

Template reflecting Blanchardstown Area Partnership's initiatives and actions supporting asylum seekers and refugees between 2000-2005

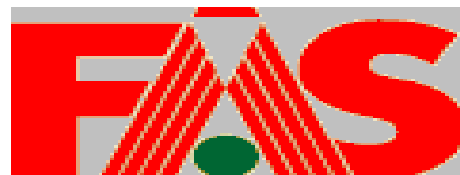
7 Strands	Service Delivery ¹	Co-ordination ²	Influencing ³
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jobs Club-FAS ○ Enterprise Start Ups (BTWEA) ○ I.T. training via BAPTEC ○ Blanchardstown Training Services ○ LES / Joblink ○ Equality Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ EQUAL Initiative ○ Core Skills Pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rent policy paper ○ Mobile information unit
Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Asylum Seeker and Refugee Strategy report 2003-2004 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need analysis research of asylum seekers and refugees in D15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Blanchardstown Asylum Seekers and Refugee Network ○ Information provision foldout in liaison with BARN & EQUAL
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health discussions with asylum seekers and refugees 		
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Millennium Fund re 3rd level 		
Youth Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Preventing Early School Leaving-Accelerated learning initiatives 		
Family Support and Childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Greater Blanchardstown Lone Parent Management Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ County Childcare Committee 	
Built Environment			Greater Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce

¹ "This occurs where there is a lack of locally based services in the area and the Partnership undertakes to deliver those services, usually on a pilot basis, to remedy the gap in services".

² "The approach of a Partnership adapting an agency approach is likely to be far more strategic and aimed at influencing policy and mainstream services. Where services are delivered by the Partnership it is usually on a contract basis to a group that is currently delivering services in the area. If such a group does not exist, then the Partnership will often play a key role in establishing such a group or, through mutual agreement, add to the remit of an existing group. This is likely to result in value being added to the service and the service being linked more directly with other activities with the agreed strategy of the Local Development Plan"

³ The Partnership does not deliver- but acts as a support structure, whose primary function is in needs assessment and

Economic Development Strand



Service Delivery

Actions to Date:

2.1 Job Club for Asylum Seekers and Refugees based at the FAS Asylum Seekers Unit Blanchardstown (GAP)

In July/August 2000 FAS set up the *Asylum Seekers Unit* in Coolmine. The aim of the asylum seekers unit was to provide a professional guidance and job placement service to asylum seekers that would match their skills to suitable employment. The Blanchardstown Partnership Job Club 'Access to Employment' was established at the FAS unit in September 2000 where 10 Jobs Clubs in total were run. *A full time coordinator and assistant were responsible for the smooth running of the Job Club – both of whom were Partnership staff.* The primary aim of the Programme was to prepare those Asylum Seekers, who have permission to work in Ireland, for open employment.

'Access to Employment' provided an introduction to the world of work by imparting the skills and necessary information to enable asylum seekers to be more confident and successful in gaining access to employment and therefore integration into Irish society. The Job Club provided asylum seekers and refugees with practical job seeking skills during the seven week Programme, which covers subjects such as: Computer applications, Developing English language, CV and interview preparation, workshops exploring cultural and work practices, Health and Safety course, inputs from Dublin Corporation, MABS and Citizens Information Center. By the end of the seven-week Programme the Jobs Club ensured that people were able to source long-term sustainable employment and also encourage them to avail of all training possibilities available. In February 2002, the final jobs club was run in the Unit itself.

Overall this was a very successful initiative as is evident from the SCOPE outputs. In all probability there are large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees (rent supplement trap) who could and should be attending jobs clubs today. Due to a change of policy by the government asylum seekers who arrived into Ireland after July 1999 can longer work. A recent ESRI report highlighted the loss to the Irish economy by not tapping into the skills of many

Outcome and Achievements of the jobs clubs (Pie Charts)

- 128 clients attended the Jobs Clubs.
- Almost 100% of individuals received a course certification
- 58 people progressed into paid employment one month after the clubs finished
- 2 individuals started up their own business under the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme.
- A further 3 explored this option with Enterprise Officer
- 6 referred to interviews
- 11 referred for further training
- 1 referred to labour marker scheme?
- 2 were placed on work experience programmes
- All clients were input onto the Partnership's SCOPE system and tracked for progression purposes

2.2 Enterprise Creation and Development (Social Welfare)

The importance of self-employment and economic development for D15 has been reinforced by the number of clients interested in self-employment and the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme. This service was enhanced in June 2001, by the appointment of a full-time Enterprise Officer. BAP has provided soft supports to an increasing number of foreign nationals through the provision of advice, training and financial assistance. The Enterprise Officer also provides a service that enables clients to develop their own business plans. As a result of feedback from existing clients, bookkeeping and tax training was introduced with the financial support of the Partnership and the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs. In order to support this measure it was necessary to acquire the services of a qualified bookkeeper and a tax consultant's expertise. A mentoring support panel was also formed to provide coaching to clients to meet specific needs in areas such as finance, sales, marketing and communication. *The numbers of foreign nationals but in particular refugees approaching the Enterprise Officer in recent years seeking advice on setting up their own business has increased steadily.*



2.3 BAPTEC Ltd

BAPTEC I.T. Training Centre was first established in 1998 following research carried out by BAP, which indicated that there was a mismatch between the skills required by employers and those held by the pool of potential employees. BAPTEC's function is to provide IT training/educational services to many of BAP's target groups *including asylum seekers/refugees* and to achieve sustainability⁴ through the operation of a 'community business' model. In its initial years of operation many of BAPTEC's clients were referred from Full Time Jobs Initiative, Blanchardstown Training Services and the LES. BAPTEC was also contracted by FAS to provide training as part of the Asylum Seeker and Freshstart Programmes. As a consequence BAPTEC has trained in many asylum seekers and refugees to effectively compete in the labour market by developing their IT skills. **BAPTEC Ltd is now an independent Social Economy Enterprise (see footnote)**



BLANCHARDSTOWN TRAINING SERVICES

2.4 Blanchardstown Training Services

In 1999, BAP in conjunction with FAS and Community Employment Projects established the Community Employment Network Support Service (CENSS). The CENNS supported the development and provision of quality skills training to Community Employment projects in the greater Blanchardstown area. In 2004, it changed its name to the Blanchardstown Training Services (BTS). This was in recognition of the wider brief that it now holds in training and supporting not only CE clients *some of whom are refugees into employment*. The BTS now delivers training courses such as

⁴ In May 1999 BAPTEC formalised its structure and incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. In April 2000 the voluntary Board of Directors decided to explore the principals of the Social Economy and it became apparent that BAPTEC incorporated all the qualities of a Social Economy Enterprise. BAPTEC Ltd commenced training in 2001 as a social economy enterprise under the FAS SE Programme. In August 2002 BAPTEC moved to a larger premises in order to better meet the demand of its clients. BAPTEC now employs 6 staff and has an extended range of courses on offer. BAPTEC achieved the FAS Excellence Through People Award in 2004.

Hygiene and Food Preparation, Safepass Programme. The BTS along with the Full Time Jobs Initiative refer on many of their clients to BAPTEC Ltd to attend certified IT training.



2.5 LES medication services /Joblink

Is the Blanchardstown Local Employment Service operating under the auspices of Blanchardstown Area Partnership. The LES provides long term unemployed people including refugees with access to a range of supports and services aimed at assisting them gain employment. Mediators provide one to one guidance and support for refugees such as CV preparation and interview skills. Over the past three years alone the LES has successfully engaged with xx refugees and has progressed xx onto either further training or employment. The LES is experiencing a large increase of new refugee clients registering whom a rent poverty trap catches out. (refer to page... for more detail)

2.6 Employers Unit

Although the Employers Unit is funded through the LES budget it is nevertheless a strategic part of BAP's Economic Strand. This unit is BAP's link to employers in the Dublin 15 area and has built up a particular expertise. The unit is in fact a "Social Recruitment Agency" and as such deals with the placement of all BAP clients including refugees. In 2004, the unit placed 150 people.

In addition to its 'core work of linking with employers, the Unit liaised with the Blanchardstown EQUAL Initiative and the Greater Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce to help deliver EQUAL's 3rd theme 'Working with Employers'.

The outputs of the EQUAL Employers Action-50 employers participated in 3 recruitment and selection training programmes focusing on Equality. An Equality Workshop was ran for organisations, which helped employers to develop and deliver an Equality Policies.

Co-ordination

2.7 Core Skills Initiative/Learning Development Agency

In 1998 a consortium of local agencies joined with BAP to launch the Core Sills Initiative. Core Skills are generic to all occupations and are used in everyday life such as communication, problem solving, IT skills and working with others. They are fundamental to employment, training and life fulfillment. As a result the Partnership established the Learning Development Agency in 1999 to develop the core skills initiative. *Pilot groups of agencies in Blanchardstown tested Core Skills materials with their clients*

- *The FAS Asylum Seekers Unit*
- LES Jobs Clubs
- Blanchardstown Training Services
- Full Time Jobs Initiative

2.8 Pathways

The Pathways Programme was established specifically for NEAP clients who are over six months unemployed. It “adopts a cognitive-behavioral approach to learning, which aims to change the attitudes and actions of participants towards employment”. It was designed to cater for a diverse range of learners and to be accessible to individuals with low literacy skills. In Blanchardstown, LES/Joblink ran Pathways. Jim Brown was responsible for establishing the content of the Programme over the summer of 2003. Vera Hickey formerly of the Local Development Agency (LDA) in Blanchardstown provided input with this task.

Blanchardstown Area Partnership re-directed the appointee from its own LDSIP staff resources to coordinate the Programme. Linda Coventry was appointed to oversee and run the Programme between October and December 2003. This was an ambitious task and it involved many individual elements such as

- ✓ Designing a structured timetable with appropriate tutor/information slots
- ✓ Addressing clients information needs
- ✓ Keeping sign in sheets
- ✓ Organising participation costs for clients on completion of the Programme
- ✓ Liaising with FAS at local and regional level

Profile of Pathways Programme Clients

In total, 51 NEAP clients completed the four Pathways courses beginning in September 2003 and finishing up in December. The age spectrum of clients ranged from nineteen years up as far as fifty-four. The majority (61%) of course attendees were male and they in turn were also slightly older on average than their female counterparts. This is not surprising given the higher number and older age profile of males signing on the live register in Blanchardstown. *More than one fifth or 22% of the course attendees were foreign-nationals.* The educational and work skills that participants possessed varied significantly. This ménage of clients posed a significant challenge to the tutors in delivering each separate course.

2.9 EQUAL Initiative

“The aim of the Blanchardstown EQUAL Project is to tackle the factors that lead to discrimination and inequality, and to effect structural change within organisations and companies (statutory, voluntary and private) in the Blanchardstown area for the benefit of individuals and groups trying to access employment opportunities

Influencing

2.10 Rent Supplement Paper

BAP completed a policy paper, which helped draw attention to several interlinked barriers people in receipt of private rent supplement experience in accessing employment. This has enormous repercussions for the integration of the ‘New Communities’⁵ into Blanchardstown considering that 80% of all private rent supplement recipients in 2004 were foreign nationals. This matter could also be further compounded by the details of revised arrangements announced by Mr Michael McDowell TD, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, for the processing of claims for *permission to remain from the non-national parents of Irish children who were born before 1 January 2005*. As part of his or her application, each parent must demonstrate every effort to become economically viable within an initial period of two years. If a person with ‘leave to remain’ is caught out by the private poverty rent supplement trap then it may be virtually impossible for them to become economically viable within this restricted time period.

⁵ Migrant worker, refugees, people with leave to remain

2.11 Numbers engaged through information and provision

Mobile Information Unit-Blanchardstown Centre for the Unemployed

The Partnership has provided a small €10,000 subvention in recent years towards the running costs of the mobile information unit *ran by the Blanchardstown Centre for the Unemployed*. This service operates as a referral conduit for refugees and ‘asylum seekers with the right to work’ to labour market programmes (Full Time Jobs Initiative, Community Employment) plus the LES. The mobile information unit alongside the LES therefore partially fulfils BAP’s outreach strategy to highlight the services offered by the Partnership.

Community Development Strand

Several Partnership staff members supported asylum seekers and refugees under this strand. In contrast to the Economic Development Strand, BAP staff engages with this target group indirectly through community development groups and networks locally, regionally and nationally.

Influencing

2.12 Blanchardstown Asylum Seekers and Refugee Network (BARN)

BAP doesn’t normally directly organise events for asylum seekers and refugees under this particular strand. Instead BAP’s Community Links Worker supports foreign nationals via BARN and tries to influence its direction and planned activities. This issue-based network members, volunteer their own time to aid with the integration of foreign nationals into Blanchardstown.

Co-ordination

In late 2001, BAP’s Equality Officer successfully applied for funding under the National Anti-Racism Awareness Programme ‘*Know Racism*’ to cover the costs of a ***need analysis research***. BAP staff in conjunction with the Blanchardstown Asylum Seeker and Refugee Network (BARN) oversaw the completion of a *needs analysis and skills audit household survey of asylum seekers and refugees* in 2002. Sixty people from different ethnic minorities were surveyed in the process. *The research findings and recommendations assisted BAP draw up a strategy document around asylum seekers and refugees*. Some of the report findings listed below were startling.

Main Research Findings

- ✓ Over half of respondents experienced discrimination and or racist abuse
- ✓ Over half had language or literacy difficulties
- ✓ Over half felt socially excluded
- ✓ Three quarters said that they did not have adequate information on services and facilities in Dublin 15

Seven focus points of BAP’s asylum seeker and refugee strategy 2003-2004

- ✓ Language difficulties
- ✓ Intercultural awareness
- ✓ Links with city based refugee support groups
- ✓ Health initiative
- ✓ Enterprise, education and employment
- ✓ Transnational learning
- ✓ Public relations e.g. Metro Eireann

Influencing

2.13 Pocket Sized Leaflet Foldout

a) A steering group involving BARN members and BAP staff helped produce a ***pocket sized information leaflet foldout*** pointing to key services and supports within the area. The foldout that was translated into five languages and was funded under the EQUAL Initiative. This was in direct response to the final research finding that three quarters of those surveyed “did not have adequate information on services and facilities in Dublin 15”.

Influencing

BARN's future strategies

b) BARN is increasingly looking to influence City Centre based agencies such as Integrate Ireland who provide services to asylum seekers and refugees. In doing so BARN has also sought to determine what are the present gaps for asylum seekers and refugees in D15. This will facilitate BARN to draw up a new area action plan. The D15 Forum Worker Niall Sexton has recently facilitated a couple of sessions around these activities. A new definition of BARN, its structure, BARN member's responsibilities etc have all been covered. BAP's Community Links Worker has been involved in the process recently and sourced funding to pay for a morning consultation exercise with asylum seekers.

Health Strand

Service Delivery

BAP's Community Links Worker and Fingal Volunteer Bureau **organised a number of health talks with ethnic minorities** around how specifically their health needs could be better met.

Education Strand

Service Delivery

Millennium Fund

The Millennium Fund for Disadvantage is part of a European Social Fund package to support and encourage greater participation of students from disadvantaged areas with regard to retention and participation in further of higher education courses. Several Partnership clients who are refugees have attended the Institute of Technology in Blanchardstown as a consequence of receiving a bursary under the Millennium Fund.

Youth Development Strand

Service Delivery

Preventing Early School Leaving / Accelerated Language Learning Initiative

This programme is run in Riversdale Community College and St Philip's Senior National School on an after school basis and provides accelerated language tuition for international students. The objectives are to upskill international students in language competency and thereby improve their chances of progressing with the educational system. The desired outcome is that improved language competency will led to improved integration with the school system. The Partnership began to fund this initiative in 2004 in response to the large number of foreign nationals settling in D15 with young families. 149 children received group tuition in the last academic year whereas 60 have also benefited so far this year.

Applications were invited from schools in the Blanchardstown area for small-scale **grants to help host multi cultural events**. St Pat's JNS, Ladyswell National School, Blakestown Community School, Riversdale Community School and St Pat's SNS all ran events to celebrate multi cultural diversity.

GAPS

"It is important not to waste time, money and scarce resources on uncoordinated, quick-fix, anti-racism "initiatives" such as poster campaigns in schools and distribution of "message" literature or videos. Short term, one-off approaches, including exhortation, message films and maybe surprisingly, direct anti-prejudice lessons have been found to be ineffective in combating racism" ⁶

⁶ Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education, 'Education for a Pluralist Society': The Direction of Intercultural Education (2001), Education Centre, Drumcondra

Family Support and Childcare Strand

Service Delivery

Lone Parent Groups

BAP's former Lone Parent and Family Support Workers supported the formation of single parent and mother toddler groups in D15. This occurred in consultation with committee members from the Greater Blanchardstown Lone Parent Steering Group⁷. The objectives of these groups are to provide an outlet for social interaction, education, information and access to other services for single parents. *Many asylum seekers and refugee families directly benefited via these groups.*

Co-ordination

Fingal County Childcare Committee

The Partnership originally helped coordinate the establishment of the Fingal County Childcare Committee. BAP's Family Support Worker, over a period of two years, supported several local childcare committees draw down €1,250,000 under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme, creating 85 additional full time childcare places. Several refugee families have since availed of the new and improved local childcare facilities coming on stream.

Built Environment Strand

Influencing

⁷ FAS, HSE,

