

# Review of a Civil Service Traveller Internship Pilot Programme 'Not Like Usual'



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,  
EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM

*Working for a Safer, Fairer Ireland*



# Review of a Civil Service Traveller Internship Pilot Programme 2006-2007

## 'Not Like Usual'

Report

to

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

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'I thought it would be a group of Travellers all in a room like usual. It's usually like that, like at FÁS. They didn't explain that. It was different. *Not like usual.*'

'I thought they'd be grumpy cos it's Government Departments'

'The fact of being able to work as a person, not just a Traveller'

# Preface

## Review of a Civil Service Traveller Internship Pilot Programme

As Minister with responsibility for Equality Issues, I am very pleased to introduce this report on a programme of positive action in support of the Traveller Community. Equality is not simply about reacting to discrimination and prejudice. It is also necessary to give positive support to groups and communities in our society who face particular disadvantage.

The Traveller Community have had to deal with significant disadvantage and discrimination over many generations. Like everyone else, Travellers have had to cope with the very rapid social and economic changes that have occurred in Ireland in recent years. Many traditional occupations have died out and there has been increasing pressure on older family and community structures. While Ireland has gone through an economic boom, I think it is fair to say that the benefits have not been felt by many in the Traveller Community. It is against this backdrop that the Government has sought to give positive supports to increase the range of life choices available to Travellers. The High Level Group on Traveller Issues has identified a range of measures which state bodies should prioritise to support Traveller participation. It is very encouraging that all of the social partners have taken a similar view and *Towards 2016* contains a commitment to pursue greater progress for Travellers.

The Traveller Internship Programme in the Civil Service, which was managed by the Department of Finance, is a practical example of how we can follow-through on the commitment agreed by the social partners. The programme has been successful in providing new work opportunities and experiences to Travellers. It also showed that the public service bodies can play a very significant role in new social inclusion initiatives. This is not just a positive thing for society in general but it also expands the awareness among public servants of the communities which they serve. I look forward to the development of further initiatives to support Travellers in the workplace, and I believe this Report will be a key reference in this work.

I want to pay tribute to all of those who worked very hard to deliver a successful programme, including those in Government Departments and agencies and Traveller representatives. I want also to acknowledge the work of Dr. Pauline Conroy and Helen O'Leary who have compiled this Report. In particular I want to record my appreciation of the role played by the programme coordinator, Miriam Joyce, who made a tremendous personal commitment to ensure that all of participants and their Departments had the best of support and encouragement. Of course, the people who deserve the greatest acknowledgment are the Traveller participants themselves. These were a courageous and well motivated group of young people who also received important support from their families. I am confident that they have gained valuable work experience. They have also demonstrated that, where new opportunities are available, Travellers are well capable of making the most of them.



Sean Power T.D.,  
Minister of State for Equality Issues

‘It’s the first time I felt close with the other people and the boss. It’s the first time I ever had that in a job’



# Acknowledgements

## Review of a Civil Service Traveller Internship Pilot Programme 2006-2007

The evaluation that follows benefited from very helpful logistical support from Brendan Sheehy of the Diversity and Equality Law Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Miriam Joyce at the Equality Unit of the Department of Finance. Ms Mary Carmody of FÁS provided essential support to the review and interesting commentary in relation to the study. Mary Flynn of the Public Appointments Service and Billy Coman of South Dublin County Council gave generously of their time and expertise as members of the Traveller Internship Programme Working Group, with particular insights into this Programme and others.

The Working Group to the study, chaired by Gerry Quinlan, produced useful feedback and comments on Drafts of the Final Report, which ensured that issues were presented in a clear and concise fashion.

We are grateful to the Line Managers, Supervisors, Personnel Officers and other officials of those Government Departments, which hosted Traveller interns, for giving of their time and insights into the experience of this initiative.

Pavee Point generously organised a discussion on the Internship Programme, which brought together a number of perspectives and views and thus enriched the evaluation.

We would like to express our warm appreciation to all the Interns - members of the Traveller Community - for taking the time to meet with the evaluators and share their ideas, opinions and experiences. Participants were reflective, open and frank and for this the researchers are grateful.

We are grateful to Ms Trudy Carroll and Ms Jennifer Geoghegan at the DJELR for their support to the work of the assessment.

Editorial assistance to the report was provided by Stewart Reddin, Ralaheen Ltd.

Ralaheen Ltd  
July 2007

‘It was a great experience. I loved the office work.. definitely want to do it. Was in [training programme] before and it was like school... would not go back. Travellers need to do other things instead of being together all the time. Have to go out in the real world. Settled people got to know me and see we’re [Travellers] not all the same. There’s no difference (between Travellers and settled people)’.

# Executive Summary

## Review of a Civil Service Traveller Internship Pilot Programme

### Introduction

The Traveller Internship Pilot Programme is a special work experience initiative, which consisted of placing 23 persons of Traveller Community origin in Clerical Officer or General Operative positions in the Civil Service. The goal was to enhance the skill sets and range of work experience of Travellers in line with the commitment of the Department of Finance to diversity within the Civil Service. The Department of Finance has a central role in developing, promoting and monitoring equality of opportunity in the Civil Service.

The programme was built on experimental experiences of the then Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, and pilot schemes of, amongst others, South Dublin County Council together with some Traveller representative organisations. The design and implementation of the Initiative involved close cooperation between the Civil Service Equality Unit in the Department of Finance, FÁS, the Public Appointments Service and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (DJELR). The DJELR had issued a report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues in March 2006. The Initiative was supported and closely monitored by a Working Group involving the major civil and public service stakeholders.

Traveller Interns were placed in posts in 12 different Departments of Government. The placements ranged from Departments in the heart of Dublin to a site of the Office of Public Works on the outskirts of Dublin city.

### Method of conducting the review

In April 2007 a review of the Initiative was commissioned and managed by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The review submitted a final report in August 2007.

The review undertook its work by face-to-face interviews with Traveller Interns, group and individual discussions with Civil Servants in Departments of Government, discussion with a Traveller Representative organisation, some members of the Working Group and an examination of printed data and materials.

### Internship applicants

A detailed examination of the backgrounds of applicants (see Table 1) to the programme showed that while 25 had attended second level education, just two had reached Leaving Certificate level and 15 had completed the Junior Certificate. This profile is consistent with educational levels among the wider Traveller community, as evidenced in Census 2006.

However, a high proportion had already completed some vocational training. About one in five had work experience in clerical work and some had completed work experience or training in manual work. This suggests that while young Travellers have been availing of post school vocational training and work experience, this was not converting into permanent jobs for them.

**Table 1**  
Selected stated education and training  
characteristics of 43 of the 50 applicants to  
the Internship Programme

| Response | Primary Level | Second Level | Junior Cert | Leaving Certificate Level | Vocational Training | Training Manual | Work Experience Manual | Work Experience Clerical |
|----------|---------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes      | 34            | 25           | 15          | 2                         | 32                  | 5               | 7                      | 8                        |
| No       | 4             | 14           | 18          | 31                        | 11                  | 38              | 36                     | 35                       |
| Unknown  | 5             | 4            | 10          | 10                        | -                   | -               | -                      | -                        |
| Total    | 43            | 43           | 43          | 43                        | 43                  | 43              | 43                     | 43                       |

Source: Extracted from anonymised data of the Civil Service Equality Unit 2006

### Pilot Programme Design

The initiative was designed carefully at the promotion, mobilisation, recruitment and programme stages. A programme co-ordinator in the Equality Unit of the Department of Finance was with the initiative from the outset. An extensive outreach action was conducted with Traveller organisations across the greater Dublin region to advertise and promote the initiative and to respond to questions about the Initiative. The Public Appointments Service adjusted its procedures slightly, so that application forms, for example, were more accessible. Twice as many applicants sought entry to the programme than places were available. Departments of Government, once asked, were quick to volunteer to participate in the Initiative.

### The Interns at work

Travellers had real concerns initially at taking up their new posts. Here is what they described:

*'I expected massive long words that I wouldn't know how to spell because it was a Government building'*

*'I worried about words I might not understand and I would be embarrassed.'*

*'I was worried about dress and that you have to dress respectful'*

Traveller Interns were provided with clerical or general operative level work in the Civil Service for a period of six-months. Their assignments offered a range of clerical work tasks such as data entry, answering the phone, reception work, preparing rooms for conferences, basic carpentry, painting, maintenance and horticulture. Jobs were full-time and pay was fixed at the Clerical Officer or General Operative rate.

### Positive features in the Pilot Programme

The Review identified a number of positive features in this initiative, some of which are identified below:

- Readiness of Senior Civil Servants to engage with this initiative
- Readiness of Departmental units to volunteer to host an Intern
- Enthusiasm of Traveller organisations for this style of initiative
- Interest of members of Traveller families in availing of the new opportunity
- General competence of interns for tasks provided to them
- Permanent co-workers and Travellers having first chance to work together and get to know each other face-to-face
- Absence of any reports of incidents of discrimination or prejudice

In the words of one participant:

*'It's the first time I felt close with the other people and the boss. It's the first time I ever had that in a job'*

A number of specialised supports appear to have added depth to the Initiative. These were:

- The experience and expertise of the members of the Working Group
- The knowledge of diversity policy within the Civil Service Equality Unit of the Department of Finance and within the Diversity and Equality Law Division of the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform
- The appointment of a dedicated staff member as Programme co-ordinator
- The large scale recruitment experience of the Public Appointments Service

- The hands-on knowledge of labour market functioning of FÁS
- The knowledge of Traveller life of Pavee Point and other Traveller Representative or support organisations.

### Skills improvement during the Internship

Many, but not all, Interns got the opportunity to go on formal training courses organised by the Civil Service. Interns expressed satisfaction at the chance to attend basic courses in areas such as telephone and communication skills, specific computer skills and understanding bullying in the workplace.

In addition to formal skills, Interns learnt how a modern workplace operates. Interns mentioned learning about flexitime, leave arrangements and social events. In addition some young Travellers said that their confidence improved and they were in a better financial situation.

One young woman described the Programme as a welcome change from previous courses and programmes:

*It was a great experience. I loved the office work.. definitely want to do it. Was in [training programme] before and it was like school... would not go back. Travellers need to do other things instead of being together all the time. Have to go out in the real world. Settled people got to know me and see we're [Travellers] not all the same. There's no difference (between Travellers and settled people).*

### Issues that arose in the Programme

A number of issues arose which posed questions or challenges to the Programme at the time or afterwards. Many of these were identified in the course of the Review. The following paragraphs give some examples.

Interns who had incomplete secondary education, nevertheless needed a good general standard of education to keep up with a Clerical Officer posting. A number of Interns needed improvements in their spelling and grammar in order to maximise the opportunities offered by the Internship.

The availability of the Interns for work for 26 consecutive weeks and on a full-time basis, arose. A number of Interns were absent from work frequently or for prolonged periods due to calls on their time from family or family responsibilities within their wider family network. The extent of this issue had not been foreseen at the outset of the Programme.

A small number of Interns considered that they had insufficient work to do and could have worked more or been provided with a more consistent stream of work.

Revision of the CVs of Interns before they ended their Internship did not take place as a planned activity. As a result many of their CVs were not updated and did not display the full range of tasks that they had undertaken and which would be of interest to prospective employers.

In the course of the Internship, there was some unintended 'drift' in the stated objectives. Some of those engaged in the Programme attempted to place Interns in Civil Service jobs at the end of the six-month work experience. This did not always work out as intended and disappointment on the part of the some Interns ensued. It signals the importance of a more structured response to the ending of the Internship.

## Recommendations

The Review made a number of Recommendations for future Internship Programmes.

A selection of these are provided below.

- A future roll out of the Programme in another region will benefit from an experienced, full-time coordinator for that region
- The six month Internship in the Civil Service should be back-to-back with a six month Internship in the Public Service
- A two-week intermediary or bridging course for Interns prior to entering the Civil Service workplace should be designed and implemented by FÁS with a view to obtaining a good skill match between Intern and placement and identifying some training programmes from which Interns would benefit
- Appropriate formal training programmes should be made available to all Interns
- The promotion of an Internship should ensure that all Travellers in the region or vicinity have access to information materials
- More specific efforts should be made at recruitment stage to identify whether the applicants have a genuine interest in manual or clerical work
- Civil Servant Internships involving manual work should get specific encouragement so that young men are attracted to such initiatives
- Mentoring of Interns from among volunteer Clerical Officer grades of staff should be considered
- Traveller organisations involved in Programme recruitment should also be involved in measures at the close of a Programme
- Traveller Interns leaving a Programme should have a pre-arranged appointment with a FÁS placement or guidance officer

## 1. Overview, underlying rationale and context

- 1.1 The Civil Service Traveller Internship Programme
- 1.2 School completion
- 1.3 Family formation
- 1.4 Labour market discrimination
- 1.5 The push from positive action towards mainstreaming on the labour market
- 1.6 Previous work experience
- 1.7 Outreach and partnership with Traveller Organisations





# 1. Overview,

## underlying rationale and context

The Traveller Internship Programme is a simple labour market programme, which arises from a complex and multi-faceted position of exclusion. Its development is the most recent stage of policy progress following many well-meaning actions, measures, programmes and initiatives that have met with varying degrees of success or otherwise. This chapter provides a brief overview of the background to the Programme and the thinking behind its evaluation.

### 1.1 The Civil Service Traveller Internship Programme

The Civil Service Traveller Internship Programme has its immediate origins in the Report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues, which made a number of specific recommendations for action in relation to employment opportunities in the Civil and Public Service for members of the Traveller Community.<sup>1</sup> The recommendations were based on an analysis made by the Group, deliberations of the Group over a period of ten or more meetings, the taking into account of a number of reports and documentation on the topic and presentations made to the High Level Group by, for example, members of the Civil Service Equality Unit and the Equality Authority. The totality of these reflections as they related to the Civil Service was distilled by the Department of Finance.

It is an interesting example of policy formation that the Internship Programme appears to have been at least partly inspired by small pilot schemes, employment experiments and risk-taking by the then Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources and Local Authorities such as that of County Clare and South Dublin. These pilot schemes tested placements of Travellers in local employment, standards of admittance to placements and jobs providing work experience since 2002.

Ireland has a broad range of initiatives which bridge from education, unemployment, and economic inactivity into transitional programmes or initiatives designed to culminate in mainstream open market employment. This study compared some characteristics of the Internship Initiative with those of the long-established Community Employment (CE) Scheme (see Appendix 8). Both are intended to be transitional programmes from the edges of the labour market towards mainstream open market employment. This shows up some of the unique characteristics of the Traveller Internship compared with Community Employment. Of particular interest is that the Traveller Internship attempts to redress the reluctance of employers to hire Travellers by providing specific work experience in the mainstream of the open market in the Civil Service.

The conversion of the lessons of the pilot schemes, the Civil Service Equality Unit's engagement with Traveller under representation in the Civil Service and the views of the High Level Group were implemented by the Equality Unit of the Department of Finance with inputs from FÁS who have extensive experience of national labour market programmes underpinned by a range of principles and strategic frameworks.

In addition FÁS has a tradition of strong monitoring and assessment systems of its programmes.

As a consequence, the conception of the Internship Programme in 2006 was particularly focussed in its goals, duration, target group and stakeholder composition. This lent the Programme an attractive appearance of simplicity.

## 1.2 Education levels and school completion

In 2006, there were 10,010 Travellers aged 15 years and over whose full-time education had ceased. Of this group, almost 70 per cent (6,932) signalled their highest level of education as primary level, including no formal education. The highest level achieved for 16 per cent (1,623) was lower secondary school, while for a further four per cent (370) it was upper secondary. Only 42 individuals had completed a non-degree third level qualification and 33 persons (0.3%) had attained a degree or higher qualification at third level.<sup>2</sup>

In the academic year 2004 - 2005, 85 per cent of Traveller children transferred from primary to post-primary level school. Of 1,845 Traveller children in post-primary schools in the same year, only 72 (4%) were in 6th year and eligible to take the Leaving Certificate examinations.<sup>3</sup>

Schools can benefit from additional resources and capitation grants for each post primary enrollee from the Traveller Community. However Traveller children can be attracted to external further education courses where they are eligible for training allowances of their own. The downstream consequences are that young Travellers are exposed to a modernising and dynamic labour market without the requisite formal qualifications to benefit from Higher Education, skilled job opportunities or to enter trade based Apprenticeships.

School failure is often a factor behind prolonged unemployment or according to an OECD<sup>4</sup> Working Paper.<sup>5</sup> The OECD study signals youth group described as neither in employment, education or training labour markets. This group, referred to as NEET, for short, are:

*'disadvantaged youth difficult to mobilise into work, even in countries where the position of youth on the labour market has improved over the past decade and where prospects for this group as a whole are rather bright'*

The OECD proposes that NEET rates be regarded as a major indicator of youth performance on labour markets.

## 1.3 Family formation

It is of note that many young women and men from the Traveller Community may expect to marry considerably younger than the settled community.

In 2006, in the age group 15 to 24 years, two per cent of the general population were married. Among the Traveller population in the same year, 24 per cent of 15 to 24 year olds were married. In addition, Traveller women tend to have their first babies at a younger age than the wider population.<sup>6</sup>

The Traveller Internship Programme therefore is recruiting within an age group who are more likely to be in the family formation process than their peers in the non-Traveller population. This has implications for the expectations of careers and work trajectories of young women and young men. Consideration of skills, occupations and careers which take account of reconciliation between work and family life may well be of additional importance for this age group.

## 1.4 Labour market discrimination

Members of the Traveller Community can and do experience overt prejudice and structural discrimination in accessing goods and services. For the last ten years, this situation has been addressed proactively both by the Equality Authority and the work of the Equality Tribunal. Discriminatory barriers on the grounds of membership of the Traveller Community to employment, employment services, education and vocational training are prohibited by law. Nevertheless, prejudice and discrimination do persist and can sink below the surface articulating themselves in indirect and subtler forms of behaviour, which are difficult to demonstrate or prove.

Apart from actual discrimination, the perception or belief that discrimination exists can be a significant barrier on the supply side of the labour market for minorities, discouraging them from presenting themselves as candidates for open labour market opportunities in employment, education or vocational training. While positive actions to provide alternative employment (in the not-for-profit sector), education (separate school classes) and training opportunities (Senior Traveller Training Centres) for members of the Traveller Community go some way to redress the exclusionary balance, finding bridges into the mainstream labour market can be disproportionately difficult to construct.

The Social Partnership agreement Towards 2016 makes specific mention of offering innovative opportunities to Travellers to avail of employment in the Civil and Public Service over the life of the agreement.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.5 The push from positive action towards mainstreaming on the labour market

The Traveller Internship programme comes at a time when many employment, training and education programmes and measures to offer opportunities to the Traveller Community have already been attempted.

Examples include:

- Visiting Teacher for Travellers
- Enhanced capitation grant for Traveller students at post primary school
- Youthreach
- Senior Traveller Training Centres
- Traveller Economy Sectoral Partnership
- Enhanced eligibility criteria for Travellers for Community Employment Scheme

Designing labour market measures to benefit members of the Traveller Community have had a varied policy history. This history is relevant in appreciating the underlying rationale behind measures and why some measures are more successful than others.

The following illustrates some of the turns in policy:

- 1960s labour market indifference and non recognition of difference<sup>8</sup>
- 1970s support to self employment and compensatory education,<sup>9</sup> recognition of difference with a view to absorption or assimilation
- 1980s positive actions on a separatist basis with a view to integration<sup>10</sup> and growth of intercultural perspectives
- 1990s eventual legal recognition of discrimination<sup>11</sup> on the basis of difference and further positive actions especially in training
- 2000s observation integration into mainstream labour market<sup>12</sup>

Speaking in 1989 to a Conference on Traveller issues, John O'Connell described policy as follows:

*In 1983, when the second Commission on Travellers published its report, it rejected the concept of 'absorption' replacing it with 'integration'. It also abandoned the term itinerant and replaced it with Traveller. It was more liberal in tone than the 1963 report. This liberalism was manifested in the manner in which it stressed individual decision-making and avoided the possibility of a collective response. For example 'the extent to which they [the Travellers] will integrate with the settled community will depend on individual decisions by them and not on decisions by Travellers as a whole or any grouping of them.'<sup>13</sup>*

This is relevant to the structuring of the Internship programme in that it combined a positive action towards the Traveller Community while providing for individual applications, interviews, job placements and supports. However the extent to which members of the Traveller Community function as individuals on the labour market is a sensitive issue. One analysis of this suggests that at least some members of the Traveller Community do not strive for individual success on the labour market.

*'In Traveller society, family solidarity is preferred to individual achievement and this relational orientation has effects on the activity of the group. Much time and effort is spent on consolidating bonds of duty and affection.'<sup>14</sup>*

This opinion raises issues as to the extent to which reconciliation can be achieved between the fixed demands of waged work and the pull of family life.

Completed education is a major determinant of labour market success. The evaluators received a separate file of education and work profiles of the majority of the 50 applicants but without their names or identifying characteristics (see Table 1). The applicants to the Internship programme – 50 persons – were more than double the number of places available at the time in 2006. Many applicants had incomplete education including at Primary level. Of those who transferred to Second Level education (25) – only 15 stated that they survived to Junior Certificate Level and just two of the 25 completed the Leaving Certificate. This is all the more surprising in that the applicants were in general aged between 17 and 23 and were in the education system after the year 2000.

Successful applicants were drawn mainly from the pool of candidates with Junior or Leaving Certificate qualifications (see Table 2). One successful applicant had no stated formal education, while another did not indicate their education level on the application form. Six others had some second level education but had not completed any state examinations.

In contrast to education, 32 of 43 applicants had pursued vocational training, frequently in two or more courses and some with FETAC accredited qualifications and skills, including computer skills.

## 1.6 Previous work experience

Many of the applicants to the Internship programme had work experience of a short duration nature. This short-term experience would be typical of many young people in the age group 18 to 25 years. This included working in cobble laying, in shops, cafes and in other casual employments. The experience of casual employment is entirely different from the compliant type of civil service employment in which they were to find

Table 1

Selected stated characteristics of 43 of 50 applicants to the Internship Programme\*

|         | First Level Education | Second Level Education | Junior Certificate Level | Leaving Certificate Level | Vocational Training | Training for manual work | Work experience in manual work | Work experience in clerical work |
|---------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Yes     | 34                    | 25                     | 15                       | 1                         | 32                  | 5                        | 7                              | 8                                |
| No      | 4                     | 14                     | 18                       | 36                        | 11                  | 38                       | 36                             | 35                               |
| Unknown | 5                     | 4                      | 10                       | 6                         | -                   | -                        | -                              | -                                |
| Total   | 43                    | 43                     | 43                       | 43                        | 43                  | 43                       | 43                             | 43                               |

Source: Extracted from anonymised data of the Civil Service Equality Unit 2006

Table 2

Selected stated characteristics of 24 successful applicants to the Internship Programme

| Highest level of education  | Number | Number accepted onto Programme |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|
| No first level education    | 4      | 1                              |
| Some second level education | 9      | 6                              |
| Junior Certificate          | 15     | 15                             |
| Leaving Certificate         | 1      | 1                              |
| Education level unknown     | 4      | 1                              |

Source: Extracted from anonymised data of the Civil Service Equality Unit 20

\*This information is based on the original application forms received; in some cases it became apparent in the interview that the application form did not accurately reflect the educational history of the candidate

themselves. In casual employment, there is generally no written contract, terms and conditions are vague. Records of the working hours, the ownership of the employment and job descriptions may be vague or absent. In a dispute, the employer lets the employee go or the employee walks out and does not return. Traveller Interns, therefore, enter the work placement not so much as without work experience, but possibly without experience of correct working conditions and employment relationships.

## 1.7 Outreach and partnership with Traveller Organisations<sup>15</sup>

During July 2006, the Programme Co-Ordinator met with all of the groups that had been made aware of the Traveller Internship Programme through the muchappreciated work of Mary Carmody of FÁS. These were as follows:

- TravAct -Traveller Training and Advocacy Group
- Blanchardstown Travellers Support Group
- Southside Traveller Action Group
- Pavee Point Travellers Centre
- Ballyfermot Travellers Development Group
- St. Margaret's Traveller Community Association

This resulted in a number of queries by telephone / e-mail from individuals and from Exchange House - a non-governmental organisation offering services to the Traveller Community.

There was a high level of interest in the programme, and the experience that it offered. Many of the queries raised related to the nature of the work involved, the hours involved and where the work would be located. Queries were raised on the age limit for employment in the Civil Service and on the literacy level required for recruitment to the programme and for the work involved. Aside from

specifically work-related queries, a number of questions were also raised regarding what would happen to social welfare benefits and secondary benefits, such as the Medical Card. The latter was a major issue for most candidates. Answers were provided to these questions. Pavee Point drew the following lessons from the positive launch of the Programme:

- Active involvement of Traveller organisations
- Outreach with visits to several Traveller organisations
- Good and clear information about the Initiative
- Leading from the top with senior Civil Servants
- Use of existing human resource structures
- References to equality legislation
- Documenting the experience from the outset

Chapter 2, which follows, describes the methods used to prepare and conduct the review of the Internship Programme.

1 Report of the High Level Group on Traveller issues (March 2006) [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie)  
2 CSO (2007) *Census 2006. Ethnic or Cultural Background. Volume 5*. Stationery Office: Dublin  
3 Department of Education and Science (2006) *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy*. Stationery Office: Dublin  
4 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development provides data and analysis on the economic, public and social policy of its 30 member countries  
5 OECD (2006) *Starting Well or Losing Their Way The Position of Youth in Labour Market in OECD countries*, Paris. Working Paper no 39.  
6 Centre for Health Promotion Studies NUIG (2001) *Travellers' Perceptions and Experiences of Maternity and Child Health Services*.  
7 Government of Ireland (2006) *Towards 2016. Ten-year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015*. Stationery Office: Dublin, Section 31.4  
8 In particular the 1963 *Report of the Commission on Itinerancy*  
9 The Senior Traveller Training Centres were established during this decade. See also: Victor Bewley (ed) (1974) *Travelling People*. Veritas Publications: Dublin  
10 The periodisation of policy was first suggested by John O'Connell (RIP)  
11 See Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group (DTEDG), Irish Council for Civil Liberties, Irish Traveller Movement (1993) *Anti-racist law and Travellers*, Dublin. Also: *Reach Out* (1994) Report by the Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group, Pavee Point Publications  
12 See *Pavee Point Strategic Plan 2001-2005* on the goal of mainstreaming and positive action and Pavee Point (2002) *Traveller Proofing within an equality framework*  
13 O'Connell, J. (1989) *The Need for imagination in work with Irish Travellers*, Communication to Conference of the Association of Teachers of Travelling People, Dublin. Reprinted in 1992  
14 Mac Aonghusa, M. (1992) *The Alienation of Travellers from the Educational System*. Sociological Association of Ireland: Dublin, p.14  
15 This section is drawn from the notes kindly provided to the Evaluators by Miriam Joyce, Programme Co-ordinator and from Pavee (2006) Newsletter, Vol. 2. 5-6 December, p.8

## 2. Evaluation objectives, scope and approach to undertaking the review

- 2.1 Evaluation objectives and scope
- 2.2 Approach to the evaluation
- 2.3 Making contact with the stakeholders
- 2.4 Interviews with Departmental personnel and Traveller Organisations
- 2.5 Interviews with Interns
- 2.6 Issues arising in the evaluation method



## 2. Evaluation objectives, scope and approach to undertaking the review

### 2.1 Evaluation objectives and scope

The objectives of the evaluation as laid out by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform were as follows.<sup>16</sup>

*To identify a means of determining the effectiveness, outcomes and impact of the Traveller Internship Programme which aims to provide temporary employment opportunities for Travellers.*

*The focus of the evaluation is to:*

- *Gain feedback from participants, Departmental personnel, the Internship Working Group and Traveller representative groups on the range and adequacy of the recruitment process, work experience and the related supports provided*
- *Analyse the extent to which this internship meets the needs and expectations of the target group and*
- *Identify programme outcomes and possible improvements to and expansion of the programme if so required*

*Scope of the evaluation*

- *Assessing and appraising the initiative in terms of its stated objective*
- *Ascertaining participants' experiences of and attitude to their internship in the Civil Service*
- *Ascertaining the relevance of the Internship to the participant's employment needs*
- *Finding out what is the most appropriate length of time in the programme*
- *Types of employment sought and barriers encountered in accessing the labour market prior to and subsequent to the programme*
- *Relevance of the programme to personal development, family needs etc*
- *Identify services and programmes that the Civil Service or bodies in the wider public service could provide in the future*

- *Analysis if the needs of the client group have been met by the initiative*
- *Comment on the level and quality of communication between clients, agencies and other stakeholders*
- *Comment on how the initiative could be improved*
- *Make practical recommendations based on the analysis of the findings of the review*
- *Make recommendations as to mainstreaming of the learning experience of the initiative*
- *Make recommendations on the future direction of the initiative and the management of any recommendations regarding expansion of the initiative*

### 2.2 Approach to the evaluation

A certain amount of internal evaluative work had been undertaken during 2006 and 2007 and which the external evaluators did not wish to duplicate. This work consisted of evaluative notes for the Working Group prepared by the internship co-ordinator at the Equality Unit of the Department of Finance. In the same vein, an interim progress report on the programme had been prepared, evaluation sheets were available for managers in the Departments of Government where interns were placed and exit interviews conducted with interns.

The approach to the evaluation was posited on the Traveller Community as a hard-to-reach group (see Appendix 5). As such, the research would be required to take some extra steps to accommodate and engage with the Traveller Interns who had participated in the programme.

The evaluation was arranged into several distinct parts. In the first instance, a conceptual framework was explored which, together with discussions with the Working Group, would give the evaluation coherence. The key conceptual issues taken into account were:



- The Traveller Community as a distinct group within a mainstream work experience programme
- The disadvantage factors which participants might carry into the programme
- The challenges of conducting an evaluation including a hard-to-reach group situated at a relative distance from the mainstream labour market

The evaluation was designed so that first-hand accounts and views could be gathered from key stakeholders and participants. For this purpose, the evaluators rejected the use of conventional survey methods. The approach involved developing a set of discussion headings for interns and for workplace managers. The discussion headings were designed to 'guide conversation' across the same terrain with each interviewee without using prewritten or pre coded questionnaires. This method was developed to get a rich qualitative feedback from participants.

An approach to the evaluation was developed using the following three main methods:

- Interviews with Traveller interns in one-to-one sessions or where preferable with up to three interns at a time
- Guided discussions with Departmental staff and Traveller representative bodies
- Desk-based study of the background, context and development of the initiative

## 2.3 Making contact with the stakeholders

Using a contact list supplied by the Department of Finance, a letter was sent by post to the relevant staff member in the Personnel Division of each participating Department. An Information Note outlining the evaluation and including contact details was attached to each letter.

By way of follow-up phone calls and e-mails, arrangements were made to meet up with Departmental personnel. Discussions of between 45 minutes and one and a half hours took place in Government department offices. The names and telephone numbers of interns were supplied to the study by the Department of Finance. The researchers treated the contact details of the interns as highly confidential. No other information regarding the interns was attached to the contact list, thereby respecting the right to privacy.

The evaluation had been flagged to the interns by the Department of Finance at the time of their exit interviews and none of the participants raised any objections to being contacted by a third party for these purposes.

Researchers and Administrative staff at Ralaheen contacted the interns by telephone and invited them to participate in the evaluation by way of a 40 - 60 minute semistructured interviews. The study met some difficulty in contacting all of the interns for various reasons such as interns had changed telephone numbers or interns did not have their own mobile phone or landline and were relying on others to relay messages.

Information Notes and an invitation to participate in the evaluation were e-mailed to eight Traveller organisations or associated individuals. Two representative bodies replied to the study.

## 2.4 Interviews with departmental personnel and Traveller Organisations

Interns were contacted by telephone and invited to meet with one of the two members of the evaluation team during April and May 2007. During the same period, managers were contacted in Government Departments or were forwarded an Information Note inviting them to meet with the evaluators at their Departmental Buildings.

It was decided that semi-structured interviews or guided conversations would provide the best opportunity for Departmental staff and Traveller organisations to furnish the review with their views and experiences of the Programme. The semi-structured interview uses open-ended questions, some pre-determined by the researcher and some arising naturally during the interview. The format allowed some rapport between an interviewer and interviewee and permitted complex questions or issues to be discussed and clarified. Interviewees could speak orally without committing themselves to paper. However, the model is time-consuming and therefore more expensive than other models. The method does not permit standardised results, as it is difficult to exactly repeat a guided conversation.

**Table 3**  
**Discussions with Government Departments**

| Number of Government Departments who participated in the review | Number of personnel in attendance at discussions |
|---|--|
| 10 out of 12  | 23 persons                                       |

Source: Ralaheen evaluation 2007

**Table 4**  
**Stakeholder Contacts and Discussions**

| Evaluation Participants | Numbers | Numbers attending |
|-------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| Traveller organisations | 1       | 3                 |
| Other Stakeholders      | 3       | 2                 |
| Working group meetings  | 2       | 3 and 4           |
| Total Person Contacts   | 12      |                   |

Source: Ralaheen evaluation 2007

## 2.5 Interviews with Interns

Each intern was contacted by telephone. Of a total of 23 interns, 14 met with researchers and offered their views and experiences to the evaluation. The remaining 9 cancelled appointments, were unavailable or non-contactable.

Those interns who engaged with the review were invited to meet with researchers at city centre or local area coffee shops of their choice.

**Table 5**  
**Contacts and Interviews with Interns**

| Contact Outcome                          | Number    |
|--|-----------|
| Interviews complete                      | 14        |
| Interviews arranged /cancelled / no show | 4         |
| Unavailable due to recent bereavement    | 1         |
| No response/not contactable              | 4         |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>23</b> |

Source: Ralaheen evaluation 2007

## 2.6 Issues arising in the evaluation method

While the evaluators contacted all 23 Interns, a number were hard-to-reach and did not make themselves contactable or available for the evaluation. In some instances, the evaluators travelled out to the neighbourhoods where the Interns were residing to facilitate an interview. We consider it likely that some of the female Interns who agreed to meet the evaluators did so knowing that the evaluation team was also female. Departmental staff generally took a participative approach to the evaluation and invited colleagues and other involved persons to participate in the evaluation discussion. This demonstrated that Departmental staff preferred a discussion-oriented programme appraisal rather than a survey-oriented assessment.

Given the number of Interns and Departmental participants, the research method is qualitative rather than quantitative. This carries, as always, the weakness of making generalisations based on small numbers. However, the Review took account of a sufficiently broad range of views and opinions that we consider the findings strong and reliable.

Chapter 3, which follows, describes the findings from the Programme participants.

<sup>16</sup> Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Diversity and Equality Law Division, Request for Tender, 29 January 2007. p. 1

### 3. The participants and their views

- 3.1 Meeting the Interns
- 3.2 Emerging themes and patterns
- 3.3 The motivation to apply
- 3.4 The application process
- 3.5 Expectations
- 3.6 Attitudes of others
- 3.7 Fears and apprehensions
- 3.8 The first week in a new job
- 3.9 Nature of the work
- 3.10 Training
- 3.11 Annual sick leave entitlement
- 3.12 Interacting with colleagues and managers
- 3.13 Support on the Programme
- 3.14 Building a CV
- 3.15 Being a Traveller in the workplace
- 3.16 Principal gains
- 3.17 Current situation and future plans
- 3.18 Advice to others and the Programme



## 3. The participants

### and their views

#### 3.1 Meeting the interns

A total of 23 individuals began the Civil Service Internship Programme in late 2006 and early 2007. During the course of the programme, one intern took unpaid leave to care for a seriously ill relative and two interns exited the programme. For the purposes of the evaluation, each of the 23 interns was contacted by telephone and meetings were arranged where possible. The study met with some difficulty in this regard. In some instances, no contact was made or interns were not available. In other cases, contact was made and meetings were arranged but then cancelled for various reasons. In a small number of instances, interns did not show up to prearranged meetings.

By mid-June 2007, the review had met with 14 interns. Discussions generally lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and were held at city centre and suburban coffee shops familiar to the participants. Researchers met with interns singly or in groups of two and in one instance with three interns together.

At the outset of the discussions, each participant was given a research Information Note and encouraged to contact any member of the independent research team at any time should they have any questions or wish to add further comments at a later date. The aims of the evaluation were clearly explained to participants. Respondents were assured that any negative comments about the Programme would not be taken as criticism of any individual manager or person involved with the Programme unless there was an explicit complaint or observation. Each interviewee was also assured of the confidential nature of the discussions and their own anonymity in the final report.

What follows is a description of the Programme from the point of view of the 14 interns who contributed to the evaluation. The method and the results are qualitative

in nature and therefore provide an insider perspective of the Programme rather than a strict count of opinions, thoughts and experiences.

#### 3.2 Emerging themes and patterns

The study method utilised a semi-structured discussion sheet. For the most part, interns could follow the discussion sheet with interviewers and see what was being written down. This had the effect of making respondents comfortable that they were not going to be misquoted.

Although the discussion themes were pre-determined, the loose structure of the discussions allowed for interns to raise issues of importance which were not anticipated or which were specific to them as individuals. This resulted in the emergence of some clear and distinct themes and patterns of views and experiences.

#### 3.3 The motivation to apply

For the most part, participants heard about the programme through family members working in Traveller organisations. Others had received information on the programme via their own personal engagement with Traveller organisations. This would suggest that successful applicants already had at least marginal experience of engagement with organisations involved in delivering or promoting education, training and pre-employment programmes. The concept of work experience, then, was not entirely alien to those who participated in the Programme.

In some cases, family members, especially parents, strongly encouraged their children to apply. They felt it would be '*good experience*' for their children and would stand to them in their future career decisions. Applicants themselves felt it sounded like a good opportunity and without much thought '*just went for it*' or '*just put in for it*'.

### 3.4 The application process

The standard application process for Clerical Officer entry level jobs in the Civil Service involves an on-line application form. The Internship programme devised adapted application forms, which were distributed in hard-copy format.

None of the interns reported any difficulty filling out the application forms although a number did so with the advice of a family member or a staff member at a Traveller organisation.

Almost all of the interns admitted feeling nervous prior to the interview. They were pleasantly surprised to find the interview 'easy' or 'grand' and the interviewers 'understanding'. Once they 'got chatting' they forgot their nerves and relaxed. One young woman found it difficult not to giggle but she was impressed that the interviewers gave her the time and space in the interview to calm down and proceed with the interview. During the course of the interview, some of the interviewees were surprised when asked if they read in their spare time. This question perplexed the interviewees until they 'found out later that they were testing you, they knew you'd be doing a lot of reading and writing [in the job]'.

### 3.5 Expectations

Participants held pre-conceived notions about what the Programme would involve. Some were confident in their expectations of office work and although they had 'not done it before' one girl had 'my own idea - [I] knew what clerical work would involve'.

Some people did not know what to expect. In fact, a number of participants were of the impression that all of the interns would be working together in one room for the duration of the programme. They were hugely

surprised when this turned out not to be the case. This was something they 'worked out' among themselves following the interview process.

*'I thought it would be a group of Travellers all in a room like usual. It's usually like that, like at FÁS. They didn't explain that. It was different. Not like usual.'*

### 3.6 Attitudes of others

Without exception, the interns' families thought the internship seemed like a 'great opportunity', a 'chance of getting on in life'. One intern described her family as being 'over the moon' while for another 'even though it was only for 6 months they thought it would be good experience'. For one young woman and her family, the prospect was not out of the norm. Although her family thought it was 'very positive' her 'parents do courses of all different courses of all different kinds and most of my family have jobs or internships'.

### 3.7 Fears and apprehensions

Candidates recounted feelings of nervousness prior to starting the internships. None of the interns described nervousness beyond that of what could be expected from any young person starting a new job in unfamiliar territory.

However, the focus of participants' worries could be considered to be slightly different to that of other young people.

Most of the new recruits, with some exceptions, were not worried about their skillsets, 'I was not worried about computers, I had done a computer course'. What was of concern to a number of participants was the application of more general education in the form of literacy skills:

*'I expected massive long words that I wouldn't know how to spell because it was a Government building'*

*'I was worried about words I might not understand and I would be embarrassed'*

Some interns were nervous about the dress code in their first few days, although they reported that by observing those around them they learned quickly what was or was not acceptable:

*'I was worried about dress and that you have to dress respectful'*

*'I was worried about the dress code - then I saw that you can't wear t-shirts with sayings on them and no boots over your trousers and ripped jeans'*

*'I was always looking at other people's clothes to know what to wear'*

One intern who was concerned about the dress code explained that they had been told to dress casually. However, she pointed out that her and her peers' definition of casual was probably quite different to that of somebody in authority in the Civil Service.

The idea of Government Departments slightly intimidated a few candidates:

*"When I heard the names of the Departments it sounded really posh but I got into it"*

*'I thought they'd be grumpy cos it's Government Departments'*

Other interns had concerns about meeting the rest of the staff and *'getting to know everybody'*. However, across the board these fears were put to rest in the earliest

stages. Interns described peers and colleagues as *'friendly', 'chatty'* and *'a very nice crowd'*. It surprised and pleased some interns how welcoming everybody was towards them.

### 3.8 The first week in a new job

In the start-up stages of the Programme, interns met with personnel staff to set up their payroll. There were no significant difficulties in this regard. Many of the interns already had bank accounts as they had previously attended FÁS courses with training allowances paid directly into accounts. Several of the interns were placed on emergency tax but reported that they had to wait only a short time to recoup the monies owed to them.

A number of interns found the hours very long initially and were *'exhausted at first'*. This was something they *'got used to'*. Those who were offered the option of flexitime generally took it up. Some were a little wary of the system at first and waited until they had settled into a rhythm before they *'went on the clock'*. Those who worked flexi-time were extremely pleased with the opportunity of working up time off. One intern was unsure if she was on flexi-time and maintained that *'nobody talked about it'*. Another young woman was *'clocking in and clocking out but the card...went soft and I never knew was I in or out'*.

Two interns mentioned that sometimes they were late for work and described the consequences:

*'If you were late there were infringements but I didn't mind because I was only there for six months anyway. Personnel would talk to you if you were late a few times, real serious like!'*

### 3.9 Nature of the work

Of the 14 interns interviewed, 10 were either very happy or content with the type and amount of work they were asked to carry out. In this area a quite distinct pattern emerged. The interns who worked in a very specific role, for example personnel divisions, were better able to describe the type of work they did and their role in the wider operation of their Department.

The interns reported that they preferred to be kept busy, *'there was loads of work - I liked it - you were not sitting around doing nothing'* and to be exposed to a wide variety of tasks:

*'Loved that every day you do something different. A whole host of different things. Keeps you fresh.'*

A small number of interns complained that they were not busy enough:

*'They never really did things with us. They didn't give us that much to do. I hated filing. Boring and too easy. When I was not busy I would be on the phone and the Internet. I would ask them to give me more to do but I think they thought it would be too difficult for me.'*

None of the interns suggested that the work was too difficult for them. Some reported slightly longer settling in times than others. In their overall view, they settled in to the work quickly and did not feel out of their depth. The most widely reported difficulty was with spelling. Where this was put forward as an issue by interns themselves, they also claimed that when they asked for help from colleagues or managers it was given willingly and without prejudice.

### 3.10 Training

Eight of the 14 interns interviewed were given the opportunity to attend training courses in various work-related areas:

- Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook
- Bullying and Harassment
- Telephone Skills
- Reception Work
- Communication Skills
- Division-specific software training

Those who attended training were pleased to have done so and recognised the value, including the monetary value, of courses:

*'I could never have paid for the courses I got'*

Some interns struggled to remember the names or content of course they had attended. They did not appear to have taken note at the time of attending training for future reference or CV building.

For a few of those who had not attended courses, it was a source of disappointment:

*'I never got the chance to do some training. I would have liked computer training, I am familiar with computers but more experience would be better'*

One intern was not put out by the lack of formal training courses as she felt *'I get enough computer courses doing the job'*. Another intern enjoyed doing courses but for one element, *'I liked being in my office, I didn't want to be away on training days'*.



### 3.11 Annual and sick leave entitlements

Interns claimed to be fully aware of their entitlements to annual leave and sick leave. Nobody expressed any difficulty with the system and some explained the formal procedure for taking sick leave, including phoning the workplace before 10am. Three interns indicated that they needed more leave than the standard amount.

### 3.12 Interacting with colleagues and managers

The vast majority of interns informed the review that their co-workers were friendly and continuously invited them to share break and lunch times and to attend any gettogethers or after work social occasions.

A number of the interns took their colleagues up on offers and invitations. For these individuals, mixing with others was a very positive element of the Programme. They felt *'part of the team'* and it made them *'high on life'* to have formed steady workplace relationships. More than one of the interns were, in fact, glad that other interns were not close by, which forced them to make new friends in their division or unit.

The remaining interns did not always take colleagues up on offers and preferred to stick together for lunches and breaks and chose not to attend parties or functions.

There were mixed feelings among the group about the practice of placing two interns in the same Department. Some welcomed the reassurance of having a friend or another intern for support, including for travelling in to work together. Others felt it would be preferable to be placed alone and to branch out of their comfort zone and mix with others. Individual personalities and levels of confidence may best explain the conflicting views on this subject.

### 3.13 Support on the Programme

Almost without exception, interns reported that they understood the line of management very clearly. They explained that for issues arising with leave or salary, the correct route was to deal with the relevant Personnel Division. For other issues the supervisor should be the first port of call. Interns described supervisors and managers as very approachable, friendly and helpful. One young person summed up the good relationship:

*'It's the first time I felt close with the other people and the boss. It's the first time I ever had that in a job'*

One intern was unclear as to who was her manager.

The group were happy with the level of support provided by the Programme Coordinator and found it useful when she *'popped over for coffee'* or e-mailed to touch base. Each intern felt her presence on the Programme and was aware they could go to her for reasons wider than day-to-day questions.

### 3.14 Building a CV

Two of the interns interviewed were offered help in re-writing their CV complete with their new skills and work experience. They chose not to take up the offer. One intern had left a CV with a fellow staff member who was taking the time to *'redo'* it.

Some interns felt they would remember all the tasks they had completed and the skills they had learned during the programme and be able to list them on a CV themselves. Others thought it would have been useful to get some help with this. None of the interns described writing down or taking note of their daily tasks. During the course of the interviews two interns remembered receiving diaries but did not understand their purpose.

3.15 Being a Traveller in the workplace

The interns held mixed views about the disclosure of their identities to colleagues in the workplace.

For some participants it was a source of relief that co-workers had been informed of their Traveller identity in advance of their first day.

*“They knew [that I was a Traveller] before I started and they knew by me anyway. I was happy - treated the same as the rest of them. Exactly the same. I was glad I didn’t have to tell them myself.”*

Other of the young people preferred the opportunity to raise the subject themselves rather than have their identity flagged by someone else. One young woman informed the review that nobody in her office realised that she was a Traveller until she had been there for quite some time and decided to tell friends and colleagues herself.

*“They never knew I was one [Traveller]...told them I was a Traveller. Very surprised. Showed we are not all the same. Wouldn’t like them to know before [I started the job], maybe they would have kept their distance’.*

In one workplace, the young interns reported being ‘slagged’ about their Traveller identity. This was all ‘good craic’ and the interns stated that it was no different than the joking about some of the other workers being ‘Northsiders’.

One young woman was adamant in her view:

*‘no-one should know you are a Traveller, there should be no mention, it makes you fearful. It should just be that a person is starting next week. There is racism out there. Only the manager should know. It’s your own personal business.*

*Some people might be very racist but not say it. I prefer not to be asked comments about the Traveller Community or Traveller issues. Everyone has their own lives. What I do or don’t do is my own business.’*

3.16 Principal gains

Interns were asked about the tangible gains they felt they made as a result of participating in the Programme.

Table 6  
Principal gains of the Programme according to participants

| Gains                 | Yes | No | No response | Total |
|-----------------------|-----|----|-------------|-------|
| Qualifications        | 5   | 9  | -           | 14    |
| Experience            | 13  | 1  | -           | 14    |
| Better CV             | 8   | 2  | 4           | 14    |
| Skills                | 13  | 1  | -           | 14    |
| Knowledge             | 10  | 1  | 3           | 14    |
| Confidence            | 8   | 3  | 3           | 14    |
| Financial improvement | 9   | 1  | 4           | 14    |

Source: Extracted from anonymised data of the Civil Service Equality Unit 2006

An Intern remarked that for her the gain was:

*‘The fact of being able to work as a person, not just a Traveller’*

### 3.17 Current situation and future plans

At the time of interviewing (mid-May to mid-June, 2007), the interns described their current situations as follows:

- 5 in situ in the Civil Service<sup>17</sup>
- 1 in Training
- 1 in Education
- 2 caring full-time
- 5 were 'in-between'

Nine of the young people interviewed had attempted the Clerical Officer exams or applied for General Operative positions with encouragement from colleagues and /or managers. Some Clerical Officer applicants were positive about the experience and said they would attempt the exams again the next time around. They understood that there was a high level of competition in the exams and felt that with practice they might get through them in the future. At the time of writing (August 2007) one intern had successfully secured employment through the Clerical Officer exams by open competition.

Those who were interested in General Operative positions were hopeful that their experience on the Programme would stand to them in their applications for permanent employment with the Office of Public Works.

### 3.18 Advice to others and the Programme

Ten of the 14 interns who participated in the review offered advice to a hypothetical second round of interns.

Of the 10, one young person said that if the opportunity to enter the Programme were offered again, they would not take it up. The individual felt that Obair provided better opportunities for young people seeking work.

Interns said they would advise future participants to 'be yourself', 'do your best' and 'don't mess'. They spoke of the Programme as an 'opportunity' to be taken seriously because 'it won't be there forever'.

One young woman described the Programme as a new and welcome change from previous courses and programmes:

*'It was a great experience. I loved the office work...definitely want to do it. Was in [training programme] before and it was like school..would not go back. Travellers need to do other things instead of being together all the time. Have to go out in the real world. Settled people got to know me and see we're [Travellers] not all the same. There's no difference [between Travellers and settled people].'*

Interns expressed the view that the Programme should span a duration longer than six months, with nine to twelve months suggested as preferable.

There was broad agreement that interns would have welcomed an end-of-Programme gathering of all interns with a group photograph. This indicated a pride in the work they had successfully completed.

17 Interns working in the Civil Service at the time of interview had commenced placements at a later date or had commenced temporary, short-term work contracts

#### 4. Other views - the Working Group, Departmental Staff, Traveller bodies

- 4.1 Initial stages of the Programme
- 4.2 Induction and orientation
- 4.3 Employment supports
- 4.4 The Interns at work
- 4.5 Training on the job
- 4.6 Understanding of the Programme goals
- 4.7 Programme issues
- 4.8 Winding down the Programme
- 4.9 Advice to Programme review



## 4. Other views

### The Working Group, Departmental Staff, Traveller bodies

This chapter presents the views of some of the Departments, which hosted Traveller Interns, the views of some members of the Working Group and of Traveller Organisations. The particular experiences of South Dublin County Council are also presented in this chapter. These views were expressed frankly in open-ended discussions, frequently involving two from the evaluation team and three or more from the stakeholders.

Following a publicity drive, Traveller candidates filled out or were assisted to fill out application forms for Clerical Officer and General Operative Posts. From these 50+, eligible Traveller candidates were called to interview. Arrangements were made for candidates to receive information via the address of Traveller organisations rather than their place of residence, if they so wished. They were provided with simple guidance as to how to respond to an interview. For most candidates this was their first job interview. Although they had worked before, they had been hired in a casual manner. From the eligible list, 23 were informed of their success - 19 young women and three men. The successful candidates were subsequently divided into pairs or threes and allocated to a Department. This information was provided at a very short interval following interviews.

#### 4.1 Initial stages of the Programme

Twelve Departments and Offices of Government responded willingly to the call to host Traveller Interns. The Civil Service Equality Initiatives Report 2006 recommends that in the future:<sup>18</sup>

*'Departments and Offices should give favourable consideration to providing positions to successful candidates in any future programmes / projects similar to the Traveller Internship Programme'.*

Departments welcomed the opportunity to volunteer into the Programme and to be able to seek volunteer units from inside their Departments. The Personnel Division was a frequent participant and a unit familiar with the work of the Equality Unit of the Department of Finance in relation to diversity issues. In the words of one Department, a lot of planning work was done before the interns '*came through the door*.' This concerned planning the specific job tasks, planning in some instances for mentors, for reporting relationships and for administrative issues such as payroll. Pavee Point expressed satisfaction at the visits made by the Programme Co-ordinator to sites and neighbourhoods, her readiness to answer all queries and her availability to individuals and organisations.

There were differences of opinion as to the value of the preparatory sessions for participating Departments prior to the programme. The following views were expressed:

- Did not prepare the Departments for issues which arose
- Discussion was very helpful, informative and useful
- Needed an additional midway discussion
- Too basic, especially for Departments with experience of Internship Programmes such as Willing, Able, Mentoring (WAM) and who have come to terms with Ireland as a multi cultural society, or who have already experimented in this area, such as the Department of the Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, WAM or with *Star Pupil Programme*

The Public Appointments Service (PAS) conducted the interviews. An application form was devised, a pre-selection process and a guide for implementation - all in a systematic fashion. At pre-selection '*a good general standard of education*' was taken as a minimum relative marker to literacy and ability to do the jobs. At interview the difference between Junior Certificate and Leaving

Certificate level candidates was apparent. In terms of work or training experience, the PAS noted a pattern among candidates that many were in a cycle of courses, programmes and employment, each lasting in or around a six-month marker.

#### 4.2 Induction and orientation

Most Departments were pleased that two Interns were to be placed together in different jobs in the same Department and who could be company for each other. Others felt it was not a good idea to place interns in twos. In these cases, managers and supervisors were of the opinion that the interns would integrate better with their peers if they were placed alone and that placing interns in groups of two had the potential to create '*ghettoisation*'. Managers and supervisors were pleased that interns were accompanied to the workplace for their first time.

Some officials were apprehensive and nervous as to how other staff would react to Traveller Interns and would anyone '*say the wrong thing*.'

One Department felt it was not only fair, but also necessary; to describe the Interns' origins as the mass media at the time was filled with daily accounts of a court case involving a Traveller family. Senior staff in this context described feelings of fear, apprehension that someone would '*say something*' or do '*anything inappropriate*.'

A supervisor described an approach to existing employees as follows:

*'Next Monday there are new staff starting from the Traveller Community. If you have a problem with that, that is racism, and racism will not be tolerated in this workplace.'*

The following views were also expressed:

- Some staff have been to school with Travellers and it is not an issue or '*had good understanding of Traveller Community*'
- The Programme should have the name '*Traveller*' removed from it; the participants are placed as workers not as Travellers
- The title of the Programme is good as it saves having to explain who the interns are
- Once the participants were introduced to staff - '*there was no big deal about it*'

In one instance, a Bank blocked or refused to readily open an account for an Intern. This had not been anticipated and consumed the time of that Department. In a second instance, Interns had been fixed a rate of pay of €2 per hour below the going rate and this had to be addressed urgently. A further issue was assisting in the resolution of Income Tax/Revenue for more than one Intern. Some Departmental personnel were of the view that time could have been saved if interns had received more start-up instruction regarding PPS Numbers, Revenue requirements and bank account details.

Some interviewees thought that pre placement orientation had to be strengthened and some form of mentoring introduced to the programme.

#### 4.3 Employment supports

Some Departments had little contact with the Programme co-ordinator. Others had valuable interaction. At least one would have preferred the greater use of mentoring, as in the WAM programme, and in more than one case an informal mentoring system evolved. The fact that there was a Programme co-ordinator available was a form of reassurance to some stakeholders even if they never contacted her. A form of '*buddy*' system might have been useful according to a stakeholder.

One Department was expecting two Interns, made all the preparations but only one turned up on the day. This was a disappointment to the staff involved in preparations.

#### 4.4 The Interns at work

Getting the right match between skills and work proved quite tricky. Some host organisations would have liked more information on skill sets (and less on Traveller culture) so that they could place the Intern in a well-matched job.

Two major concerns were expressed among host organisations:

- The placement of Interns in the company of, or in teams, with other clerical officers where they could learn and integrate
- The securing of an uninterrupted supply of clerical work so that the Interns would not be left idle

Not all Departments and bodies succeeded in these two objectives and some expressed disappointment that the Interns had been underemployed some of the time or had been in too isolated a workspace. Successful placements included:

- Entering data into special programmes
- Working in the reception area and answering the telephone
- Dealing with sick leave in a Personnel Division
- Working on a large-scale project as operatives and shadowing tradesmen

The majority of host organisations described the Interns as well able for their work, or quick to learn or very competent and reported that they '*created a good atmosphere*' or were '*very positive about learning.*'

Host organisations were pleased at the integration of some Interns into the life of the workplace, joining in coffee breaks, attending workplace events/celebrations and chatting with other staff. Some staff stated that this was their first experience working alongside a Traveller Community member and were interested in the Interns' accounts of their day-to-day lives.

A few Interns did not integrate so easily. They did not attend social events in the workplace, were reluctant to switch assigned jobs or locations and travelled to work exclusively with other Interns and never on their own. In the course of discussions with Pavee Point, stakeholders remarked that these are complex and sensitive issues, which are being actively addressed.

#### 4.5 Training on the job

It had been intended that the work placement would offer some training opportunities to all participants, which would enhance their CVs and employment opportunities. This was realised for some participants who were quickly guided towards short courses in Reception Skills, Computer Programme Skills, Answering the Telephone Skills. Those who got such opportunities were, for the most part, delighted with them. However some Interns did not appear to attend training courses because none or few opportunities were made available to them or this had not been sufficiently understood by their host Department.

#### 4.6 Understanding of the Programme goals

It is the opinion of the Review that many stakeholders did not understand or lost sight of the very specific goals of the Programme. This was not because they had not been informed, but is due to other intervening and unanticipated factors. The initiative was intended as a specific work experience programme. Over the six months, some participants, stakeholders and civil servants came to understand the Programme as one of work experience and job placement. This had significant implications for the assessment of whether the programme was successful or not. What was the nature of this shift in goals?

- The experience of other work experience-job placement programmes such as that of South Dublin County Council was alive in the minds of both some participants and stakeholders who assumed that a successful experience would be followed by employment, albeit temporary.
- Clerical staff working alongside the Interns took some 'under their wing' and encouraged them to prepare for the Civil Service examinations and to take the examinations with a view to permanent entry to the service. Indeed so much emphasis had been placed initially on potential prejudice, that there was an underestimation of the warmth and generosity of staff towards these young Interns. This may have created an impression among Interns of follow up and attachment or entitlement to their current posting.
- Some Departmental staff, who knew that the Programme was temporary work experience, nevertheless felt benevolent towards the interns and conveyed an impression to some Interns that they would look out for anything suitable that might come up when the Programme was over. They proceeded to do so, perhaps conveying cautiously that they were making no promises. Despite the cautionary note, some

interns were disappointed when managers or supervisors were unable to secure work for them.

- Some Interns were offered what they believed to be 'extensions' for replacement work during Term Time Leave holidays, when the Programme expiry date loomed up. In fact these were distinct jobs under separate and temporary contracts. Other Interns who got no such opportunity may have felt there were real jobs for some but not for others.
- Some Departmental staff may have underestimated the difficulties faced by hard-to-place candidates and which require specific and well-tested interventions and advice from experienced FÁS placement officers, who can guide and accompany their navigation through a highly competitive labour market.<sup>19</sup>

As a result of these unanticipated developments, the Programme focus of work experience and skill acquisition fogged up as the months passed and in some instances veered onto a side road of job placement.

Any future roll-out of the Programme has to factor in this tendency or provide fast and formal transfer of the Interns into FÁS services where fresh from their experience those that wish, can be oriented to job interviews with prospective employers.

#### 4.7 Programme issues

For some Departments, the frequent unexplained absences among a number of Interns were very perplexing. In some instances a number of Interns used up all their leave days, holidays and sick days very fast and then proceeded to take uncertified days of absence. Some Interns were unable to make themselves available for full-time work five days a week. The explanations for the absences varied from light-hearted references to wedding preparations, unusual references to attending healers for sickness and



very sadly to the deaths of very young people in their immediate families, accidents which occurred to themselves, and illness among family members where girls were expected to take over caring responsibilities. Where problematic issues arose, the girl Interns were expected to leave work and take over at home. At least two Interns were affected by deep grief due to family deaths.

The caution of docking of pay had no impact on the level of absenteeism. In fact, interns themselves suggested to managers and supervisors that this would be a satisfactory way to resolve absenteeism issues.

The equal treatment of all staff is at issue here. The absence from work among interns caused difficulty for managers and supervisors who struggled to legitimise unauthorised absences observed by other clerical officers. It is the opinion of the review that offering a shorter working day or part-time work experience may not be adaptations suited to addressing the issue of availability for work. The duration of the Programme could have been longer with a 9-month period suggested rather than 6 months. This would have allowed for a wider range of formal training and more integration into the practice of full-time working.

A small number Departmental staff insisted that the young age of the Interns was a significant issue and not the fact that they were from the Traveller Community. In one Division co-workers were a good bit, if not much, older and there was some tension in finding a means of integrating them into older and sometimes male working environments. Other Divisions, where Clerical Officers made up a larger portion of the staff profile, did not find issue with the young age of interns.

The absence of job placement at the end of the Programme was a concern for some managers and supervisors. One individual expressed this as follows:

*'I hate that when they leave here there is nothing, this has been a new, positive direction in their lives. With all these programmes they feel psychologically that they are being passed around...Need to create further options.'*

#### 4.8 Winding down the Programme

For the most part, individual Divisions were sorry to see the Programme draw to a close. Many reported that the intern would be missed on a personal and professional level. One manager commented that the experience had been 'very enriching and positive' for the Division in which the intern was placed. In acknowledgement of the contribution interns had made, staff and management organised social events either on the premises or at a nearby venue to express their appreciation of their contribution to interns.

The Programme co-ordinator conducted exit interviews with interns.

The majority of managers felt confident that interns had gained new skills and experience that would be valuable on a CV. However, there was no provision built in to the programme for supervisors, managers or personnel officers to discuss these new CV entries with interns. Departmental personnel expressed a willingness to engage with interns in this regard.

#### 4.9 Advice to Programme review

Managers, supervisors and personnel officers had given serious thought to the Programme and the evaluation. It was evident to the evaluators that a high level of reflection and discussion had taken place throughout the life of the Programme and staff were able to offer, in conclusion, concise ideas and advice to any future roll out of the Programme.

The majority of Departments and Divisions advised that certain issues needed to be resolved for the next round of the Programme:

- Absenteeism - in particular out of fairness to existing staff - would have to be addressed and specific guidance issued to participating Departments
- The literacy level of interns, which could be dealt with in some part through training
- A mentoring system was regarded as a good idea, with divided opinion as to the formal or informal nature of a potential system
- The importance of the advance notice of skill-sets to divisions to aid the process of skills-matching and individual training plans to fill the skills gaps

Some Departments and stakeholders offered further advice to future Programmes:

- The Programme, as far as possible should only engage those with a genuine interest in the type of work available
- Discuss and reflect on the young age of interns
- Reassess the practice of placing interns in twos
- Participating Divisions should build up to it well in advance with formal diversity training for all staff
- Maintain the centrally managed aspect of the Programme
- Extend the Programme length
- Include more time for reviews during the lifetime of the Programme, with managers and interns - separately or together
- Keep the scheme fresh by using different Departments and divisions
- Stronger induction for interns
- Divisions should devise a clearly identified block of work so boredom does not set in
- Continuous and regular interventions to up-date interns' CVs and job-seeking skills and practice
- A certain level of education, namely Leaving Certificate, would be a preferable entry requirement to the programme

<sup>18</sup> Department of finance (2007) *Civil Service Equality Initiatives Report 2006*.

<sup>19</sup> Competition at the lower end of the labour market and between categories of 'excluded' can be very intense.

## 5. Conclusions drawn from the Review

- 5.1 Programme design
- 5.2 The promotion of the Programme
- 5.3 Mobilisation of Government Departments
- 5.4 The title of the Programme
- 5.5 The interview process
- 5.6 Diversity of participants
- 5.7 Orientation for managers
- 5.8 Understanding of the programme - its nature
- 5.9 Eligibility for the Programme
- 5.10 Awareness-raising for civil servants
- 5.11 Awareness-raising for Travellers
- 5.12 Interns' understanding of their jobs
- 5.13 Placement of Interns in pairs
- 5.14 Advice on dress code
- 5.15 Interns' competencies for their work
- 5.16 The availability of sufficient work for Interns
- 5.17 Interns' preferences for companionship
- 5.18 Intern reference person
- 5.19 Department capacity to take on Interns within agreed starting period
- 5.20 Intern availability for work for 26 consecutive weeks
- 5.21 Payment of wages to Interns
- 5.22 Family pressures on Interns
- 5.23 Trauma in the lives of Interns
- 5.24 Opportunities for training
- 5.25 Curriculum Vitae preparation
- 5.26 Closing event
- 5.27 Post placement
- 5.28 Civil Service examinations
- 5.29 Intermediary programmes



## 5. Conclusions

### drawn from the Review

#### 5.1 Programme design

The programme design of fixed duration work experience in Civil Service jobs for job-ready disadvantaged young people was coherent. The Programme design was readily and quickly understood by Civil Servants as a good and sensible idea that would add value to young peoples careers. The design was free from complicated eligibility criteria and unencumbered by multiple objectives, which could distort its implementation and evaluation.

#### 5.2 The promotion of the Programme

The programme was actively canvassed among Traveller organisations with labourintensive question and answer sessions, site visits, and explanatory sheets. The engagement of Traveller organisations appears to have been much appreciated and was a factor in the enthusiasm expressed for the programme and the volume of applicants, which was double the number of places available.

#### 5.3 Mobilisation of Government Departments

Twelve Departments of Government and Offices responded enthusiastically to a call for interest in participating in the Initiative. The willingness of Departments and divisions, units and bodies within Departments to be a part of the Programme was noted by those steering the Programme. The number of bodies that volunteered to offer outdoor manual work placements was insufficient to meet the numbers of successful candidates. This was a disappointment for applicants. It had the indirect effect of 'feminising' the programme as manual work was sought or expected by male applicants.

#### 5.4 The title of the Programme

The title of the Programme posed problems for participants who did not know what an 'intern' was and would have preferred it to be called what it was - work experience.

#### 5.5 The interview process

The application and interview process appears to have been sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of interview-inexperienced candidates without significantly departing from Civil Service standards.

#### 5.6 Diversity of participants

An unexpected number of successful applicants came from the same neighbourhoods of Dublin and/or were related to each other as siblings or cousins. The evaluation can only speculate as to how this came to pass.

One possibility is that those who received information about the Internship Programme kept it to a small circle of families who put forward two or three family members to the programme.

A second possibility is that families favoured having two or more applicants in the programme so that, if successful in their applications, they could travel together and be together on the programme.

A third possibility is that some families declined to encourage participation in the Programme because they did not wish their members to mix with Travellers from other specific families with whom relations were tense or unfriendly.<sup>20</sup>

### 5.7 Orientation for managers

Some managers found the formal orientation session too brief, duplicating knowledge they already had or focussing too strongly on certain issues to the exclusion of others and uninformative. Others found it most interesting and had hoped it would be longer. There was no consensus on this issue.

### 5.8 Understanding of the programme - its nature

While the Programme was distinctly and specifically promoted as a fixed duration and temporary work experience initiative, some participants and some managers, despite this proviso, came to understand it differently. Traveller organisations and Travellers who knew of, or had participated in earlier pilot schemes, imagined that if the work placement went *'well'*, participants might be *'kept on'*. When this did not happen, there was disappointment. Some participants said they had been told in their placement that there was a chance they could stay on, although this is nowhere stated in the Programme literature.

Some Clerical Officers, line managers and other senior staff in Departments thought it would be *'good'* if participants could *'stay on'* and tried to arrange this informally themselves with the best of motives in mind. Some thought that the interns could do summer work or fill term-time vacancies over the summer. As a result some Interns got, what they described as, *'extensions'*<sup>21</sup> to the Internship and others did not.

### 5.9 Eligibility for the Programmers

Applicants to the programme were permitted from candidates aged 17 years or more.

Some stakeholders expressed the view that eligibility criteria should focus less on age and more on level of

education. These interviewees were of the opinion that it would be more appropriate to offer the Programme only to those educated to Leaving Certificate standard. It was considered that holders of the Leaving Certificate would have greater literacy skills and have demonstrated better attendance and commitment to a demanding programme.

However, the mainstream Clerical Officer competition does not demand a Leaving Certificate level of education of applicants. It would, therefore be difficult to justify such a requirement for this Programme.

### 5.10 Awareness-raising for Civil Servants

Several managers said the programme was good for raising awareness of diversity issues among staff specifically in relation to members of the Traveller Community. At least two managers had been at school with Travellers and thought the initiative was good for mutual understanding.

### 5.11 Awareness-raising for Travellers

Many Travellers found the initiative excellent in allowing them to mix with settled people, talk with them, *'make friends'* with settled people. In the words of one participant, this Programme was *'not like usual'*. By this she meant a room with all Travellers sitting together and no settled people.

### 5.12 Interns understanding of their jobs

Several interns could not accurately describe or precisely name their jobs or job tasks. Some did not understand what their jobs consisted of. Those doing manual work and very specific clerical duties (Office of Public Works; Conference preparation/event management) understood what they were doing. Interns answering phones, or greeting at reception or entering sick leave data understood what they were doing.

Some with absolutely no background in civil or public service could not appreciate what they were doing and had an unclear notion of their role in the larger wheel of the overall department or service. As a result they were unable to describe it at the evaluations or on their CVs.

### 5.13 Placement of Interns in pairs

The decision to place interns in pairs with the same Departments or Bodies proved satisfactory for the interns, providing them with a companion and workmate in a strange workplace and in some instances, with a commuting partner. Others were pleased to maintain a degree of distance from other interns as it afforded them an opportunity to mix with other colleagues. Some but not all interns could have managed / did manage on their own.

### 5.14 Advice on dress code

Dress Code was an important issue for girl/women interns; it both puzzled and worried them in case they 'stood out' from the crowd. It was resolved very quickly after a day or two when they saw what other girls/women were wearing.

### 5.15 Interns' competencies for their work

Most interns were well able for the clerical or manual work with which they were provided and could complete it quickly. Some interns had spelling and grammar deficits, which required close supervision of written work. This would not have been apparent from their CV or interview. Two interns expressed huge interest and particular enthusiasm for their daily work and for the kindness of their supervisor whom they regarded as a friend and boss.

### 5.16 The availability of sufficient work for Interns

Interns expressed the desire to be fully occupied at all times. A small number stated that they were left 'idle'

some days or during some periods and they disliked this intensely. Departments too worried that they would have enough appropriate and available work for Interns.

### 5.17 Interns' preferences for companionship

Interns liked being in large typing '*pools*', open plan offices or at busy front office desks. It may be that interns are accustomed to large extended family and busy, even crowded, environments. Clerical Interns did not like being in offices of just one or two people. Two interns enjoyed enormously the work enormously and the camaraderie with other workers.

### 5.18 Intern reference person

Some clerical Interns benefited from direction from a more mature employee to whom they could address informal questions or to whom they could go with problems. This person was not necessarily their immediate supervisor but rather a co-worker who informally and without direction took on the role of '*buddy*' or '*mentor*'.

### 5.19 Department capacity to take on Interns within agreed starting period

It proved useful that all interns could start during a common calendar period of three to four weeks. This provided a sense of programme, facilitated evaluation, administration and progress reporting. Departments which for a variety of reasons, cannot commence within the designated calendar period, should self-exclude from inclusion in the Programme.

### 5.20 Intern availability for work for 26 consecutive weeks

An important number of interns could not make themselves available, or were unable to sustain their availability, for work 5 days a week over a 26-week period, both according to themselves and/or their Departments. This proved to be a sensitive issue requiring wider reflection and which goes further than this evaluation. Since entry to the work experience was by competitive interview, interns who could not make themselves available or sustain the 26-week period were displacing an opportunity, which might have accrued to an unsuccessful applicant to the programme.

### 5.21 Payment of wages to Interns

Interns received the pay appropriate to Clerical Officers in the Civil Service or General Operatives in the Office of Public Works. There were no complaints about pay. In addition to pay, Interns could keep their Medical Card if they had one. There were discussions with at least two Interns regarding 'docking' their pay if they took further leave days when their leave days and sick days had been used up. The prospect of pay deductions did not appear to constitute a major issue with Interns. One or more Interns were overpaid when leave days were taken into account.

### 5.22 Family pressures on Interns

Interns experienced some family pressures in relation to their work placement, which other Clerical Officers would not normally experience. These included a presumption that some of the girl/women Interns would travel to and from work always in pairs, even when their hours of starting or finishing work varied. Some Interns stated that it was not acceptable for them to attend receptions, celebrations or social events during or after working hours.

### 5.23 Trauma in the lives of Interns

An unusual number of Interns experienced, or were exposed to, traumatic events in their lives while they were Interns or just prior to becoming Interns. These events included a serious car accident, death of young siblings and death of other family members.

### 5.24 Opportunities for training

Opportunities for formal training were mixed. While some Interns got several training experiences, others got none at all. Those who got training especially appreciated courses in reception work or answering the telephone.

### 5.25 Curriculum Vitae preparation

Interns generally reported or believed that there was no support available in updating their Curriculum Vitae. Interns generally were not fully aware of how to describe their work experience on a CV.

### 5.26 Closing event

Interns had an expectation of a closing event to the Programme in the form of a Certificate of Completion and/or a group photograph of all Interns or an event that marked the ending of the experience.

### 5.27 Post-placement

Few if any Interns reported jobs or economic activities, or prospects of any, when interviewed during May and June 2007. Interns were unable to recall, or did not report on, any formal efforts to place them in further training, education or employment outside of the Civil or Public Service.

### 5.28 Civil Service Examinations

A number of Interns were encouraged by co-workers to prepare for and present themselves as candidates for the Civil Service Clerical Officer examinations. The Public Appointments Service provided two days of training to prepare candidates for the open competition. A small amount of evidence to date would indicate that this examination is quite difficult for this target group of Interns to pass successfully at this point in time.

### 5.29 Intermediary Programmes

The value of a short intermediary 'Programme' to orient and prepare the Interns for the work placement could be useful. This type of short two-week programme has been used by FÁS in their *Gateway for Women* initiative. During the two-week period, the expectations of work in the public sector can be explored and practical issues of Bank Accounts and Transport addressed. Ability to use computers and copy type can be verified so that there is a good match between training needs and training course availability. Such an intermediary programme would enable work orientation to be developed and distinguished from workplace induction carried out by the individual Departments themselves.

<sup>20</sup> Ralaheen has observed in other parts of the country, that labour market programmes occasionally encounter difficulties in having programmes reaching out to two or more specific neighbourhoods or housing estates, where participants will be joined together on a common 'inclusion' programme.

<sup>21</sup> They were not, in fact, 'extensions' but new temporary contracts.



## 6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Recommendations related to the Programme as a whole
- 6.2 Recommendations related to specific components of the Programme
- 6.3 Recommendations related to Traveller participation
- 6.4 Recommendations related to Government Departments
- 6.5 Suggestions for Traveller Organisations
- 6.6 Recommendations for post work experience



## 6. Recommendations

### 6.1 Recommendations related to the Programme as a Whole

- That the Traveller Internship Programme, as a valuable initiative in mainstreaming, should be repeated
- Any future programme should have an experienced and full-time co-ordinator for the/each region
- Traveller organisations should be invited to promote the programme and disseminate information as to its value
- The Programme would benefit from some additional inputs structured to focus Interns on their future labour market goals and methods of achieving those goals such as CV building
- The Intern Programme in the Civil Service should be back to back with a Public Sector and Local Authority initiative also of six months' duration, providing a one-year package
- Future roll out of the Programme will benefit from the experience of the Civil Service Equality Unit of the Department of Finance, the labour market exclusion knowledge of FÁS and the experience of race and diversity issues in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- The next phase roll-out should be restricted to a particular region
- The aims and objectives of the Programme should be repeatedly and more explicitly described and the Programme named as a mainstream Programme
- The word 'Internship' should be removed from the Programme title
- A two-week intermediary programme of work orientation (as opposed to workplace induction) should be considered for all Interns prior to placement, preferably in a FÁS training centre

### 6.2 Recommendations related to specific components of the Programme

- The Programme promotion should ensure that all neighbourhoods where Travellers reside have access to promotional information
- Careful reflection should be undertaken prior to supporting Travellers who left formal education early through open Civil Service competitions
- To redress the gender imbalance in the Programme, extra effort should be given to promoting the Programme to Departments which have outdoor manual work available
- The link between the explicit policy goal of school completion and employment on the Programme should be emphasised in the way the Programme is constructed. Advice on retention in education and engagement with schools should be sought from South Dublin County Council
- The orientation of this mainstreaming Programme should be tilted more towards skills matching and slightly away from the community of origin
- All Interns should benefit from some internal or in-house training
- The mid-term or other assessment of Interns should be less detailed and more oriented towards discussion with managers and interns

### 6.3 Recommendations related to Traveller Participation

- Traveller applicants to the Programme should, where feasible, have expressed an interest in their application or interview, in clerical or manual work
- Traveller applicants should be specifically asked whether they can make themselves available for work experience 5 days a week for 26 weeks

- Preference should be given to those applicants who have demonstrated some capacity to sustain an involvement in education, training or work
- Consideration should be given to conducting a basic literacy assessment at interview
- Participants should be provided with 'Leave Planning' advice on the first day of their work experience
- Participants who do not present for work on a (pre-agreed) number of occasions and have no subsequent sick leave certificates or other pre-advised notice, should not be permitted to remain on the Programme

#### 6.4 Recommendations related to Government Departments

- Departments should be provided with sufficient Intern information to match Interns to available work tasks
- Departments who observe that Interns, having used up sick and leave days, are not presenting regularly for work should meet with the Programme coordinator at an early date to address the issue
- Interns who appear to have basic literacy issues could be provided with basic literacy training or 'Office Writing Skills'
- Departments should be advised that a greater number of traumatic incidents are likely to impact on the lives of some Interns
- Intern mentors might be selected from other experienced Clerical Officers
- Mentoring Clerical Officers should have this 'performance' positively added to their career files

#### 6.5 Suggestions for Traveller Organisations

- Traveller Organisations might advise participants and their families that attendance is expected five days a week for 26 weeks
- Interns should be advised of the Dress Code prior to commencement

- Interns and their families might be advised that there could be invitations to after-hours work or after-hours social events
- Interns and their families might be advised that due to the use of flexi-time, it may not be reasonable to expect Interns to travel together to and from work in pairs

#### 6.6 Recommendations for post work experience

- All interns should be advised and facilitated to enrol with FÁS occupational services or Obair/LES in the fourth month of their work placement to prepare a plan for their next steps in work, training or education
- Where there is a second stage six month programme in the Public Service, separate preparatory orientation should be provided by, and in relation to, the second body or organisation
- All Interns should have their CV correctly updated during the internship and, in particular, prior to departure. This exercise would necessitate in-put from those in direct supervision of Interns, Personnel Officers, FÁS experts and Interns themselves
- A 'leaving event' should be structured into the end of the Programme
- Traveller Organisations who have assisted in Programme promotion should be invited to also assist in post Programme placement

## Appendix 1 Evaluation of Civil Service Traveller Internship Pilot Programme

### Information Note

A six-month pilot internship programme in the Civil Service for members of the Traveller community is coming to an end. The Programme has taken place under the guidance of a Working Group made up of representatives from several different civil and public service departments and agencies. The Working Group is keen to draw lessons from this experience, which was shared across a number of Departments of Government.

The evaluation is being overseen by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of Finance and FÁS. The research company, Ralaheen Ltd, has been invited to undertake an independent evaluation of the initiative. Ralaheen has already completed research or evaluation with hard-to-reach groups on the labour market.

The assessment process will include 40 - 60 minute interviews with all participating interns as well as, separately, some Departmental staff, the Internship Working Group and Traveller representative groups. The focus of the evaluation is to:

- Gain feedback on the range and adequacy of the recruitment process, work experience and the related supports provided
- Analyse the extent to which the internship meets the needs and expectations of the client group
- Identify programme outcomes and possible improvements to and expansion of the programme if so required

The evaluation will run between April and June 2007.

For further information about the study you can contact:

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## Appendix 2 Headings for discussion with evaluation participants

### Evaluation of Civil Service Traveller Internship Pilot Programme

#### Departmental Personnel Discussion Themes

##### 1. Description of work environment

- Number of Interns - male / female / age / educational background
- Description of division / unit including:
  - Size of division
  - Type of work
  - Gender balance of existing staff
  - Age profile of existing staff
  - Any members of the Traveller community already working / recently worked in the division

##### 2. Initial stages

- Approached
- Ever been involved with intern programme before
- Initial feeling of line managers and HR personnel - hassle / too busy with other projects / nervous / sceptical of value
- Training for staff
  - How many staff received training
  - Staff at which levels?
  - Who delivered training?
  - Length of training sessions
  - Usefulness of training
  - Any gaps in training?
- Involvement in terms and conditions of contracts
- Meeting with candidates before employment
  - How long?
  - Was it useful?
  - Introduce to other staff or just managers?
  - Give them tour of building / work station?
  - What kind of issues did they raise - conditions of employment / type of work / questions about staff?
  - Did you have questions for them to gauge their ability or skills or was that all available to you from application procedure?

##### 3. Employment

###### Orientation / Settling

- Setting up payroll - issues with bank accounts / addresses
- Does division have mentoring / buddying system for new staff or is it reliant on friendliness of staff to go for coffee / lunch / cigarette break

###### Support

- What type of support available for managers and other staff during the programme?
- Did managers feel fully supported at all times? Somebody on other end of phone?
- Who was intern's first point of contact - Miriam or Line Manager - did they understand this and use correct procedures for queries / issues

###### Work

- Were interns able for work or did it have to be reduced or altered in any way?
- Were they able for more difficult work than previously expected?
- Did it significantly add to workload of personnel to train / lead interns?
- Did they receive same level of work as peers?
- Any issues around timekeeping / dress code / willingness to take orders / standard of work / absenteeism?
- What type of training courses did they do? How was this decided?
- Did they complete a variety of duties?
- Did their vocational and interpersonal skills develop during the internship?
- Was 6 months long enough or too long?

#### Extra curricular

- Overall did the programme have a positive / negative impact on the workplace?
- Were staff open to the idea?
- Any obvious resentment / tensions
- Did the interns mix with other staff or did they stick together
- Was it useful to have two at the same time or was this damaging to mixing?
- Were they invited out on nights out / lunches etc.
- Did any complaints of bullying or harassment arise?
- Did any of them have family or childcare issues which prevented them from coming to work on time / regularly
- Did they talk about the reaction of their families / community to their new work?

#### Future for the interns

- Did they receive training to prepare for open competitions in Civil Service or for other job seeking
- Did they up-date their CVs before they left? Were they significantly better?
- Did they noticeably gain confidence?
- Did they express an interest in seeking same type of work?

#### Future for the department division

- Willing to repeat the exercise? Why / why not?
- If you had the choice would you hire the interns permanently?
- Opened managers and staff to benefits of diverse workplace?
- What would help in future?

## Interview with Interns Guide

|   |                      |  |
|---|----------------------|--|
| 1 | Interview date       |  |
| 2 | Interviewer initials |  |
| 3 | Location             |  |

### PROFILE

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 4 | Age   |  |
|   | Age left school                                   |  |
|   | Age now   |  |
| 5 | Family status/ responsibilities (give any detail) |  |
| 6 | Current situation:                                |  |
|   | • work  |  |
|   | • training  |  |
|   | • education                                       |  |
|   | • caring  |  |
|   | • 'in between'                                    |  |
|   | • volunteer                                       |  |
|   | • welfare/unemployed                              |  |
|   | • not known                                       |  |
|   | • other   |  |

### DISCUSSION HEADINGS

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Application process                       |  |
| 2 | Own Expectations                          |  |
| 3 | Attitudes of others in wider family       |  |
| 4 | Fears and apprehensions                   |  |
| 5 | What worked well/not so well              |  |
| 6 | Starting the internship in the first week |  |
| 7 | Surprises and disappointments             |  |
| 8 | Managing tax, social welfare, contracts   |  |
| 9 | Working hours and flexi time              |  |

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| RALAHEEN CODE      |  |
| Interviewee Number |  |
| Tick when entered  |  |

### DISCUSSION HEADINGS - CONTINUED

|     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 10  | The actual work and tasks given - feel able for it/too easy/slow/fast |  |
| 11  | Experience of where to go with issues                                 |  |
| 12  | The Training and courses attended                                     |  |
| 13  | Taking leave/holidays/sick leave                                      |  |
| 14  | Mixing with others in the workplace/break time, lunchtime/after work  |  |
| 15  | Applying for Exams  |  |
| 16. | Getting a CV  |  |
| 17. | Relationship with immediate supervisor/mentor/personnel               |  |
| 18  | Being from the Traveller Community in the workplace                   |  |
| 19  | The length of the internship  |  |
| 20  | Miscellaneous   |  |
| 21  | Future plans then, future plans now                                   |  |
| 22. | Gains:  |  |
|     | • Qualifications  |  |
|     | • Experience  |  |
|     | • Skills  |  |
|     | • CV improvement  |  |
|     | • Knowledge   |  |
|     | • Confidence  |  |
|     | • Financial improvements  |  |
|     | • Other   |  |
| 23. | Disadvantages   |  |
| 24. | Advice to give to future interns                                      |  |
| 25. | comments of interviewer/interviewee                                   |  |

## Appendix 3 Participation in the review

### Discussions with Government Department

| Number of Government Departments who participated in the review | Number of personnel in attendance at discussions |
|---|--|
| 10  | 23   |

### Interviews with interns

| Outcome                             | Number    |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Interview complete                  | 14        |
| Interview cancelled / no show       | 4         |
| Unavailable to meet with the review | 1         |
| No response                         | 4         |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>23</b> |



## Appendix 4 Membership of Working Group

### Civil Service Traveller Internship Programme Working Group

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Gerry Quinlan (Chair)    | Department of Finance  |
| Miriam Joyce (Secretary) | Department of Finance (Department of Health and Children from June 2007) |
| Brendan Sheehy           | Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform                           |
| Jennifer Geoghegan       | Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform                           |
| Brendan O'Leary          | Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment                           |
| Anne Gale                | Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment                           |
| Yvonne Joyce             | Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources               |
| Peter Byrne              | Department of Social and Family Affairs                                  |
| Dave Fadden              | Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government             |
| Bríd Conway              | Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government             |
| Aine Gray                | Public Appointments Service  |
| Mary Flynn               | Public Appointments Service  |
| Michelle Canny           | Public Appointments Service  |
| Mary Carmody             | FÁS  |
| Billy Coman              | South Dublin County Council  |

## Appendix 5 Hard-to-reach populations

The concept of hard-to-reach populations is used widely in US social research. It is used in particular by Mathematica Policy Research Inc in their large-scale studies for Federal agencies providing social services to large populations. The concept does not presume any exclusion on the part of the interviewee or research subject, and is neutral with regard to discrimination. It conceptualises the technical difficulties to be overcome on the part of research agencies in ensuring high response rates and representative samples.

Interest in hard-to-reach populations has grown in the US since the 1996 Welfare Reform affected millions of low income Americans, whose changed circumstances have been monitored by large-scale social studies.

Hard-to-reach populations can be geographically, culturally or socially remote from research promoters. This leads to under reporting of their circumstances in sample surveys or failure to capture the full range of experiences and opinions of the target population. The extra distance between research promoter and potential interviewee can be reduced by taking additional steps to bring the research closer to the spaces and places which potential interviewees find acceptable, by the addition of incentives or other trust building measures.

The extra steps for researchers can involve printing research materials in languages other than English or using specially selected interpreters or cultural mediators, holding interviews in local neighbourhoods and services, or paying for transport for persons with disabilities.

## Appendix 6 Traveller Community by Area of residence 2002 and 2006

Table 1

Travellers by usual residence, 2002 and 2006

| Area                              | Number 2006  | Number 2002  |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| State                             | 22,369       | 23,681       |
| Leinster                          | 11,367       | 12,085       |
|                                   |              |              |
| Dublin City Council               | 1,812        | 2,049        |
| South Dublin Co Council           | 1,761        | 1,824        |
| Fingal Co Council                 | 1,122        | 1,244        |
| Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Co Council | 363          | 579          |
| <b>Total Dublin</b>               | <b>5,058</b> | <b>5,696</b> |
| <b>Dublin as % of State</b>       | <b>22.9%</b> | <b>24.0%</b> |

Source: Compiled by Ralaheen Ltd and inspired by LaDonna Pavetti et al (2001) Work Based Strategies for Hard to Employ TANF recipients, Mathematica Policy Research Inc. Washington DC.

In the Census of 2002 and 2006 some 22,000-23,000 persons self defined themselves as members of the Traveller Community. Self-definition or self-declaration is an important form of description compared with other methods of measurement such as observed or administrative sources. Half of all those describing themselves as Travellers resided within the area of Leinster at the time of the Census 2006. Some 23 per cent of all Travellers -5,058 persons - reside within the four Dublin Local Authorities.

Table 2

Traveller Interns by Area of Residence, 2006 / 07

| Area           | Numbers   |
|----------------|-----------|
| North Dublin   | 10        |
| South Dublin   | 5         |
| West Dublin    | 1         |
| Outside Dublin | 3         |
| Unknown        | 4         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>23</b> |

Source: Programme data 2007

22 P. Conroy (2002) Data collection and ethnicity - Ethical Issues and safeguards in the collection of data, Discussion Paper for the DJELR.

## Appendix 7 Interview Information for Candidates for the Traveller Internship

### Civil Service Traveller Internship Programme



**An tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí**  
**Public Appointments Service**

#### Interview information

This following document will give you information to help you prepare your interview for the Internship Programme.

##### Structure of the Interview:

- There will be two people carrying out the interview.
- It will last approximately 20 minutes.
- The interview will be relatively informal
- You will be introduced to each interviewer and the format of the interview will be explained to you.
- The interviewers will focus on the following areas:
  - Personal Organisation
  - People Skills
  - Commitment and Flexibility
  - Education

##### Preparing for the interview:

The people doing the interview will be particularly interested in exploring your commitment to the Internship Programme, so it would be useful to think about experiences where you have showed commitment to, for example, a training course or preparing for an examination. The interviewers will also ask about your educational experience. It would be useful to think carefully about examples of how your past experiences (school, outside activities, part-time work) show you have the skills listed above.

##### Other tips:

- Switch off your mobile phone.
- You should dress smartly.  
You **do not** need to wear a suit.
- Speak slowly and calmly.
- If you are nervous on the day, don't worry, this generally isn't noticeable and the interviewers will try to put you at your ease.
- Take a drink of water if you need to.
- Listen carefully to the question asked.
- If you are not sure what a question means, let the interviewer know. They will repeat the question or ask you in a different way.
- Don't worry if there is a pause before you answer while you think.
- You can address your answers to the interviewer asking the questions.
- The interviewers will do everything they can to help you do well on the day.

## Appendix 8 Programme Models of Paid Work Experience for 'Hard to Employ' Recipients

|                                      | Traveller Internship<br>Department of Finance<br>2006-2007  | Community Employment (CE) Scheme<br>Part-Time Job Option  |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Target Population                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Individuals/Traveller Community who lack work experience and /or</li> <li>· Individuals/Traveller Community employers are reluctant to hire</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Individuals who lack work experience and /or</li> <li>· Individuals employers are reluctant to hire</li> <li>· Aged 18 years (Travellers)</li> </ul> |
| Pre Employment activities            | Life skills and/or Job readiness  | Lacking life skills and/or job readiness  |
| Initial employment options           | Placement in Government Departments   | Placement in neighbourhood not-for-profit/voluntary or socially useful jobs   |
| Support to find permanent employment | Limited to modest   | Yes   |
| Post-Placement support               | Some  | Ongoing   |
| Social support                       | Mainly in work site   | Yes in and out of work sites:<br>Supervisors/Facilitators   |
| Duration                             | 6 months  | Up to 3 years   |
| Training options                     | Not mandatory   | Yes.<br>FETAC Skills training and other learning including literacy   |
| Incentives                           | Full-time waged employment  | Part-time waged employment + secondary benefits   |

Source: Compiled by Ralaheen Ltd and inspired by LaDonna Pavetti et al (2001) Work Based Strategies for Hard to Employ TANF recipients, Mathematica Policy Research Inc. Washington DC.





