

# **Southside Partnership DLR CLG. Pre-Budget Submission Proposals**

## **Budget 2020**



Southside Partnership DLR was established in 1996 as an independent local development company delivering a range of programmes and services in Dún Laoghaire Rathdown, Co. Dublin. The principal programmes the organisation delivers are: the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP); the Local Employment Service (LES) and the Tús Community Work Placement Initiative. The Partnership also runs a Community Employment Scheme, is involved in a number of projects financed through European funds and hosts others including HSE funded initiatives such as the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Drug and Alcohol Taskforce, Healthy Food Made Easy, Living Well with Dementia as well as a domestic violence project called Southside Addressing Violence Effectively (SAVE) funded by TUSLA.

#### OUR VISION

To see an inclusive and just society, without discrimination, where people are encouraged and enabled to reach their full potential within strong vibrant communities.

#### OUR MISSION

Working in partnership to improve social and economic inclusion and build vibrant communities in Dún Laoghaire Rathdown.

The following are suggestions outlining a number of issues, problems and possible solutions, which we feel should be taken into consideration when framing the upcoming Budget.

#### **Back to Work Enterprise Allowance:**

1. Extend programme support to more than 2-years.

#### **Community Employment:**

1. Support re-engagement after 3-months.
2. Increase the training budget and relax the emphasis on QQI training.

#### **Local Employment Services (LES):**

1. Any future tender for the provision of employment services should be restricted to not-for-profit organisations and should focus on supporting the most disadvantaged.
2. Progressions to Tús and CE should count towards the achievement of organisational targets.

#### **Tús Community Work Placement Initiative:**

1. Reduce the Inter-Tús Placement qualification period from 3 years to 1 year.
2. Extend employment contracts for participants identified as needing increased support to ensure their eventual progression.
3. Update the eligibility criteria to increase access to the Tús programme for more jobseekers.
4. Extend employment contracts for Tús participants aged 62 or over.



## **Back To Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA)**

While changes to this scheme over the years have meant that unemployed people can access an enterprise support allowance payment sooner, anecdotal local evidence indicates that reductions in the length of this payment, and associated supports, have impacted negatively on the long-term viability of many of the businesses involved.

Nationally 5,772 people exited the live register onto the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) in 2017, as a result of support from Local Development Companies such as Southside Partnership DLR and their Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP) interventions. Anything which can be done to support these entrepreneurs to remain in business, and off the live register, should be considered value for money in the long-term.

### **Issue:**

Traditionally the BTWEA was a 4-year scheme with payments as follows:

Year 1 = 100%                      Year 2 = 75%                      Year 3 = 50%                      Year 4 = 25%

It is now a 2-year scheme with the following payments:

Year 1 = 100%                      Year 2 = 75%

Simply put, the drop from 75% to 0% at the end of the second year of trading may be too much for many people and as such they are forced, over time, to return to the live register, reluctantly abandoning their business venture which may have been viable with a little more support. This is especially true for the clients currently presenting due to the length of their unemployment. In order to really build a business that is sustainable after the 2-year BTWEA supports end, they need to develop contacts, networks, etc., and this takes time. The support of an Enterprise Officer while on the BTWEA, access to networking opportunities and free training, along with the financial support cushion from DEASP are essential.

### **Proposed Solution:**

Increase the BTWEA to at least a 3-year scheme and adjust the percentages over the years. The aim here should be to minimise any impact in the first year, to allow the client concentrate on getting the business up and running, and to extend the period of support available. It should then allow for a steady income in the second year and a fair reduction in the final year(s) to encourage people to continue in business and not return to the live register.

One example of possible allocation might be:

Year 1 = 100%                      Year 2 = 70%                      Year 3 = 30%

Note: This is actually a proposed reduction in the Year 2 allocation and the 30% in Year 3 is still more cost effective than having to means test people and possibly pay them 100%, if eligible, when they return to the live register.

Other permutations could aim towards a more ‘cost neutral’ effect, while still supporting the participants for a longer period of time.



## **Community Employment**

The Community Employment (CE) programme is administered by the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection (DEASP) and is designed to help people who are long-term unemployed (or otherwise disadvantaged) to get back to work by offering part-time and temporary placements in jobs based within local communities. After their placement, participants are encouraged to look for permanent jobs, based on the experience and new skills they have gained while on CE. Participants currently have access to €250 per annum to support their training needs.

Two specific issues have been identified as negatively impacting on participants and, if addressed, could help improve long-term programme goal achievement.

### **Issue 1:**

If a participant voluntarily finishes CE for any reason, or completes a year but does not opt to continue in that placement, they are unable to get back on CE for a minimum of 12-months. For a variety of reasons a CE participant may have to drop out of their placement for a period of time before they complete a full year on the scheme. When this occurs they can apply to get their social welfare reinstated but cannot apply for CE again for a minimum period of 12-months from their actual finish date.

Another example is the instance whereby a participant is coming towards the end of their current year on CE and decides they would prefer to continue working on CE elsewhere, on another scheme, to further develop and broaden their skills and experience. If they cannot source another suitable CE placement to seamlessly continue into another year on the scheme when their current year has been completed, under the existing arrangements, they have to apply to reinstate their social welfare payment and are not eligible to reapply for CE for a minimum of 12-months from their contract end date.

It does not make sense in both cases highlighted above that participants are penalised in this way and are unable to participate on CE for a full year. This simply slows down possible progressions, along with putting unnecessary staffing pressures on the community and voluntary organisations that depend on CE for staff support. Participants in both of the cases above would have clearly shown their commitment and willingness to participate and engage on a CE scheme to further enhance their skills, work experience and training. Therefore removing or easing the current eligibility reactivation barrier of 12-months for those that leave their CE placement early or who wish to take up a placement elsewhere if their current contract has expired, greatly increases the potential positive progression outcomes and pathways to part time / full time employment.

### **Proposed Solution:**

If a participant drops out of CE, or does not take up another year within their current placement when their contract ends, they should be eligible for CE again after a 3-month period.



**Issue 2:**

The annual CE training budget is too small and too restrictive in its application.

Participants between 21 and 55 years must be working towards a QQI Award on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or an industry equivalent, to be eligible for up to an additional 2-years on CE (up to a maximum total of 3 consecutive years). For a lot of those now presenting for participation on CE, QQI accredited training is not a realistic option, especially in the early stages, and they would benefit more from access to ‘soft skills’ and other unaccredited training opportunities.

For those who do identify suitable accredited training, the annual budget of €250 per person is simply not enough. Very often participants are forced to consider QQI training options which do not match their desired employment outcomes simply because the budget will not stretch to cover the cost of the training they really want to undertake. There are a limited number of training providers that will deliver a QQI accredited module for €250 or less and those that do, tend to focus solely on a limited range of modules / awards. Any free modular options provided by the ETBs or other training institutions are generally not broad enough in their scope or diversity to reflect modern workplace requirements, so participants can feel constrained or limited in the choices for free training courses that are available to them.

For any individual with literacy or numeracy issues, the idea of having to take up accredited training whilst on CE can be a very distressing and challenging prospect and this can lead to a further deterioration of confidence and/or an unwillingness to participate for fear of exposing their literacy difficulties.

Note: The maximum training allowance per person available through the LES Mediator’s Fund is currently €500 per annum.

**Proposed Solution:**

Reinstate the CE Scheme training budget at €500 per participant per annum.

Relax the focus on QQI accredited training, leading to a major award, in an effort to truly work with long-term unemployed people to develop the career opportunities they desire. ‘Industry standard’ type training courses should also be more greatly recognised and accepted, particularly in the case of courses that are applicable to the construction / trades / industrial / manual labour related workplaces.



## Local Employment Services

The LES provides a range of employment support services to job seekers. The service is unique in that it is client-centred and has a holistic approach when working with clients. This, along with being able to access the wrap-around services of LDCs such as Southside Partnership, ensures that clients who are now presenting with multiple barriers, receive the intensive support they require.

### **Issue 1:**

Going forward it is understood that there is an intention at government level to procure labour activation services, such as the LES, through an open tendering process. Moving towards such a process, or the introduction of a 'payment by results model', will not necessarily benefit Jobseekers. Instead, it could encourage organisations to focus their efforts on clients that need minimal intervention in order for the company to meet targets and make a profit. This, along with other issues, has been well documented in the Irish Local Development Network's (ILDN) Pre-Budget Submission for Budget 2020 and Southside Partnership DLR fully endorses the recommendations made in the ILDN pre-budget submission regarding the LES.

### **Proposed Solution:**

Ensure sufficient funding and processes are in place to enable an already successful Local Employment Service delivery model to continue and to focus on those most distanced from the labour market. To this end, any tender for this work going forward should be restricted to not-for-profit companies.

Note: For further information on this issue, please see the ILDN Pre-Budget Submission for Budget 2020.

### **Issue 2:**

With a vibrant employment market and almost 'full employment', it is becoming harder for those most disadvantaged and distanced from the labour market to secure positions. Very often these are people who have been unemployed for many years, for a variety of reasons, and as such, potential employers are nervous to 'take a chance on them' by offering them employment.

For such long-term unemployed people, breaking the cycle and establishing / re-establishing productive work habits is vital. Participation on programmes such as Community Employment and Tús are fantastic mechanisms to build skills and routines and participation also helps to assure potential employers that their attendance and commitment will not be an issue.

### **Proposed Solution:**

Currently progressions to programmes such as Tús and Community Employment from Local Employment Services, including Job Clubs, do not count in relation to their progression targets. As participation on such programmes is without doubt the next most appropriate development step for many of the clients currently on our LES caseload, such progressions should count towards organisational targets, thus further encouraging staff to help support clients into the most appropriate next step on the way towards their ultimate employment goals.



## **Tús Community Work Placement Initiative**

In looking at enhancements to the Tús scheme, it is worth noting that our intent is to ensure that the jobseeker is placed at the centre of all actions and policies. Putting the needs of the jobseeker first is a core tenet of our aims.

Community and voluntary organisations provide multiple human, social and community services that impact many lives nationally. In this work they contribute to the economy as well as create value for Irish society. Many of these organisations are Tús Placement Providers and a sample of current providers can be seen in **Appendix 1** of this document.

We would seek to keep as many jobseekers as possible gainfully engaged in productive work that is of benefit to the community and society, through these Placement Providers, as an alternative to paying them a similar sum to remain at home.

To this end, our recommendations in support of this are as follows:

### **Summary Recommendations:**

1. Reduce the Inter-Tús Placement qualification period from 3-years to 1-year.
2. Extend employment contracts for participants identified as needing increased support to ensure their eventual progression.
3. Update the eligibility criteria to increase access to the Tús programme for more jobseekers.
4. Extend employment contracts for Tús participants aged 62 or over.

### **1 Reduce the Inter-Tús Placement Qualification Period**

#### **Issue:**

Currently, a jobseeker who has completed a Tús engagement must wait 3-years before they can qualify to participate again. With the aim of keeping as many jobseekers as possible gainfully engaged in productive work or education, it would make sense to reduce the length of this qualification period.

#### **Proposed Solution:**

Reduce the inter-Tús placement qualification period from 3-years to 1-year.

### **2 Extended employment contracts for Tús participants.**

#### **Issue:**

It has become increasingly evident that the 12-month Tús contract for those coming from long-term unemployment is simply not enough time to allow many of the Tús participants to break the cycle of unemployment and fully re-integrate with the open labour market.

Jobseeker's perspective:

For many new Tús participants, it takes several months to 're-arrange' their personal circumstances and come to terms with working again after being unemployed for at least a year, or in many cases, for substantially longer. They then have a 'learning curve' in their



new position and, just as they are settling in and providing value to the Placement Provider, it is time for them to move on, perhaps with the support of other labour market activation services such as the Local Employment Services. However, for many, their time on Tús is too short.

Placement Provider's perspective:

Placement Providers are also finding the speed of turnover to be an issue. Having spent considerable time and effort engaging with, and training, a Tús participant, they often comment on the fact that just when they are starting to get a return on this investment it is time for the participant to move on or return to the live register as their 12-month contract on Tús is finished.

Tús Team Leader's perspective:

From the Team Leader's perspective, and that of the Implementing Body, it is also felt that 12-months does not give enough time to really build the type of relationship needed to fully engage with someone who has been unemployed for a substantial period of time. The lack of a training budget, such as that available for Community Employment participants, is also an issue. Team Leader's work very hard to ensure Tús participants are informed about additional supports available through SICAP, LES, ETB, etc., but the time available to explore such progression options is short.

### **Proposed Solution:**

Allow the Implementing Body the option to grant a 1-year contract extension to suitable Tús participants. This would help to ensure that the participants, and the Placement Providers, both get the most out of the programme.

We propose that this option be facilitated for up to 25% of the total allocated Tús placements.

### **3. Update eligibility criteria to increase access to the Tús programme for more jobseekers.**

#### **Issue:**

The current qualifying criteria for Tús is very restrictive. It penalises those who have taken positive actions to progress into employment, while encouraging some to 'wait' for longer than is necessary to avail of this effective and successful activation support programme.

Jobseekers who have engaged in part-time work, short-term work, casual work or education, can be excluded from Tús simply because they have engaged in these activities for over 4-weeks within the previous 12-months. This marginalises those who have taken some positive steps in their lives, whereas we should be facilitating these active Jobseekers to join Tús.

There are others who, whilst not on the live register, may become available for work and wish to engage with the programme. For example those who have spent years caring for a now deceased parent or relative, or single parents who can now take up employment, etc. These people deserve access to practical supports without having to wait for long qualification periods. Such individuals should be readily facilitated to pursue a Tús work placement to enhance their job progression prospects.





**Proposed Solution:**

- a. Reduce the qualifying period for access to Tús to 6-months.
- b. Allow all periods of training, work experience or short-term employment to count towards Tús eligibility.
- c. Extend eligibility to those who are not in receipt of a DEASP payment but who have capacity to join the open labour market if given sufficient work-experience and/or training. This should include those who are coming off a Back-to-Education Allowance, a Carer's Allowance or a Disability Payment and who are now available and capable of taking up employment.

**4. Extend employment contracts for Tús participants aged 62 or over.**

**Issue:**

Many people in their sixties find themselves in a position whereby they cannot find work because, whether we like it or not, their age can be an issue and may count against them. Very often these people return to the DEASP to receive Jobseekers Allowance and often end up languishing at home. Is it not much more desirable to keep such individuals engaged on the Tús programme doing useful work, which they enjoy doing, with Placement Providers who appreciate and benefit from such work?

**Proposed Solution:**

Tús participants aged 62 or over should be allowed remain on the programme until:

- (a) They find a suitable full-time role, or
- (b) They retire.

This to be facilitated for up to 10% of the total allocated Tús placements.

Note: Southside Partnership DLR would be extremely willing to work with DEASP to pilot all, or some, of the above suggestions on our Tús programme in 2020 in order to assess their impact.

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**Appendix 1: Sample of Tús Providers, July 2019:**

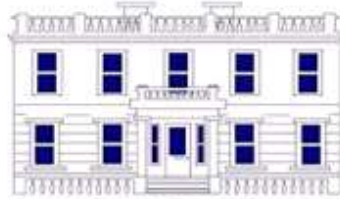




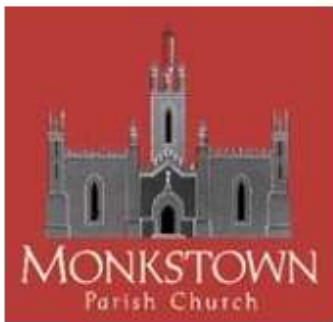
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