness skills using mock interview sessions; and
- deliver presentations to students, teachers and representatives from other organisations (such as ethnic minority and disability groups) to advise them of job opportunities and the council's recruitment and selection procedures.

The programme has created eight basic grade posts specifically 'ring-fenced' to disabled applicants. It also operates a 'guaranteed interview' scheme for people with disabilities and has a confidential care-line for applicants whose first language isn't English.

We have skilled up to 50 front-line council officers on sign language techniques and issue details of all council vacancies to under-represented groups within the ethnic minority and disabled communities.

The programme holds the NIACRO award for the fair recruitment of people with criminal convictions and has attained the 'Gold' Opportunity Now benchmarking award for gender equality. We've also engaged in a partnership project which encourages women into non-traditional roles.

More recently, we have engaged with the Citywide Employability Consortium (CEC) through the Community Outreach Programme, to develop pre-employment training programmes for the long-term unemployed. We've also worked in partnership with Bryson Charitable Group's Training and Employment Unit (North City Training) on the Young Person's Employment Initiative (pilot) by providing placement opportunities for 36 long-term unemployed young people from across the city, and we've engaged with the Probation Board for NI (PBNI) and Youth Justice Agency (YJA) to provide work experience placements for individuals who are required to carry out community service orders.

The council recognises the potential in everyone regardless of their background. The Community Outreach Programme gives individuals the opportunity to gain a valuable insight into career opportunities within the council and also gives them the opportunity to develop their skills and to recognise their own potential. From an employer's perspective, it recognises that the individuals are our potential workforce in the future and it gives us the opportunity to invest in them and to give something back to our citizens.

[Back to top](#)

Case study – Mark

The Orchardville Company is a company limited by guarantee with social firm status. It is under the umbrella of the Orchardville Society, a charity that assists young people and adults with Learning Disability and Autistic Spectrum Disorder prepare for and secure employment. At present 25% of the work force have a learning disability including Mark who started a part time job earlier this year. Mark applied for the position of domestic assistant and a number of reasonable adjustments were made to enable Mark to accept the position.

Firstly Mark completed a six week work trial in order for him to decide if he liked the job and what support requirements he would need. At the end of the trial a meeting was held involving Mark, his Employment Officer and the manager to discuss the outcome of the work trial and what reasonable adjustments would be required including:

- The purchase of different mops as Mark found it very difficult to use the industrial mops. This minor adjustment enabled Mark to confidently carry out this aspect of the job to the same standard of cleanliness and at minimal cost to the employer.
- Mark also found it difficult to complete all the tasks within the three hours per day he was scheduled to work. The employer agreed to increase Marks hours by 30 minutes per day to enable him to comfortably complete all the tasks and not feel under pressure.

Mark continues to work at the Orchardville Company and is supported by the Orchardville Society Employment and Skills Service.

[Back to top](#)