

# **District Approach to Early School Leaving in Tallaght**

Work Sampling



# In Ireland what is an Early School Leaver?

- Legal school leaving age is **16** years
  - but
- Early School Leaver is now considered to be a young person who has not completed at least **5** years of **2<sup>nd</sup> level** schooling and sat the final state examination at **17 or 18** years of age
  - Final exam is Leaving Certificate
  - Points acquired from exam determine the **3<sup>rd</sup>** level course that can be accessed
  - Primary, secondary and third level education is free but not all expenses are covered.

# What is the provision for early school leavers in Ireland?

- Youth Reach is the alternative provision for youth over 16 who have left mainstream school
- Youth Reach participants can acquire FETAC qualifications to progress to vocational training or further education
- In addition there is a range of voluntary provision which is specific to each area

# What is the District Approach?

- It is a initiative to respond to the needs of early school leavers
- It is convened by the Dodder Valley Partnership who employ a Convenor to co-ordinate and drive the work
- It is locally based and comprises a
  - Strategy Group working at local policy level and a
  - Practitioners Network of front line workers which aims to
    - identify gaps in existing local provision and
    - develop network of provision to respond to the varied needs of **early school leavers**

# How does the initiative respond to the needs of early school leavers ?

By

- Providing formal and informal education and training
- Encouraging participation in accredited training
- Facilitating the acquisition of skills to allow active and positive participation in society.
- **Providing work experience opportunities to enable progression**

# Work Sampling

- Progression to work has been a problem for this group
- Work experience/work sampling was identified as essential component to enable them to move on
- Advisory group of practitioners developed a module with procedures and protocols to suit
  - the needs of early school leavers in the area *and*
  - the available resources

# Work Sampling

Elements for success were identified as

- Clear structure
- Protocols
- Agreements
- Commitment
- Advocate
- Key worker
- Committed Employers

# Work Sampling

- District Approach identity was developed
  - Headed paper
  - Standard CV
  - Application Form
  - Employer information leaflet
  - Four way agreements (employer, advocate, key worker, participant)
  - Training standard agreed



# Work Sampling Programme

## Main components

- Module to be delivered to same standard for **all** participants from **all** referring agencies
- Agreed essential training modules prior to placement with employer
- FETAC Level 3\*
  - Work Preparation
  - Work Orientation
  - Communications
  - Personal Development
  - +
  - Customer Care
  - Mock Interviews
  - Safe Pass ^
  - Manual Handling ^

\* National Framework of Qualifications

^ Industry based qualifications

# Work Sampling Programme

## Main components

- 6 weeks training
- Placement with employer for further 6 weeks
- Regular contact with employer and participant by Advocate and Key Worker
- Referral back to relevant agency or Advocate on completion of placement

# Work Sampling Programme

## Main components contd.

- Advocate maintains a waiting list
- Advocate sources employers
- Advocate arranges Open Day to explain process to young people
- One to one interviews with interested participants
- Referring agency allocates “*Key Worker*” to maintain contact with participant for duration of training and work placement
- “*Statements of Understanding*” agreed for
  - Advocate
  - Key Worker
  - Employer and
  - Participant

This was done to ensure maintenance of standards while on placement *and* to avoid possible exploitation of participants by employers

# Role of the Advocate

- The advocate co-ordinates the process
- The advocate provides assistance with career path planning, guidance, training and work experience to early school leavers
- In relation to work experience/sampling the advocate is a vital link between the employer, the young person and the key worker.

# Role of the Key Worker

- The key worker is not responsible for delivering the training or for organising the work sampling
- The key worker has responsibility for ensuring that a young participant receives a high quality, personalised service according to his or her needs and wishes.
- The key worker, builds a relationship with the participant in order to become more acutely aware of his or her needs and wishes and to mediate with employer or advocate if necessary.

# Role of the employer

- Offer a time limited work sampling opportunity
- Organise the induction
- Provide a mentor
- Agree to liaise with advocate and key worker as required
- Offer work opportunity to suitable participants if vacancy arises

# Role of the participant

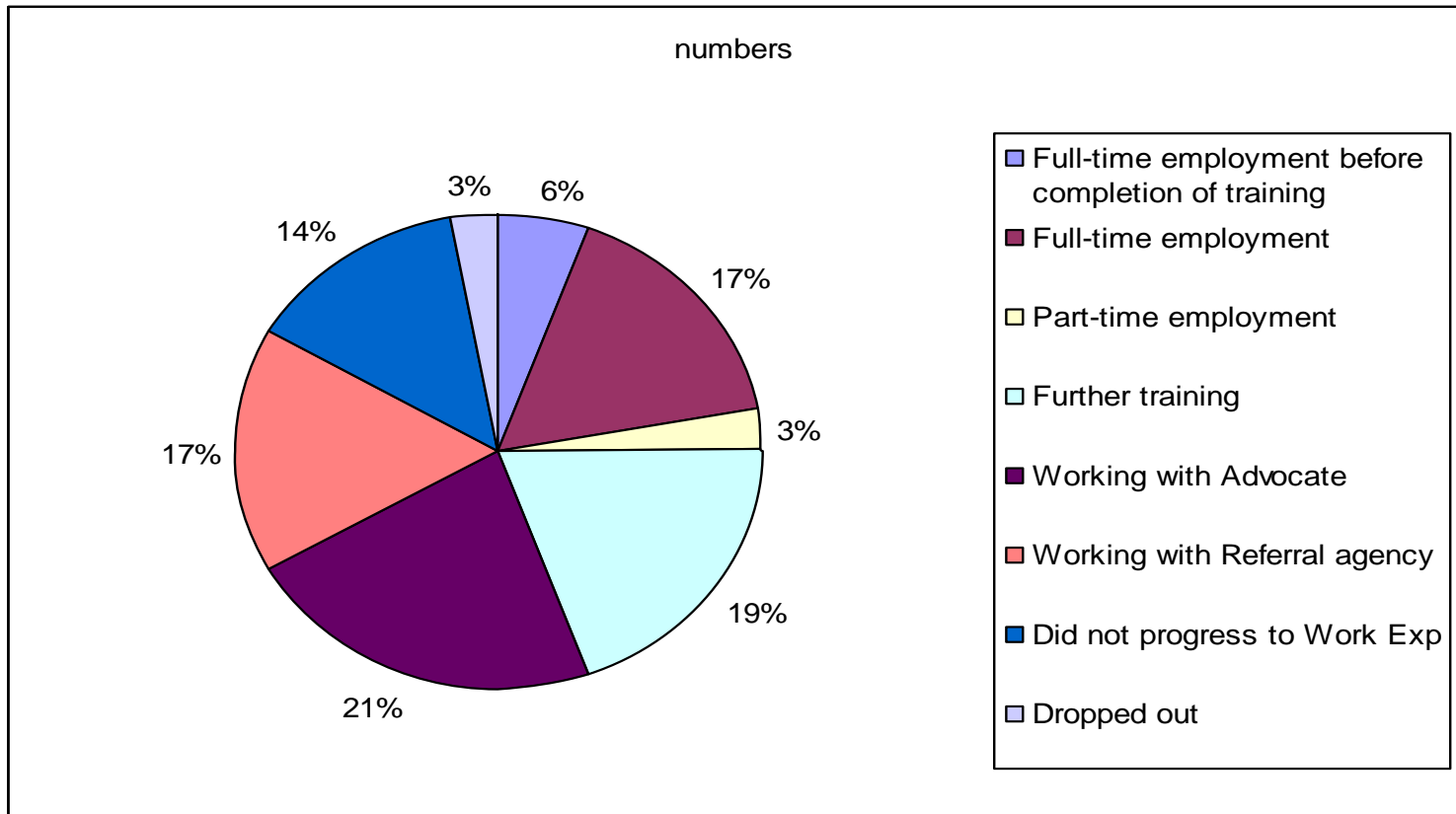
- Participate in and complete training
- Co-operate in identifying appropriate work sampling placement
- Sign up to agreement (protocol)
- Participate fully in placement
- Liaise with advocate and key worker
- Identify future career path
- Avail of any offer of suitable job

# Work Sampling

How has it worked so far?



# Work Sampling Programme Outcomes – 3 groups (31)



# Work Sampling Programme

## Benefits for participant

- Young people experience “real” work
- Confidence enhanced
- Focus on possible career options
- Additional training identified
- Accreditation and work relevant qualifications achieved
- Progression to employment before and after training (unexpected benefit for some)

# Work Sampling Programme

## Benefits for employer

- Opportunity to “try out” the participant
- Support provided by advocate and key worker with any problems arising
- Possibility to employ “loyal” worker who appreciates opportunity
- Contribution to community and corporate social responsibility
- Recognition in locality for opportunities provided

# Work Sampling Programme Challenges

- Ensuring difficult target group appreciate opportunity
- Funding to provide pre-employment training
- Funding for Advocate to manage initiative
- Sufficient committed employers