

Ballymun Job Centre Co-operative Society Limited

STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2016



INTRODUCTION

Since its foundation in 1986 the BJC has evolved into a well established and respected community based organisation that continues to respond to the needs of job-seekers/changers in Ballymun and to the challenges facing the community. The BJC has played and continues to play an important role in addressing social and economic exclusion and many of the innovative actions and activities that the Centre has developed have impacted positively not only on individuals living in Ballymun but also individuals in other disadvantaged communities in Dublin. The BJC has become a model for local community based labour market services that respond to the needs of local job seekers.

Employment is a key factor that determines the level of someone's social inclusion, both at the macro level – in order to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of our welfare systems – and at the micro level – because paid employment is the best route out of poverty.

- Employability can be defined as the relative capacity of an individual to achieve meaningful employment given the interaction between personal characteristics and the labour market.

Unemployment and low participation in the labour market are heavily concentrated in particular groups in society and within particular geographical areas. These concentrations take different forms in different areas, reflecting skill or area differences. However, it is a common feature that people with low earning potential are those most likely to have poor employment prospects due to a lack of positive employability characteristics.

The degree to which an individual can acquire new skills and knowledge will to a large extent determine not alone their quality of employment and level of income but also their capacity to adapt to changes in economic and labour market conditions. To-day's labour market requires an individual to be flexible, adaptable and to be open to learning new skills. Many employers consider these, as key employability factors required by an individual in order to be successful within the labour market. As a result the concept of 'employability for life' and not a 'job for life' should now be the goal for many individuals within the labour market. It is against this background that the concept of life-long learning and employability becomes increasingly relevant to policies and actions to address poverty, social and economic exclusion and to ensure a more equal labour market.

Labour market policies should aim to assist individuals, particularly in disadvantaged areas to reach their full potential and to enhance their employability. This is necessary if in the long-term individuals in disadvantaged areas are to overcome poverty and social exclusion. A necessary strategy to achieve this objective is to raise the skill, education levels but also the labour market aspirations of individuals living within these communities. The actions outlined in the Plan are intended to achieve this objective.

The Plan sets the work of the Ballymun Job Centre in a wider context. It is clear that the focus of the work of the BJC is at a local level. However the ability to deliver effective services at a local level is influence by many factors outside of Ballymun. A primary objective of the BJC strategy is to ensure that individuals in Ballymun have the opportunity to benefit from any future upturn in the economy at national and EU level. The Plan is intended

to support job seekers in Ballymun and particularly disadvantaged job seekers to have access to more and better jobs.

THE BJC: AN OVERVIEW

The Ballymun Job Centre (BJC) was established in 1986 as a community response to a chronic unemployment situation. Since opening, the BJC has adapted to changes in the environment in order to respond more effectively to the needs of the community. A voluntary organisation with charitable status, the BJC has a proven track record of providing quality and innovative services.

It is the belief of the BJC that every person has the capacity to realise their potential within the labour market and to this end has provided a comprehensive range of services to create pathways to further training, education or employment for its registered clients. This is done within a progression framework, which is initiated by; client referral (self referral) → registration → Guidance and Job seeking support → Processes (specialist services) → Training Education → Job placement.

Seamless Services for Job Seekers

Funding for the BJC labour market services and activities comes from a variety of different sources. The service is made up of a number of different and inter-related elements. Each of the separately funded services, projects and activities are linked to form a seamless service to the clients

Since 1996 the BJC has managed the Local Employment Service Network (LESN) on behalf of the Department of Social Protection (DSP). The BJC also manages a Job Club and JI on behalf of DSP. The BJC is working with the DSP in the provision of the national Employment Action Plan and labour market activation as part of the Pathways to Work strategy.

On behalf of the Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force (BLDTF), the BJC offers a number of services aimed at providing supports to the labour market for clients coming from a background of drug or alcohol use.

Relationships with Employers

A key element of the work at the BJC is to build relationships with employers. The BJC provides a professional and free service to employers assisting them in recruitment of staff. The BJC has over twenty years experience of working with employers in meeting their recruitment needs.

Building Partnerships

Employability is influenced by a number of diverse factors. In recognition of this the BJC has built relationships and works closely with a wide range of public, private, community and local, national and European organisations.

Training and Education

In order to improve the prospects for clients accessing quality, sustainable employment it is often necessary to increase their skills and educational levels. Thus the development of training and education programmes is an important aspect of the work of the BJC. As a result, the BJC has developed and implemented many training and education programmes.

The BJC has worked and continues to work with a wide range of agencies in order to deliver the training.

Innovation and Research: From Local to EU to Local

The BJC has a strong belief in the need to remain innovative and to try new ideas to address identified issues arising from the day-to-day experience of clients. Since the mid 90s the BJC has accessed and managed various European Union and private trusts funded programmes. These provide the BJC with the resources necessary to be innovative and to test new ideas and ways of working. Over the years the BJC has made determined efforts to ensure the lessons and work of the EU Projects improved the delivery of services and the way we work with clients.

PROFILE OF BALLYMUN

Ballymun, located on the north side of Dublin City, was built as part of a large public housing scheme by Dublin City Council in the 1960’s and early 1970’s in response to the significant housing shortages in the city at the time. Intended as a ‘state-of-the-art’ and modern town, the scheme saw the construction of 2,814 flats in a series of 36 - 4, 8 and 15 story tower blocks – the first and only tower block scheme of its kind in Ireland – along with a further 2,400 houses, all within a 1.5 square mile radius. Over the years a lack of investment in the physical and social infrastructure of the area resulted in a significant degeneration of Ballymun’s physical environment, and the rise of serious social and economic disadvantage in the area.

In 1996, a decision was made to demolish the high-rise tower blocks and replace them with low-rise housing. Ballymun Regeneration Ltd was set up by Dublin City Council and charged with the task of regenerating the physical, infrastructure of the entire area.

In terms of the physical regeneration over 2,700 new housing units have been built, a new main street is under construction complete with local shops, a sports and leisure centre, a new Civic Centre, a primary health care centre, arts centre and two new hotels. Early in 2009 IKEA opened a store.

The population of the Ballymun catchment area is: 20,141(Source, CSO 2011) of which 16.6% (3,343 persons) are 15 to 24 year olds, which is significantly higher than the national share of 12.6%.

Unemployment and Ballymun

Figures from the most recent Census (2011) show that Ballymun performs very poorly in terms of key labour market indicators relative to the National Average (see table below), with a significantly lower employment rate (44%) and higher unemployment rate (32%) than the national average (50% and 19% respectively). There is also a larger proportion of unskilled/semi-skilled (21% compared to 14% nationally).

Main Labour Force PES Data, State, Dublin City and Ballymun (A, B, C, D) 2011 Census

	State	Dublin	Ballymun
Employment Rate	50%	51%	44%
Unemployment Rate	19%	18%	32%
Un-skilled/Semi-skilled %	14%	10%	21%

Source: CSO

The figures are particularly stark when the 15-24 age-group are considered. The unemployment rate for this age group is 54% compared to 39% for the national average and 34% for Dublin. While the youth employment rate for Ballymun of 21% is similar to the national average of 22% this is due to a relatively high participation rate of 46% in Ballymun versus the national average of 30%, rather than a comparable incidence of employment among those participating in the labour market. Indeed, the relatively high participation rate for Ballymun youth is largely due to the fact that they tend to leave the education system much earlier, with 41% of this cohort having ceased full-time education compared to 33% nationally. This is reflected in their low level of educational attainment with 88% Ballymun youth having at best a post-leaving cert qualification.

Main Labour Force PES Data, State, Dublin City and Ballymun 2011 Census (15-24)

	State	Dublin	Ballymun
Employment Rate	22%	25%	21%
Unemployment Rate	39%	34%	54%
Labour Force Participation	30%	38%	46%

Source: CSO Census, Small Area Population Statistics.

From a policy perspective, perhaps the most relevant (and certainly the most up-to-date) source of labour force information at a local level is the Live Register¹. However, the Live Register does not paint the full picture of those out of work in Ballymun. Ballymun has a large number of single parent family units accounting for 26% of all family units in the area. Many single parents who are out of work are not counted on the Live Register if, as is usually the case, they are in receipt of a One Parent Family Payment. Furthermore, individuals in receipt of a disability payment are not counted on the Live Register and young unemployed (under 18) are also not counted on the Live Register. In March 2000 a local labour force survey put the percentage of unemployed at 58.4% higher than the Live Register.

A range of factors contribute to the higher levels of unemployment in Ballymun, compared to the National figures. These include the high prevalence of low educational qualifications and the dominance of unskilled and semi-skilled manual occupational backgrounds. This highlights the importance of providing relevant education and training provision for job seekers in Ballymun. Addressing the labour market needs of individuals will require long-term strategies and actions that have the capacity to increase the skill levels of individuals in Ballymun in order to enable them to compete for employment that is more sustainable and provides in the long-term the possibility of higher income levels.

In summary, Ballymun has been characterised as an area of social and economic disadvantage and consequently much of the population remain low skilled, with lower educational and career aspirations. During the past ten years the area has undergone a huge physical regeneration (which is on-going), but the impact of a social and economic regeneration has not been as evident. It has been particularly badly impacted by the current economic downturn.

¹ The Live Register is not designed to measure unemployment as it includes part-time workers, seasonal and casual workers entitled to unemployment payments. The numbers on the Live Register tends to be higher than QNHS (approx. 40-50% higher on average).

THE PLAN

Vision Statement: People living in the greater Ballymun area have the capacity to realise their labour market potential and can access employment that provides them with a quality of life free from poverty and welfare dependence

Mission Statement: To raise the skills, educational levels and the labour market aspirations of individuals in the greater Ballymun area

Strategic goals:

- Increase employability by supporting clients to develop their employment related skills, education and abilities
- Increase individual's labour market choices and earning potential from employment thus reducing their vulnerability to poverty
- Maximise employment, education or training opportunities for local people
- Develop innovative approaches in response to identified labour market needs and issues
- Co-operate with and foster co-operation between organisations and agencies at European, National and local level

Strategic Objective (SO)

SO 1: Provide an information, registration, career guidance, placement and support service for job seekers and changers

This is the core of our work with job seekers. The BJC acts as a first point of contact for the community who wish to avail of the range of employment support services. It is important that the BJC provides an initial information point on the range of services, educational and training opportunities and offer general advice on labour market, training and education options. The registration process provides the opportunity for an initial assessment of the client's needs and is the gateway through which clients are referred to the most appropriate service to meet their needs. The provision of guidance service for those seeking to return to work is necessary for two main reasons:

The profile of the job seeker in Ballymun means that the provision of a service that can assist individuals to determine their aptitude for particular employment and to clarify career direction for individuals is core to the objectives of the BJC.

Guidance is an important part of the supports to achieve the objective of providing individuals not just with a job but also with the opportunity to access jobs with long-term prospects. This is an important element in actions to address poverty.

OBJECTIVE ONE:	How
Provide an information, registration, career guidance, placement and support service for job seekers and changers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide labour market information and a registration service for job seekers and changes • Provide one-to-one and group support to clients • Provide career advice and direction to clients using appropriate career guidance tools • Assist clients to identify appropriate career paths • Assist and encourage clients to identify, prepare for and access opportunities in training and/or education that can lead to placement in employment

SO 2: Develop relationships with and provide support to employer

The provision of an employer support service is important, as the progression of clients is dependent on the continued development of contact with employers.

Without the capacity to match clients to jobs the likelihood of providing employment opportunities for the clients are greatly diminished.

The role of the employer support service is to provide employers with a greater understanding of the work of the BJC and to open the doorway to employment opportunities for disadvantaged job seeker that they would not otherwise have.

OBJECTIVE TWO:	How
Develop relationships with and provide support to employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop relationships with employers to promote the work of the BJC and the skills and education of the individuals registered. • Identify vacancies and work to match the employers' job requirements with clients with the required skills and education • Fill vacancies for employers and place clients into employment • Develop actions to encourage clients placed in low skilled employment to access education and training in order to progress within their employment

SO 3: Provide for the implementation and development of training and education programmes

Given the profile of job seekers in Ballymun it is necessary to increase the skills and educational levels in order to improve their prospects of accessing quality sustainable employment that will give them the capacity to earn more and thus reduce their vulnerability to poverty. The provision of training is central to actions aimed at enhancing access for local people to employment in higher skills jobs

OBJECTIVE THREE:	How
Provide for the implementation and development of training and education programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The BJC will identified, designed and implement training and education programmes, with a focus on preparing clients for the jobs of the future • Training courses are designed and proposals are drawn up in conjunction with staff, other agencies and submitted on time to relevant funders • A recruitment and selection process for all training programmes is organised and relevant staff are involved. • Evaluation framework is used to produce evaluation reports for each training course. Progress and end of course reports are provided to the relevant funding organisation

SO 4: Provide for the implementation and development of special innovative programmes and research

The BJC has a long history of working with clients. This experience has shown that sometime “mainstream” services do not meet the needs of clients. At other times the service or intervention that the client needs is not available or is in a form that does not meet the needs of the client.

This objective is intended to provide the BJC with the opportunity to access funding to test out new approaches and idea that are aimed at meeting the needs of the clients.

The objective will develop new actions that can be adapted into mainstream services, thus improving the overall quality of services provided to clients.

OBJECTIVE FOUR	How
Provide for the implementation and development of special innovative programmes and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals are developed and application made to appropriate funding bodies • Relationships are maintained with partner organisations • Progress report are provided on time • All financial and administrative aspects are implemented • Dissemination of the learning is undertaken to influence the provision of mainstream services.

SO 5: Continue to develop and implement quality assurance systems for all services

The BJC seeks to provide a quality service to a high standard. Every client is entitled to a quality service that meets his or her needs. Implement and maintain independent standards such as the Q Mark and FETAC assists the Centre to maintain its quality standards.

OBJECTIVE FIVE:	How
Continue to develop and implement quality assurance systems for all services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and maintain quality systems • Carry out ongoing reviews of various aspects of the services to ensure quality standards • Maintain external quality standards such as Q-mark and FETAC

SO 6: Ensure the continuous development and involvement of BJC staff in the development of the services

The capacity of the BJC to provide quality service is directly related to the quality of the staff, staff are our key resource. The involvement of staff is central to the successful implementation of the BJC Mission. As a result the BJC seeks to implement HR policies and practices that are person centred based on values of fairness and equality and can balance the needs of the organisation with the need to provide all staff with a positive employment experience and an opportunity to progress.

OBJECTIVE SIX:	How
Ensure the continuous development and involvement of BJC staff in the development of the services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a safe environment and good working conditions for the staff • Review staff training needs • Staff are consulted in the development of day-to-day improvements in the quality of the service provided • Staff handbook is reviewed and updated when necessary • Implement improvements in the staff PO/PI system, ensure that all staff have one-to-ones

SO 7: Market and promote the work of the BJC effectively

It is important for the future development of the BJC that the good news and the positive impact that the BJC has on the lives of individuals in the community is told. Many individual, employers and others are not aware of the work and services of the BJC. It is important that information on the services available reaches the individuals and organisation not aware of our work and the services that are provided

OBJECTIVE SEVEN:	How
Market and promote the work of the BJC effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and circulate appropriate promotional materials • Participate actively in forums, committees, groups and boards • Maintain and develop BJC Web site and other communication media including social media • Make presentation at conferences and other events

SO 8: Source and effectively manage the necessary resources (*human, capital and financial*)

The BJC is a “not for profit” organisation with charitable status. The aim of the BJC is to assist individuals to improve the quality of their lives by improving their employability and their labour market opportunities. The funding for the various services and actions comes from a variety of different sources, private, National and EU. The BJC has a duty to the funders, community and clients to ensure that the funding it receives is managed in an effective manner and achieve value. The maintenance of an effective financial management system and procedures is central for the successful development and delivery of the various services provided by the BJC

OBJECTIVE EIGHT:	How
Source and effectively manage the necessary resources (<i>human, capital and financial</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding is secured for all the actions and services via discussions with the relevant agencies and Departments • Funding is identified to develop new actions • All actions and services have a budget and operate within budget • Financial reports are produced when required for funding agencies • Annual audit is produce • Funding is identified to secure new premises for the BJC

SO 9: Consolidate and further develop Partnerships with others

Employability is influenced by a number of diverse factors. The factors include demographics, life history (personal and family circumstances), caring responsibilities, physical and psychological health status, educational qualifications, literacy, problem solving skills, self-sustained learning, occupational history, location (negative stereotyping of place of residence) and the welfare unemployment trap. Addressing these factors requires tailored and sustained intervention by a range of agencies. In recognition of the above the BJC will continue to build relationships and worked closely with a wide range of public, private, community and local, national and European organisations.

OBJECTIVE NINE:	How
Consolidate and further develop Partnerships with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships are developed and maintained with a range of organisations and agencies at local, national and EU level • Develop and implement joint actions with other agencies and organisations • Agree service level agreements with organisations and agencies as appropriate • Develop partnerships with employers and employer networks

SO 10: Increase the number of job opportunities in the area

The main objective of the Plan and the work of the BJC are to provide employment opportunities for people in Ballymun. In order to achieve this objective it is important that the number of employment opportunities in the area increase. The BJC while not directly involved in attracting inward investment or enterprise development has an important support role to play. As a result the BJC will work with local and national agencies in their efforts to attract investment into Ballymun with the aim of increasing employment opportunities.

OBJECTIVE TEN:	How
Increase the number of job opportunities in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with state and private agencies to promote Greater Ballymun as an attractive investment area for new job opportunities • Work with and support organisations developing enterprise activities in the area • Promote the BJC services to employers setting up in the area so as to maximise the number of local people accessing employment

SO 11: Increase the links with the schools and families

The BJC already works with the local schools. Over the lifetime of this plan it will further develop these links and look at actions to develop links with families. The level of formal education an individual achieves is an important determinant of how well he/she will progress within the labour market. Part of the foundation for this takes place within the family environment and the schools system. How the individual interacts with these two elements will tend to influence their perception of employment, careers and the labour market. Thus there is a strong link between the school and family environment and the client's experience. As a result it is important that the individual focused services provided by the BJC link into these important elements of the client's life experiences.

OBJECTIVE ELEVEN:	How
Increase the links with the schools in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with the local schools • Agree specific actions with the schools to increase awareness of labour market options for students • Work with the schools to strengthen the link from school to the labour market