

EVALUATION
OF
TRAVELLER
FORKLIFTING COURSE

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Glossary

BAP – Blanchardstown Area Partnership

LES- Local Employment Service

DSCFA- Department of Social Community and Family Affairs

BTSG- Blanchardstown Traveller Support Group

LDA- Local Development Agency

Background

As far back as August 2001, Blanchardstown Local Employment Service initiated contact with local Travellers about how best to design a potential training programme that would meet their needs from a training and employment perspective. Thereafter the LES mediator submitted an application for funding to the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs and liased with the local Jobs Facilitator. The outcome of this on going consultative exercise with various parties was that in January 2002 the LES contracted the services of Forklift and Safety Training Services Ltd to run a course for male members of the Traveller community living in Blanchardstown.

Course content

The course itself was run in Finglas until the middle of February and seven Travellers received certificates by the end of the fortnight. In order to facilitate the participants they were driven to and from the training centre in Finglas on a daily basis. The course content covered subject matters such as

- Reach Truck
- Counter Balance
- Power Pallet Track
- Manual Handling
- Workplace Health and Safety

Initially two additional weeks of job seeking skills were to have been a feature of the course but due to mitigating circumstances (explained further on) this element of the course unfortunately never materialised.

Methodology

The Research and Evaluation Officer from Blanchardstown Area Partnership was requested to evaluate this course co-ordinated by Mr Brian Mooney of the Blanchardstown LES with a view to the final report being presented to Mr Tiny Kirby from the local Social and Family Affairs Offices. In undertaking this summative evaluation the course participants, trainers plus the LES mediator who organised the course were all contacted.

Format

- 2 semi-structured interviews took place with travellers in the LES offices and on one of the camp sites
- Questionnaire completed by the LES mediator
- Questionnaire completed by forklift trainer, course co-ordinator and company director

The key issues, which the evaluation will examine, are as follows

- **Relevance-** to what extent are the programmes objectives still pertinent in relation to the evolving needs and priorities both at a local and national level
- **Efficiency-** how economically have the various inputs been converted into outputs and results?
- * **Effectiveness-** how far have the programme's impacts contributed to achieving its objectives?
- **Utility/Equity-** how do the programme's impacts compare with the needs of this LES client group?
- **Sustainability-** to what extent can the positive changes be expected to last after the programme ceases?

The following are the aims and objectives as described by the LES mediator.

Aims

To engage a group of male Travellers in an educational / training course, providing the group with a positive experience of education / training, enhance each participant's self esteem and give each member of the group a sense of achievement.

Objectives

- To provide the group with certification
- That will enhance their prospects of successfully securing gainful employment in the open labour market
- Improve their personal development and job seeking skills.

Introduction

Based upon the most recent headcount of Travellers in the various Archdioceses of Dublin ¹ there are slightly more than 200 male adult Travellers i.e. over 18, living in Blanchardstown. According to a research report² completed for the Blanchardstown Traveller Support Group, Travellers “felt that their own lack of training contributed to their poor participation in mainstream employment”. The research completed on behalf of the BTSG also conducted a skills audit of adult Travellers. For the purposes of that particular exercise individuals under 12 were eliminated.

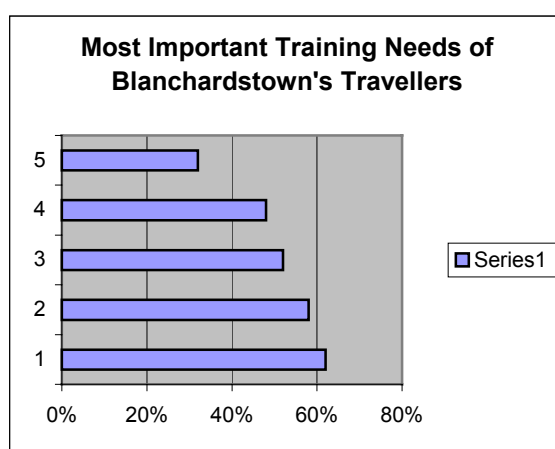


Fig 1: 5= Assertiveness Training, 4= Specific Skills, 3= Personal Development, 2=Community Development, 1= Literacy

Table Two: Skills of the Adult Travellers		
	No of people	%
Travellers who acknowledge no skill/competence	109	30%
Travellers who acknowledged some skill/competence	139	38%
Non Responses	118	32%
Total	366	100%
(n=366)		

¹ The Education and Accommodation Needs of Travellers in the Archdiocese of Dublin CROSSCARE A report by John A. Weafer June 2001

² Travellers in Blanchardstown Author: Christina M Quinlan

If we are to assume that the above data is still reasonably accurate several years later one can conclude that the skill levels amongst male Travellers are significantly lower than for the equivalent male settled population. According to one of the Travellers interviewed as part of this evaluation he

“didn’t have any previous experience, no qualifications or anything else before hand”

He was now thinking of doing an advanced reach truck arm course as he

“ now has something he can build on”.

Indeed the LES mediator³ was able to indicate that none of the seven male Travellers that completed the course had either a formal or technical qualification before they approached and sought support from the LES. All were therefore early school leavers fitting the profile of many male Travellers. We can safely conclude therefore that this course was particularly relevant to the Travellers who completed it and obtained a certificate at the end of the two weeks training. All seven Travellers now have some ‘specific skills’, which is listed under figure 1 as a most important training need of Travellers in general. It appears the fact that the travellers themselves were consulted and helped shape the outline of the course greatly improved the chances of them actually seeing the course through to the end.

By August two from the original seven course participants had secured employment. This is obviously a welcome development and could possibly be the first occasion these particular individuals have secured ‘mainstream open employment’. The Traveller population have to overcome a lot of prejudice in many aspects of their lives. This is no different when it comes to applying for jobs and securing employment. As part of the same research undertaken for the BTSG the attitudes of commercial business managers towards Travellers in Blanchardstown were sought. One of its findings was that 70% of the business managers were either non-committed or expressed reservations in response to the statement on hiring Travellers. Put in context this makes it all the more difficult for Travellers to find a job. Of the remaining five individuals one has moved abroad whilst the other four are currently receiving mediation via the LES on an irregular basis.

The LES mediator has built up elements of trust and respect with the individuals.

“Gaining the trust and allaying the suspicions of the Travellers”

was in fact one of the challenges the mediator encountered in setting up the course. It took an extraordinary effort on behalf of the mediator beyond the normal call of duty to ensure that the course progressed as smoothly as possible. On many occasions he had to call on participants homes on bad winter mornings to make sure they were going to attend as they had been on drinking sessions the night before. Therefore it took a lot of perseverance on the part of the mediator to keep the participants motivated throughout. He also had to deal

³ Mr Brian Mooney

“with a number of conflict situations during the course”.

There was recognition also that the course had been *“organised quite well”*

“Good of Brian to get it done for us”

“He does this best”

According to the LES mediator

“It should be easier to engage participants in any future initiatives as a number of barriers have been broken down”.

It is very important therefore that there is a follow through as soon as possible so that the link and goodwill can be maintained. The on-going medication which three of the Travellers are receiving therefore it aiding this process.

The actual course trainers were also asked how relevant the course was to the needs of the participants?

“Trainees were armed with skills which should enable them to get employment”

“Their knowledge of the correct operating techniques and skills would enable the participants to be ready for work”

“Yes there is a major demand for forklift operators”

“Their time-keeping was not great”

Unfortunately the proposed literacy and personal development module aspect of the course was never delivered. These particular skills emerged as the third and first most important training needs according to the BTSG report. The reasons why no advancements were made along these fronts were because lack of interest by the Travellers in regard to this aspect of the course. A second reason was that two of the Travellers were involved in a car accident. This is something, which needs to be re-examined closely as a lot of people’s time and efforts went to waste. It is disappointing especially so as the Travellers were consulted with as how best to organise this course to fit their own needs. It could possibly be the case that many of the Travellers feel uncomfortable discussing such issues in a group setting. If there is any lesson to be drawn here it is that possibly as adults this is something which can only be delivered in a one to one setting. However to facilitate this approach it would make it more expensive and time consuming. It could also be the case that some of Travellers were simply not ready to attend the course. Therefore some informal pre-development work may need to be done prior to such a course to help clarify practical course elements.

“They enjoyed what they consider the tangible modules on the course e.g. forklift, but did not recognise the benefits of developing their soft skills”.

Views of Travellers as to the merits of the course?

<i>How would you rate the course?</i>	<i>Which parts of the course did you find most useful?</i>	<i>Any parts of the course you didn't find useful?</i>	<i>How relevant was the course to your own needs?</i>	<i>What did you think of the trainers who gave the course?</i>	What did you think of the guidance notes?	How are you using the skills you picked up from the course at the moment?	Would you recommend this course to other people?
<p>“Very good”</p> <p>“Brilliant course”</p>	<p>“Found it all very useful”</p> <p>“Panel-best of all-easiest –other pars took a bit of getting used to”</p> <p>“Ridge panel truck, you could work inside and outside with it-not stuck inside all day”</p>	<p>“No none at all”</p> <p>“Every part of the course was good”</p>	<p>“Didn't have previous experience, no qualifications or anything else beforehand”</p> <p>“Thinking of doing reach arm course-now had something he can build on”</p> <p>“Got everything I wanted to from the course-now just want a job”</p>	<p>“Trainer was good went through and explained everything”</p> <p>“Given a sheet of paper to check everything was safe”</p> <p>“People did the best for us”</p> <p>“Good of Brian to get it done for us” “He does this best”</p> <p>“organised quite well”</p>	<p>“Handouts were very handy”</p> <p>“Every morning the trainers would go through things for safety reasons”</p>	<p>“Trying to get a job at the moment-done a few interviews-lacks real work experience”</p> <p>“People are getting a licence-but its another thing getting a job from it”</p>	<p>“Recommend the course to people who really wanted to do it”</p> <p>“Length of the course was just right, if you couldn't learn in that time you never would”</p> <p>“Recommend the course-something to do instead of hanging about the place-even if its just for 2 weeks”</p>

Conclusions

The training needs of male Travellers are currently not being met in Blanchardstown. The Forklifting course represents the first occasion that a course has been designed in conjunction with Travellers by an agency (LES) to try as best meet their training needs with a view to securing employment. This is a positive step but clearly a lot of follow up activity is required if the momentum and goodwill created is not to dissipate. The onus for this rests with a number of bodies and cannot be the preserve of any one agency.

The LES mediator undertook most of the co-ordination and staffing functions in establishing the course.

- Consultation with Travellers prior to course
- Sourced funding
- Visits to halting sites
- Recruitment of course participants
- Negotiated with training providers regarding price of course
- Aftercare of participants

The efforts of the mediator are to be commended but this approach could not be sustained in the longer term. Should this continue it would reduce the amount of time the LES mediator could offer all his clients and potentially they could adversely be affected.

The course has been relatively effective in that all the seven participants have obtained a certificate. This is the first time that any of this group has been awarded a cert and can only have boosted their confidence and self esteem. Engaging with Travellers is probably more difficult than with most other disadvantaged groups in society, as their development issues e.g. literacy needs etc are in many cases multiple. The amount of one on one support they require to help them progress into mainstream employment or further education and training requires more concentration of resources. Gaining the trust of Travellers is something that requires patience. The mediator reported that he found it intimidating at times engaging with Travellers on sites. Many sections of society are also prejudiced against Travellers. This makes it all the more difficult for Travellers to secure employment.

Unfortunately it was only possible to speak directly to two of the seven Travellers in completing this evaluation. However both were overall very happy that they attended the course and were clearly pleased that they had received a cert at the end of the two weeks. Each of them was very eager to find work and was motivated to do so. They also indicated that they were willing to pursue further courses if they felt it would advance their employment prospects in the longer term. The course therefore must have provided these individuals with a positive experience of training, which is one of the course aims. Both had received follow up support from the LES mediator, as have most of the other participants. Again they were very appreciative and recognised the amount of time and effort the LES mediator had put in.

On a less positive note none of the Travellers attended the personal development section of the course, which the mediator in conjunction with the Learning

Development Agency went to great lengths to set up. The evaluation did not establish the reasons for this and therefore one can but purely speculate.

Recommendations

- 1) With over 200 male Travellers in Blanchardstown (the largest concentration in Ireland) it is evident that there is a need for a full time development officer to work solely with male Travellers with a view to helping them progress into mainstream employment or further training/ education. The funding for such a post could possibly be delivered through the EQUAL Initiative with the support of the BTSG and BAP.
- 2) Further efforts must be made to develop Travellers 'soft skills'. This requires the involvement of the LDA and other agencies in Blanchardstown. Attendance records should dictate how much Travellers get for attending the courses.
- 3) The proposed Resource Centre for Travellers in Parslickstown should be the venue from where training course operate. Obviously this may not be practical for the likes of a Forklifting course but possibly the theory aspects could be delivered from there and help improve overall attendances.
- 4) LES must continue to help persuade employers to employ Travellers. There is a requirement for a PR exercise to be undertaken therefore. Once again there is an opportunity for this to link in with the EQUAL Initiative part of whose remit is to help persuade employers to adapt a more flexible and inclusive approach to minority groupings.
- 5) It would not be sustainable for the LES mediator to have sole responsibility for delivering the likes of the Forklifting course once again. Instead his concentration should rest upon providing Travellers with information as to where they can attend training courses. This person could perhaps be the link between Travellers and the development officer. Of course this person would still be providing mediation to Travellers in their everyday job.
- 6) The Forklifting Company that delivered the training should be used again should it be decided to re-run such a similar course, as the quality of training was seen as high by the LES and the trainees alike.
- 7) Any further training delivered should be flexible to gain the trust and co-operation of Travellers.

Bibliography

The Education and Accommodation Needs of Travellers in the Archdiocese of Dublin
CROSSCARE A report by John A. Weafer June 2001

Travellers in Blanchardstown Author: Christina M Quinlan

Appendix

Location and number of Travellers living within the BAP Area

Location	Parish	Families	Total Population	Adults	Children<18
Permanent Halting Sites					
St Brigid's Park,	Porterstown	8	34	17	17
Total permanent halting sites		8	34	17	17
Temporary Halting Sites					
Cappagh Field-St Mary's Blanch'		37	195	78	117
Cruiserath, Mulhuddart –Corduff		19	85	41	44
Cappagh, St. Christopher's-Blanch'		16	93	35	58
Total Halting Sites		80	407	171	236
Group Housing					
Morgan Place, /Blanch'		7	35	14	21
Parlickstown Grdns.	Mulhuddart	6	42	13	29
Total Group Housing		13	77	27	50
Unauthorised Halting Sites					
Old Navan Road	Mulhuddart	10	72	29	43
Dunsink Lane	Blanch'	43	219	104	115
The Graveyard, Mulhuddart	Corduff	10	39	18	21
Opposite Graveyard	Corduff	3	12	4	8
Ballycoolin Road	Corduff	1	5	2	3
Old Navan Road	Mulhuddart	2	11	5	6
Morgan's Place	Castleknock	3	10	4	6
Total Unauthorised Sites		72	368	166	202
Standard Housing ** Council Houses					
		23	104	45	59
Total Standard Housing **		23	104	45	59
Total		196	990	426	564

Source "The Education and Accommodation Needs of Travellers in the Archdiocese of Dublin" A report by John A.Weafer CROSSCARE The Catholic Social Service Agency

**** Total Standard Housing figure is inclusive of all Fingal**