

**RESEARCH REPORT ON THE OPERATIONS AND
EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT
PROGRAMME**

Final Report

Prepared for FÁS

by

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to Researching the Operations and Effectiveness of the Supported Employment Programme: An Overview of the Approach and Methodology	1
1.1 Development of the Supported Employment Approach to the Employment of People with Disabilities	1
1.2 Development of the FÁS Funded National Supported Employment Programme	5
1.3 Description of the FÁS Funded National Supported Employment Programme – Based on Operational Guidelines	6
1.4 Aim of the Research	8
1.5 Programme Effectiveness: The Role of Programme Design and Implementation	9
1.6 Methodology Used in Researching the Effectiveness of the Supported Employment Programme	11
1.7 Overview of Report	14
Chapter 2: Labour Market and Policy Context of the Supported Employment Programme	15
2 Introduction	15
2.1 Labour Market Context	15
2.1.1 Issues on the Demand Side	17
2.1.2 Supply Side Issues	18
2.2 Policy Context and Objectives	20
2.2.1 Sectoral Plan of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	20
2.2.2 Sectoral Plan of the Department of Social and Family Affairs	22
2.3 The Position of the Supported Employment Programme within Labour Market Programme Provision for People with Disabilities	22
2.4 Summary Conclusions	23
Chapter 3: Profile of Active Clients on the Supported Employment Programme	24
3 Introduction	24
3.1 Circumstances of Clients Prior to Accessing the Supported Employment Programme	25
3.2 Total Number of Active Clients on the Supported Employment Programme	26
3.3 Repeat Status of Active Clients	27
3.4 Duration Active Clients are on the Supported Employment Programme and Most Recent Meeting of Job Coach with Active Clients	27
3.5 Breakdown of Active Clients by Programme Phase	29
3.6 Demographic Profile of Active Clients on the Supported Employment Programme	31
3.6.1 Gender and Age	31

3.6.2	Marital and Family Status	32
3.6.3	Education, Training and Qualifications	33
3.6.4	Labour Market History	34
3.7	Profile of Disabilities Being Experienced by Active Clients of the Supported Employment Programme	34
3.7.1	Profile of Disabilities Being Experienced by Active Clients of the Supported Employment Programme Based on Census Returns	35
3.7.2	Profile of Disabilities Being Experienced by Active Clients of the Supported Employment Programme Based on Census Returns	36
3.8	Welfare Status of Active Clients of Supported Employment Programme	37
3.9	Summary Conclusions	38

Chapter 4: The Nature of the Employment Being Accessed by Clients of the Supported Employment Programme **39**

4	Introduction	39
4.1	Point in Time Estimates of Number of Active Clients in Employment	40
4.1.1	Proportion of Active Clients in Employment Based on Census Returns (N=2,122)	40
4.1.2	Proportion of Active Clients in Employment Based on the Job Coach Survey (N=1,825)	41
4.1.3	Proportion of Current and Past Clients in Employment Based on Surveys of Current and Past Clients	41
4.2	Employment Status of Clients Exiting the Supported Employment Programme	41
4.2.1	Employment Status of Clients Exiting the Supported Employment Programme Based on Census Returns	42
4.2.2	Employment Status of Clients Exiting the Supported Employment Programme Based on Survey of Job Coaches	43
4.2.3	Employment Status of Clients Exiting the Supported Employment Based on Survey Respondents	44
4.3	Time Taken to Secure Employment among Clients in Employment	44
4.4	Role of the Supported Employment in Securing Employment	46
4.5	Duration in Employment among All Clients Obtaining Employment	48
4.6	Profile of Clients Obtaining Employment (Based on Survey of Current and Past Clients)	49
4.7	Profile of Companies Recruiting with Assistance from the Supported Employment Programme (Based on Survey of Employers)	51
4.8	Occupations of Active Clients in Employment	52
4.9	Terms and Conditions of Employment of Employees	54
4.9.1	Working Hours of Active Clients in Employment (Based on Census Returns)	54
4.9.2	Working Hours of Survey Respondents in Employment	55
4.9.3	Comparison of Working Hours of SEP Clients with National Population	55
4.9.4	Earnings of Clients in Employment	58
4.10	Supports Provided to Employees	60

4.11	Skill Levels Required for Job and Experience of Promotion in Job	60
4.12	Job Satisfaction of Employees	61
4.13	Welfare Status of Clients in Employment	61
4.14	Employment Retention and Meeting the Labour Requirements of Employers	62
4.15	Summary Conclusions	62

Chapter 5: When and Why Clients Cease Participation in the Supported Employment Programme **65**

5	Introduction	65
5.1	Estimating Annual Throughput on the Supported Employment Programme	66
5.2	Programme Phase at which Clients Exit the Supported Employment Programme	67
5.3	Reasons for Clients Exiting the Supported Employment Programme	71
5.4	Measuring the Effectiveness of the Supported Employment Programme	73
5.4.1	Programme Effectiveness Based on the Proportion of Clients Exiting to Employment (Regardless of the Number of Hours Worked)	74
5.4.2	Programme Effectiveness Based on the Proportion of Clients Exiting to Employment (and Working in Excess of 18 Hours a Week)	74
5.5	Summary Conclusions	75

Chapter 6: Inter-Organisational Variation in Client Profiles, Programme Implementation and Programme Outcomes **76**

6	Introduction	76
6.1	Inter-Organisational Variation in the Profile of Clients	76
6.2	Organisational Variation in Programme Implementation	77
6.3	Inter-organisational Variation in Programme Outcomes	79
6.4	Summary Conclusions	80

Chapter 7: Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of the Supported Employment Programme (Based on Surveys of Employers and Job Coaches) **81**

7	Introduction	81
7.1	Main Concerns of Employers in Recruiting a Person with a Disability	82
7.2	Main Strengths and Weaknesses of the Supported Employment Programme as Seen by Employers	82
7.3	Barriers to the Employment of Clients as Identified by Job Coaches	84
7.4	Job Coaches' Suggestions to Improve the Effectiveness of the Supported Employment Programme	87
7.5	Summary Conclusions	89

Chapter 8: The Operations and Effectiveness of the Supported Employment Programme: Issues Arising and Areas for Action

8	Introduction	91
8.1	Summary of Critical Issues	91
8.1.1	Variation in Levels of Support Required by Clients Entering the Supported Employment Programme	91
8.1.2	The Employment Outcomes of the Supported Employment Programme	92
8.1.3	Substantial Variation in Time Taken to Access Employment	93
8.1.4	Working Hours and Pay	93
8.1.5	Demand Side Issues	93
8.1.6	Considerable Variability in Programme Intake, Implementation, and Results Across Sponsor Organisations	94
8.1.7	Factors Related to Design of the Supported Employment Programme	95
8.1.8	Welfare Issues	96
8.2	What Type of Employment Programme is the Supported Employment Programme?	96
8.3	Proposed Areas for Action and Recommendations	98
	References	104

List of Tables

Table 1.1	Survey Populations, Samples and Response Rates	13
Table 2.1	Changes in the Employment Situation of People with Disabilities 2002 to 2004	16
Table 2.2	Changes in the Employment Situation of Men and Women with Disabilities 2002 to 2004	16
Table 3.1	Duration of Active Clients on Supported Employment Programme and Time Elapsed Since Most Recent Meeting of Job Coaches with Active Clients	27
Table 3.2	Distribution of Active Clients by Programme Phase (Based on Census of Active Clients – 2,122)	30
Table 3.3	Distribution of Active Clients by Programme Phase (Based on 98 Job Coach Returns – 1,825)	30
Table 3.4	Comparison of Age Composition of SEP Active Clients with that of People with Disabilities in Census 2006	32
Table 3.5	Comparison of Marital Status Composition of SEP Active Clients with that of People with Disabilities in Census 2006	32
Table 3.6	Disabilities among Active Clients of the Supported Employment Programme Based on Census of Active Clients	35
Table 3.7	Self Assessed Restrictions in Type and Amount of Work	36
Table 3.8	Type of Welfare Payment Being Received by Active Clients of Supported Employment Programme	37

Table 4.1	Employment Status of Clients Exiting the Supported Employment Programme Between April and September 2007	42
Table 4.2	Programme Phase at which Clients Ceased their Involvement in the Supported Employment Programme among Clients Leaving the Programme in the 12 Month Period Prior to March 30 th 2007	43
Table 4.3	Employment Status of Survey Respondents by Active Status on the Supported Employment Programme	44
Table 4.4	The Role of the Supported Employment in Assisting Active Clients to Find Employment	46
Table 4.5	Nature of Support Provided by Job Coaches in Respect of Finding Employment	47
Table 4.6	Employment Status by Self Assessed Job Readiness	50
Table 4.7	Employment Status by Self Assessed Impact of Disability on Capacity to Work	50
Table 4.8	Sectoral Distribution of Companies Recruiting Using the Supported Employment Programme	51
Table 4.9	Company Size Distribution of Companies Employing Clients of the Supported Employment Programme	52
Table 4.10	Labour Force Level 1 Occupational Classification of Active Clients in Employment	53
Table 4.11	Self-Assessed Restrictions in Type and Amount of Work among SEP Clients and National Population of People with Disabilities in Employment	57
Table 4.12	Views of SEP Clients in Employment on Hours Worked	58
Table 5.1	Analysis of Exits from the Supported Employment Programme by Programme Phase and Year of Intake	67
Table 5.2	Exit Rates by Programme Phase for All Active Clients on March 30 th 2007	68
Table 5.3	Duration on Supported Employment Programme and Duration since Last Meeting with Job Coach among Clients Exiting the Programme	69
Table 5.4	Reasons for Leaving the Supported Employment Programme by Programme Phase	72
Table 7.2	Main Strengths and Weakness of Supported Employment Programme as Identified by Employers	83
Table 7.3	Main Barriers to the Employment of Clients Identified by Job Coaches	85
Table 7.4	Improving the Effectiveness of the Supported Employment Programme Based on Survey of Job Coaches	87
Table 8.1	Characteristics of Employment Assistance and Supported Employment Type Programmes for People with Disabilities	97

List of Figures

Figure 2.1	Distribution of Self-Assessed Restriction among People with Disabilities in Employment and among People with Disabilities Not in Employment	19
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Figure 3.1	Duration (in weeks) on the Supported Employment Programme	28
Figure 3.2	Duration (in weeks) Since Job Coaches Last Met in Person with Clients	28
Figure 3.3	Age Profile of Active Clients by Gender	31
Figure 3.4	Highest Educational Qualifications among SEP Clients, People with a Disability Aged 15 and Over, and People without a Disability Aged 15 Years and Over (both of the latter from Census 2006)	33
Figure 4.1	Time Taken to Secure Employment Following Entry to the Supported Employment Programme	45
Figure 4.2	Duration in Employment among Clients in Employment	49
Figure 4.3	Distribution of Working Hours among Clients in Employment	55
Figure 4.4	Comparisons of Working Hours of SEP Clients in Employment with National Data on Persons in Employment	57
Figure 4.5	Weekly Earnings in Bands	59
Figure 6.1	Variation in the Profile of Clients Across the 24 Sponsor Organisations	77
Figure 6.2	Variation in Aspects of Programme Process Across the 24 Sponsor Organisations	78
Figure 6.3	Variation in Employment Rates Across the 24 Sponsor Organisations	79
Figure 8.1	Schematic Overview of Areas Needing Assessment in Relation to Entry to the SEP	99

List of Boxes

Box 1.1	Extract from “ <i>Impressions of Supported Employment</i> ” by Spjelkavik and Evans (2007)	4
Box 5.1	Selected Comments of Job Coaches on Job Readiness during the Needs Assessment Phase of the Supported Employment Programme	70

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCHING THE OPERATIONS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME: AN OVERVIEW OF THE APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

1 Introduction

This introductory chapter begins by presenting a brief overview of the development of supported employment as an intervention designed to assist people with disabilities to access and retain employment in the open labour market. Following this the FÁS funded national Supported Employment Programme (SEP) is outlined and a description of its main design and implementation features is provided. The aim of the research and a number of the considerations arising in assessing the effectiveness of the SEP are then presented and the methodology used in undertaking the research is described. The final section presents an outline of the structure of the report.

1.1 Development of the Supported Employment Approach to the Employment of People with Disabilities

The use of supported employment as a means of assisting people with disabilities secure and maintain employment began in the United States in the 1980s.¹ Many factors influenced its emergence including the civil rights and consumer movements, the Independent Living Movement, and the realisation - among policy makers and practitioners - that then existing approaches to assisting people with disabilities access and retain employment did not work. Such approaches were typically based on an approach to vocational rehabilitation that involved progressing people with disabilities through a spectrum of social, education, training and employment supports with a view to eventual transition into employment in the open labour market. Legislative developments were also of importance in providing for rights of access to and financial resources for the development of supported employment in the US.

¹ There is a considerable body of literature dealing with the emergence, development, and operation of supported employment in the US. This section draws largely on the work of Paul Wehman and John Kregel and their colleagues at the Rehabilitation Research and Training Centre on Supported Employment in Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia. Key sources include Wehman and Kregel (1989), Wehman *et al.*, (1989) and Wehman and Kregel (1998).

The critical departure of supported employment from other approaches prevailing at the time was the recognition that all people with disabilities - regardless of the severity of disability (by whom and however defined) - have the potential to work in the open labour market with the provision of appropriate supports. Linked to this was a rejection of segregated approaches to employment and a shift in the direction of intervention toward providing the individualised supports required to enable full participation by people with disabilities in open employment. From a service perspective, supported employment emphasised independence and self-determination on the part of people with disabilities. Procedurally, supported employment emphasised the priority of employment placement and the subsequent provision of supports and training in the workplace - summarised by the phrase “place and train” rather than “train then place”. This priority ensured the acquisition of skills directly related to the employment secured.

The extent to which supported employment both challenged and departed from exiting approaches to the employment of people with disabilities is indicated in the following quotation from the evaluation report on the first National Supported Employment Initiative in the US:

Supported employment is much more than a job, however. In many ways, supported employment personifies a national civil rights movement on the part of people with severe disabilities who have been excluded, devalued, and disenfranchised on the basis of their perceived lack of vocational competence. Supported employment programmes dramatically question the values of adult service delivery models which have been in practice for the past 20-30 years for people with severe disabilities. ...In short, real employment with continuing support in a normal work environment provides an opportunity for long-term dignity, more pay, a chance of upward mobility, and a chance to break out of the deadly existence of perpetual unemployment. (Wehman et al. 1989, p. 3).

As initially developed in the US, a number of features distinguished supported employment from other approaches to assisting people with disabilities access and retain employment. Three features are particularly noteworthy.

First, it focused on providing an individualised set of supports tailored to the needs and aspirations of individual clients in respect of employment. The types of supports provided typically included: (i) identifying the skills, capacities and interests of clients (variously referred to as vocational, occupational, and needs assessment); (ii) finding a job consistent with the interests and capacities of clients (termed job development); (iii) facilitating the transition to taking up a job (termed job placement); providing and developing in-work supports to ensure that clients can maintain employment (e.g., providing on the job training, developing supportive workplace practices), and providing on-going support including responding to client or employer requests for advice and

assistance in respect of work performance and workplace relationships. These five elements continue to be central features of supported employment though, as is noted later, there has been considerable development in the nature and range of actual practices since the approach was first introduced.

The second distinguishing feature of supported employment is the role of the job coach. The core responsibility of the job coach is to ensure the delivery of all of the work related and other supports required to enable their clients secure and maintain employment. Discharging this role potentially involves job coaches in a very wide range of activities (e.g., liaison with family and other social services, addressing transportation requirements, advocating on behalf of clients with potential employers, dealing with welfare queries from clients, supporting the development of positive interpersonal relationships with the work colleagues of clients, providing technical assistance in respect of job design and assistive technologies to employers, and mediating between clients and employers in respect of any issues arising in relation to work performance and career development).

Third, supported employment clearly identifies employment in the open labour market (referred to as “competitive employment in the US literature) as its aim. This is in contrast with approaches based on various forms of segregated work and employment and, in turn, reflects the emphasis in supported employment on promoting equality for people with disabilities based on parity with their non-disabled peers. The aim of securing employment in the open labour market also brings into focus the role of supported employment in not just meeting the needs of people with disabilities seeking employment but also the needs of their potential employers. Thus, supported employment seeks to meet employers’ requirements in respect of their employees. The rationale here is that successful supported employment requires meeting the needs of both employers and people with disabilities. In practice this involves providing support and advice to both employers and people with disabilities in respect of all aspects of the work role and its performance.

Since its development in the US supported employment has been introduced and developed in many European countries as well as in Japan, Australia and New Zealand. In 1992, the European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE) was established and it was followed by the World Association of Supported Employment (WASE) in 1995. The adoption of supported employment into national policies aimed at supporting people with disabilities to access and retain employment has been accompanied by the development of diverse practices in respect of its actual delivery to clients. This diversity reflects a widening of the constituency of clients from an initial focus on persons with severe learning disabilities to include people experiencing sensory, physical, and mental health related disabilities. More recently, the supported employment approach has been extended to people without a disability experiencing severe difficulties in accessing employment.

An examination of two recent reviews of the implementation of supported employment internationally shows that there are substantial differences between countries in respect of areas such as how supported employment is funded, the mix of clients found within programmes, the duration of support provided, and the nature of the employment accessed (see EUSE, 2004 and Spjelkavik and Evans, 2007). A number of the key issues identified by the latter are summarised in Box 1.1. In their examination of the possible reasons for the diversity in the practice of supported employment both reports point to the possible role of where funding comes from and the criteria linked to the receipt of funding by organisations delivering supported employment. They also note, however, that there no unified set of supported employment quality criteria or standards towards which each service provider can perform and assess their own measures. Also, the evident variation in client profiles is seen as reflecting different referral systems and different financial opportunities for supported employment services, both at local and national levels.

Box 1.1
Extract from “*Impressions of Supported Employment*”
by Spjelkavik and Evans (2007)

Some of our impressions can be summed up as follows:

there is a great variety of organisations and financing systems of supported employment services in different countries, and these differences may influence both the practical aspects as well as the end results of supported employment;

there are differences regarding approaches and methods used in supported employment;

there is a wide variety in the population of clients in supported employment services;

there is no general agreement about the definition and difference between job taster, work experience placement and an ordinary job;

there is no general agreement if supported employment is about getting a job or if it is a social issue;

there is uncertainty and disagreement on issues such as job readiness and clarification of job seekers' employability and motivation;

the understanding of 'get and keep a job' and 'long-term follow up' varies.

From Spjelkavik and Evans, 2007, p. 53.

Despite evident variation in the details of the actual design and implementation of supported employment across counties there remains broad agreement that the aim of supported employment is employment in the open labour market, that the job coach is

central to its implementation, and that it focuses on both the needs of individual people with disabilities and their employers.

1.2 Development of the FÁS Funded National Supported Employment Programme

The use of supported employment in Ireland began in the late 1980s and was subsequently expanded - in many instances - with support from a number of European Union programmes during the 1990s (e.g., Horizon, EMPLOYMENT-Horizon). During the 1994-1999 period of the EU funded EMPLOYMENT-Horizon Initiative it is estimated that in the region of 1,000 people with disabilities accessed employment with support from the various pilot initiatives (MSEP, 2000). Reflecting the learning from the various supported employment pilots and initiatives, the recommendations of National Rehabilitation Board's National Advisory Committee on Training and Employment regarding the need to develop supported employment (NACTE, 1997), as well as lobbying by a number of organisations involved in devising and implementing supported employment, government commitment to support the implementation of a national supported employment initiative was announced in July, 2000.

On foot of the transfer of policy responsibility for vocational training and employment services for people with disabilities from the Department of Health and Children to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in June 2000, FÁS announced the National Pilot Supported Employment Programme in July 2000. As described in its Annual Report for 2000, the SEP is:

an open labour market initiative that seeks to facilitate the integration of people with disabilities, who traditionally have had difficulty getting into paid employment, by providing on-the-job supports. Through this Programme, people with disabilities will be helped to obtain and retain employment.
(FÁS, 2001, p. 3)

Between the time it commenced operations in late 2000 and June 2002 when it was first reviewed, 24 Supported Employment Consortia provided services to 1,918 clients of whom 775 (40.4%) were placed in employment (Martin and Associates, 2003).

On foot of the recommendations of the review a number of changes were made to the eligibility criteria for the programme as well as to the administrative arrangements to implement the programme. These were incorporated into the *Supported Employment Operational Guidelines and Forms* and came into effect during 2004. The description of the SEP presented in the following section is based on these guidelines.

1.3 Description of the FÁS Funded National Supported Employment Programme – Based on Operational Guidelines

The three main aims of the FÁS funded national Supported Employment Programme are to:

1. *facilitate the integration of people with disabilities into paid employment in the open labour market;*
2. *provide supports to assist with this integration process; and,*
3. *meet the requirements of employers.*

The *Operational Guidelines for the Supported Employment Programme* state that its objective is to “lead to full independence in the open labour market” (p. 9). To that end the guidelines also state that: “Following placement in a job under the Supported Employment Programme an exit plan should be drawn up for that client leading to independence within the open labour market” (p. 9). The *open labour market* is defined as “work that would be done by another member of the workforce. Work must be compensated with the same benefits and wages as other workers in similar jobs. This includes sick leave, annual leave, bonuses, training opportunities, and other benefits”. (p. 3). Also, it is expected that the majority of clients securing employment with assistance from the SEP will have working hours “that are the norm within the industry or sector”. In the case of clients who do not enter employment with working hours in excess of 18 hours a week, a “progression of working time strategy” is advocated that will lead to such clients increasing their working hours to in excess of 18 hours a week over a six month period.

The *Operational Guidelines* state that “Supported Employment will be open to all persons with a disability regardless of disability type.” (p. 8) who meet the job readiness eligibility criterion for the programme with job readiness being defined as “A person who has the necessary training, education, motivation and ability to pursue work / career in the open labour market” (p. 8). The decision in respect of the job readiness of clients is made between the FÁS Employment Service Officer and the Job Coach. It should be noted here that all clients of the SEP must be registered with FÁS and in this regard FÁS - through its Employment Service Officers - acts a formal gateway to programme participation.

To secure these objectives the SEP provides a range of supports to programme participants and employers. For participants the supports provided include needs assessment, job sourcing (including contact with employers, matching the job seeker with a suitable employer and job), providing participants with in-work supports to ensure the sustainability of their employment, and providing aftercare and mentoring aimed at addressing unforeseen contingencies when they arise and supporting career development

and independence. Supports to employers include advice, assistance with job design and assistive technologies, work organisations, information on financial and other supports available to enable the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities, and support in relation to employees recruited.

Based on the formal description of the programme in the *Operational Guidelines* the four central components or phases of the SEP include:

1. needs assessment with the client to identify the “type of employment that is most suitable to him or her”;
2. job sourcing and development involving contact with local employers and job analysis;
3. matching the job seeker with a suitable employer; and,
4. providing the employee with the necessary support and coaching in the workplace with the amount of support provided being expected to decline over time as clients develop their skills and adapt to the workplace.

Drawing on existing practice at the time of this research the key components or phases of the SEP can be described as follows:

1. Needs Assessment – identifying occupational aspirations, undertaking assessments of capacity and skills, identifying and addressing barriers to employment;
2. Job Search / Job Development – identifying and approaching possible employers, preparing clients for specific jobs and / or job interviews, providing advice and assistance to both clients and employers in respect of job design and supports and adaptations, arranging work experience placements;
3. In Employment with Job Coach Support – providing of advice and support to both clients and employers in respect of mutual expectations and work performance, optimising clients’ capacities to undertake work tasks, developing supportive workplace relationships;
4. Aftercare and Mentoring – providing supports to aid integration, career development and independence.

The implementation structure of the SEP involves:

- FÁS as the provider of funding and the body responsible for programme administration, monitoring and quality. Operationally, the funding, administrative and monitoring aspects of the SEP are managed by the Community Services Division of FÁS and delivered regionally by Community Service Officers. All

persons entering the SEP are required to be registered with FÁS. This is undertaken by Employment Service Officers who are also responsible for referral, where appropriate, of such persons to the Sponsoring Organisation. As stated in the *Operational Guidelines*: “*The decision of job readiness will be a decision between the FÁS Employment Officer and the Job Coach. FÁS Employment Services shall have the final authority in regard to referral to Supported Employment.*” (p. 8).

- 24 Sponsors Organisations that are fully responsible for the management, administration and implementation of the programme. Each Sponsor Organisation is required to be a separate legal entity with its own Board of Directors.

The key personnel involved in actual programme delivery are the Co-ordinators employed by the Sponsor Organisations to implement the programme with front-line programme delivery being undertaken by Job Coaches who directly provide the specified range of supports to participants and employers.

During the years covered by this research (i.e., 2006, 2007) the complement of Job Coaches was of the order of 120 full-time equivalents² and the funding commitment to sponsor organisations for 2007 (April 2007 to end March 2008) was just over €8 million.

1.4 Aim of the Research

As stated in the request for tender documentation the aim of the research is: “*to examine the effectiveness of the FÁS funded National Supported Employment Programme by conducting a review within the context of the current Operational Standards.*”

Noting the above description of the SEP and the focus in the request for tender documentation on assessing the effectiveness of the programme, the following observations are made. First, programme effectiveness is conventionally defined as the extent to which a programme is achieving its objectives. More colloquially, assessing effectiveness involves answering the question: is the programme achieving what it set out to achieve? Assessing programme effectiveness involves identifying appropriate indicators to quantify the extent to which the programme objectives are being achieved and collecting data in respect of these indicators.

Based on the programme documentation for the SEP, the key programme objectives are to: (i) “*facilitate the integration of people with disabilities in the open labour market*”; and (ii) “*meet the labour requirements of employers.*” From other sections of the SEP

² A number of Sponsor Organisations employ Job Coaches on a part-time basis. Reflecting this the actual number of Job Coaches is estimated to be in the region of 145.

programme documentation it is clear that “integration” includes working for similar pay and conditions as non-disabled workers and becoming capable of maintaining employment without the support of the SEP. It is important to note that the actions that the SEP undertakes to meet these objectives are broadly defined by the four components or phases of the programme as implemented by the Sponsoring Organisations with the resources provided by FÁS. Thus, a key indicator of programme effectiveness is the number of clients obtaining employment with assistance from the SEP and retaining this employment (or transferring to another employment) following their participation in the SEP. As is discussed in Chapter 5 - where data on the post-programme employment rates of clients are presented - this is not as straightforward as it might seem for reasons related to the varying durations clients actually spend on the SEP before exiting from the programme and ambiguities in determining whether or not all clients exiting from the SEP receive the full benefit of the SEP prior to their exiting the programme.

Identifying an appropriate indicator of the extent to which the SEP is achieving its objective in respect of meeting the labour demands of employers requires operationalising “meeting the labour requirements of employers”. This could be done in a variety of ways: for example, assessing the extent to which the SEP is assisting employers to recruit employees to positions or to undertake work for which they were having difficulty recruiting employees or providing employers with more reliable employees at prevailing rates of pay than they would secure without assistance from the programme. Given the potential complexities of addressing the foregoing in a survey of employers the approach adopted in this research was to assess programme effectiveness in respect of employers primarily in terms of their responses to two questions: *Do you consider that the Supported Employment Programme is meeting your needs as an employer of people with disabilities?* and, *Would you retain the employee you currently have on the Supported Employment Programme in the absence of support from the programme?*

1.5 Programme Effectiveness: The Role of Programme Design and Implementation

The effectiveness of any programme is influenced by two main factors: how well the programme is designed in terms of meeting its objectives; and, how well it is implemented. The design elements of a programme include a wide variety of factors such as eligibility criteria, targeting, induction procedures, appropriateness of the number of mix of supports and interventions provided to the identified needs of its target group, and the duration of support. Implementation elements include the managerial and operational roles undertaken by organisations and personnel implementing a programme and the extent to which they actually deliver on the various elements of programme design. Understanding how a programme works and assessing if it is working effectively

involves identifying the details of the design and implementation elements and linking these with indicators of programme effectiveness.

Conversely, two of the main factors that compromise programme effectiveness are technically termed *design failure* and *implementation failure*. Design failure arises when the elements comprising a programme (e.g., eligibility criteria, number and types of supports provided to participants, the duration of programme etc) are inappropriate or do not adequately underpin the achievement of programme objectives (assuming the end to be achieved is right, the means to do so are not). In effect, the programme is not effective - or less effective than it could be - because it does not include the right number or mix of actions to secure the objectives of the programme. Examples of design failure include a programme being of too short a duration to address the full range of needs of its participants, an inadequate balance between actions directed toward the supply and demand sides of the labour market, or inability to attract the targeted participants. Implementation failure arises when the specified elements of the programme are not fully implemented or are poorly implemented. Among the factors that contribute to implementation failure are a lack of clarity as to the nature of the actions to be undertaken to assist participants, an under-estimation of the time and resources taken to implement the actions specified in the programme design, weak support and training systems for programme personnel, and drifting of practices from those specified in programme design.

In practice no programme is ever perfect in terms of design or implementation. Thus, a central task arising in reviewing programme effectiveness is to identify the strengths and weaknesses arising in the areas of programme design and implementation with a view to strengthening the capacity of the programme to achieve its specified objectives in terms of both its design elements and its implementation structure. Essentially this is the approach that informs the methodology used for researching the effectiveness of the SEP presented below. Before doing this, however, one further important factor needs to be highlighted: that is, the role of the labour market and policy environment in which a programme is implemented.

Labour market programmes tend to be designed in the context of (or at least taking into account) the labour market and circumstances prevailing at the time of their design. However, the labour market context of a programme is rarely static: it changes over time. Changes in labour market circumstances including factors such as levels of demand (overall vacancies), patterns of demand (for particular occupations or for employees at specified wage levels), and the level and pattern of supply including the number and qualification levels of job applicants can alter the environment in which a labour market programme operates and render it redundant or ineffective. Thus, in undertaking reviews of programme effectiveness it is important to consider the programme under review in the context the labour market circumstances and policies prevailing at the time of its introduction and those prevailing at the time of the review.

In the case of the target group for the SEP - people with disabilities - the research evidence shows that, under any given set of labour market conditions, people with disabilities have lower employment rates than their non-disabled peers (see Chapter 2 for details). The research evidence shows that the reasons for the employment rate gap include: factors on the *demand side* (e.g., employer preferences for people without a disability, lack of employer awareness of the capabilities of people with disabilities, lack of employer awareness of the supports available to employ people with disabilities), factors on the *supply side* (e.g., people with disabilities on average have lower qualifications and less job experience than their non-disabled peers), and *factors on the institutional and policy side* (e.g., lack of transport, welfare disincentives). Our recent report on the evaluation of the Midlands Pilot (for FÁS) also raises the issue of the potential adverse impact of immigration on the already poor employment prospects of people with disabilities. It also highlights the very substantial level of diversity found among people with disabilities in terms of the severity of disability and the association between this and probabilities of being in employment. Thus, it must be recognised that the SEP is currently operating in a context where the evidence points to substantial and varied barriers to the employment of people with disabilities, including people with disabilities who are job ready.

1.6 Methodology Used in Researching the Effectiveness of the Supported Employment Programme

The methodology used in researching the effectiveness of the SEP included:

- desk research including a review of the literature on supported employment and previous evaluations of the SEP;
- collation and review of data on programme implementation including indicators of programme performance (e.g., number and profile of participants) and programme effectiveness (e.g., transitions to employment, employment retention). The latter involved undertaking a census of all active clients of the 24 sponsor organisations implementing the SEP;
- a survey of Job Coaches in respect of their experiences and views regarding the relevance and effectiveness of the supports they provide to participants and employers, their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the programme from their perspective, and their views on the barriers faced by their clients in seeking to access and retain employment;
- sample surveys of participants, past participants, and employers involved in the programme focusing on their views regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the programme from their respective perspectives; and,

- consultation with service providers and organisations working with people with disabilities.

Census of Active Clients on March 30th 2007: In order to establish the total number of active clients in the SEP as well as to obtain an accurate profile of the characteristics of clients on the SEP, a full census of clients was designed and undertaken. The census form was designed to be completed by Job Coaches in respect of all of their active clients on a designated date (i.e., March 30th 2007). The form was designed to be completed electronically. The questions included were based on consultations with FÁS personnel and the Co-ordinators in the 24 sponsor organisations. The data collected on active clients include basic demographic details, education and training history, employment status, and details of the disability being experienced by clients. For clients in employment, details of hours worked and earnings were requested.

The census was undertaken during the months of August and September 2007. Because of the time gap between the designated date of March 30th and the date on which the census returns were actually made (i.e., mainly mid to late September), it was possible to identify active clients who exited from the SEP over a six month period. These clients formed the sampling frame for the survey of past participants.

The census was also designed to be used as the sampling frame for the surveys of current participants, past participants, and employers. To enable this to be done contact details were requested in respect of both active clients and, in the case of clients in employment, their employer. Subsequent to the samples being drawn all Job Coaches with clients in the samples were contacted to confirm the contact details provided as well to confirm that there were no issues arising in respect of contacting the persons in the samples and their employers if they were in employment. Where such issues arose a random replacement procedure was used.

The total number of Job Coaches providing a return in respect of each of their clients was 119. These returns came from all 24 sponsor organisations and the total number of active clients enumerated was 2,122, of which a total of 607 had exited the SEP at the time of the census return. Given that a number of Job Coaches did not make a return we estimate that the coverage of the census is not quite 100% but is in the region of 90% of active clients on March 30th 2007.

Surveys of Current and Past Participants: The total number of current participants sampled was 305 with the number of past participants being 125. Both of these figures approximate to one in five clients of the respective survey populations (i.e., 20.1% in the case of current participants and 20.6% in the case of past participants). The samples of current and past participants were randomly drawn.

The actual survey methodology included a combination of postal and telephone interview methods. All persons sampled were sent a structured questionnaire. A free phone telephone number was provided and survey recipients were asked to use this number if they had queries regarding the survey or wished to complete the survey over the phone. A follow-up procedure was used in respect of all survey recipients not responding by either post or telephone within a 10 day period. This procedure involved attempted telephone contact with these survey recipients with a view to securing an interview by telephone or establishing the reasons for their non-response.

Table 1.1
Survey Populations, Samples and Response Rates

	Current Participants	Past Participants
Survey Population	1,515	607
Sample	305	125
Percentage sampled	20.1%	20.6%
Completed questionnaire received or telephone interview secured	196	67
Response rate	64.3%	53.6%

The total number of current participants from whom a completed questionnaire was received or with whom a telephone interview was secured is 196 corresponding to a response rate of 64.3%. In a small number of cases a family member assisted with the telephone interview. The corresponding figure in the case of past participants is 67 corresponding to a response rate of 53.6%.

Using data from the census of active clients the profiles of survey respondents and non-respondents were compared to check for non-response bias. No statistically significant differences were found between the two groups in respect of their gender, age, educational level, disability type and duration on the SEP. On this basis it was concluded that the survey respondents were representative of the survey populations.

Survey of Employers: The procedure used in the survey of employers involved identifying the employers of clients returned as employed in the census of active clients and who were also selected for the samples of current and past participant samples. This resulted in a total of 187 employers. All of these were sent a questionnaire and provided with a free phone number which they were requested to use if they wished to make queries regarding the survey or to do the survey on the phone. A follow-up procedure identical to that used in the surveys of current and past participants was used. The total number of employers from which either a completed questionnaire or telephone interview was secured is 106 corresponding to a response rate of 56.7%.

Consultations with Organisations and Personnel Implementing the SEP: Prior to beginning the research, briefing and consultation meetings were held with the Directors of the organisations implementing the SEP, SEP Co-ordinators, and FÁS Community Services personnel. These meetings were used to discuss the feasibility of the research methodologies and to agree procedures in respect of data collection. During the course of the research key documentation including forms and questionnaires were circulated for comment to SEP co-ordinators and FÁS Community Services personnel. During the course of data collection, in particular in undertaking the census of active clients, a considerable amount of telephone contact was made with individual Co-ordinators and Job Coaches.

Subsequent to completing the research a further round of meetings was undertaken with FÁS Community Services personnel, SEP Directors, and SEP Co-ordinators. During these meetings the main findings of the research were presented and discussed and possible areas for action in respect of improving the effectiveness of the SEP examined. Prior to preparing the final chapter of this report the main findings of the research and an outline of the recommendations arising to improve the effectiveness of the SEP were presented to and feedback taken from the Consultative Forum on Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities.

1.7 Overview of Report

The labour market and policy context of the SEP are outlined in Chapter 2. Following this the main findings of the research are presented in Chapters 3 to 7. Each of these chapters focuses on a particular aspect of the programme beginning with a detailed profile of active clients (Chapter 3). Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings concerning progression to employment and the nature of employment obtained by clients accessing employment and the effectiveness of the SEP respectively. Chapter 6 focuses on the implementation of the SEP and presents the findings concerning inter-organisational variability in programme implementation and results. Chapter 7 draws together the mainly qualitative data on issues related to the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the SEP and the views of Job Coaches and employers in respect of improving the effectiveness of the SEP. The final chapter presents a digest of the critical issues arising from the findings of the research and identifies the areas for action arising in respect of improving the effectiveness of the SEP.

CHAPTER 2

LABOUR MARKET AND POLICY CONTEXT OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

2 Introduction

The SEP was introduced and developed against a background of high employment growth and substantial change in respect of training and employment policy for people with disabilities - notably the transfer of responsibility for vocational training services and employment from the Department of Health and Children to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in June 2000. As a detailed examination of these two areas has been presented elsewhere (NDA, 2006) this chapter focuses on identifying the employment rate gap between people with disabilities and their non-disabled peers and identifying the key policy commitments in respect of the employment of people with disabilities presented in the National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 and related policy documents. The employment rate gap is defined as the difference between the employment rate of people without a disability and that of people with a disability with the employment rate of each group (i.e., the number of people in employment divided by the relevant number in the population) being calculated on the basis of data on employment in the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). Data from the QNHS is presented here as it is the source that will be used to monitor progress in meeting policy targets in respect of the employment of people with disabilities.

2.1 Labour Market Context

The 10 year period from 1998 to 2007 saw employment grow by just over 600,000. This corresponds to a 40% increase in the number of persons in employment between 1998 and 2007. Despite this level of employment growth there is little evidence that it has resulted in a more favourable context for the employment of people with disability (Ronayne and Tyrrell, 2005, NDA, 2006). As outlined below, data from the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) show the employment rate gap between people with disabilities and their non-disabled peers remains substantial.

A number of statistics concerning recent changes in the employment situation of people with disabilities can be extracted from the results of the two special surveys on disability

undertaken by the CSO in 2002 and 2004 (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2). Noting the possibility of sampling errors associated with small numbers, the overall trend indicated is that, at best, the employment situation of people with disabilities remained unchanged during a period when employment growth overall was 5.6%. However, a number of aspects of the data presented suggest that the employment situation of people with disabilities may have deteriorated during the 20 month period between the two surveys. For example, the employment rate of people with disabilities was 40.1% in 2002 but fell to 37.1% in 2004. Also, when the percentage change in the number of people in employment is calculated for both people with disabilities and people without a disability, it is clear that the former - at 0.8% - is seven times less than the latter (at 5.6%).

Table 2.1
Changes in the Employment Situation of People with Disabilities 2002 to 2004

	2002	2004	Absolute Change	% Change
<i>In Employment (000)</i>				
No Disability	1,534.9	1,621.5	86.6	5.6
Disability	109.9	110.8	0.9	0.8
<i>Employment Rate</i>				
No Disability	68.5	67.0	-1.5	-2.2
Disability	40.1	37.1	-2.9	-7.3
<i>Employment Rate Gap</i>	28.4	29.9	1.5	5.2

Table 2.2
Changes in the Employment Situation of Men and Women with Disabilities 2002 to 2004

	2002	2004	Absolute Change	% Change
<i>In Employment (000)</i>				
Men with a Disability	66.5	66.6	0.1	0.2
Women with a Disability	43.4	44.2	0.8	1.8
<i>Employment Rate</i>				
Men with a Disability	46.0	42.7	-3.2	-7.0
Women with a Disability	33.5	31.0	-2.5	-7.4
<i>Employment Rate Gap</i>				
Men With a Disability	33.3	35.3	2.1	6.2
Women with a Disability	24.4	25.0	0.6	2.4

When the figures are disaggregated by gender, the pattern that emerges is that men with disabilities fared worse than their female counterparts during the recent period of

employment growth (see Table 2.2). This is best illustrated by noting that just 100 of the 900 person increase in employment among people with disabilities is accounted for by men. In line with this, the employment rate gap for men increased by 2.1 percentage points while that of women with disabilities increased by 0.6 percentage points.

Taken collectively these statistics indicate that, relative to people without a disability, the employment situation of people with disabilities is likely to have deteriorated somewhat over the most recent period for which we have data from the QNHS. One further and rather stark statistic that illustrates this is that just 1% of the total increase in employment over the 20 month period is accounted for by the entry of people with disabilities - mainly women with disabilities - into employment. These figures highlight the serious challenges arising in meeting policy targets in relation to the employment of people with disabilities.

2.1.1 Issues on the Demand Side

Explanations of the employment rate gap between people with disabilities and their non-disabled peers have identified factors on both the demand and supply sides of the labour market as well as limitations in the areas of labour market programmes designed for people with disabilities and barriers to employment associated with the operation of the welfare system (see NDA, 2006 for review). A significant issue concerning the demand side is the low proportion of companies actually employing a person with a disability. Fewer than one in eight (11%) employers have a person with a disability in their workforce on the basis of survey results reported by Manpower (2003) though this figure rises to just under one in four (24%) in a recent FÁS survey of private sector employers (FÁS, 2007).

Regardless of the actual source of data, it is clear that the majority of employers in the private sector do not have a person with a disability in their workforce. What this indicates is a weakness in the demand side of the equation in respect of the employment of people with disabilities. The reasons for this are manifold: some employers simply never have received a job application from a person with a disability; some have never thought about the issue; there is evidence of a substantial level of uncertainty among employers about the capacity of “people with disabilities” (particularly people with mental health difficulties) to undertake work; some fear accusations of discrimination; there are concerns about health and absenteeism, safety, and insurance issues; and, some employers may be either directly or indirectly discriminating against people with disabilities. Cutting across these possible reasons for the low proportion of employers employing people with disabilities is a lack of information about the capabilities, skills and competencies to be found among people with disabilities and a tendency to stereotype disability as associated with reduced capacity for work or reduced productivity. The latter is likely to be particularly the case where an employer has no direct experience of having a person with a disability in their workforce.

Two key issues arise for employment focussed programmes such as the SEP. First, the pool of employers with whom the programme is interacting can be seen as comprising two groups: the first, and smaller of these groups, are employers with actual experience of a person with a disability in their workforce with the second and larger group being employers with no experience of having a person with a disability in their workforce. These two groups clearly present different challenges in terms of securing placements for clients of the SEP. Arising from this is recognising the importance of increasing the pool of employers with whom the programme is interacting and thereby increasing the possible number and types of employment open to people with disabilities. This issue is considered further in the context of presenting the recommendations from this research in Chapter 8.

2.1.2 Supply Side Issues

A key issue arising on the supply side, and one that is also of significance in the context of the operation and effectiveness of the SEP, is the level of diversity present in the circumstances, conditions and employment aspirations of people with disabilities. This is important for two reasons: first, the capacities and employment aspirations of people with disabilities will vary and, second, the range and intensity of supports required to assist people with disabilities into employment will vary correspondingly. Thus, efforts to increase the employment rate of people with disabilities must be cognisant of the diversity to be found among people with a disability. One aspect of this diversity that has received considerable attention - and one that is also investigated in this research - is diversity in self-assessed work related restrictions in relation to the type and amount of work that an individual can undertake.

On the basis of self-assessed work related restrictions, the population of people with disabilities in employment is substantially different from that not in employment. This is illustrated in Figure 2.1 which shows the substantial and disproportionate percentage of people with disabilities not in employment who report that their disability considerably restricts both the type and amount of work they can do. Conversely, the population of people with disabilities in employment substantially comprises people with a disability who report that their disability does not restrict either the type or the amount of work they can do.

The composition of people with disabilities not in employment is of considerable significance in the context of both assessing the adequacy of the existing policy approach to assisting people with disabilities enter employment and designing appropriate and effective interventions. Two aspects of this are commented upon here.

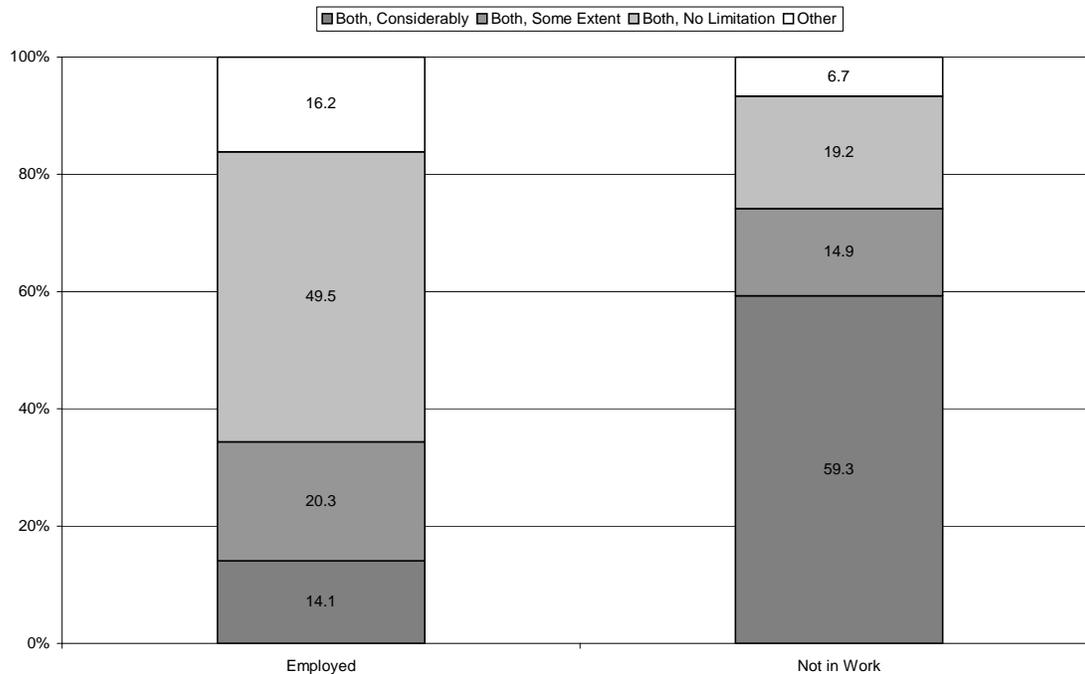


Figure 2.1 Distribution of Self-Assessed Restriction among People with Disabilities in Employment and among People with Disabilities Not in Employment

First, the population of people with disabilities with whom policy intervention is needed disproportionately comprises people with disabilities who report considerable difficulties in both the type and amount of work they can do. A substantial proportion of this group is accounted for by five types of disability. These are in order of scale: mental, nervous and emotional conditions, back or neck conditions, conditions related to heart, circulation and blood pressure, other longstanding health problems and mobility difficulties related to legs and feet. What is not known in respect of this group is the number actually seeking work, the types of work being sought, and the supports required to access and retain employment. An indicative figure in respect of the latter issue is that 18.5% of people with disabilities not in employment stated that they would need assistance to be provided in order for them to work (QNHS, 2002, Table 14).

Second, the variation in self-assessed restrictions among people with disabilities not in employment also points to the need for policy to be sensitive to the issue of “creaming” or dealing only with the “easy end” of the problem. That is, progress could be made in respect of increasing the employment rates of people with disabilities by only or primarily dealing with people with disabilities reporting no restriction on the type or amount of work they can do. Taking account of this point in policy terms requires an approach to objective and target setting that takes into account peoples’ self-assessed restrictions on the type and amount of work they can do and their requirements in terms of supports and assistance in relation to employment. Failure to do this - given the

current pattern of employment of people with disabilities - could easily result in the further marginalisation of a large number of people with disabilities, particularly people experiencing severe restrictions but who have aspirations to work.

2.2 Policy Context and Objectives

The overall policy objectives of employment policy for people with disabilities are set out in the National Development Plan 2007 - 2013. It states:

Increase the employment of people with disabilities who do not have a difficulty in retaining a job. The immediate objective is to have an additional 7,000 of that cohort in employment by 2010. The longer term target is to raise the employment rate of people with disabilities from 37% to 45% by 2016 as measured by the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). The overall participation rate in education, training and employment will be increased to 50% by 2016. These targets will be reviewed in the light of experience and the availability of better data. (p. 26)

In relation to labour market programmes, the policy emphasis will be to ensure that disabled people have an equal opportunity to participate in mainstream employment and training programmes. Where this is not possible, there are a number of training and employment supports targeted specifically at people with a disability which will continue to be provided, including vocational training by Specialist Training Providers and the Supported Employment Programme. In addition, policy also aims to raise awareness amongst employers of the contribution disabled employees can make (p. 194)

Central to the actions aimed at achieving these objectives are the Sectoral Plans of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

2.2.1 Sectoral Plan of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Among the main initiatives identified in the plans are:

Developing a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities by:

Enhancing the effectiveness of employment programmes and vocational training, including implementation of the new FÁS Vocational Training

Strategy (FÁS Vocational Training Strategy for Disabled People – April 2006)

Further developing supports to the open market employment of people with disabilities in both the public and private sectors

Increasing the participation rates of people with disabilities on CE over the period of the Plan and raising CE participation limits for people with disabilities

Collaborating with other key Government Departments and agencies to promote:

a. The removal of disincentives and benefit traps that may create barriers to employment

b Enhanced structural capacity, flexibility and effectiveness of the education, training and employment systems for the purposes of facilitating gainful employment

c Implementation of policies to increase awareness and support local recruitment and retention at work of people with disabilities

d Exploration of the extension of the NEAP FÁS referral process to people with disabilities in the context of their special needs. (pp. 6-8)

Of the initiatives cited above two are likely to be of relevance to the operations of the SEP. First, the roll out of the FÁS Vocational Training Strategy for Disabled People can be expected to increase both the number of persons with a disability accessing training - particularly through FÁS mainstream training services - and also the labour relevance of the training accessed by people with disabilities. To the extent that this occurs it could provide the SEP with a pool of clients prepared for labour market entry. As noted below, however, this will require developing more coherent and systematic linkages between the SEP as a specialist employment services programme and providers of training services that include people with disabilities among their trainees.

The second initiative relates to the further development of supports to enable people with disabilities access employment in the open labour market. On the basis of available data among the issues arising in this regard are the respective roles played by and relationships between FÁS mainstream employment services, the Local Employment Service, and the employment services provided by the SEP. The declining numbers of people with disabilities being directly placed into employment in the open labour market by FÁS mainstream employment services - from 781 in 2002 to 424 in 2007 - suggests either that placement in the open labour market has become more difficult or that an increasing role is being played in this regard by both the LES and the SEP. Evidence for the former is provided by the data from the QNHS presented above which showed an increase of only

900 in the number of people with a disability in employment between 2002 and 2004. Also, in line with this there is qualitative evidence from the evaluation of the Midlands Pilot that services working to assist people with disabilities access employment in the open labour market are experiencing considerable difficulty in this regard due to competition from other sources of labour (WRCsec, 2006).

2.2.2 Sectoral Plan of the Department of Social and Family Affairs

A key initiative being taken by the DSFA is the implementation of a Social and Economic Participation Programme the objective of which is “*to promote participation and social inclusion primarily through activation measures aimed at people of working age*” (p. 42). One of the key objectives of this programme is to:

Provide for a systematic identification of the employment, educational and life skills potential for income support recipients. This will be achieved through appropriate profiling and the consolidation of previous information on interventions, allied to capacity assessment. This process will identify recipients for whom activation can be meaningfully achieved. (p. 43)

As is raised in Chapter 5 and developed later in Chapter 8, a key issue arising in respect of the operation of the SEP is devising an appropriate and agreed set of procedures to assess issues such as the “job readiness”, “employability”, and support needs of people with disabilities. To the extent that such matters are being addressed in the context of delivering on the objectives of the Sectoral Plan of the DSFA, they will also be of relevance to the SEP. As discussed elsewhere (NDA, 2006) one of the gaps in the current system of provision is the absence of an agreed and systematic approach to engaging with and identifying the employment potential, aspirations and support needs of people with disabilities.

2.3 The Position of the Supported Employment Programme within Labour Market Programme Provision for People with Disabilities

The current policy package of labour market provision for people with disabilities is diverse and comprises mainstream programmes in which people with disabilities participate (to varying extents, but on the whole on a rather limited basis) as well as a range of specialist or targeted provision including the training provided by a range of Specialist Training Providers with support from FÁS (see WRCsec, 2006, NDA, 2006). In terms of participant numbers, substantial numbers of people with disabilities also participate - on an annual basis - in mainstream education (e.g., Back to Education Allowance, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, Back to Education Part-time Initiative – Part-Time Option,) and employment programmes (particularly Community

Employment and the Social Employment Programme) and to a more limited extent on other employment programmes (e.g., Back to Work Allowance Scheme). While it is beyond the scope of this research to review the effectiveness of the policy package it is noted here on the basis of previous research (see NDA, 2006) that the employment outcomes from the individual elements of the package as a whole are weak and that one means of addressing this weakness is to create stronger linkages between the various programmes comprising the policy package - particularly those concerned with training and skill development - and the SEP.

2.4 Summary Conclusions

Despite strong employment growth over the past decade there is limited evidence that this has substantially benefited people with disabilities. The SEP is now operating in a labour market context in which the rate of employment growth will be low and this, combined with weaknesses in the linkages between it and other elements of labour market programming for people with disabilities, places significant pressure on the programme in respect of enhancing its effectiveness. The constraining effect of the large proportion of employers without a person with a disability in their workforce is a significant challenge not just for the SEP but for all programmes specifically catering for people with disabilities in that, without securing a more widespread experience of and commitment to the employment of people with disabilities among employers, programmes will experience demand side constraints to their effective operation. Finally, the employment targets in respect of the employment of people with disability in current national policy will have to be addressed in a different labour market context to that prevailing when they were framed. This also points to the need for innovation and capacity development if programmes seeking to assist people with disabilities access employment are to be effective.

CHAPTER 3

PROFILE OF ACTIVE CLIENTS ON THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

3 Introduction

The profile of SEP active clients presented in this chapter is primarily based on the Census returns made by 119 Job Coaches from all 24 SEP sponsor organisations. As detailed in the methodology for the research, the Census related to all active clients of Job Coaches on the 30th March 2007. The following is the definition of active client used in the Census:

An “Active Client” is a person who on the 30th March 2007 is registered with and receiving a service from the organisation. Contact is being maintained with the client on an ongoing basis. The client is considered to be part of the case load of the Job Coach. For the purpose of the Census and the Survey of Job Coaches an Active Client does not necessarily have to correspond to an active client as defined by FÁS.

It should be noted that the definition of active client used in the Census is inclusive of all clients meeting the maximum durational criterion of 18 months as stipulated in the Supported Employment Operating Standards. Also, in practice, Job Coaches included all active clients meeting the eligibility criteria set out in the Operating Standards when completing the Census forms. The decision to include clients who have been supported by the SEP for durations in excess of 18 months among the active client population for the purposes of this research was based on: (i) the actual presence of such clients among the active case loads of Job Coaches on the specified date the Census (March 30th); and, (ii) the value of being able to quantify and profile the total number of beneficiaries of the SEP with a view to making a comprehensive assessment of programme.

Data from two other sources are also used to supplement those provided by the Census. The sources of these data are the Job Coach Survey and the survey of current and past SEP active clients. Data from the latter source is used to examine clients' circumstances prior to accessing the SEP, to provide additional demographic information regarding clients (e.g., marital and family status), and also to provide additional information on the health conditions and disabilities being experienced by active clients. The latter is used

to supplement the generally “categorical” descriptions of disabilities provided by Job Coaches on the Census Form by providing a detailed breakdown of health conditions and disabilities as reported by clients.

3.1 Circumstances of Clients Prior to Accessing the Supported Employment Programme

Based on the survey of current and past participants, the largest single group (43.6%) of clients described themselves as unemployed and looking for a job prior to their entry to the SEP. Following this group are clients who had been participating in an education or training course prior to accessing the SEP. This group accounted for almost one third (30.8%) of clients. The circumstances of the remaining one quarter (25.6%) of clients were very varied and included in order of the proportion of clients stating them: working in the open labour market (7.8%), at home “doing nothing” (5.4%), working in sheltered employment (4.3%), and being ill or in hospital (3.9%). The circumstances of the small proportion (4.2%) of clients not in the any of the above categories included working on Community Employment, on long-term leave, caring for a relation, and on probation.

From the above it is clear that the two largest groups of persons entering the SEP comprise persons that can clearly be seen as active in the labour market - looking for a job - or improving their qualifications and skills. In addition to these are the 7.8% of persons who stated that they were working in the open labour market (a figure that is somewhat larger than the proportion of clients identified as working prior to programme entry in the Census returns - 4.0% of all clients). Thus, approximately one in four (82.2%) clients entering the SEP are either active labour market participants or participants in an education or training course.

When asked directly *Did you get any help to find a job before you started on the Supported Employment Programme?*, almost two-thirds (61.6%) of survey respondents answered negatively. This figure suggests that the majority of entrants to the SEP did not previously have support in this area. Among the 38.4% who answered that they had received support from some source to help them find a job 28.4% cited FÁS as the source of support, 25.5% cited parents, relations or friends, and 25.5% cited the organisation in which they had been participating in a training course. Among the remaining one quarter (24.5%) of survey respondents a variety of sources of support were mentioned including named individuals, the Local Employment Service, and Area Based Partnership Companies.

When asked directly about how they first heard of the SEP, the largest single group (30.1%) stated that they first heard about it from FÁS personnel and an additional 4.3% cited notices in FÁS offices. Three other sources were cited by more than 10% of respondents: (i) 18.8% stated “other” - mainly referring to organisations implementing

the SEP or named service providers for people with disabilities, though the HSE was not cited; 13.3% stated that they first heard about the SEP while participating in a training course; and, (iii) 11.7% stated that they first heard of the SEP from either a family member or friend. Other less frequently mentioned sources of initial information about the SEP included personnel working in a community based or local organisation (8.6%), from someone who was participating in the SEP (5.1%), and from personnel in the Department of Social and Family Affairs (3.9%). The remaining sources of initial information about the SEP mainly included the radio and local media, though these accounted for just 3.1% of all sources cited.

3.2 Total Number of Active Clients on the Supported Employment Programme

The total number of active clients on the SEP on March 30th 2007 enumerated in the Census is 2,122. This is a point in time figure and it is likely to vary from month to month as clients leave and enter the SEP.

Two other estimates of the total number of clients on the SEP at a point in time during 2007 are available. First, the results of the Job Coach Survey completed by 98 Job Coaches in 23 Sponsor Organisations sum to a total 1,825 active clients on the 30th March 2007. Noting the fact that some Job Coaches did not complete a Job Coach Survey it is not surprising that there is a difference between the Census figure and that derived from the Job Coach Survey. When the figure based on the Job Coach Survey is adjusted to take into account an estimate of the number of clients of Job Coaches not returning a questionnaire the resulting estimate of the number of active clients in the SEP on March 30th is 2,216 - a figure virtually identical to the Census figure.

A second comparative figure is provided by the FÁS monthly update on the SEP for the month of August 2007. It shows the number of clients as being 2,394 based on returns from 103 Job Coaches in 22 Sponsor Organisations. Should a return have been made by all 24 Sponsor Organisations, the resulting figure would have been higher by at least 100, suggesting that, in August 2007, the number of clients on the SEP was of the order of 2,500. The higher figure in the FÁS monthly update for August 2007 is broadly consistent with the other two estimates based on March 30th 2007 in that it is likely to reflect an increase in programme participants over the period from end of March to August 2007.

Taken together, these figures indicate that the point in time capacity of the SEP in terms of client numbers is in the region of 2,200 to 2,500. Because of some variation in number of Job Coaches actually employed at any given time and the related issue of the numbers working full-and part-time hours it is not possible to calculate an accurate point in time case load estimate. However, the figures indicate the average point in time case load

based on 120 full-time equivalent Job Coaches is of the order of 19 to 21 clients per full-time equivalent Job Coach.

3.3 Repeat Status of Active Clients

All Job Coaches were asked: “*Is this the first time this client has been on the SEP?*” On the basis of 1,962 responses provided, 367 active clients were identified as repeat clients. Allowing for missing values almost one in five (18.7%) of active clients on the SEP are repeat clients. Examination of the characteristics of these clients did not show any systematic differences from active clients on the SEP for the first time though there was substantial variation in the proportion of repeat clients across the 24 sponsor organisations (from 6.0% to 61.4%). This issue is examined further in Chapter 6 in the context of looking at organisational variation in the operations and outcomes of the SEP.

3.4 Duration Active Clients are on the Supported Employment Programme and Most Recent Meeting of Job Coach with Active Clients

The date on which clients started on the SEP and the date on which Job Coaches last met with their active clients was requested in the Census Form. These data were used to calculate the duration on the SEP of active clients and the time elapsed since Job Coaches last met personally with their active clients. The findings are summarised in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Duration of Active Clients on Supported Employment Programme and Time Elapsed Since Most Recent Meeting of Job Coaches with Active Clients

	Duration on SEP of Active Clients		Last Met with Active Client
At most 18 months	69.1	Within past 18 months	97.4
Between 19 months to 36 months	17.3	Between 19 and 36 months ago	2.4
37 months and over	13.6	37 or more months ago	0.2
Total	100.0	Total	100.0

Just over two thirds (69.1%) of active clients had had been in the SEP for at most 18 months and a further 17.3% had been on the SEP for between 19 and 36 months. At 13.6%, a significant minority of active clients had been on the SEP for over three years. When the date of the last meeting with a Job Coach is considered almost all (97.4%) persons returned as active clients in the Census had been met in person by a Job Coach in

the 18 months prior to the Census return. The latter finding underpins the active status of clients regardless of their duration on the programme.

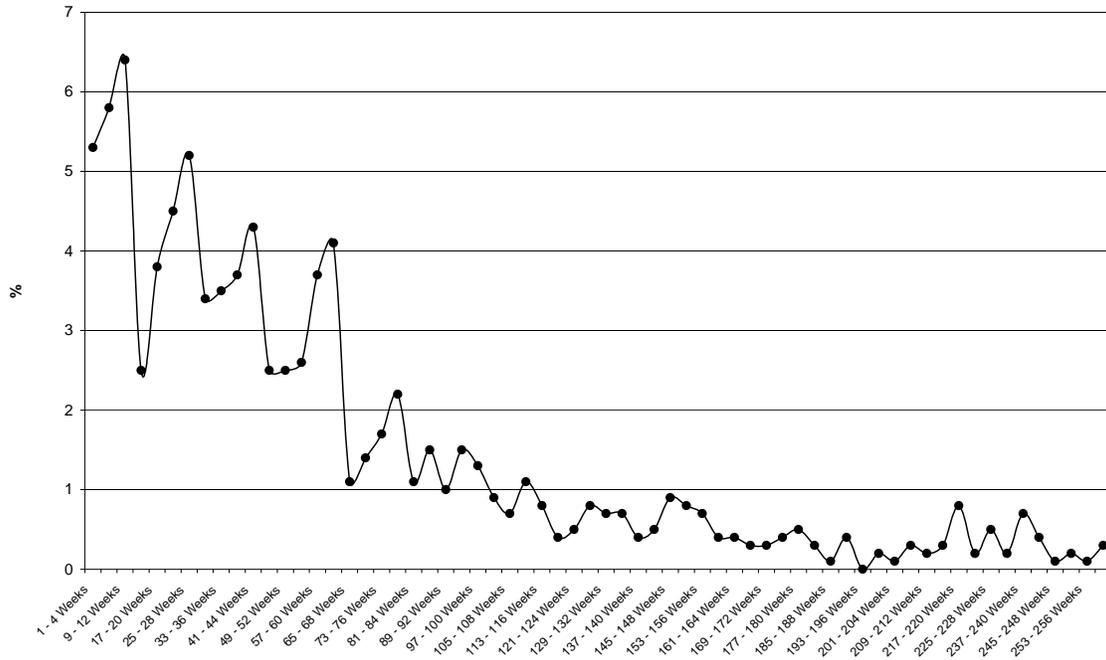


Figure 3.1 Duration (in weeks) on the Supported Employment Programme

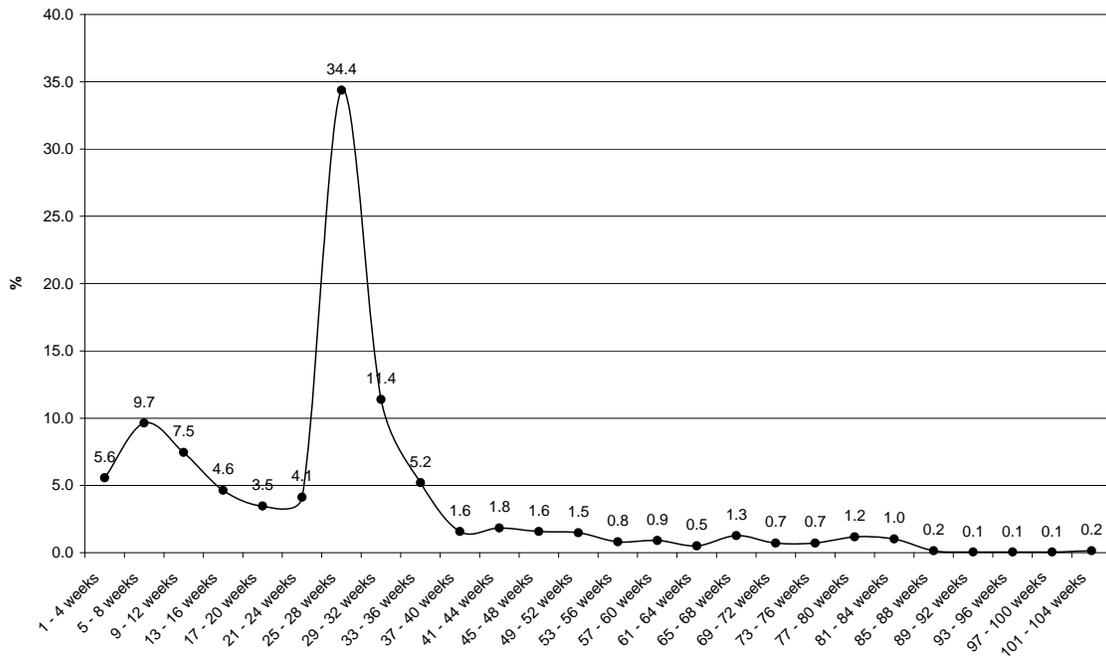


Figure 3.2 Duration (in weeks) Since Job Coaches Last Met in Person with Clients

A more detailed breakdown of the durations on the SEP of all active clients on the programme is presented in Figure 3.1. It shows that there is wide variation in the durations that active clients have been on the SEP but also that the composition of active clients is structured in a particular way. That is, the majority of active clients are on the programme for durations of less than 18 months and that the proportion of clients with longer durations falls off rapidly following 18 months on the programme. More specifically, 11.1% of active clients have been on the SEP for between 1 and 8 weeks, 17.2% for between 9 and 24 weeks, 25.1% for between 25 and 52 weeks, 16.8% for between 53 and 80 weeks, and 7.3% for between 81 and 104 weeks. Approximately one in five clients (22.5%) has been on the SEP for durations in excess of two years with this figure falling to 13.6% in respect of durations in excess of three years.

The issue of variation across the 24 sponsor organisations with regard to client duration on the SEP is examined in Chapter 7. Suffice it to note here that in the case of two organisations all active clients had been on the SEP for less than two years while in a number of other organisations higher proportions - of the order of 30% to 40% - of active clients had been on the SEP for durations in excess of two years.

The detailed data on when Job Coaches last met in person with their clients (see Figure 3.2) show that there was a peak in such meetings 24 to 28 weeks prior to the Census return corresponding to March 2007. While the reason for this peak is not self-evident it does suggest that the Job Coaches review the status and situation of their clients at the end of the first quarter of each year. The timing of this review corresponds to the cycle of programme funding which, while annual, runs from the beginning of April to the end of March.

3.5 Breakdown of Active Clients by Programme Phase

Tables 3.2 and 3.3 present breakdowns of the distribution of clients across the four phases of the SEP. The first of these tables, which is based on data from the Census, shows that the largest single group of clients (i.e., 36.0%) at a point in time is in the Job Search / Job Development Phase while the smallest group (i.e., 14.9%) is in the Needs Assessment Phase. Approximately equal proportions (i.e., 22.4% and 22.0%) of clients are in the In Employment with Job Coach Support and Aftercare and Mentoring Phases.

A small proportion (4.7%) of clients was identified by Job Coaches as not fitting neatly into any of the four phases of the SEP. The reasons for this classification included the difficulty of clearly assigning some clients to a particular phase (e.g., clients could be in a mix of Needs Assessment and Job Search / Job Development or indeed in a temporary work experience placement while other clients could be in employment while looking for another job that better suited their capacities and aspirations - that is, being in Job Search / Job Development and in Employment with Job Coach Support). In relation to this

matter it was also noted that in addition to clients moving progressively through the four phases it was not uncommon for clients to move “backwards” (e.g., following the loss of a job moving from In Employment with Job Coach Support or Aftercare and Mentoring back to Job Search / Job Development).

Table 3.2
Distribution of Active Clients by Programme Phase (Based on Census of Active Clients – 2,122)

	N	%
Needs Assessment	316	14.9
Job Search / Job Development	764	36.0
In Employment with Job Coach Support	475	22.4
Aftercare and Mentoring	467	22.0
Other than above	100	4.7
Total	2,122	100.0

Table 3.3
Distribution of Active Clients by Programme Phase (Based on 98 Job Coach Returns – 1,825)

	Number of Job Coaches with No Clients at Phase	Range of Number of Active Clients at each Phase	Average Number of Active Clients at each Phase	Total Active Clients at each Phase	
				N	%
Needs Assessment	8	1-11	3.4	328	18.0
Job Search / Job Development	3	1-28	6.7	641	35.1
In Employment with Job Coach Support	8	1-14	5.0	478	26.2
Aftercare and Mentoring	9	1-17	4.0	378	20.7
Total			19.1	1,825	100.0

The data from the Job Coach Survey are broadly in line with those from the Census in respect of the distribution of active clients across the four phases of the SEP (see Table 3.3). What these data also show is that there is variation across Job Coaches in respect of the mix of active clients they are supporting. Notably, a small number of Job Coaches do not have clients at one of the four programme stages (at a point in time) and also there is considerable variation in the number of clients at each of the four phases across the 98 Job Coaches who completed a Job Coach Questionnaire.

3.6 Demographic Profile of Active Clients on the Supported Employment Programme

This section presents a demographic profile of active clients on the SEP. Where available and relevant, data from Census 2006 are also presented to enable the profile of active clients on the SEP to be assessed in the context of national data on the population of people with disabilities.

3.6.1 Gender and Age

The gender composition of clients on the SEP is 58.5% men and 41.5% women - figures that are virtually identical to those found in the evaluation of the SEP during its pilot phase (Martin and Associates, 2002, p. 18). Compared to the gender composition of the national population of people with disabilities between the ages of 15 and 64 (i.e., 51.6% men and 48.4% women), there is a slight over-representation of men and a corresponding under-representation of women among active clients of the SEP.

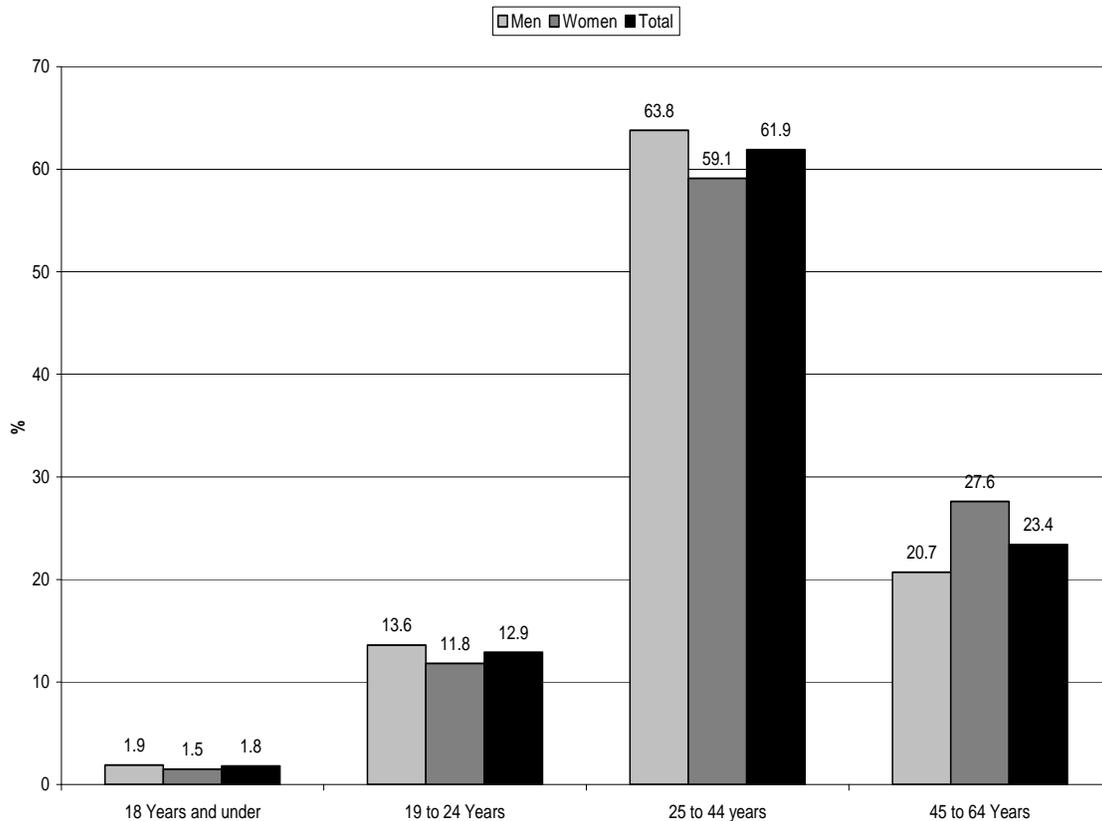


Figure 3.3 Age Profile of Active Clients by Gender

Table 3.4
Comparison of Age Composition of SEP Active Clients with that of People with Disabilities in Census 2006

	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64
Census SEP	14.7	61.9	23.4
Census 2006	13.1	35.2	51.7

The age profile of clients shows that the majority (i.e., 61.9%) of clients are in the 25 to 44 year age range (see Figure 3.3). A small proportion (i.e., 1.8%) of clients are aged 18 years or under and a further 12.9% are in the 19 to 24 year age band. At the other end of the age range nearly one quarter (i.e., 23.4%) of clients are aged 45 years and over (with just three clients being aged 65 years or over). There is a tendency for more women than men to be in the 45 years and older age group.

Comparison of the age composition of SEP active clients with that of the population of people with disabilities as returned in Census 2006 shows that there is an over-representation of SEP clients in the 25 to 44 year age band (see Table 3.4). The high proportion of active clients in the SEP in the 25 to 44 year age band is indicative of the focus of the programme on labour market integration and, corresponding to this, its attraction of clients in the age range at which maximum labour force participation rates are found.

3.6.2 Marital and Family Status

At 83.4%, over four in every five active clients on the SEP are single and, corresponding to this, just less than one in five active clients are either married, separated, or divorced. Compared to the national population of people with disabilities there is a substantial over-representation of single persons among active clients on the SEP (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5
Comparison of Marital Status Composition of SEP Active Clients with that of People with Disabilities in Census 2006

	Single	Married	Separated / Divorced
Census of SEP Clients	83.4	9.3	7.3
Census 2006	45.2	42.0	12.8

Reflecting the marital status profile of active clients on the SEP just 15.4% are parents of children.

3.6.3 Education, Training and Qualifications

The highest levels of educational qualifications obtained by SEP clients are shown in Figure 3.4. It shows that almost two in five (i.e., 38.3%) have no formal educational qualifications and a further one in five (i.e., 21.8%) have at most Junior Certificate qualifications. Almost one quarter (23.8%) have reached Leaving Certificate level and 16.1% have reached third level. For comparative purposes Figure 3.4 also shows the highest educational qualifications of people with a disability in the national population and also people without a disability in the national population. Two points are notable. First, the profile of educational qualifications among SEP clients is very similar to that found in the population of people with a disability. This finding indicates that, in terms of their highest educational qualifications, SEP clients are similar to that of the overall population of people with disabilities. Second, it is also clear, however, that higher proportions of people with disabilities have lower educational qualifications than those found in the national population of people without a disability.

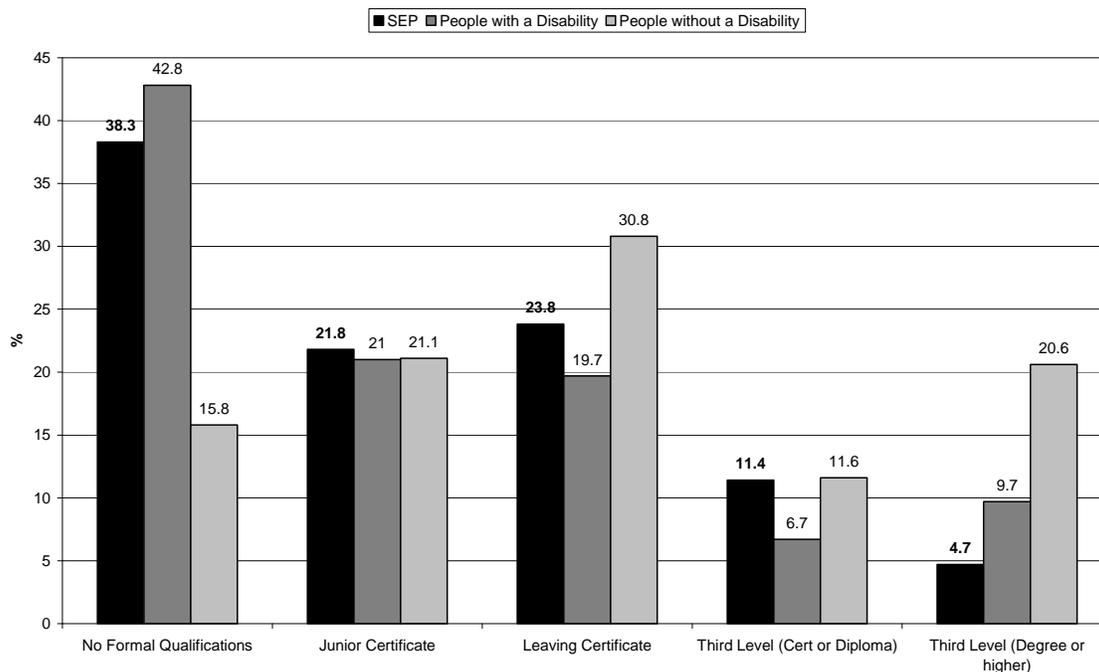


Figure 3.4 Highest Educational Qualifications among SEP Clients, People with a Disability Aged 15 and Over, and People without a Disability Aged 15 Years and Over (both of the latter from Census 2006)

The definition of training course used in the Census is as follows: *by training we mean completion of a course whose purpose and format are predetermined, is structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time and learning support, and leads to certification by a recognised body.* From the data on participation in post-school training

collected in the Census of active clients, it is clear that just over three quarters (i.e., 76.1%) have completed at least one training course. At 80.0%, this proportion is slightly higher among women than men (i.e., 73.2%).

Job Coaches were also asked to identify if their clients possessed a Provisional or a Full Driving Licence. The rationale for including this qualification related to identifying the proportion of clients that could potentially access jobs requiring them to drive and also identifying the proportion of clients that would be reliant on public or other forms of transport to travel to and from employment. Overall, just over one quarter (27.1%) of clients possessed a Full Driving License with an additional 8.3% having a Provisional License. Thus, almost two thirds (i.e., 64.5%) of clients did not possess a Driving License. The latter figure is somewhat higher among women than men (69.2% and 61.1%, respectively).

3.6.4 Labour Market History

Based on having worked in at least one job prior to entry to the SEP, the majority (i.e., 72.2%) of clients had some experience of working on entry to the SEP. The converse of this is that a significant minority (27.8%) had no experience of employment prior to their accessing the SEP. The latter is of note in the context of assessing the “job readiness” or “capabilities” of clients to access employment with the support of the SEP.

A similar set of figures was found in the survey of current and past participants: 23.8% reported that they had never worked in the open labour market prior to entering the SEP, 30.0% stated that they had held just one job, and 46.2% stated that they had held at least two jobs.

Overall, both sets of the findings on labour market history prior to entry to the SEP indicate that approximately one in four persons entering the SEP have no prior experience of employment in the open labour market.

3.7 Profile of Disabilities Being Experienced by Active Clients of the Supported Employment Programme

The Supported Employment Programme clearly presents itself as a labour market integration support programme targeted toward people with disabilities. As stated in the current Operating Standards, the programme “*is open to people with different types and varying degrees of disability who are job ready*”. This section examines the nature and severity (in terms of work restrictions) of the disabilities being experienced by clients on the SEP using data from the Census returns and the survey of current and past participants. Data from the latter are used to provide estimates of the extent to which

clients on the SEP are experiencing restriction in the nature and amount of work they can do arising from their disability.

3.7.1 Profile of Disabilities Being Experienced by Active Clients of the Supported Employment Programme Based on Census Returns

Details of the actual range of disabilities being experienced by active clients and of their time of onset were provided in respect of 1,961 persons, corresponding to 92.4% of the active clients. Based on the descriptions provided by the Job Coaches the disabilities reported were grouped into five categories (see Table 3.6). It should be noted that, for the most part, the descriptions provided by Job Coaches under learning disabilities referred simply to “learning disability” or “intellectual disability” rather than to specific conditions associated with learning disabilities (e.g., Asperger’s Syndrome, Dyslexia). Similarly, in relation to clients experiencing disabilities associated with their mental health, most conditions were simply described as “mental health problems” rather than specific conditions such as depression or schizophrenia.

Table 3.6
Disabilities among Active Clients of the Supported Employment Programme Based on Census of Active Clients

	Since Birth	During Childhood – Up to 12 years	During Adolescence - 13 to 19 Years	During Adulthood – 20 Years and Over	Total	
					N	%
Learning	89.9	6.6	2.6	0.9	664	33.9
Physical	37.2	7.9	12.2	42.7	468	23.8
Mental Health	5.0	3.3	36.9	54.8	662	33.8
Sensory	78.3	9.6	3.8	8.3	157	8.0
Hidden	80.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10	0.5
Total N	935	118	324	584	1,961	100.0
Total %	47.7	6.0	16.5	29.8		100.0

Clients with learning and mental health related disabilities each account for one third of clients with persons with physical disabilities accounting for just less than one quarter. Clients with sensory disabilities account for 8.0% of clients. A number of Job Coaches indicated that their clients had “hidden” disabilities. In terms of disability onset, almost half (47.7%) of clients had their disability since birth and somewhat less than one third (29.8%) had acquired their disability during adult life. Learning disabilities predominated among persons with disabilities from birth while mental health and physical disabilities predominated among persons acquiring disabilities in adulthood.

The Census returns also provided information on whether or not clients required the use of assistive technologies. They showed that one in eight (12.1%) clients required such technologies. The main forms of assistive technologies being required by these clients were adapted workstations (including desks, seating, keyboards and screens), hearing and visual aids, communications software, and walking aids and wheelchairs.

3.7.2 Profile of Disabilities Being Experienced by Active Clients of the Supported Employment Programme Based on Census Returns

The full listing of the disabilities being experienced by clients as reported by respondents to the survey of current and past clients presented in Annex 1 shows a very wide variation in the types of disability reported as well as, in the case of majority of clients, a unique description of the disability being experienced. From the detailed data presented in Annex 1 it is also clear that there are a limited number of clusters of clients experiencing particular disabilities, mainly clients reporting Cerebral Palsy, Depression, Epilepsy, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual / Learning Disabilities, and Mental Health Difficulties. It is also evident that a number of respondents reported the presence of more than one disability.

In order to identify the impact of their disability on capacity to work all survey respondents were asked to state whether their disability placed limitations on the type or amount of work they could do. The responses to these two questions were cross-tabulated to produce the figures presented in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7
Self Assessed Restrictions in Type and Amount of Work

	Limited in Type and Amount of Work	Limited in Type of Work	Limited in Amount of Work	No Restrictions
Learning	50.0	27.6	5.3	17.1
Physical	66.7	17.4	4.3	11.6
Mental Health	46.2	20.5	10.3	23.1
Sensory	23.1	53.8	7.7	15.4
All	50.8	25.2	6.8	17.2

Overall, half (50.8%) of survey respondents stated that they were restricted in both the type and amount of work they could do. At 66.7%, this proportion was highest among respondents with physical disabilities. Just one in four (25.2%) survey respondents stated that they experienced a restriction solely in respect of the type of work they could do. At

53.8%, this was most prevalent among people with sensory disabilities. Comparatively few (just 6.8%) survey respondents stated that they were restricted solely in respect of the amount of work they could do. Finally, 17.2% of survey respondents stated that they experience no restrictions with respect to both the type and amount of work they could do.

3.8 Welfare Status of Active Clients of Supported Employment Programme

Depending on the source of data used between one in 10 (9.6% in Census) and one in eight (12.5% in survey of current and past participants) active clients of the SEP are not in receipt of a welfare payment. Thus, the vast majority of active clients of the SEP are welfare recipients.

Table 3.8
Type of Welfare Payment Being Received by Active Clients
of Supported Employment Programme

	Census of Active Clients	Survey of Current and Past Participants
Disability Allowance (DA)	78.9	76.6
Disability Benefit / Illness Benefit (DB / IB)	5.8	6.1
Other, including no payment	15.3	17.3
All	100.0	100.0

When the type of welfare payment is examined (see Table 3.8) approximately three quarters of SEP clients are found to be recipients of Disability Allowance (DA). This is a means tested payment payable to persons who experience substantial restriction in undertaking employment with this being determined by medical assessment or examination. Thus, not alone will recipients be experiencing a disability they will also have limited income. Despite the high proportion of SEP clients in receipt of DA, when considered in the context of the total number of recipients of DA (i.e., 83,697 in December 2006) it can be seen that the SEP is catering for somewhat less 2% of DA recipients nationally.

In comparison to recipients of DA, comparatively small numbers of SEP clients are in receipt of either Illness Benefit (IB) or other illness and disability related welfare payments. This pattern suggests that the SEP has limited interaction with persons leaving their employment for reasons related to the acquisition of disability or the experience of long-term illness. The low representation of recipients of IB among SEP clients is likely

to reflect the eligibility for this payment, that is, recipients of IB are required to be unable to work. A similar requirement is made in respect of recipients of Invalidity Pension.

3.9 Summary Conclusions

The current operational capacity of the SEP is of the order of 2,200 to 2,500 active clients with the largest single grouping of active clients being in the Job Search / Job Development phase of the programme. The profile of active clients presented in this chapter shows clients to be a diverse group in terms of their circumstances prior to participation in the SEP, their demographic characteristics, their educational qualifications and labour market history, their self-assessed level of job readiness, the disabilities they experience and the level of self-assessed restriction in their capacity for work. This diversity is likely to be reflected in variation in the level and range of supports required to assist them to obtain and retain employment. In that regard, it is also notable that, among the current complement of active clients, almost one in five had been on the SEP previously and one in eight had been on the programme for over three years.

CHAPTER 4

THE NATURE OF THE EMPLOYMENT BEING ACCESSED BY CLIENTS OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

4 Introduction

As presented in Chapter 1, the aim of the SEP is to assist persons with a disability obtain employment in the open labour market and develop the capacity to retain employment on an independent basis and to develop their careers. Employment in the open labour market is considered to be work that would be done by other members of the workforce and involving the same benefits and wages as non-disabled workers doing similar jobs. The Operational Guidelines in effect up until mid 2007 and the current Operating Standards also specify that clients of the SEP should be assisted to progress to employment with working hours in excess of 18 hours per week.

Given the centrality of employment to the SEP and the brief of this research to examine the effectiveness of the SEP, this chapter draws on all four sources of data generated for this research to examine - from a number of perspectives but particularly that of clients - how effective the SEP is in supporting clients to access and retain employment. The four sources of data are drawn upon to:

- (i) identify an overall point in time estimate of the proportion of SEP clients in employment;
- (ii) investigate issues such as time taken to secure employment with assistance from the SEP and whether or not clients considered that the support for the SEP was critical to the securing the transition to employment. The latter includes the issue of deadweight: that is, the proportion of clients stating that they obtained employment without assistance from the SEP;
- (iii) provide a profile of clients obtaining employment; and,
- (iv) examine the terms and conditions of employment of active clients in employment at the time of the Census return and of those clients in employment at the time they responded to the survey of SEP clients.

Data from these sources are also used to examine various aspects of the employment obtained by clients of the SEP including hours of work, hourly earnings, and job satisfaction.

4.1 Point in Time Estimates of Number of Active Clients in Employment

4.1.1 Proportion of Active Clients in Employment Based on Census Returns (N=2,122)

The total number of clients in employment at the time of the Census returns were made is 921. Based on this figure the overall proportion of clients in employment is 43.4%. As is illustrated by the analysis presented below, this is a gross figure based on the total population (i.e., 2,122) of active clients on the SEP on March 30th 2007 who were in employment at that time plus those active clients on that date who subsequently obtained employment between March 30th and the time of the Census returns.

Using data available on the dates active clients started on the SEP and the dates on which these clients took up employment it was possible to compute when clients actually obtained employment and whether or not they were in employment prior to entry to the SEP. Among the 2,122 active clients on March 30th, 709 were in employment before that date and 140 obtained employment after that date and before the Census return was made. Employment start dates were not provided for 72 active clients. Among the 709 active clients in employment on 30th March 2007, 84 (i.e., 11.8%) were in employment at the time they started on the SEP. Based discussions with SEP co-ordinators and the comments of Job Coaches responding to the Job Coach Survey, the main reasons that these clients accessed the SEP were to obtain support to improve their working hours and / or wage rates, to seek support to get a better job or one more in line with their aspirations or capabilities, and to seek support to maintain their current job.

Taking the absolute figures presented above and noting the cases with missing values it is possible to calculate the employment rate of active clients on the 30th March 2007. The computation for this point in time estimate of the employment rates is $709 / (2,122 - 72)$ and it results in an employment rate of 34.6%. That is, just over one third of active clients on the 30th March 2007 were in employment. If this figure is adjusted for the 84 active clients entering the SEP while in employment the employment rate for active clients actually obtaining employment with support from the SEP is 30.5% (i.e., $(709 - 84) / (2,122 - 72)$)

During the period between 30th March and the time of the Census returns, an additional 140 active clients obtained employment. Thus, of the 1,413 (i.e., $2,122 - 709$) active clients not in employment on the 30th March 2007, 140 - corresponding to 9.9% - obtained employment at some point prior to the Census return being made. Again adjusting for clients in respect of whom data on start dates were not returned, 10.4% of active clients not in employment on the 30th March had secured employed by the time of the Census return.

4.1.2 Proportion of Active Clients in Employment Based on the Job Coach Survey (N=1,825)

Using data from the Job Coach Survey it is possible to calculate a second point in time estimate of the proportion of active clients on the SEP in employment - though in this case the estimate is based on returns from 98 Job Coaches in 23 Sponsor Organisations and in relation to active clients “in employment with Job Coach support” and active clients in the “aftercare and mentoring” phase of the SEP. Of the 1,825 active clients of these Job Coaches 478 (i.e., 26.2%) were identified as being “in employment with Job Coach support” and a further 378 (i.e., 20.7%) were identified as being in “aftercare and mentoring”. These figures when combined indicate that the employment rate of active clients on March 30th is 46.9%.

4.1.3 Proportion of Current and Past Clients in Employment Based on Surveys of Current and Past Clients

As noted in Chapter 1, the methodology for the survey of current and past clients was based on taking a sample of 430 of all active clients on March 30th 2007 corresponding to one in five of all active clients on that date. Reflecting the fact that 607 clients had ceased by the time of the Census return, the sample actually contained 305 clients active at the time of the census return and 125 clients who has ceased their involvement in the SEP at the time of the Census return.

Data on employment status at the time of the survey were available for 262 of the 265 survey respondents. They show that a total of 149 persons were in employment at the time they were surveyed and that three had been in employment prior to entering the SEP. Based on the figure of 146 clients who obtained employment while on the SEP, the overall employment rate of survey respondents is 56.4% at the time of the survey. Taking into account when these clients actually secured employment, the point in time estimate of the proportion of active clients in employment on March 30th 2007 is 39.8%. This proportion takes into account a figure of 43 clients that obtained employment at some point after 30th March and excludes the three respondents who stated they were in employment when they started on the SEP (i.e., $(146 - 43) / (262 - 3)$).

4.2 Employment Status of Clients Exiting the Supported Employment Programme

The point in time estimates of employment among active clients of the SEP presented above are based on clients still being actively supported by their Job Coaches. That is, they are based on clients that have not made the transition to maintaining their employment on an independent basis which is the ultimate of the SEP. This section considers the available data on the employment status of clients that have ceased their active involvement in the SEP. This is of relevance to the overall aim of this research for

two reasons. First, it is an indicator of the extent to which the SEP is successful in supporting effective transitions to “independence and career progression”. Second, in terms of programme design, the SEP is structured on the basis of a fixed number of active clients at a point in time - approximately 2,500 on the basis of the current complement of personnel. This being the case the main means by which the SEP generates the capacity to take on new clients is through clients exiting from the programme. As discussed in more detail in the following chapter, the number and employment status of clients exiting the programme within any specified timeframe is thus of importance in considering the effectiveness of the SEP.

4.2.1 Employment Status of Clients Exiting the Supported Employment Programme Based on Census Returns

Between March 30th 2007 and the time of the Census returns, 607 active clients exited the SEP, corresponding to a six month exit rate of 28.6%. Given the phased structure of the SEP one would expect that a substantial component of the outflow from the programme would comprise clients in employment. The data presented in Table 4.1 provide the basis for looking at the employment status of clients exiting the SEP.

Table 4.1
Employment Status of Clients Exiting the Supported Employment Programme
Between April and September 2007

	Starts Prior to End march 2006 (N=986)		Starts During April 2006 to March 2007 (N=1,126)		Active Clients on SEP March 30 th 2007 (N=2,122)	
	Number Ceasing Between April 2007 and September 2007		Number Ceasing Between April 2007 and September 2007		Number Ceasing Between April 2007 and September 2007	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employed - Start Date prior to 30-03-07	79	29.2	24	7.3	103	17.2
Employed - Start Date after 30-03-07	6	2.2	8	2.4	14	2.3
Employed - No Date Provided	4	1.5	3	0.9	7	1.2
Has Worked but Currently not Employed	142	52.4	212	64.6	354	59.1
Never Worked in Open Labour Market	40	14.8	81	24.7	121	20.2
Total	271	100	328	100	599	100

To allow for different durations of active clients on the SEP this table examines the status of clients exiting the SEP among clients that entered the programme prior to end of March 2006 and those that entered between April 2006 and end of March 2007. What clearly emerges is that the largest component of the outflow from the SEP - regardless of the duration of clients on the programme - comprises clients not in employment at the time they exit the programme. Among clients who entered the SEP prior to end of March 2006 the figure is 67.2% and among clients entering the programme between April 2006 and end of March 2007 it is 89.3%. These two figures indicate that the majority of the outflow from the SEP between March 2007 and the time of the Census returns - approximately a six month period - comprises clients leaving the programme without obtaining employment. The reasons for this for this are examined in Chapter 5.

A total of 124 that had ceased their active involvement in the SEP at the time of the census return were in employment. This corresponds to an employment rate of 20.7% among clients ceasing the SEP between April and September of 2007.

4.2.2 Employment Status of Clients Exiting the Supported Employment Programme Based on Survey of Job Coaches

All Job Coaches completing the Job Coach survey were asked to provide the number of their clients that ceased active involvement in the SEP during the 12 months prior to March 30th 2007 and to state the programme phase these clients were in at the time they ceased involvement in the SEP. The data are summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2
Programme Phase at which Clients Ceased their Involvement in the Supported Employment Programme among Clients Leaving the Programme in the 12 Month Period Prior to March 30th 2007

	N	%
Needs Assessment	303	27.6
Job Search / Job Development	434	39.5
In Employment with Job Coach Support	168	15.3
Aftercare and Mentoring	194	17.6
Total	1,099	100.0

Based on the programme phase at which clients ceased their involvement in the SEP a total of 362 clients ceased their active involvement in the SEP while in employment. If this figure is taken as an indicator of the annual rate of progression into employment in the open labour market without on-going Job Coach support then 32.9% of clients ceasing the SEP on an annual basis do so on this basis. Given the phased structure of the SEP one would expect that all clients in employment exiting the SEP would be in the

“aftercare and mentoring” phase. However, the data in Table 4.2 show that this is not the case and that just under half (46.4%) of all clients exiting the SEP in employment do so at the “in employment with Job Coach support” phase.

4.2.3 Employment Status of Clients Exiting the Supported Employment Based on Survey Respondents

Table 4.3 present an analysis of the employment status of survey respondents among past and current participants. Focusing on survey respondents that were no longer active clients of the SEP just over one in three (35.4%) were in employment at the time they were surveyed.

Table 4.3
Employment Status of Survey Respondents by Active Status
on the Supported Employment Programme

	Past Clients	Active Clients	All Respondents Active on 30 th March 2007
Got a job and still in employment	35.4	63.4	56.4
Got a job, but currently not in employment	18.5	9.3	11.6
Never got a job	46.1	27.3	32.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4.3 also shows that approximately one in five (18.5%) past participants had obtained employment at some time while in receipt of support from the SEP but were no longer in employment at the time of the survey. This figure indicates the level of instability of the employment found among clients that are no longer active clients of the SEP. By far the largest group - 46.1% - of past participants had never obtained employment while on the SEP. This is consistent with the findings on this issue based on the Census of active clients and Job Coach Survey.

4.3 Time Taken to Secure Employment among Clients in Employment

To compute the time taken for clients in employment to actually secure employment the time difference in weeks between their start date on the SEP and the start date of their employment was calculated. Active clients in employment at their time of entry to the SEP (N=84) were excluded from the analysis. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 4.1.

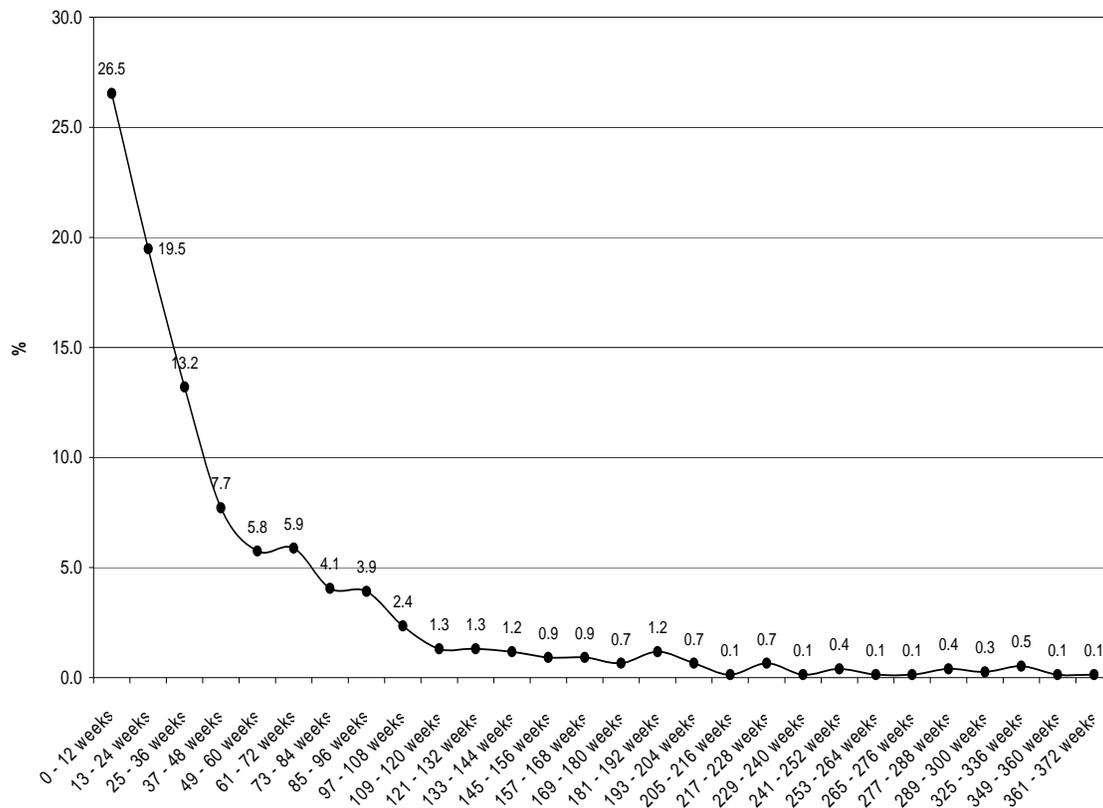


Figure 4.1 Time Taken to Secure Employment Following Entry to the Supported Employment Programme

Just over one quarter (26.5%) of clients obtaining employment do so within 12 weeks of entering the SEP and a further one in five (19.5%) obtained their employment at some time between their 13th and 24th week on the SEP. Combined these figures indicate that almost half (i.e., 46.0%) of clients in employment secure employment within a 24 week period. When the time frame is extended out to 48 weeks two thirds (66.9%) of clients obtaining employment are in employment and by 72 weeks the figure rises to 78.6%. At 108 weeks, almost all (i.e., 88.9%) clients obtaining employment are in employment. After that time there is a clear lengthening of the time taken to secure employment.

The overall trend in respect of the time taken to secure employment among clients actually obtaining employment is that the majority (i.e., 59.2%) do so within a 36 week time period and almost half (46.0%) do so within 24 week. This suggests that the SEP is engaging with clients with different levels of “job readiness”: some active clients - the majority - can be assisted to obtain employment within a relatively short time frame while others - albeit a minority - require considerably longer periods of support before they obtain employment.

The data presented in Figure 4.1 also indicate for some clients entering the SEP there is a rapid progression through the first three phases of the programme while other clients take considerably longer than one year to enter the “in employment with Job Coach Support” phase of the programme. This, in turn, indicates that the durations of programme phases and the time taken to progress through programme phases is mainly driven by the individual needs and circumstances of clients.

4.4 Role of the Supported Employment in Securing Employment

As shown in the previous chapter, persons entering the SEP do not form a homogeneous group of people. They vary widely in terms of the nature and severity of their disability and their self rated capacity to engage in certain types of work as well as in the amount of work they are able to do. One of the additional sources of variation in the client population is whether or not clients have a clear idea of the type of work they want to do when they start on the SEP. Table 4.4 presents the answers of survey respondents to the question “Did you have a clear idea of the type of work you wanted to do when you started on the SEP?” as well as results of an analysis that examined the manner in which the SEP subsequently engaged with clients answering negatively and positively to this question.

Table 4.4
The Role of the Supported Employment in Assisting Active Clients to Find Employment

	248 (100.0%)							
Had clear idea of type of work	No 92 37.1%				Yes 156 62.9%			
Job Coach helped identify type of work	No 18 19.6%		Yes 74 80.4%		No 42 26.9%		Yes 114 73.1%	
Job Coach helped find type of work	No 18 100.0%	Yes 0 0.0%	No 18 24.3%	Yes 56 75.7%	No 32 76.2%	Yes 10 23.8%	No 34 29.8%	Yes 80 70.2%

Looking first at the 37.1% of clients who entered the SEP with no clear idea of they type of work they wanted to do, it can be seen that four in five (80.4%) of these clients reported that they were assisted by the Job Coach to identify they type of work they wanted to do. Among this group of clients three quarters (75.5%) also stated that their Job Coach actually assisted them to obtain a job consistent with their occupational

aspirations. For the minority (i.e., 19.6%) of clients that entered the SEP with no clear idea of the type of work they wanted to do and who also reported that their Job Coach did not assist them to identify the type of work they wanted to do, all reported that their Job Coach did not assist them find employment.

Among clients that entered the SEP with a clear idea of the type of work that they wanted to do - 62.9% of all clients entering the SEP - almost three quarters (73.1%) also stated that their Job Coach helped them to clarify they type of work they wanted to do. Almost three quarters (70.2%) of this group also reported that their Job Coach helped then to obtain employment consistent with their employment aspirations. Among clients stating that their Job Coach did not assist them to clarify the type of work they wanted to do, a much smaller proportion (23.8%) stated that their Job Coach actually helped then to finding the type of work they wanted to do.

Overall, the pattern of the findings shows that 41.1% of clients stated that their interaction with their Job Coach did not - at the time of the survey - help them to find employment. Conversely, 58.9% of clients stated that the Job Coach actually assisted them to find employment in the type of work they wanted to do. The actual types of assistance provided by the Job Coaches in this regard are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5
Nature of Support Provided by Job Coaches in Respect of Finding Employment

Supports	%
Actually identified job and directly contacted employer	33.6
Guidance and on-going support	19.8
Provided information on possible jobs / vacancies	15.3
Arranged interviews	10.7
Provided assistance with CVs and application forms	10.7
Provided training on doing job interviews, interview preparation	3.3
Made approaches to potential employers on behalf of client	3.3
Arranged temporary work experience placement	3.3
	100.0

Survey respondents provided a variety of answers in varying levels of detail when asked about the nature of the support provided by their Job Coach to assist them find employment. Content analysis of the responses identified the eight types of support listed in Table 4.5. It should be noted that some clients referred to two or three of the types of support listed above while others identified only one of them.

To further clarify the role of the SEP in actually supporting clients to secure employment all survey respondents in employment at the time of the survey (N=149) were asked *Would you have got this job without the assistance of your Job Coach?* Just under three quarters (72.7%) stated that they would not have got the job in which they were currently employment without the support of their Job Coach. The converse of this finding is that approximately one in four (27.3%) of survey respondents stated that they obtained their current employment without the support of their Job Coach.

When considered as a whole, the findings reported above indicate that the support provided the Job Coach is critical to obtaining employment in the case of the majority of clients in employment. However, a minority clients in employment state that the assistance and support provided by their Job Coach was not a critical factor in their obtaining employment.

4.5 Duration in Employment among All Clients Obtaining Employment

The duration of employment in four week bands of all clients in employment is shown in Figure 4.2. It ranges from under four weeks to over 500 weeks, though it must be noted that very long durations in employment are found among a minority of active clients (e.g., 15.3% of active clients in employment have durations in excess of 180 week). This figure includes the 104 clients that had ceased their involvement in the SEP subsequent to March 30th 2007.

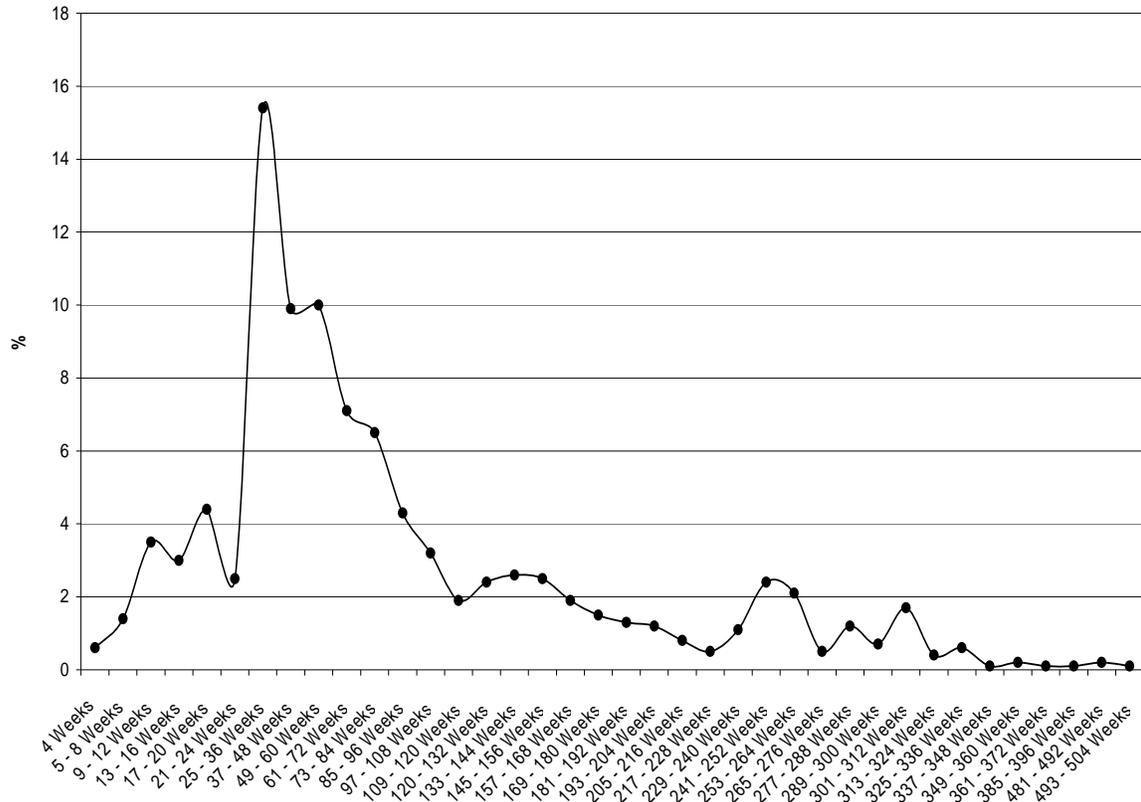


Figure 4.2 Duration in Employment among Clients in Employment

Among all clients in employment at the time of the Census returns just over half (i.e., 53.2%) had been in their jobs for between 25 and 96 weeks - approximately between 6 months and two years. As noted earlier, 140 active clients on March 30th 2007 obtained their jobs subsequent to that date. These clients mainly account for the 15.4% (N=129) of clients in employment for between one and 24 weeks. Overall, just fewer than three quarters (i.e., 71.8%) of clients in employment had been in employment for at most 108 weeks.

4.6 Profile of Clients Obtaining Employment (Based on Survey of Current and Past Clients)

As noted above 149 survey respondents were in employment at the time of the survey, 30 had obtained employment at some point during their involvement in the SEP but were no longer employed, and 83 never obtained a job. Data on employment status were not available in respect of three survey respondents. Investigation of the profiles of clients in these three employment status groups showed that there were no statically significant differences between them in respect of their demographic characteristics (i.e., gender,

age, marital status), their level of educational qualifications, and the type of disability being experienced. The analysis did, however, identify two factors that were associated with employment status: job readiness as reported by the clients and self assessed capacity in respect of the extent to which their disability placed restrictions on the type and amount of work they could do (see Tables 4.6 and 4.7).

Table 4.6
Employment Status by Self Assessed Job Readiness

	Employed at Time of Survey %	Not Employed at Time of Survey (but had accessed employment) %	Never Employed %	All %
Job ready	61.0	11.8	27.2	76.5
Not job ready	41.7	10.0	48.3	23.5

Table 4.7
Employment Status by Self Assessed Impact of Disability on Capacity to Work

	Employed %	Not Employed (but had got a job) %	Never Employed %	All %
Limited in type and amount	44.8	14.4	40.8	50.8
Limited in type only	63.9	4.9	31.2	25.2
Limited in amount only	61.1	11.1	27.8	6.8
Not limited in either type or amount	72.1	16.3	11.6	17.2

Looking at employment readiness first, it is notable that a substantial minority (23.5%) of survey respondents considered that they were not job ready when they started on the SEP. This assessment is validated by their employment status at the time of the survey (e.g., 48.3% had never secured employment which is considerably higher than the comparable proportion (27.2%) found among survey respondents who considered that they were job ready. Qualitative analysis of the main reasons why these clients considered themselves not to be job ready at the time they started on the SEP identified four categories. In order

of importance these are lack of experience, lack of confidence, lack of skills, and the adverse impact of illness on capacity to work at the time when they started on the SEP.

Turning to the findings on the impact of disability related restrictions on capacity to work Table 4.7 clearly shows a relationship between the extent of such restriction and employment status. Most notably, at 72.1% in employment, it is among the minority of survey respondents who reported no restrictions that the highest employment rate is found. Among survey respondents who reported that they were restricted in respect of either the type or amount of work just over 60 percent in each case were in employment at the time of the survey. The lowest employment rate (44.8%) is found among survey respondents who consider that they are restricted in both the amount and type of work they can do.

4.7 Profile of Companies Recruiting with Assistance from the Supported Employment Programme (Based on Survey of Employers)

The companies recruiting clients of the SEP are varied in terms of sector and size (see Tables 4.8 and 4.9). This indicates that the SEP is engaging with a wide cross-section of sources of employment. Three sectors do, however, account for the majority (59.9%) of recruitments under the SEP. These sectors are other services including personal services, the hotels and restaurants sector, and the wholesale and retail sector. This, as is shown below, reflects the occupational profile of clients and survey respondents.

Table 4.8
Sectoral Distribution of Companies Recruiting Using
the Supported Employment Programme

Sector	%
Manufacturing / Other production industries	3.8
Construction	3.8
Wholesale and retail trade	13.5
Hotels and restaurants	19.2
Transport, storage and communications	3.8
Financial and other business services	3.8
Public administration and defence	11.5
Education	3.8
Health	9.6
Other services including personal services	27.2
	100.0

Table 4.9
Company Size Distribution of Companies Employing Clients
of the Supported Employment Programme

Company Size	%
1 – 9	17.3
10 – 19	19.2
20 – 49	21.2
50 – 99	17.3
100 – 499	13.5
500 +	11.5
	100.0

The sectoral profile of companies recruiting using the SEP is also consistent with that found in the Manpower SkillsGroup Survey (2003). It found that three sectors accounted for 38% of all companies with employees with a disability: wholesale and retail, personal and social services, and hotels and restaurants.

A number of other features of companies recruiting using the SEP are of interest. First, a very high proportion (94.0%) stated that they had an equal opportunities policy in place. Second, 58.8% stated that they had recruited people with disabilities prior to recruiting with support from the SEP. Third, 38.0% stated that they had made adaptations or provided supports to employees recruited with support from the SEP. These adaptations and supports included physical alterations to the workplace, provision of additional training, introduction of flexible working hours, and providing one-to-one support from work colleagues or supervisors.

4.8 Occupations of Active Clients in Employment

A detailed listing of the occupations of all active clients in employment is presented in Annex 2. It shows that there are 78 different occupational categories among active clients in employment. Within this wide spread of occupations are a number of occupations that feature with some regularity. These occupations are sales assistants (11.3%), clerical workers (11.1%), cleaners and domestics (10.1%), kitchen porters (4.7%), and catering assistants (4.6%). Combined these four occupational categories account for 41.8% of all occupations held by active clients in employment. In addition to these occupations, 15.4% of active clients are in occupations coded as “all other occupations, not elsewhere classified (nec)”. Such occupations are typically unskilled occupations. A further 11 occupations are held by at least 1% of active clients in employment and combined these 11 occupational categories account for 21.7% of active clients in employment. The occupations are storekeepers, warehouse workers,

receptionists, gardeners and groundskeepers, security personnel, care assistants, childcare workers, caretakers, checkout personnel, machinery operatives, and sales related occupations.

Table 4.10
Labour Force Level 1 Occupational Classification of Active Clients in Employment

	% Based on Census	% Based on Survey Respondents	QNHS 2004
Managers and Administrators	0.1	0.0	18.5
Professionals	1.3	3.0	10.8
Associate Professional and Technical	1.3	3.8	9.6
Clerical and Related	18.3	15.8	10.1
Craft and Related	5.8	5.3	12.2
Personal and Protective Occupations	12.0	10.5	11.1
Sales Occupations	13.7	10.5	6.6
Plant and machine Operatives	6.0	2.3	8.7
Other Occupations	41.5	48.9	12.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The more aggregated categorisation of occupations presented in Table 4.10 shows that very few active clients in employment are in management and professional occupations and that the largest single grouping - at 41.5% - is in mainly unskilled service occupations. It is also clear that there is a close correspondence in the profile of occupations based on the survey of current and past participants and that based on the Census of active clients.

When the occupational profile of SEP clients is compared with that of all people with disabilities in employment - as reported in the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) Special Module on Disability (2004) - it is clear that the latter contains considerably higher proportions of persons who are in managerial, professional and associate professional occupations and lower proportions in clerical, sales, and personal service occupations. This difference suggests that either a low proportion of people with disabilities from managerial, professional and technical backgrounds make use of the SEP or that the SEP has limited effectiveness in supporting its clients to access managerial, professional and technical positions. In this regard it is useful to recap on the educational qualifications of active clients of the SEP: based on the Census returns 16.1% have a third level qualification and based on the survey of current and past participants 18.2% have a third level qualification, figures that are very similar. Thus, it is not that the SEP does not attract people with disabilities with third level qualifications. This being the case, and also the finding that there is no statistically significant relationship

`between educational qualifications and employment rates among SEP clients, suggests that the SEP is experiencing difficulty in supporting its clients with third level qualifications to access jobs commensurate with the qualifications. A further factor that is likely to be influencing this finding is the presence of more formal recruitment procedures in respect of managerial, professional and technical occupations.

4.9 Terms and Conditions of Employment of Employees

This section uses data from the Census of active clients and the survey of current and past participants to examine working hours and payment rates. Both data sets are used to check for consistency in the findings regarding these aspects of the terms and conditions of SEP clients in employment. Given the wide variation in hours worked found among SEP clients in employment it is considered more useful to focus on this aspect of working time rather than looking in detail at whether employment is full-time or part-time. With regard to the latter, suffice it to note here that three quarters (74.3%) of SEP clients in employment described their employment as part-time. This is considerably larger than the corresponding proportion (27.7%) of the national population of people with disabilities in employment based on QNHS figures presented in the Special Module on Disability (2004).

4.9.1 Working Hours of Active Clients in Employment (Based on Census Returns)

Based on all clients in employment at the time of the Census returns (N=921) the total number of hours worked ranged from a minimum of two (in the case of 11 clients) to a maximum of 48 (in the case of just one client). The average number of hours worked is 20.1 hours.

The distribution of the number of hours worked presented in Figure 4.3 shows that three values occur as “peaks”: 23.6% work 20 hours a week, 10.4% work 39 hours a week, 8.1% work 15 hours a week. Also, Figure 4.3 shows that a small proportion (6.0%) of SEP clients work at most five hours a week. At the other end of the scale just 3.2% work for more than 39 hours a week.

When working hours are grouped into two bands, just over two in five (i.e., 44.3%) clients in employment work for at most 18 hours a week and just over half (55.7%) of clients for at least 19 hours a week.

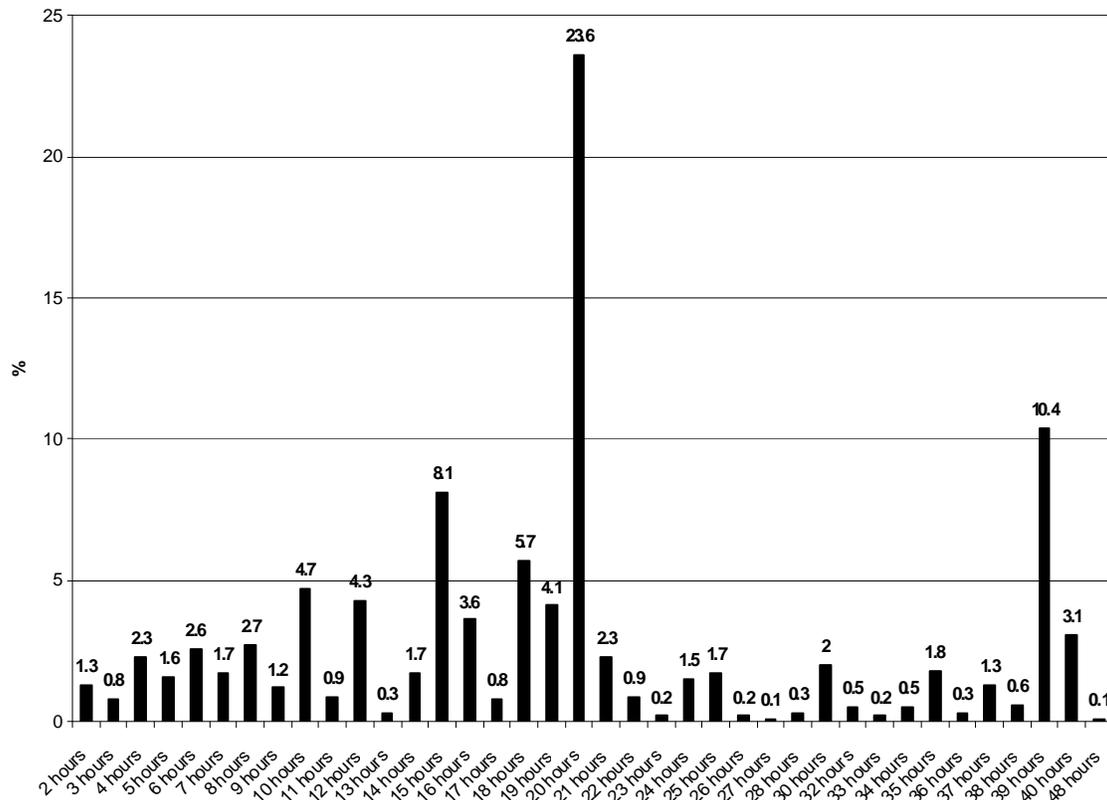


Figure 4.3 Distribution of Working Hours among Clients in Employment

4.9.2 Working Hours of Survey Respondents in Employment

At 19.1 hours, the average number of hours worked a week based on 149 survey respondents in employment at the time of the survey is virtually identical to that based on the Census of active clients in employment reported above. Also, the range and distributions of working hours are very similar based on both datasets. The range based on the survey respondents in employment is 2 to 45 hours a week. When working hours are grouped, 45.8% of survey respondents in employment work at most 18 hours a week and 54.2% work at least 19 hours a week - proportions virtually identical to those based on the Census of active clients.

4.9.3 Comparison of Working Hours of SEP Clients with National Population

The QNHS Special Module on Disability (2004) provides data on the working hours of people with disabilities and people without a disability among all persons in employment in the last quarter of 2004. Figure 4.4 uses these data together with those from the Census of active clients and the survey of current and past participants to compare the profile of working hours of SEP clients with that of the national population of people

with disabilities (PwD) in employment and the national population of people without a disability (Pop No Disability) in employment.

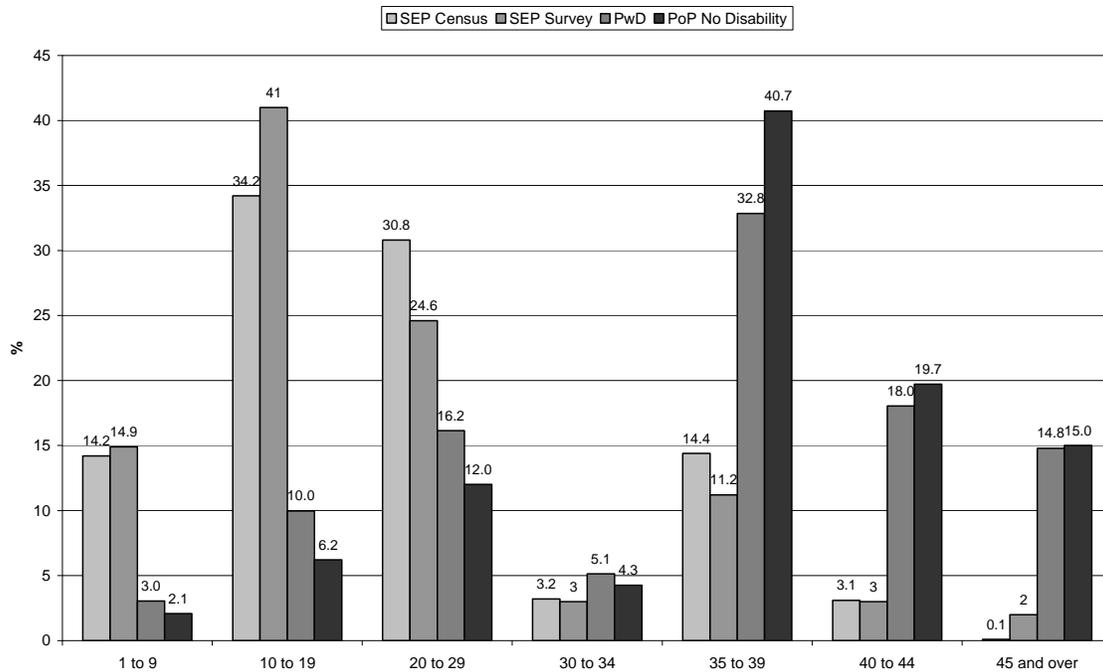


Figure 4.4 Comparisons of Working Hours of SEP Clients in Employment with National Data on Persons in Employment

Two main trends are illustrated by the data presented in Figure 4.4. First, the proportions of SEP clients in employment who work less than 20 hours a week are considerably higher than those found among the national population of people with disabilities in employment. For example, one in seven (14.2% in Census data and 14.9% in survey data) SEP clients in employment work for between one and 9 hours a week. The comparable figure among the national population of people with disabilities in employment is just 3.0%. A similarly large proportionate difference between SEP clients and the national population of people with disabilities in employment is evident in relation to working between 10 and 19 hours a week. It is also clear that the single largest proportion (34.2% based on Census data and 41.0% based on survey data) of SEP clients in employment work for between 10 and 19 hours a week. Second, the working hours of people with disabilities in employment are generally lower than those of the non-disabled peers. The latter reflects the higher rate of part-time working found among people with disabilities compared with their non-disabled peers.

When considered together it is evident that the working hours of SEP clients are considerably below both those of the national population of people with disabilities in

employment and the national population of people without a disability in employment. Possible interpretations of this finding are that: (i) a higher proportion of SEP clients in employment experience restrictions in the number of hours that they can work compared to the national population of people with disabilities in employment; (ii) the SEP is more effective in accessing part-time than full-time employment for its clients; or, (iii) SEP clients are looking for and are happy with their working hours because of their limited impact of their welfare payment. It may be the case that all three of these possible interpretations are in play.

Table 4.11
Self-Assessed Restrictions in Type and Amount of Work among SEP Clients
and National Population of People with Disabilities in Employment

	Employed SEP	Employed QNHS 2002
Limited in type and amount	40.9	38.0
Limited in type only	28.5	4.0
Limited in amount only	8.0	8.5
Not limited in either type or amount	22.6	49.5
Total	100.0	100.0

With respect to the first of these interpretations it is possible to compare levels of self-assessed restrictions in the type and amount of work of among SEP clients in employment with those of national population of people with a disability in employment. Data for the latter are from the QNHS Special Module on Disability (2002). When the figures for the two groups are compared (see Table 4.11), the most notable feature is that a considerably smaller proportion (22.6%) of SEP clients in employment report no restrictions on either the type or amount of work they can do compared with the corresponding figure (49.5%) national population of people with disabilities. Related to this is the considerably higher proportion (28.5%) of SEP clients in employment that report they are restricted in the type of work they can do compared with the corresponding figure (4.0%) for the national population of people with disabilities. Overall then, the main difference between SEP clients in employment and the national population of people with disabilities in employment is the higher proportion of the former experiencing restrictions in the type of work they can do. This, of itself, is unlikely to explain the difference in working hours between the two groups.

Using data from the survey of current and past participants it is possible to look at whether or not SEP clients in employment are satisfied with their working hours (see Table 4.12). Looking at the overall situation first, it is clear that the majority (81.0%) of SEP clients in employment are happy with their working hours and do not wish to work either more or fewer hours a week. A small proportion (13.7%) stated that they would

like to work more hours a week and an even smaller proportion (5.3%) stated that they would like to work more hours a week.

Table 4.12
Views of SEP Clients in Employment on Hours Worked

	Would like to Work More Hours	Would Like to Work Fewer Hours	Happy with Hours of Work	Total
1 to 9	42.1	5.3	52.6	100.0
10 to 19	12.7	3.6	83.6	100.0
20 to 29	6.1	6.1	87.9	100.0
30 to 39	5.6	0.0	94.4	100.0
40 plus	0.0	33.3	66.7	100.0
All	13.7	5.3	81.0	100.0

When views on working hours are examined by the actual number of hours worked a week it is clear that it is among clients working fewer than 10 hours a week that one finds the highest proportion (42.1%) of clients seeking to increase their working hours. This is not surprising given the number of hours they are actually working. Also, it is clear that it is only among clients working 40 or more hours a week that one finds a substantial proportion stating that they would like to work fewer hours a week. Given the small overall proportion (< 5%) of SEP clients in employment working 40 or more hours a week this is a very small proportion of clients in employment.

When considered together the overall pattern of the findings in relation to working hours strongly suggests that the vast majority of SEP clients in employment are satisfied with their working hours. Thus, the high proportion found to be working less than 20 hours a week and the high proportion in part-time employment can be interpreted as reflecting the aspirations of the majority of clients in employment rather than pointing to high levels of underemployment.

4.9.4 Earnings of Clients in Employment

Reflecting the wide variation in the number of hours worked, there is also substantial variation in weekly gross earnings: from just €2 to €900 based on the Census of active clients in employment at the time of the Census returns and from €8 to €719 based on survey of current and past participants in employment. Based on the Census returns the average weekly gross wage is €176.25 and the average hourly rate is €8.77. The comparable figures from the survey of current and past clients are €11.89 and €11.42 respectively. Given that the latter figures are based on data provided directly by SEP

clients in employment rather than Job Coaches, it is likely they present a more accurate picture of hourly earnings. For comparative purposes the minimum hourly rate for adult experienced workers since 1st July is €8.65 and the average hourly rate of all employees nationally in March 2006 is €19.47 (CSO, 2007).

Based on the figures for average hourly earnings it is clear that employees being supported by the SEP earn less per hour than the average employee nationally. Three factors influence this finding: (i) high proportions of SEP employees are in sectors with lower than average hourly earnings (i.e., the hotels and restaurants - €11.96, wholesale and retail trade - €15.07, and other services €14.03); (ii) higher paid occupations such as managers and professionals are underrepresented among SEP clients; and, (iii) approximately three quarters of SEP employees are in part-time employment which on average is associated with lower hourly rates than full-time employment. In relation to the latter point it can be noted that average hourly earnings of part-time workers at €13.89 per hour are approximately one third less than those of full-time employees (i.e., €20.74).

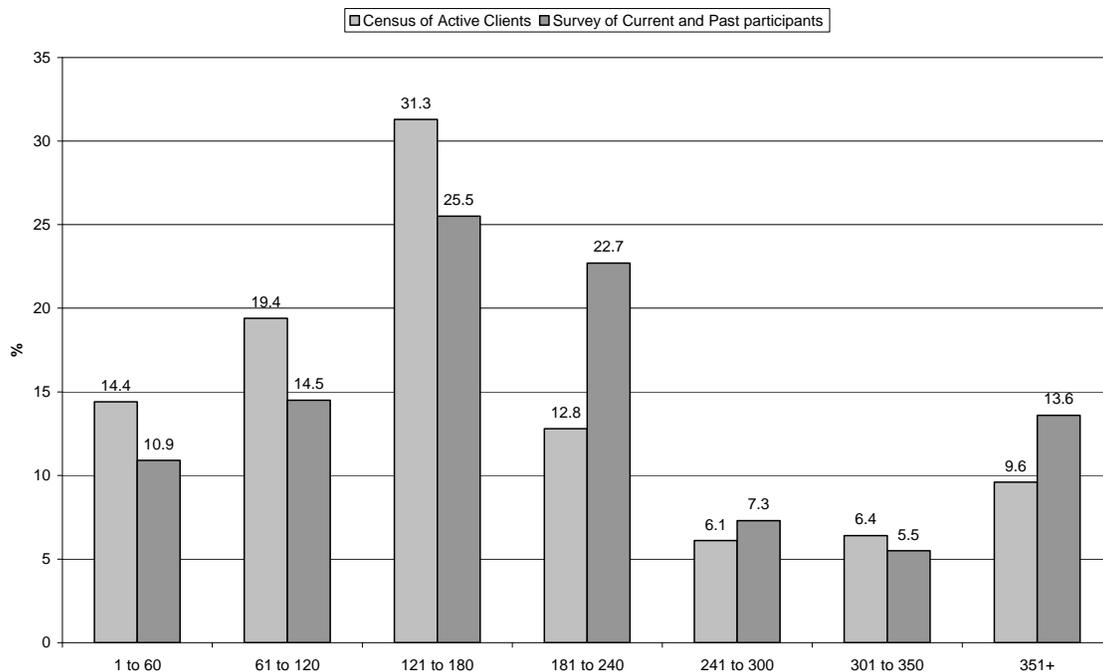


Figure 4.5 Weekly Earnings in Bands

The gross weekly earnings of clients in employment are banded in Figure 4.5. The distributions show that between one quarter (25.4%) and one third (33.8%) of SEP clients in employment do not exceed the €120 weekly threshold of the current income disregard. That is, between one quarter and one third of all clients in employment can retain all income from employment and retain their full DA entitlement. For clients in receipt of

incomes between €120 and €350 a week their incomes are assessed at 50%: that is, each additional € income results in a 50 cent decrease in welfare income. Over half (i.e., 56.6% based on Census returns and 61.0% based on survey of current and past clients) of clients in employment earn incomes in this range. Depending on the data source, 9.6% to 13.6% of SEP clients in employment are receiving gross weekly earnings of in excess of €350.

Data in respect of satisfaction with wage levels were available from the survey of current and past clients. They showed that they only a minority (11.2%) were dissatisfied with their earnings. An additional 13.4% were indifferent in that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Over half (54.5%) expressed satisfaction with their earnings and a further 20.9% stated that they were very satisfied with their earnings.

4.10 Supports Provided to Employees

At 44.4%, the proportion of SEP clients in employment reporting that their employer provided them with some form of assistance or support as an aid to them doing their job is quite similar to the proportion based on the survey of employers (i.e., 38.0%). Thus, both findings on this matter indicate that the majority of SEP clients in employment are either not provided with or do not require assistance and support from their employers.

Examination of the types of supports and assistance reported by employees overwhelmingly pointed to the role of direct personal assistance and support from management, supervisors and work colleagues as the predominant form of support received by SEP clients in employment. Just over four in five (83.7%) SEP clients in employment and receiving support from their employer reported this. This type of support included one-to-one instruction on work procedures and tasks, additional explanations of what is required, personal support and advice, and support from work colleagues when problems are experienced or workload is getting to heavy. The next most frequently provided form of support - reported by 8.1% - is flexibility in relation to working time and hours. This included allowing time off for medical appointments and being sympathetic in relation to sick-leave. The third most frequently reported form of support was providing formal training, for the most part workplace based training: 5.8% reported this. Finally, just 2.3% of SEP clients in employment reported that adaptations were made to buildings or workstations.

4.11 Skill Levels Required for Job and Experience of Promotion in Job

Almost all (95.1%) SEP clients in employment stated that they had the required skills to do their job well. Reflecting the forms of support provided to employees on the SEP, over half (52.9%) reported that their ability to do their job had increased “to a great

extend” since they started working and a further 43.5% stated that their ability had improved “to some extent” or just to a “limited extent”. Just 3.6% stated that their ability to their jobs had not improved since they started working.

Despite the evidently high levels of perceived capacity to undertake the work required and also the high proportion of SEP employees stating that their ability to do their jobs had increased since they started working, just 5.9% reported that they had been promoted since they started working. This low rate of promotion found among SEP employees is likely to reflect the limited opportunities for promotion in many of the occupations held as well as the adverse impact of working part-time, particularly for a relatively small number of hours a week. As discussed above many of the occupations held by SEP employees were of a relatively low skill level and the majority of SEP employees work part-time hours.

4.12 Job Satisfaction of Employees

Just six (4.0%) SEP clients in employment considered that they were not being treated fairly by their employer. The reasons for this were lower wages than other workers (2), poor working conditions (2), failure to provide a contact of employment when requested (1), and not being given enough work to do (1).

Reflecting the above and also the generally positive levels of satisfaction with earnings reported above, 42.1% of SEP employees stated that they were satisfied with their job and a further 35.0% stated that they were very satisfied with their job. Just 15.0% were indifferent and 7.9% dissatisfied.

Reflecting the figure of 22.9% who were indifferent or dissatisfied with their job, 21.3% stated that they were currently looking for another job.

4.13 Welfare Status of Clients in Employment

As is evident from the figures presented earlier on working hours and earnings, the majority of SEP clients in employment are likely to be in a position to retain their welfare payment in total or in part. This is confirmed by data on the welfare status of clients in employment from the survey of current and past clients. They show that just 16.5% of SEP clients in employment are not in receipt of a welfare payment. Among clients in employment almost two thirds (60.3%) stated that they retained their Disability Allowance in total or in part with a further 16.5% stating that they retained their Illness Benefit or other welfare payment. Just 6.8% of SEP clients in employed stated that they were receiving the Back to Work Allowance.

4.14 Employment Retention and Meeting the Labour Requirements of Employers

The aims the SEP include seeking to secure both stability of employment integration for its clients and also to meet the labour requirements of employers. One indicator of the latter is available from the survey of employers based on employers' answers to the question: *Would you retain the employee you currently have on the Supported Employment in the absence of support from the programme?* The majority of employers (82.0%) replied positively to this question. Employers making a negative reply to this question were asked to identify the reason for non-retention. Qualitative analysis identified three categories of reasons: (i) behavioural difficulties related to the individual employee; (ii) inability to retain employee in the absence of the support from the SEP; and, (iii) low productivity.

A second indicator of the role of the SEP in meeting the labour needs of employers is based on responses to the question: *Do you consider that the Supported Employment Programme is meeting your needs as an employer of people with disabilities?* The vast majority (88.4%) of employers replied positively to this question.

Based on the above it is reasonable to conclude that the majority of the employment secured by clients of the SEP is of a secure nature and that employment retention is likely to occur in the majority of cases in the absence of or following withdrawal of support from the programme.

4.15 Summary Conclusions

Based on the different point in time estimates of the proportion of active clients in employment with support from the SEP presented in this chapter it is likely that a realistic estimate lies between 35% and 40%. Based on an active client population figure of 2,500 these figures indicate that the number of active clients in employment with support from the SEP is of the order of 875 to 1,000.

Substantial variation was found in respect of the time taken by clients to access employment with support from the SEP. One in four (26.5%) clients obtaining employment did so within 12 weeks of entry to the SEP and a further one in five (19.5%) did so within 24 weeks. On the other hand, over one in five (21.4%) clients obtaining employment did so having been 18 months on the SEP. This suggests that the SEP is engaging with clients with different levels of "job readiness" and "employability": some active clients - the majority - can be assisted to obtain employment within a relatively short time frame while others - albeit a minority - require considerably longer periods of support before they obtain employment.

Two factors distinguished clients who accessed employment from those who did not: (i) self-assessed levels of job readiness at the time of entry to the SEP; and (ii) self-assessed level of restriction in respect of the type and amount of work they could do. Three quarters (76.5%) of clients stated that they were job ready on entry to the SEP and among these almost two thirds (61.0%) were in employment at the time they were surveyed. Among the one quarter (23.5%) of clients who stated that they were not job ready at the time of entry to the SEP just over two in five (41.7%) were in employment at the time they were surveyed. The findings concerning self-assessed levels of work related restriction are in line with national data and show that employment rates are considerably higher among clients experiencing no work restrictions than among clients experiencing considerable work related restrictions. It should be noted that clients reporting considerable restriction in the type and amount of work they can do by definition present Job Coaches with a reduced range of options with regard to identifying and accessing suitable employment.

For the most part the types of jobs accessed by clients in employment are low skilled occupations mainly in the services sector. Also, despite the presence of clients with third level qualifications (11.4% had a third level diploma or certificate and 4.7% had a third level degree) there is an under-representation of clients in managerial, administrative and professional occupations. Almost all (95.1%) SEP clients in employment stated that they had the required skills to do their job well. Reflecting the forms of support provided to employees on the SEP, over half (52.9%) reported that their ability to do their job had increased “to a great extent” since they started working and a further 43.5% stated that their ability had improved “to some extent” or just to a “limited extent”. The high proportion of clients in employment stating that their ability to do their job had increased since they started working reflects the emphasis in supported employment on developing work capacities while clients are in employment.

The working hours of clients in employment are lower than among the national population of people with disabilities in employment: approximately 15% work fewer than 10 hours a week and a further 35% to 40% - depending on the source of data - work for between 10 and 19 hours a week. Average hourly earnings are in the region of €8.77 to €11.42 depending on the data source used and generally exceed the national minimum wage. Overall, the majority of clients in employment are satisfied with their earnings (67.9%), their hours of work (81.0%) and their jobs (77.1%). It is only among clients in employment working for less than 10 hours a week that a high proportion (42.1%) stated that they would like to work more hours. Reflecting average hours and earnings, the majority (76.8%) of clients retained their welfare payment and a further 6.8% stated that they were receiving the Back to Work Allowance.

At 44.4%, the proportion of SEP clients in employment stating that their employer provides them with some form of assistance or support as an aid to them doing their job is similar to that reported by employers (i.e., 38.0%). Thus, both findings on this matter

indicate that the majority of SEP clients in employment are either not provided with or do not require assistance and support from their employers.

The majority (82.0%) of employers with an employee being supported by the SEP stated that they would retain the employee in the absence of support from the SEP and the majority (88.4%) of employers also stated that the SEP is meeting their needs as an employer of people with disabilities. The first of these findings indicates that a high level of employment retention is likely following the formal exiting of clients in employment from the SEP. Finally, based on the qualitative comments made by employers in response to the questionnaire or by telephone interview it is evident that a reasonable number of employers with an employee being supported by the SEP had “some connection” with the issue of disability (e.g., family member or relative, personal experience, involvement with an organisation working in the area of disability) and that this provided their motivation to employ a client of the SEP.

CHAPTER 5

WHEN AND WHY CLIENTS CEASE PARTICIPATION IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

5 Introduction

The findings presented in the previous two chapters of this report show that not all SEP clients access employment and that, in many instances, clients leave the SEP without accessing employment. In the previous chapter it was also shown that, based on the findings of the Job Coach Survey, the majority of active clients that ceased their involvement in the SEP in the year prior to the Census date of March 30th did so at either the Needs Assessment phase (27.6%) or the Job Search / Job Development phase (39.5%). That clients should leave during the Needs Assessment phase and the Aftercare and Mentoring phases of the SEP is to be expected: in the case of the former they may be assessed as not job ready and referred back to FÁS, to another agency, or to training; in the case of the latter one would expect that the clients are moving into independent employment. However, noting the design of the SEP, it is somewhat surprising to find clients leaving during the Job Search / Job Development and In Employment with Job Coach Support phases of the SEP.

This chapter begins by estimating the annual throughput on the SEP and then moves on to examine the reasons underlying the pattern found in relation to clients exiting the SEP. For the purpose of this analysis throughput is defined as all clients formally ceasing their involvement in the SEP regardless of whether or not they “complete” the programme or their labour market status at the time they exit the programme.

This can be contrasted with a definition of throughput based on programme “completion”. Constructing an adequate definition of programme completion is difficult in relation to the SEP. Based on the current Operating Standards, it is possible to identify a number of possible indicators of throughput based on programme completion. First, based on the maximum programme duration of 18 months, a measure of throughput based on this temporal view of completion could be defined as all clients exiting the programme at 18 months regardless of the labour market status of the clients at that point. Application of this to the SEP as it currently operates is problematic for a number of reasons: (i) the presence of active clients on the programme for more than 18 months; (ii) the presence of active clients not securing employment while being on the programme for

18 months or more; and, (iii) the presence of clients exiting the programme while in employment but who are not in the programme for the full 18 months. In addition, to these three reasons it is also the case that a proportion of clients - the actual figure is not possible to determine - access employment but do not retain the job and return to the programme.

Taking on board the aims of the SEP another measure of throughput based on programme completion could be based on all persons exiting the programme while in employment regardless of the programme phase at which they obtain employment or the time they spend on the programme. This indicator also corresponds to a measure of programme effectiveness: that is, all persons exiting the programme to employment (regardless of the number of hours worked) and remaining in that employment without support from the SEP. This could however, be seen as restrictive as it would exclude clients who exit from the SEP for other positive reasons such as progression to an education or training programme.

A third approach to specifying an indicator of throughput based on programme completion could be defined as clients exiting the SEP while in the aftercare and mentoring phase of the SEP and being in employment for in excess of 18 hours a week without the support of the SEP (and for present purposes ignoring the actual duration that these clients have been on the SEP). Technically, and based on the current Operating Standards for the SEP, this indicator corresponds to a key indicator of programme effectiveness: that is, it is a measure of the extent to which the SEP is achieving one of its central aims, that is, facilitating the integration of people with disabilities into paid employment in the open labour market.

In the final section of this chapter the effectiveness of the SEP is examined based on the indicators described above.

5.1 Estimating Annual Throughput on the Supported Employment Programme

Based on the Job Coach Survey, 1,099 clients exited from the SEP in the year prior March 30th 2007. As this figure is based on the responses of 98 Job Coaches it is an underestimate of throughput on the SEP in the year to March 30th 2007. Allowing for this, the annual throughput on the SEP is estimated to be in the region of 1,250.

It is possible to make a second estimate of annual throughput on the SEP based on the Census returns. Between March 30th and the time that the Census returns were made 607 formerly active clients exited from the SEP. As the period covered is approximately six months this corresponds to an annual estimate of throughput of 1,214 - a figure not that dissimilar from that based on the Job Coach Survey.

Taking both sources of data in account suggests that, on an annual basis, between 1,200 and 1,300 clients exit the SEP. These clients are a very diverse group in terms of the programme phase at which they exit the SEP, the length of time that they have spent on the SEP, and their labour market status at the time they exit the SEP. The circumstances and labour market status of these clients as well as their reasons for exiting the SEP are examined below.

5.2 Programme Phase at which Clients Exit the Supported Employment Programme

In Chapter 4 it was shown that the majority (i.e., 79.3%) of clients exiting the SEP between 30th March 2007 and the Census return did so without obtaining employment. Table 5.1 shows the programme phase at which clients exited the SEP subsequent to March 30th 2007. This clearly shows that the majority of clients exiting the SEP during this six month period do so at the Needs Assessment (23.9%) and Job Search / Job Development (33.9%) programme phases. Among all clients exiting between March 30th and the Census return 57.8% left at these two phases.

Table 5.1
Analysis of Exits from the Supported Employment Programme
by Programme Phase and Year of Intake

	Clients Entering Prior to End March 2006: Exiting after March 30 th 2007		Clients Entering Between April 2006 and End March 2007: Exiting after March 30 th 2007		Total Number Ceasing Between April 2007 and September 2007	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Needs Assessment	27	9.8	118	35.5	145	23.9
Job Search / Job Development	79	28.7	127	38.3	206	33.9
In Employment with Job Coach Support	35	12.7	31	9.3	66	10.9
Aftercare and Mentoring	85	30.9	20	6.0	105	17.3
Other	49	17.8	36	10.8	85	14.0
Total	275	100.0	332	100.0	607	100.0
Exit Rates Based on Date of Entry to SEP	27.9%		29.2%		28.6%	

When the figures are examined by the year clients commenced on the SEP it is clear that there is a higher rate of exiting at the In Employment with Job Coach Support and Aftercare and Mentoring phases among clients that entered the programme prior to end of

March 2006 than among clients entering the SEP between April 2006 and end of March 2007. This reflects the longer timeframe available within which to support these clients access employment. Focusing on clients that commenced on the SEP in the 12 months prior to the Census date, there is clear evidence of high proportions exiting at the two earlier phases of the SEP. Among clients entering the SEP in the 12 months prior to March 30th 2007 and leaving prior to the Census return over half (73.8%) left at either the Needs Assessment or Job Search / Job Development phases.

Table 5.2
Exit Rates by Programme Phase for All Active Clients on March 30th 2007

	Active Clients on SEP March 2007		Number Ceasing Between April 2007 and September 2007		Exit Rates Based on Programme Stage
	N	%	N	%	%
Needs Assessment	316	14.9	145	23.9	45.9
Job Search / Job Development	764	36.0	206	33.9	27.0
Employment with Job Coach Support	475	22.4	66	10.9	14.0
Aftercare and Mentoring	467	22.0	105	17.3	22.5
Other	100	4.7	85	14.0	85.0
All Exits	2,122	100.0	607	100.0	28.6

When the six month exit rates by programme phase are calculated on the basis of all clients leaving the SEP between March 30th and the Census return (see Table 5.2) there is clear evidence that a substantial proportion (i.e., 45.9%) of clients in the Needs Assessment phase of the SEP on March 30th 2007 left subsequent to that date. With the exception of clients that were not formally assigned to a particular programme phase (i.e., classified as “Other” in Table 5.2) the exit rates from the other three phases are considerably lower than this figure. What is also evident, however, is that one finds clients exiting the SEP during the Job Search / Job Development and In Employment with Job Coach Support phases of the SEP. Strictly speaking, these clients are exiting from the programme prior to programme “completion” (the use of parentheses here reflects the presence of ambiguity with regard to a definition of programme completion other than in temporal terms: that is, the SEP is of 18 months duration).

Table 5.3 presents a number of statistics concerning duration on the SEP of clients leaving the programme at the four programme stages and also the duration since these clients last met with their Job Coach. First, on a technical point, the mean and median are presented because the average duration on the SEP is being inflated by the presence of a relatively small number of clients with very long durations on the programme. Thus, the

median is a better indicator of duration: that is, it is the value above and below which 50% of the cases lie.

As would be expected, the duration that clients have been participating in the SEP varies by the programme phase at which they exit from the SEP. Based on median values, half of all clients leaving at the Needs Assessment phase spent at least 18 weeks on the programme. This rises to almost 40 weeks in the case of clients leaving the Job Search / Job Development phase, 58 weeks in the case of clients leaving at the In Employment with Job Coach Support phase, and 112 weeks in the case of clients leaving during the Aftercare and Mentoring phase.

Table 5.3
Duration on Supported Employment Programme and Duration since Last Meeting with Job Coach among Clients Exiting the Programme

	Duration on SEP			Duration Since Last Met job Coach		
	Range	Mean	Median	Range	Mean	Median
Needs Assessment	1 to 278	32.0	18.6	8 to 263	32.6	26.9
Job Search / Job Development	3 to 368	60.7	39.7	2 to 132	30.3	25.7
Employment with Job Coach Support	4 to 305	74.3	58.3	1 to 114	27.7	24.9
Aftercare and Mentoring	1 to 306	131.8	112.6	8 to 121	39.9	32.1
Other	1 to 368	81.5	55.6	3 to 162	46.6	46.9
All Exits	1 to 368	70.6	45.7	1 to 263	34.5	26.9

The trend with respect to the duration since clients last met with their Job Coach is different and shows that among clients leaving during all four phases of the SEP at least 50% have not met with the Job Coach in the previous 25 to 32 weeks. One implication of this is that a substantial proportion of clients exit the SEP without the benefit of a recent - or closing meeting - with their Job Coach.

The figures also show that there is substantial variation in the durations spent on the SEP among clients exiting the programme. More generally, the figures suggest that for a substantial proportion of clients exiting the SEP, the phased structure of the SEP is more of a framework within which their needs are addressed rather than a structured continuum. Also, as is shown below, leaving at the Aftercare and Mentoring phases is not synonymous with leaving while in employment.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, while it is not unexpected that clients should exit from the SEP at the Needs Assessment phase, the rate at which clients exit the SEP during this phase is very high. Also, a substantial proportion of clients who exit the SEP

at this phase do so having been clients of the programme for considerable durations (50% for durations in excess of 18 weeks). Based on the Job Coach Survey, among the factors identified as contributing to both the high exit rate at the Needs Assessment phase as well as the long durations on the SEP found among a considerable proportion of clients exiting at this stage are that: (i) many clients formally referred to and formally registering with the SEP are not job ready at the point of entry to the SEP, despite this being the criterion on which they are referred to the SEP by Employment Service Officers in FÁS; (ii) it is during the Needs Assessment phase that decisions about actual job readiness are made; and, (iii) the assessment phase in respect of some clients takes a considerable period of time. An illustrative set of comments from Job Coaches regarding this issue is presented in Box 5.1.

Box 5.1

Selected Comments of Job Coaches on Job Readiness during the Needs Assessment Phase of the Supported Employment Programme

Clients are referred to the service on the basis that they are job ready. However, not all are job ready. An assessment still needs to be made of this and this is done through meetings with the client, checking references, assessing the client's qualifications, experience and training re: the work they would like to do. Having medical forms completed by client's doctor in order to get confirmation from a medical point of view that the client is job ready. All this can take longer than the 8 weeks in the Guidelines.

During the profiling stage (needs assessment), which involves 8 x 1 hour sessions - after compiling and gathering all the information - a decision is then reached about whether or not the client is job ready.

I "profile" all clients over a period of approx 2 months (7/8 meetings). The client and I discuss a number of areas including work experience, education, health, supports, interests, expectations. At the end of this, the client and I decide if they are job ready.

I do not follow the definition of job readiness laid down by FÁS. Our criterion is that the person is genuinely motivated to find work. I would usually set up weekly meetings over an 8 to 12 week period to assess their ability to keep meetings, assess their time keeping, see if any personal development courses/courses are needed to upskill and a clear idea of what type of employment is sought and if this is suitable for the client.

The Supported Employment process begins with the Needs Assessment stage which is also known as 'profiling' where I meet with the client for up to 8 sessions to gather information on their background - family & friends, work experience, education, support needs, communication skills and work expectations. After this stage, I decide whether or not the client is job-ready and this is discussed with or without a key worker present, dependent on what is most appropriate.

A number of comments also suggested that in some instances - and reflecting the absence of other service providers in the locality - there was “nowhere” to refer clients that were assessed as not job ready. In these instances such clients might be retained on the SEP and, in some cases, they would be classified as being in the “Other” programme phase (i.e., not classifiable to any of the four programme phases). From the data presented below in Table 5.4, it can be seen that the predominant reason identified for clients exiting the SEP and identified as not being in one of the four phases of the SEP is that they were not job ready.

5.3 Reasons for Clients Exiting the Supported Employment Programme

Based on information provided in the Census returns, Table 5.4 presents data that allow the reasons for exiting the SEP to be examined in more detail. It shows that three reasons for leaving predominated among clients leaving at the Needs Assessment and Job Search / Job Development phases: (i) accessing training and education; (ii) illness; and, (iii) not being job ready. In contrast with this, among clients exiting during the In Employment with Job Coach Support and Aftercare and Mentoring phases, the main reasons include support no longer required, independently working, and working on Community Employment.

When the reasons for leaving are examined in their own right, a number of points are highlighted. First, a substantial minority (i.e., 16.6%) of clients are identified as leaving the SEP because they are not job ready. This is despite the requirement that for persons to be eligible to become clients of the SEP they must be determined to be job ready at the point of entry to the programme. Second, almost one in five (i.e., 19.4%) leave to take up a training or education course. As clients exiting to access an education or training course predominantly leave at the Needs Assessment and Job Search / Job Development phases of the SEP these clients could also be considered not to be job ready. Third, the recurrence of illness (relapse) and the presence of difficulties related to a client’s disability were identified as the reason for exiting in the case of 16.8% of clients. Fourth, among clients that left the SEP during the six month period subsequent to March 30th 2007, one in ten (10.2%) left to access Community Employment. Fifth, smaller proportions of clients exiting the SEP simply ceased contact, left the locality, accessed other forms of support, or left for reasons related to changes in their personal and / or family circumstances.

Table 5.4
Reasons for Leaving the Supported Employment Programme by Programme Phase

	Needs Assessment	Job Search - Job Development	Employment with Job Coach Support	Aftercare and Mentoring	Other	Total
Training and Education	31	41	9	5	20	106
	24.4%	22.4%	16.1%	5.2%	23.8%	19.4%
Illness	28	34	6	13	11	92
	22.0%	18.6%	10.7%	13.4%	13.1%	16.8%
Not Job Ready	28	30	5	3	25	91
	22.0%	16.4%	8.9%	3.1%	29.8%	16.6%
Support No Longer Required	9	8	5	25	9	56
	7.1%	4.4%	8.9%	25.8%	10.7%	10.2%
Community Employment	5	21	12	11	7	56
	3.9%	11.5%	21.4%	11.3%	8.3%	10.2%
Independently Working	2	6	11	24	3	46
	1.6%	3.3%	19.6%	24.7%	3.6%	8.4%
Ceased Contact	14	8	2	0	1	25
	11.0%	4.4%	3.6%	.0%	1.2%	4.6%
Other Supports Accessed	6	1	0	9	2	18
	4.7%	.5%	.0%	9.3%	2.4%	3.3%
Left Geographical Area	1	8	2	0	3	14
	.8%	4.4%	3.6%	.0%	3.6%	2.6%
Personal Family Reasons	2	5	0	1	2	10
	1.6%	2.7%	.0%	1.0%	2.4%	1.8%
All Other Responses	1	21	4	6	1	33
	.8%	11.5%	7.1%	6.2%	1.2%	6.0%
Total	127	183	56	97	84	547
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The figures presented in Table 5.4 show that the reasons for exiting the SEP vary by programme stage. The reasons for exit during the first two phases of the SEP have been

already noted above. Turning to clients that exit during the In Employment with Job Coach Support phase it is clear that among such clients one finds high proportions on Community Employment (21.4%) and working independently (19.6%). Among clients exiting during the Aftercare and Mentoring phase the major reasons provided are support no longer required (25.8%) and independently working (24.7%). However, it is also clear that some clients leaving during the Aftercare and Mentoring Phase do so because of a recurrence of ill-health or because they left their employment to access an education or training programme. While the proportions of clients exiting the SEP for these two reasons during the Aftercare and Mentoring phase of the programme are relatively low, they do indicate that the exit rate from the Aftercare and Mentoring phase is not - on its own - a clear measure of effectiveness as discussed in the introduction to this chapter.

Overall, the figures presented above show that there is considerable diversity in the factors associated with formal cessation of participation in the SEP and that, for the most part, these are not associated with progression to secure employment. What the figures also highlight, however, is that a considerable proportion of the intake to the SEP includes clients who for a variety of reasons are subsequently assessed as not job ready. The presence of such clients in the intake to the SEP has two consequences: (i) a high proportion of programme resources are being devoted to making assessments of job readiness and dealing with clients who subsequently leave the SEP for a variety of reasons other than to take up employment; and, (ii) the inclusion of such clients is reducing the effectiveness of the SEP when measured on the basis of proportion of clients exiting the SEP while in employment.

5.4 Measuring the Effectiveness of the Supported Employment Programme

In terms of the current design of the SEP, accessing employment with Job Coach support and being in employment and in receipt of Aftercare and Mentoring are both means to achieve the central aim of the SEP, that is, facilitating the integration of people with disabilities into employment in the open labour market and doing so in such a manner that they can sustain this employment without on-going support from the SEP. Technically, the provision of Job Coach support to clients in employment and providing Aftercare and Mentoring to clients in employment are programme activities, not programme results or outputs. Also, the numbers and proportions of clients in these programme phases are measures of programme activity not measures of programme effectiveness.

Based on the definitions of effectiveness presented in the introduction to this chapter, the effectiveness of the SEP is examined in the following section. The two measures of effectiveness used are both based on the proportion of clients exiting the SEP while in employment. Data from the Census of active clients and from the survey of past participants are used.

5.4.1 Programme Effectiveness Based on the Proportion of Clients Exiting to Employment (Regardless of the Number of Hours Worked)

A total of 607 active clients formally exited from the SEP between March 30th and the time of the Census return. Data on the employment status of these clients were available in respect of 599 clients. They show that at the time of the Census return 124 persons corresponding to 20.7% of all clients exiting the SEP during the period were in employment. Noting the estimate of annual throughput on the SEP presented in Section 5.1 above (i.e., 1,200 to 1,300) this employment rate corresponds to between 248 and 269 clients formally exiting the SEP on an annual basis while in employment.

As noted above, the presence of clients leaving the SEP during the Needs Assessment phase is likely to reduce measures of effectiveness based on the employment rate of clients exiting the programme. If all clients exiting the SEP during the Needs Assessment phase are excluded from the computation of the employment rate it rises to 26.9%.

Based on the survey of past participants - and noting that these are representative of the total number of clients exiting the SEP - 35.4% were in employment at the time they were surveyed. This figure is considerably larger than that based on the Census returns. If applied to the annual estimate of throughput on the SEP it corresponds to between 425 and 460 clients formally exiting the SEP on an annual basis while in employment.

Thus, if the number of hours worked is disregarded in assessing programme effectiveness, the findings of this research indicate that between 21% to 35% of clients formally exiting the SEP do so while in employment.

5.4.2 Programme Effectiveness Based on the Proportion of Clients Exiting to Employment (and Working in Excess of 18 Hours a Week)

Based on the Census returns 66.9% (i.e., 83/124) of all persons formally exiting the SEP and in employment were working for in excess of 18 hours a week. If this figure is used to provide a measure of effectiveness based on meeting the requirement of working in excess of 18 hours a week as stated in the Operating Standards, the estimate of the employment rate among clients formally exiting the SEP falls to 13.9%. This corresponds to an annual figure of between 167 and 181 clients exiting the SEP in employment on an annual basis.

On the basis of the survey of past participants, 69.6% stated that they were working for in excess of 18 hours a week - a figure almost identical to that based on the Census returns. Using this figure to calculate the employment rate of clients exiting the SEP while in employment and working for in excess of 18 hours a week gives an employment rate of 24.2%. Applied to the estimates of total annual throughput presented in Section 5.1, this proportion corresponds to an annual figure between 290 and 315 clients exiting the SEP while in employment and working in excess of 18 hours a week.

5.5 Summary Conclusions

The number of clients formally exiting the SEP on an annual basis is estimated to be in the region of 1,200 to 1,300.

Data on the exit rates from the SEP by programme phase show that a substantial proportion (i.e., 45.9%) of clients entering the Needs Assessment phase of the SEP leave during this phase without progressing further in the SEP. With the exception of clients that are not formally assigned to a particular programme phase the exit rates from the other three phases of the SEP are considerably lower than this figure. Three factors account for the high proportion of clients entering and leaving the SEP during the Needs Assessment phase: (i) accessing training and education; (ii) illness; and, (iii) not being job ready. The presence of such clients in the intake to the SEP has two consequences: (i) a high proportion of programme resources are being devoted to making assessments of job readiness and dealing with clients who subsequently leave the SEP for a variety of reasons other than to take up employment; and, (ii) the inclusion of such clients is reducing the effectiveness of the SEP when measured on the basis of proportion of clients exiting the SEP while in employment.

Measures of the effectiveness of the SEP based on the proportion of clients exiting from the programme while in employment vary from 13.9% to 35.4% depending on the restrictiveness of the criteria used and the data source. Allowing for error in the estimates, somewhere in the region of 20% to 40% of clients formally exiting the SEP do so while in employment. Assuming that the effectiveness rate is 30% and applying this rate to the annual outflow of 1,250 clients corresponds to 375 persons exiting the SEP while in employment on an annual basis.

CHAPTER 6

INTER-ORGANISATIONAL VARIATION IN CLIENT PROFILES, PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

6 Introduction

As outlined in Chapter 1, the SEP is implemented by 24 organisations each of which receives financial and other supports from FÁS to implement the programme within the framework of the *Supported Employment Operational Guidelines* (up to mid 2007) and the recently introduced *Supported Employment Operating Standards*. While structurally these organisations are broadly similar in terms of governance, management and operational personnel it is clear from the results of previous research on the SEP - specifically the case studies prepared by Martin and Associates (2002) - and from analysis of the documentation relating to these organisations undertaken for this research that they also differ in a number of ways including their organisational histories and ethos, their varying involvement with organisations involved in service provision for particular groups of people with disabilities, and in terms of the specific backgrounds and orientations of their Management Committees / Boards of Management. Additionally, it is clear that there are differences between the 24 organisations arising from the different geographical, labour market, and service provision environments in which they operate.

Against the backdrop of the above, this chapter briefly examines organisational variation in three aspects of the SEP. The three aspects are client profiles, programme implementation, and programme outcomes. The analysis of organisational variation in this chapter is presented in a mainly descriptive manner and the individual organisations to which the data are related are not identified. The purpose of the analysis is simply to draw attention to the presence of variation in a number of key aspects of the SEP across the 24 implementing organisations and to raise the issue of the extent to which such variation results from the organisations operating in different labour market and geographical contexts and/or differing organisational practices in implementing the SEP.

6.1 Inter-Organisational Variation in the Profile of Clients

An analysis of the data provided in the Census returns shows that there is substantial variation across all 24 organisations in respect of the profile of their clients (see Figure

6.1). Taking the gender composition of clients first, across all 24 organisations the gender breakdown of active clients is 58.5% men and 41.5% women. The level of variation in the gender composition of clients across the 24 sponsor organisations is illustrated by the finding that in four organisations at most 33.3% of their active clients are women while in three over 50% are women.

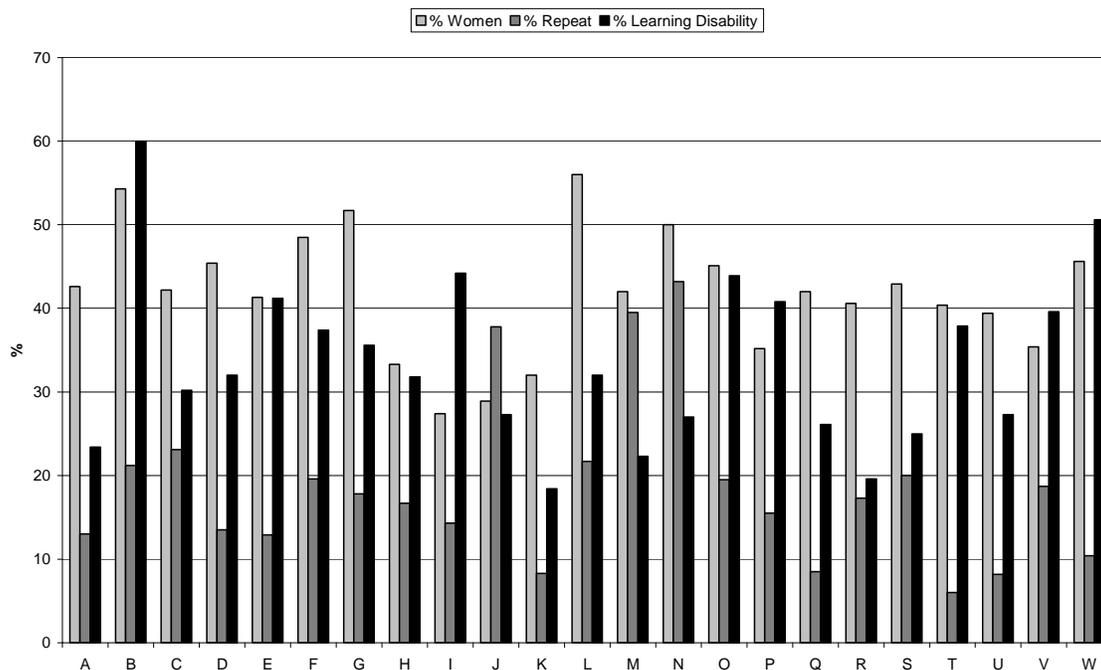


Figure 6.1 Variation in the Profile of Clients Across the 24 Sponsor Organisations

Among all active clients on the SEP on March 30th 18.7% were repeat clients. The level of organisational variation in this aspect of the profile of active clients is illustrated by the finding that in the case of three organisations less than 10% of active clients are repeat clients while in the case of four others over 33.3% of active clients are repeat clients. While there is an awareness and acknowledgement that, over time, clients can formally exit and then subsequently return to formal participation in the SEP, the high level of repeat clients in a number of organisations is notable.

A third area in which there is a substantial level of variation across the 24 SEP sponsor organisations is in the composition of active clients based on their health conditions and disabilities. In Chapter 3 it was shown that the two main types of disability being experienced by active clients on the SEP are learning disabilities and mental health related disabilities. Each of these disabilities accounts for approximately one third of the disabilities being experienced by active clients on the SEP. Figure 6.1 presents the proportion of active clients in each sponsor organisation reported as experiencing a

learning disability. The figures range from under 25% in four sponsor organisations to over 50% in two sponsor organisations.

6.2 Organisational Variation in Programme Implementation

Three aspects of programme implementation are examined here: proportion of clients at Needs Assessment phase, proportion of active clients on SEP for greater than two years, and the six month exit rate. The data on these for each of the 24 sponsor organisations are presented in Figure 6.2.

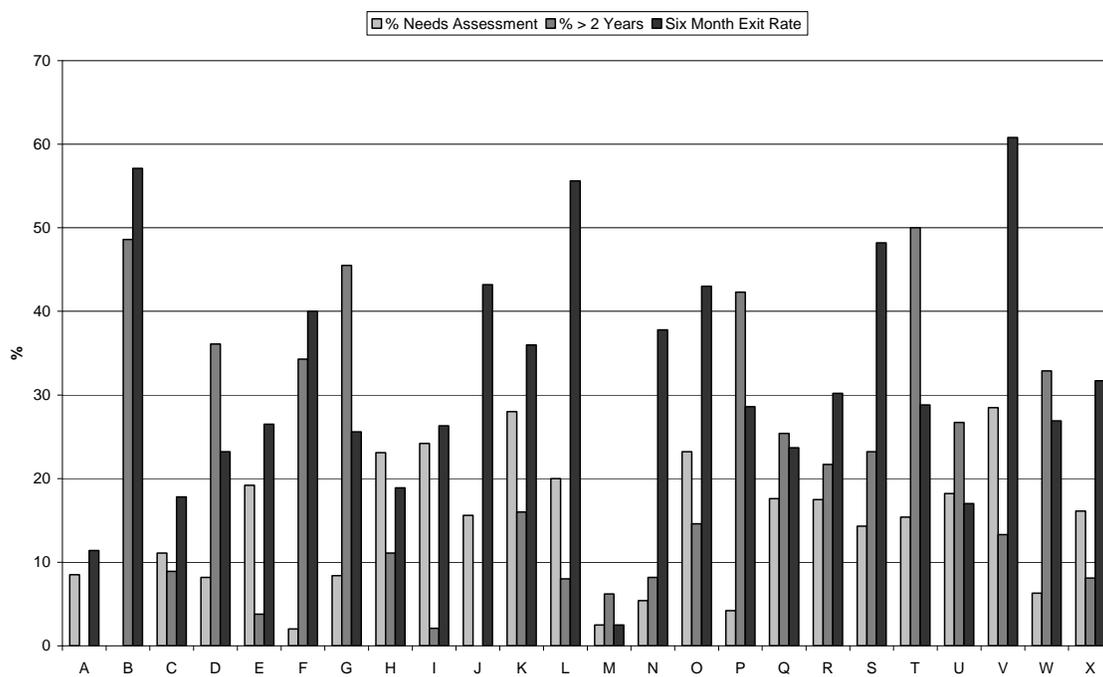


Figure 6.2 Variation in Aspects of Programme Process Across the 24 Sponsor Organisations

Based on Census returns, 14.9% of all active clients in the 24 sponsor organisations were identified as being at the Needs Assessment phase of the SEP. In four organisations this proportion fell to under 5% with four other organisations having approximately 25% of their active clients at this phase.

The extent of inter-organisational variation is particularly large in respect of the proportion of active clients on the SEP for in excess of two years. This proportion is 22.4% for all active clients on the SEP but rises to in excess of 35% in the case of five organisations. On the other hand, in the case of nine organisations less than 10% of

active clients had been on the SEP for more than two years and, among these organisations, two had no repeat clients.

In the previous chapter the proportion of active clients exiting the SEP between the Census date of March 30th 2007 and the time of the Census returns was shown to be 28.6%. This corresponds to a six month exit rate. However, four sponsor organisations had six month exits rates in excess or 45% indicating a very high level of turnover in their active client base. At the other end of the scale one organisation had a six month exit rate of just 2.5% and another of 11.4%.

6.3 Inter-organisational Variation in Programme Outcomes

The three programme outcomes examined here are the proportion of active clients in employment at March 30th 2007, the proportion in employment at the time of the Census return, and the proportion of clients leaving the SEP while being in employment. As was discussed in the previous chapter the latter can be considered an indicator of programme effectiveness. The relevant data for all 24 sponsor organisations are presented in Figure 6.3.

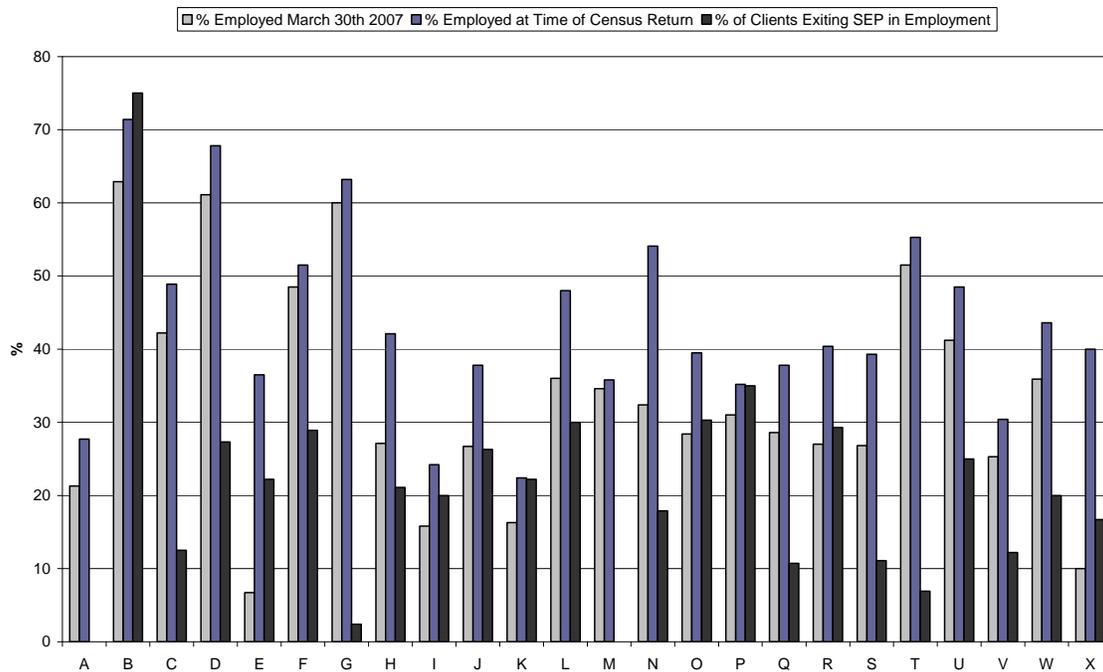


Figure 6.3 Variation in Employment Rates Across the 24 Sponsor Organisations

In Chapter 4 the employment rate of all active clients on March 30th 2007 was shown to be 34.6%. This proportion fell to less than 20% in the case of four organisation and rose to over 50% in the case of four other organisations. The proportion of clients in employment rose in all 24 organisations between the Census date and the time of their Census return. This is reflected in the finding that the employment rate at the time of the Census returns across all 24 organisations increased to 43.4%. However, there is substantial variation in this proportion across the 24 organisations: three sponsor organisations had employment rates of in excess of 60% while three others had employment rates of less than 30%.

One of the measures of programme effectiveness identified in the previous chapter is the proportion of clients in employment at the time they exited the SEP - regardless of the number of hours worked a week. Among all clients exiting the SEP in the six month period between April and September 2007 20.7% were in employment. In four sponsor organisations this proportion fell to under 10% while in only two other organisation did it exceed 30%.

6.4 Summary Conclusions

The data presented in this chapter show a wide level of variation across the 24 sponsor organisations with respect to the profile of their clients, the manner in which they operate the programme, and measures of their effectiveness. While not examined here it is also likely that there are relationships between client profiles, programme implementation, and effectiveness within each of the sponsor organisations. Also, it is likely that some of the variation - particularly in effectiveness - is influenced by features of the local labour market in which the sponsor organisation is based (e.g., number, sectoral profile, and geographical distribution of companies, transport infrastructure, and proximity to service providers for people with disabilities).

While it is not possible to be definitive as to the precise sources of variation across the 24 sponsor organisations, the presence of such wide variation does give cause for concern and points to the need to consider actions that would lead to a more consistent implementation of the SEP. Allied to this are the potential benefits that could be secured by identifying good practices in programme implementation in areas such as programme promotion among employers, approaches to needs assessment, inter-organisational liaison, and performance management and appraisal.

CHAPTER 7

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME (Based on Surveys of Employers and Job Coaches)

7 Introduction

In this chapter the views of employers (with an employee being supported by the SEP) and of Job Coaches regarding the operation and effectiveness of the SEP are examined. The issues examined include the concerns that employers may have in recruiting a person with a disability, the views of employers on the strengths and weaknesses of the SEP as a programme to assist them recruit and retain an employee with a disability, the views of Job Coaches on the main barriers they experience in seeking to secure employment for their clients, and the views of Job Coaches on improving the effectiveness of the SEP based on their experience of implementing the programme.

By way of prefacing the presentation of the findings regarding the above it is important to note that, as discussed in the opening chapter of this report, the role of the Job Coach is central to the implementation of supported employment and is one of the defining features of the supported employment approach to the employment of people with disabilities. Their role spans a wide set of functions that critically includes identifying the employment capacities, aspirations and support requirements of their clients (client assessment), contacting employers in respect of identifying employment for their clients (programme promotion / job development / placement), working with clients and employers to identify and put in place the supports required to enable their clients to be effective employees (in work support), and providing on-going and tailored support to both employees and employers (in work support / aftercare). Given their role and experience in respect of directly interfacing with both clients and employers in the context of implementing the SEP their views on factors influencing the effectiveness of the programme are likely to be grounded in the realities influencing the programme.

7.1 Main Concerns of Employers in Recruiting a Person with a Disability

Job Coaches are unanimous in their view that employers have concerns in recruiting a person with a disability (see Table 7.1). Not all employers, however, share this view. A

significant minority (41.4%) stated that they do not have particular concerns when employing a person with a disability. One likely reason for this is that the employers responding to the survey included employers with substantial experience of employing a person with a disability and consequently their views do not reflect the views of the majority of employers who have no experience of employing a person with a disability.

Table 7.1
Main Concerns of Employers in Recruiting a Person with a Disability
as Identified by Employers and Job Coaches

Employers	Job Coaches
58.3% stated that employers have particular concerns when employing a person with a disability	99% of Job Coaches stated that employers have particular concerns when employing a person with a disability
Ability to do the job	Ability to do the job
Additional resources required for supervision	Lower productivity
Sick-leave attendance	Health and safety
Reactions of other personnel	Insurance
Health and safety	Attitudes of other employees
Insurance	Amount of support required
Cost of adaptations	Lack of information on managing crises

Both employers and Job Coaches agree that the critical concern arising in recruiting a person with a disability is evidence that the person “can do the job” for which they are being recruited. The qualitative data collected regarding this issue strongly suggest that where an employer can be assured of the work capacities of the client to do the job in question then the other concerns that arise can be managed. Interestingly, while employers identifying concerns in respect of employing a person with a disability agree with Job Coaches that the ability to do the job is the main concern that arises, their order of priority in respect of other concerns is different from that of Job Coaches, though a similar set of concerns is identified by both. Collectively, they provide an indication of the range and priority of issues arising for employers in recruiting people with disabilities.

7.2 Main Strengths and Weaknesses of the Supported Employment Programme as Seen by Employers

Based on a qualitative analysis of employers’ comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the SEP, four strengths and four weaknesses were identified. These are presented in order of priority (based on the frequency with which they were cited) in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2
Main Strengths and Weakness of Supported Employment Programme
as Identified by Employers

Strengths	Weaknesses
Providing support to both employee and employer	Actually ensuring clients can do job the are recruited to do
Enabling effective job matching and maximising the skills provided by employee and used by employer	Low levels of awareness of programme and what it offers among employers
Availability of service to resolve problems when they arise	Personnel recruited reluctant to work more hours - welfare restrictions
Practical advice and support on workplace / job design adaptations	Discontinuity of service due to changes in personnel

Looking at the strengths of the SEP first, it is clear that each of the four strengths identified refer to the aspects of the role of the Job Coach. This suggests that from the perspective of employers the availability of the Job Coach is a critical resource in recruiting and retaining an employee with assistance from the SEP. Looking at the four strengths identified it is also clear that first three refer to services provided to both clients and employers. This is consistent with the one of the defining features of supported employment that is, the clients of the service are both employees and employers and success is achieved only when the needs of both are met. In practical terms, a key element of this is ensuring that the work capacities and skills of employees match those required by the job and, thereby, meet the needs of their employers.

A different picture emerges from the four weaknesses identified. The main weakness identified was the difficulty of actually convincing employers that SEP clients can actually do the job they are recruited to do. As noted above this is the critical threshold that has to be passed if a recruitment is to be made. The second weakness cited by employers - bearing in mind that these employers are availing of the SEP - is the low level of awareness among employers concerning the SEP. The thrust of the comments in this regard referred to employers not currently availing of the SEP and to the possibility that if there was greater awareness of the SEP there would be higher levels of participation by employers. As is discussed below this is also among the major issues that Job Coaches identify as limiting the effectiveness of the SEP.

The third weakness cited by employers does not refer directly to the SEP but to the adverse consequence for them of the operation of the Disability Allowance Income Disregard. The issue being raised here is the reluctance of employees to increase their working hours because it would either bring them over the threshold - currently €120 - at which they would begin to experience reductions in their welfare payment (50 cent per

Euro earned for all income in the range €121 to €350). The effect of this on the supply of labour is evident in the low number of hours worked by a considerable minority of SEP clients in employment (see Section 4.9 in Chapter 4 for details).

The fourth weakness cited is that the supports being provided to clients and employers can be disrupted due to changes of personnel. This reflects the presence of a high level of turnover among Job Coaches particularly during the early years of the SEP (Martin and Associates, 2002). While this matter was not directly investigated in this research there is evidence of continued turnover of personnel in that, based on the responses of Job Coaches to a question about their duration in their current employment in the Job Coach Survey, one in five (19.6%) Job Coaches stated that they were in their current employment for at most one year and a further 16.5% stated two years. These figures indicate that approximately one third of Job Coaches currently implementing the SEP have been recruited during the past two years. Qualitative comments from Job Coaches indicated that the reasons for turnover included job insecurity (one year contracts), pressure of work, and, in comparative terms, low earnings.

7.3 Barriers to the Employment of Clients as Identified by Job Coaches

Analysis of the responses that Job Coaches made to a question regarding the main barriers they experience in securing employment for their clients resulted in four main types of barrier being identified: (i) low demand on the part of employers; (ii) low employability on the part of clients; (iii) adverse effects of the welfare system; and, (iv) restrictions related to the design of the SEP (see Table 7.3).

For Job Coaches the critical issue of low demand from employers has two elements: an actual reluctance on the part of employers to recruit a person with a disability (for reasons that are well documented) and competition from other workers resulting in a low demand for workers with a disability. This latter issue must be viewed in the context of the types of jobs for which there is actual “competition” occurring or deemed to be occurring. These jobs are for the most part entry level jobs and jobs involving low to moderate skill levels in the services sector. The key point being made in this regard is that securing placements for people with disabilities in these jobs has become increasingly difficult due to the availability of applicants from the new EU member states.

The second barrier identified concerns the low levels of employability of many clients. The key issues referred to here include the low skill levels of many clients, the absence of skills that are actually in demand by local employers, weaknesses in social and interpersonal skills, and the absence of real work experience and employment histories. The extent of the latter among clients of the SEP is estimated to be in the region of 25% of clients (see Section 3.6.4 in Chapter 3).

Table 7.3
Main Barriers to the Employment of Clients
Identified by Job Coaches

Barrier	Issue	Examples
Low Demand	Employer fears, ignorance, misconceptions	<i>Reluctance and fear of employers to become involved with the disabled. The employers own perceptions of a person with a disability. Unfortunately, these are regularly of a negative nature. Lack of information/awareness on the part of employers regarding disability. Employers, as soon as they mention they have a disability they don't want to know.</i>
	Competition from other workers	<i>The influx of foreign workers to this country has had a huge impact on placing people with disabilities into mainstream employment because the foreign nationals are doing the jobs that would normally be sourced for our clients, for example, catering, shop assistants etc. Entry level jobs are getting scarce with the influx of workers from other European countries. The jobs market is competitive. There have been jobs but there are more people chasing them. This is a rural and seasonal area with a large influx of foreign nationals securing the types of jobs a lot of our clients apply for.</i>
Low Employability of Clients	Lack of skills / relevant skills	<i>Lack of relevant skills and training is a big problem. I have found that with my clients who have done appropriate, meaningful training, it is an easier task to place them in employment because, at the end of the day, the employer wants someone who can do the job. Not being able to multi task.</i>
	Absence of employment record / work experience	<i>Lack of experience not only for the job in question but of how to socially act in the working world. Not having the relevant work experience or big time gaps on CV between jobs. Lack of any real work experience or relevant qualifications for the job in question</i>
Welfare System	Fear of loss of payment and secondary entitlements (Medical Card)	<i>Client dependency on the welfare system and in some cases it is financially more viable for a client to remain on their payment with benefits. Fear of losing benefits. Benefits trap, unwillingness to replace social welfare with earnings. Clients are extremely afraid to come off their benefits and enter employment. Therefore in a lot of cases, job coaches are unable to use the WSS. Also, gaining an exemption from welfare (in the case of Invalidity Pension) is extremely difficult.</i>
SEP Programme	Restrictive Criteria	<i>The 18 hour rule is a deterrent as the employer may not have 18 hours to give. Restrictions in the FÁS criteria (18 month period of support before withdrawal) also, minimum of 18 hours of employment per week per client.</i>

The issues being identified by Job Coaches in respect of clients are summarised under the heading of “employability”. This term is being used in its technical sense here: that is, employability is a function of the skills available and the level and nature of skills in demand - either in a localised or national context. Consequently, assessing employability is not just a matter of focusing on the skill set of an individual but the extent to which there is an actual demand for this in the labour market. Also, the term as conventionally used and measured encompasses not just the possession of technical skills and work capacities but a range of motivational, social and interpersonal factors without which individuals cannot function in a workplace.

The third barrier identified concerns the operation of the welfare system. The issues being identified here mainly, but not solely, refer to clients’ perceptions of the welfare system (often arising from long periods of welfare dependence) and of their fears regarding giving up a stable and predictable source of income (welfare payment) and associated welfare entitlements, particularly the Medical Card. Among the consequences of this is the reluctance on the part of many clients to replace welfare income with income from employment by taking up full-time employment. Supporting evidence for this comes in two forms: (i) the low take up of schemes such as the Wage Subsidy Scheme involving transitions off welfare; and, (ii) the high level of usage of the Disability Allowance Income Disregard and comparatively low numbers of hours worked by SEP clients in employment.

The final barrier is related to the presence of what are seen as restrictive criteria regarding working hours and durations of support from the SEP as specified in the *Operating Standards for the Supported Employment Programme*. The key points being made in this regard are that many clients - for a variety of reasons including capacity, personal aspirations and, as discussed above, welfare related issues - do not want to work for more than 18 hours a week. Also, confining the period of support from the SEP to a maximum of 18 months is seen as resulting in an unrealistic timeframe within which to secure long-term employment outcomes for at least some clients. With regard to the latter point it is important to note that what is at issue is not so much the level or intensity of support required for some clients but the availability of support when needed beyond the period of 18 months.

Finally, many Job Coaches referred to fact that the barriers they identify in respect of the employment of their clients do not operate independently. Rather, and particularly in the case of some clients, they tend to occur together and thus mutually reinforce their adverse consequences. To cite one Job Coach on this matter: *There is not usually one main difficulty or barrier but a combination of problems ranging from a lack of marketable skills, no transport, poor social skills, the benefit trap, unable to work 18 hours due to poor coping strategies and long history of unemployment.*

7.4 Job Coaches' Suggestions to Improve the Effectiveness of the Supported Employment Programme

In the light of their experiences in implementing the SEP Job Coaches were asked to identify possible ways of improving the effectiveness of the programme. Their responses to this question were often lengthy and included more than one recommendation. When taken as a whole five main issues needing attention were identified and associated with each of these issues is a recommendation and illustrative comments. Table 7.4 summarises the situation.

Table 7.4
Improving the Effectiveness of the Supported Employment Programme Based on Survey of Job Coaches

Issue	Recommendation	Examples
Absence of National Programme Identity and Promotional System	Branding and marketing SEP to all people with disabilities and to employers.	<p><i>A really strong national, co-ordinated marketing campaign for SEP. It's quite ridiculous that SEP organisations should have to try to market their service with minimal resources. All this results in is marketing that is sub-standard, ineffective and disparate.</i></p> <p><i>More coherent "National Programme" (One Name, One Vision).</i></p> <p><i>A nation wide marketing ploy to make employers aware of the service so that it becomes well known and seen as an employment tool by employers.</i></p> <p><i>National advertising raising the awareness of the service and specifically who can avail of the service - that is the range of disabilities covered, not just the obvious ones.</i></p> <p><i>Develop a higher profile which would involve a nationally marketed name instead of different names around the country.</i></p> <p><i>Brand SEP nationally so employers and potential clients know what it is.</i></p>
Restrictive Operating Standards	Alter Operating Standards	<p><i>18 hour and 18 month rules are both unrealistic. Support for persons with disabilities cannot just be dropped after 18 months. Practice has shown that when this happens the person invariably loses the job they have fought so hard to attain.</i></p> <p><i>Remove the 18 hours minimum working week and make supported employment accessible to everyone with a disability regardless of the number of hours that they are able to work.</i></p> <p><i>Look at high need clients and the 18 hour rule. A lot of people with disabilities want to work but may not be able for more than a couple of hours a week. This group should not be overlooked.</i></p> <p><i>18 hours rule is discriminative towards people who are</i></p>

		<p><i>unable to work up to 18 hours.</i></p> <p><i>More flexibility of FÁS guidelines so that they are not excluding the more vulnerable, they need to be able to be more inclusive of the more marginal client.</i></p>
Welfare Disincentives	Remove Disincentives	<p><i>Raise earning disregard limit to counteract the benefit trap.</i></p> <p><i>Raising of the Earnings Disregard limit to offset fears of losing benefits.</i></p> <p><i>There is a need to raise the Earnings Disregard limit to allay client fears of Benefits Trap and in turn to encourage a higher level of participation from the client group.</i></p> <p><i>Fast track the process to get an exemption to work from Invalidity Pension.</i></p>
Weakness of Financial Incentives to Employers	Provide more financial incentive to employers	<p><i>Review and make relevant financial supports for employers with as little red tape to access as possible.</i></p> <p><i>Provide incentives for employers such as work place/linked work. This gives the employer a chance to take on someone without having costs i.e. insurance/wages. SEP to have easier access to it.</i></p> <p><i>Have greater incentives for employers to encourage them to give people with disabilities the opportunity of employment. These should be easily accessed with little paper work for the employer.</i></p>
Absence of / Restrictions on Linkages with Other Programmes	Develop linkages between programmes.	<p><i>The 'double-funding' concern needs to be addressed as some clients need SEP support while accessing another FÁS funded initiatives or training programmes.</i></p> <p><i>If we could work with the Wage Subsidy Scheme rather than in competition to it - providing on-going support to clients rather than taking them off our book, this could be a real incentive to employers.</i></p> <p><i>CE is good source of clients for us and could be used more.</i></p>

The first issue identified concerns the absence of a clear national identity for the SEP and the absence of a systematic approach to promoting the programme to both employers and clients. Among the factors that can be identified as contributing to this situation is the fact that each sponsor organisation can adopt its own approach to promoting the SEP and the absence of structures and processes to ensure that key issues such as programme branding and promotion are managed effectively and without needless duplication of effort. The clear recommendation is to “brand” the SEP in such a manner that its relevance to and positive benefits for both employers and people with disabilities are clearly identified and then promoted in a coherent and effective way both at national and local levels.

The second issue identified mainly refers to what are seen as restrictions arising from the criteria concerning working hours and the duration of support to clients in the *Operating*

Standards for the Supported Employment Programme. These have been identified and discussed above under the heading of the barriers that Job Coaches experience in seeking to secure employment for their clients. The argument being presented by Job Coaches with respect to this issue is that the effectiveness of the SEP in securing employment for its clients is being constrained by the expectation that all clients will aspire to and be capable of working more than 18 hours a week and that it will be possible to secure the transition to independence within a timeframe of 18 months. As indicated earlier - particularly in Chapter 4 - the reality at present is that in the region of 50% of clients work less than 20 hours a week and the majority of these are happy with their hours of work. It is only among clients working less than 10 hours a week that a substantial minority - approximately 40% - want to work more hours. Also, support is being provided over periods in excess of 18 months in respect of approximately one third of clients.

The third issue concerns the actual operation of the welfare system, particularly the adverse effect that the level at which the Disability Allowance Income Disregard is set is having on the number of hours clients want to work. With respect to considering this issue it should be remembered that the majority of clients obtaining employment with support from the SEP retain their welfare payment in total or in part (see Section 4.13 in Chapter 4 for details) and that the effect of the Income Disregard is mainly to constrain the number of hours worked rather than acting as a barrier to taking up employment.

The fourth issue identified generally concerns the lack of incentives to employers to recruit a person with a disability but particularly references to the absence of financial incentives that are attractive to employers and easily accessible by them. Linked to this is the view that there are no financial incentives for employers built into or directly linked with the SEP. The presence of these is seen as creating a greater incentive for employers to recruit with assistance from the SEP.

The final issue identified broadly concerns the absence of structured linkages between the SEP and other elements of labour market programming in which people with disabilities participate. Developing such linkages is seen as a way of identifying and sourcing clients for the SEP as well as enabling the SEP to work alongside other programmes including training programmes with a view to maximising the employment chances of people with disabilities leaving these programmes.

7.5 Summary Conclusions

As noted in Chapter 4, the majority of employers with experience of recruiting with support from the SEP are satisfied with the operation of the programme. Based on the views of employers presented in this chapter it is clear that their generally high level of satisfaction with the SEP is due to the role that Job Coaches play in working with *both*

clients and employers with a view to meeting their respective needs. This emphasis on meeting the needs of both employees and employers in a developmental and on-going manner can be seen as a unique feature of the SEP and one that differentiates it from mainstream employment services. Consequently, any actions taken to develop the effectiveness of the SEP should maintain a clear and strong focus on practices that build the capacity of the programme to simultaneously deliver benefits to both employees and employers. Satisfactorily meeting the needs of both is essential to effectiveness.

Based on the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 there is evidence that the SEP is performing less than fully effectively in securing employment for the majority of clients entering the programme. Based on the views of Job Coaches presented in this chapter, improving the effectiveness of the SEP requires action on a number of fronts, notably: (i) creating a national identity for the programme and branding and promoting it in an effective manner to potential clients including people with disabilities and employers; (ii) reconsidering what are found to be restrictive criteria in the areas of working hours and durations of support in the *Operating Standards*; (iii) addressing disincentives to taking up employment and increasing hours of work arising from the operation of the welfare system; (iv) creating more incentives for employers to recruit people with disabilities with assistance from the SEP; and, (v) developing more systematic and effective linkages between the operation of the SEP and other elements of labour market provision in which people with disabilities participate.

CHAPTER 8

THE OPERATIONS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME: ISSUES ARISING AND AREAS FOR ACTION

8 Introduction

This chapter begins by presenting a number of critical issues influencing the implementation and effectiveness of the SEP arising from the findings of the research. While the issues are presented individually they need to be considered collectively if appropriate actions to improve the effectiveness of the SEP are to be identified. Building on the set of critical issues presented, the second section of this chapter raises the question: “what type of employment programme is the SEP?” The intention in doing this is twofold: (i) to highlight how the SEP is currently operating; and, (ii) to identify the critical decisions that need to be taken in further developing the operations and effectiveness of the SEP. The third and final section of this chapter identifies a number of areas where action needs to be taken if the effectiveness of the SEP is to be enhanced and makes recommendations regarding some of the specific actions required.

8.1 Summary of Critical Issues

The following is a summary of the critical issues that need to be considered in identifying actions to enhance the effectiveness of the SEP.

8.1.1 Variation in Levels of Support Required by Clients Entering the Supported Employment Programme

The profile of active clients presented in Chapter 3 clearly shows that the SEP is currently catering for a very diverse group of clients. Illustrating this diversity and its associated implications for the varying levels and types of support required by clients are the following:

- the diversity of the client profile in terms of labour market status prior to entering the SEP: for example, approximately 40% of clients were looking for a job, 30% were in training, and 30% reported “other” status; self-assessed levels of job readiness (25% stated they were not job ready at the time they accessed the SEP);

- self-assessed severity of work related restrictions (approximately 50% reported restrictions in both the type and amount of work they can do, 30% in one or the other, and 20% reported no restrictions); and “previous experience of work in open labour market” (approximately 25% had no prior experience of work);
- the high exit rate from Needs Assessment phase: approximately 25% of all clients exiting the SEP do so at the Needs Assessment phase. Almost half of clients entering the Needs Assessment Phase do no progress beyond it (i.e., exit rate at Needs Assessment phase is 46%);
 - the long duration on the SEP among a minority of clients: one in eight (13.6%) clients had been on SEP for over 3 years and there is substantial variation in this across sponsor organisations.

Additionally, in terms of categories of disability, the two major groups of clients accessing the SEP are people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems. Each of these groups accounts for approximately one third of clients and they respectively present difference requirements in terms of models of support from the programme.

8.1.2 The Employment Outcomes of the Supported Employment Programme

Four of the main findings in relation to the employment outcomes of the SEP are:

- based on census of active clients, just over one third (34.6%) of active clients were in employment on March 30th 2007. This corresponds to 865 clients on the basis of a client population figure of 2,500;
- based on the census of active clients, one in five (20.7%) clients exiting the SEP between April 2007 and end September 2007 did so while in employment. If clients that exited the SEP at the Needs Assessment phase are excluded then just over one in four (26.9%) clients exiting the SEP do so while in employment;
- based on the Job Coach Survey one third (32.9%) of clients exiting the SEP in the year to end March 2007 did so while in employment (based on programme phase);
- based on the survey of past participants, just over one third (35.4%) were in employment at time of survey.

Allowing for error in the estimates, somewhere between one in five and two in five clients exit the SEP while in employment. Assuming an annual throughput of 1,250 this corresponds to 500 a year.

Enhancing the effectiveness of the SEP will require taking actions to increase the proportion of clients in employment with support from the programme and increasing the proportion of clients that exit from the programme while in employment.

8.1.3 Substantial Variation in Time Taken to Access Employment

The main findings in respect of this are:

- one in four clients obtaining employment do so within 12 weeks. Half of all clients obtaining employment do so within 24 weeks. Three quarters of all clients getting employment do so within an 18 month time period with the other one quarter securing their employment subsequent to 18 months.

The variation in time taken to access employment shows that, among the minority of clients in employment, different levels of service provision in terms of intensity and duration of support are required to secure an employment outcome. This, in turn, reflects differences in the employability of clients.

8.1.4 Working Hours and Pay

Approximately 15% of SEP clients in employment work less than 10 hours and a further 35% to 40% work between 10 and 19 hours a week. These working hours are lower than the national population of people with disabilities in employment.

Average hourly earnings of SEP clients in employment, while above the minimum wage, are lower than the national average. Approximately three quarters are satisfied with their jobs and almost all are satisfied with their hours of work. It is only among clients in employment working less than 10 hours a week that a substantial minority - 42% - want to work more hours.

8.1.5 Demand Side Issues

Across a number of different areas examined in this report there is evidence that the SEP is operating in a context of limited demand from employers and that this is a constraining factor on the effectiveness of the programme. Among the key findings illustrating this are:

- **Small Pool of Recruiting Employers:** Estimates of the proportion of companies employing a person with a disability vary between 10% and 25%. Companies in the wholesale and retail, hotels and restaurants, and other personal services sectors tend to have higher rates of recruitment of people with disabilities. There is some evidence from the survey of employers to suggest that many were more open to recruiting a person with a disability due to familiarity with disability through

personal or family circumstances or contact with organisations working in the area of disability. It is difficult to put an accurate figure on this but it could be in the region of 20% to 25%. One implication of this is that the SEP interacts with two groups of employers: the first group comprises employers who have experience of employing a person with a disability and therefore may be more informed and open to recruiting additional employees with a disability; the second group comprises employers who have no experience of employing a person with a disability and consequently may present greater challenges in terms of securing employment placements for clients. The presence of these two groups among employers needs to be taken into account in developing approaches to promoting the SEP among employers.

- **Ability to do Job is Critical:** Both employers and Job Coaches agree that the critical concern of employers in recruiting a person with a disability is their ability to do the job. Yet, this area is also identified by employers as one of the weaknesses of the SEP. Consequently, improving the effectiveness of the SEP will involve finding ways of assuring employers of the work capacities of clients.
- **Low Demand and Competition from Other Sources of Labour:** The survey of Job Coaches clearly showed that the main barriers they encountered in trying to secure employment for their clients were the absence of a demand from employers and competition for entry level jobs from workers from the new EU member states.

The issue of low demand from employers is likely to become an even more critical issue influencing the operation of the SEP over the medium term and consequently careful consideration is required in developing an effective strategy of promoting the programme among employers.

8.1.6 Considerable Variability in Programme Intake, Implementation, and Results Across Sponsor Organisations

There is substantial variation across the 24 sponsor organisations in terms of the profiles of their active clients (e.g., gender, type of disability), the manner in which they implement the programme (e.g., number of clients on programme for more than two years) and the employment results achieved. Also, based on the Job Coach Survey, there is some evidence of variation in the actual practices of Job Coaches in areas such as undertaking “needs assessment” across the 24 sponsor organisations.

Based on the views of the Job Coaches and the comments made during consultations with Co-ordinators undertaken as part of the research methodology, each sponsor organisation largely implements its own approach in areas such as planning and strategy development, programme promotion, innovation, and performance management. There is a reasonable consensus that there needs to be a more coherent approach across all 24 sponsor

organisations to these issues. Such an approach would also reduce duplication of effort in key areas such as programme promotion and performance management.

8.1.7 Factors Related to Design of the Supported Employment Programme

A number of factors related to the design of the SEP were identified during the course of the research as carrying considerable implications for both how the programme is implemented - particularly in a consistent manner across all 24 sponsor organisations - and for the effectiveness of the programme, particularly when effectiveness is assessed in terms of employment outcomes. The following summarises the main issues arising:

- **Lack of Clarity in Respect of Job Readiness:** While job readiness is defined in the *Guidelines* and *Standards* documents for the SEP, no operational procedures or approaches to actually assessing this are specified. Among the effects of this is the high exit rate during the Needs Assessment phase and a lowering of the proportion of clients being supported in employment at any given time. Also, to a considerable extent the current Needs Assessment phase is effectively acting as a gateway to entry to the SEP and in that regard - particularly given the intensity of the level of contact with clients during this phase - a large proportion of programme resources are being allocated to clients that do not subsequently progress to access employment;
- **Absence of Coherent and Visible Identity for SEP among Employers and Clients:** Currently, the majority of programme promotion is undertaken by the individual sponsor organisations. This creates difficulties in “branding” and “marketing” the programme to employers and people with disabilities and also results in duplication of effort and the adoption of different approaches;
- **Restrictive Criteria:** Both working hours (more than 18 hours a week) and duration of support (maximum 18 months) criteria in the *Operational Standards* document are viewed as excluding people with disabilities who are looking for work but do not wish to work more than 18 hours a week and those who require longer term support to access and maintain employment. It should be noted that while some clients require support over long durations, delivering this support typically requires only minimal programme resources in terms of Job Coach time;
- **Lack of Agreed Procedures in Respect of Exiting Clients from Programme:** Currently, there is an absence of clear and agreed procedures regarding when and how clients cease being formal clients of the SEP. This contributes to difficulties in identifying when clients actually cease to be programme participants (apart from the situation when this decision is taken unilaterally by the client). Identifying the criteria to be used in making this decision is critical, as is identifying the procedures that will be used and the parties who will be involved in decision-making (e.g., clients, Job Coaches, employers), particularly when clients are exiting the programme while in employment. It should also be noted

that a criterion based *exclusively* on duration of participation has weaknesses in that some clients will progress to being capable of independently sustaining employment relatively quickly while others will not.

- **Weakness of Formal Linkages to Education, Training and Other Labour Market Programmes:** There is an absence of systematic and formal linkages to programmes developing the skills and work competencies of people with disabilities. As an employment focused programme the SEP is well positioned to consolidate the investments in skill and competence development made elsewhere in the system. Developing such linkages is also consistent with the already identified need for as well as the benefits of developing more integrated approaches to supporting people with disabilities to access and retain employment (NDA, 2006).

8.1.8 Welfare Issues

The issues arising under this heading mainly, but not solely, refer to clients' perceptions of the welfare system (often arising from long periods of welfare dependency) and of their fears of giving up a stable and predictable source of income (welfare payment) and associated welfare entitlements, particularly the Medical Card. Among the consequences of this is the reluctance on the part of many clients to totally replace welfare income with income from employment by taking up full-time employment. Supporting evidence for this includes the low take up of schemes such as the Wage Subsidy Scheme involving transitions off welfare and the high level of usage of the Disability Allowance Income Disregard among SEP clients in employment. Job Coaches and employers referred to the adverse impact of the Disability Allowance Income Disregard threshold of €120, particularly on the number of hours clients wished to work. Welfare related issues do not appear to be a disincentive to taking up employment *per se*, but do influence desired hours of work so as to remain below disregard thresholds and income levels likely to lead to withdrawal of secondary benefits.

8.2 What Type of Employment Programme is the Supported Employment Programme?

Based on the findings of this research concerning issues such as the profile of SEP clients, the manner in which the programme is implemented, and the varying levels of employability of clients as well as the employment outcomes secured in respect of clients presenting with different support requirements, there is evidence that the SEP - as currently implemented - can be characterised as encompassing elements of an "employment assistance programme" and elements of a "supported employment programme" as these are conventionally understood. The characteristics of both of these types of employment programme are schematically outlined in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1
Characteristics of Employment Assistance and Supported Employment Type
Programmes for People with Disabilities

Programme Design Elements		“Employment Assistance Programme”	Supported Employment Programme
1	Client population	Self declared disability, recipients of disability / illness welfare payment	Self declared disability, recipients of disability / illness welfare payment
2	Job readiness requirement for entry to the programme	Yes	No
3	Accessibility to and relevance of mainstream employment and training services to clients	Moderate to High	Low to Moderate
4	Client profile on entry	Capable of accessing, maintaining, and progressing to independent employment. with support from the programme	Requires developmental and on-going support to access and maintain employment
5	Disability restrictions on type and amount of work	Low to Medium	Medium to High
6	“Productivity”	Approximates to employees without a disability, capable of unsupervised work with normal workplace supports	Limitation on productivity recognised, likely to require higher level of supervision and workplace supports
7	Employer commitment	Low	High
8	Working hours	Can approximate to employed population of people with disabilities	Likely to be less than working hours of employed population of people with a disability
9	Level of liaison required with other agencies / personnel in respect of clients condition and needs (e.g., HSE, GP, Psychologist / Psychiatrist, family etc.)	Low	Medium to High
10	Links to other programmes Relevance of Workplace - Relevance of BTWAS - Relevance of WSS - Role of CE	High High Low Progression from	High Low High Progression to
11	Duration of programme assistance	Time limited	On-going
12	Key result indicator	Clients progressing to independent employment in open labour market	Clients in employment with on-going support

These two approaches to providing employment services to people with disabilities are presented here because they characterise approaches currently being implemented *within* the SEP (to varying degrees and with some level of variation across the 24 sponsor organisations). They are also presented because they identify critical areas of programme design that need to be considered in addressing the operations and effectiveness of the SEP.

The presentation of these two approaches should not be interpreted as indicating that the SEP should evolve as one or the other. The critical issue is that among the population of people with disabilities *who want to work* there is a continuum of capacity in terms of employability as well as in terms of the levels and types of support required to enable access to and retention of employment. The central challenge arising for employment services - and for the SEP - is how to effectively engage with and cater for clients who want to work but who are at different points on the continuum in respect of their employability and support needs.

8.3 Proposed Areas for Action and Recommendations

As was discussed in the introductory chapter of this report, supported employment is fundamentally about supporting people with disabilities to access and retain employment. As an employment programme, the key indicators of programme effectiveness for the SEP must be seen as including:

- (i) the proportion of clients in employment with support from the programme; and,
- (ii) the proportion of clients exiting the programme while in employment (and in a position to retain this employment, or secure other employment, and develop their careers).

Enhanced programme effectiveness will be indicated by increases in both of these proportions over their current levels. To guide the actions required to secure improved programme effectiveness it will be necessary to set *agreed* and *achievable* targets in respect of these two indicators and to systematically review progress in respect of their achievement on a regular basis by putting in place a performance monitoring system appropriate to the operation of SEP. Based on current programme performance a minimum target of 50% in respect of both these indicators is recommended. As a number of the other actions recommended here will influence the extent to which these targets are achieved, it will be necessary to review these targets on an annual basis over the medium term.

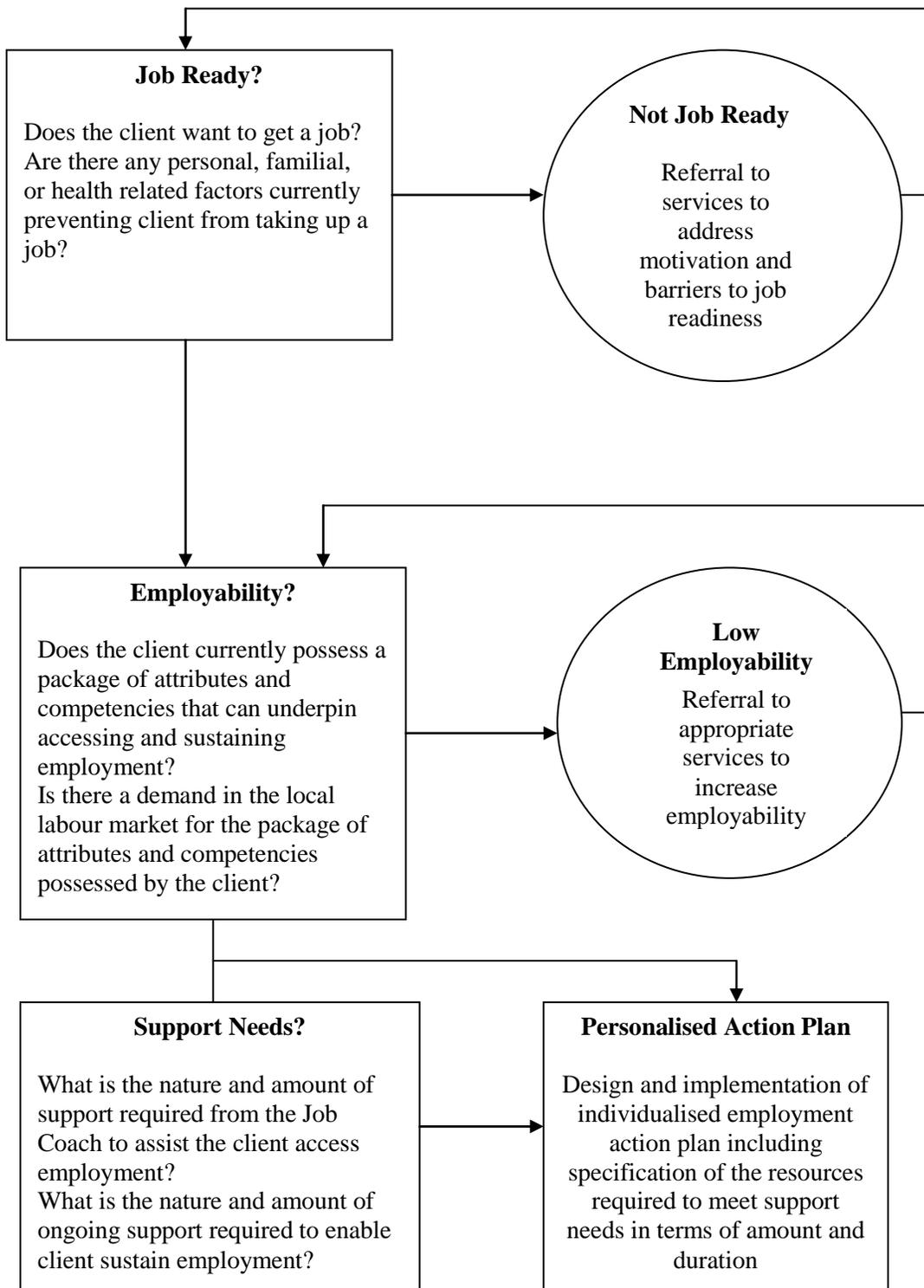


Figure 8.1 Schematic Overview of Areas Requiring Assessment in Relation to Entry to the SEP

Clarity is also required in respect of the term employment and what counts as employment. Given the findings of this research and noting the concerns of stakeholders in the SEP - including clients and potential clients of the SEP - regarding this issue, employment must be in the open labour market and there must be a meaningful and satisfactory engagement with such employment on the part of clients. Based on the findings regarding satisfaction with working hours (i.e., the vast majority of SEP clients in employment working in excess of 10 hours a week are happy with their working hours and do not wish to work more hours) and also reflecting some typical arrangements in respect of working hours found among SEP clients in employment (e.g., one day a week, two to three afternoons or mornings a week or combinations of same) it is recommended that, for the purpose of target setting and monitoring progress, employment should be defined as working a minimum of 8 hours a week.

A number of the actions required to support the achievement of the recommended targets in respect of employment are identified below.

1 Develop Operational Clarity in Respect of the Target Group for the SEP and Develop Appropriated Assessment Procedures

Achieving clarity about the target group for the SEP will involve recognising that “job readiness”, “employability” and “support needs” are different concepts, that each involves a continuum of possibilities (e.g., in simplified terms from “low” to “high”), and that each requires an appropriate method of assessment and a decision making procedure in respect of the criteria for entry to the SEP. An indication of the key operational aspects of each of these concepts and of their relevance to specifying procedures for entry to the SEP is schematically outlined in Figure 8.1.

Arising from and in relation to the above is clarifying is the extent to which, and how, the SEP is to / or will cater for people with disabilities who have different employment aspirations, different levels of employability, and who require different levels of support to realise their employment aspirations. The evidence from this research clearly indicates considerable diversity in respect of employability and support needs among clients and, consequently, the need for different types and durations of support to enable them to access and retain employment.

Central to resolving the above issues will be developing and using agreed protocols and assessment tools to aid effective decision-making regarding the target groups for the programme and ensuring that entrants to the programme are in position to benefit from the programme and, also, that the programme can effectively meet their requirements in respect of accessing and retaining employment. To achieve this it is recommended that a review of existing assessment and profiling procedures and associated instruments is

undertaken with a view to identifying and / or developing a relevant and effective procedure to:

- (i) identify clients for whom the SEP is an appropriate and likely effective form of intervention; and,
- (ii) accurately profiling clients entering the programme in terms of their job readiness, employability, and support requirements.

This will also contribute to improving the planning and delivery of individualised support to clients. As indicated in Chapter 2, commitments in respect of developing profiling procedures are stated in the Sectoral Plan of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. As the procedures are designed to identify welfare recipients “*for whom activation can be meaningfully achieved* (p. 43)” they will be of relevance to the review recommended here.

2 Identify and Document Operational Procedures in Respect of Key Areas of Programme Implementation

To date the implementation of the SEP has been guided by two documents prepared by FÁS: *Supported Employment Operational Guidelines and Forms* and *Supported Employment Programme Operating Standards*. In the light of the issues identified above, among the weaknesses identified in these documents - particularly in respect of ensuring programme effectiveness as assessed by employment outcomes as well as ensuring consistency in the implementation of the SEP across the 24 sponsor organisations - is the absence of documented operational procedures in respect of key areas of *programme implementation*. Among the areas of programme implementation in question are how job readiness, employability and support needs should be assessed, who should make such assessments and what criteria should be adopted in relation to programme entry, what procedures should be adopted when clients are formally exiting the programme and who should be party to implementing such procedures and decision-making in respect of clients formally exiting the programme. In effect, the “what” of programme design and implementation is specified in these documents but no clear direction is provided with respect to the “how”.

For the above reasons but also to address a number of the other critical issues identified earlier in this chapter - including ensuring that the SEP is implemented in a more consistent and effective manner across all 24 sponsor organisations - it is recommended that the current *Supported Employment Operating Standards* documented be revised, updated and expanded to incorporate:

- (i) the recommendations of this report in respect of programme targets and programme monitoring; and,

- (ii) details of the operational procedures to be used in relation to key areas of programme implementation.

Based on the critical issues identified in this research the revised, updated and expanded document should address the following:

- operationally identify the criteria and associated assessment procedures for entry to the programme (incorporating the results of the recommendation on assessment procedures above);
- formally outline the decision making process in respect of client entry to the programme and the roles of different parties in this;
- specify the nature, range and duration of supports that can be provided to clients in response to their individual needs in respect of accessing and retaining employment;
- document agreed procedures and practices in respect of individualised planning and support to assist clients access and retain employment;
- identify the formal linkages that will be established between the SEP and providers of education, training and employment programmes and document how these linkages will be implemented;
- operationally identify the criteria to be used and practices to be adopted in formally exiting clients from the programme. This is required in relation to clients exiting the programme while in employment and in relation to clients exiting the programme but not in employment; In the case of clients exiting the programme while in employment specific reference will be required in relation to securing employment retention and career development;
- specify the indicators that will be used to review programme performance and effectiveness, the procedures that will be used to collect data in respect of the selected indicators, and the frequency of data collection and review procedures. As indicated above these indicators should include the proportion of clients in employment with support from the SEP as well as the proportion of clients exiting the programme while in employment.

While responsibility for implementing the above lies with FÁS, it is recommended that that the process of identifying and agreeing appropriate and effective procedures in respect of the areas of programme implementation identified above should involve consultation with key programme stakeholders including FÁS personnel in Community Services and Employment Services, sponsor organisations, and operational personnel. The rationale for recommending stakeholder involvement in the specification of operational procedures is to ensure that the different competencies and expertise of stakeholders are fully utilised and that, in turn, the resulting procedures meet their

respective requirements and support their different operational responsibilities in implementing the SEP.

3 Develop a National Identity for the Supported Employment Programme and Devise and Implement a Marketing Strategy for the Programme

The most significant barrier that Job Coaches identified in respect of securing employment for their clients is the absence of a “demand” from employers. Noting this, any effort to enhance the effectiveness of the SEP will be constrained if the issue of low demand is not addressed in a systematic and effective manner. While all sponsor organisations address this issue in various ways at present, and with varying degrees of success, there is a need to identify and implement a strategic and innovative approach to securing greater employer participation in the programme.

To address the issue of low demand on the part of employers it is recommended that a national identity be developed for the Supported Employment Programme and that a strategy to promote the programme among employers and people with disabilities be developed and implemented. The key stakeholders groups in the SEP (including FÁS Community Services and Employment Services personnel, sponsor organisations, and operational personnel) should be involved in actioning both of these recommendations. Consideration should also be given to identifying how employers - as the targets of such a strategy - can feed into the development and implementation of an effective strategy to promote the SEP.

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Annex 1

Disabilities as Stated by Survey Respondents

Three fingers missing on right hand	1
Acquired brain injury	1
Alcoholism and depression	1
Amputee - prosthetic leg	1
Anxiety depression	2
Anxiety disorder with depression for which I am treated. Chronic fatigue with pain. These symptoms wax and wane.	1
Aspergers and mental health (depression)	1
Aspergers Syndrome	4
Autism and Epilepsy	1
Back injury	2
Bad fall, head and back injuries	1
Bi-polar manic depression	1
Bilateral amputee - I'm a bilateral amputee so the nature of my disability is a physical disability.	1
Bipolar (Manic Depression)	1
Bipolar disorder	1
Blind	3
Brain injury - front lobe. Short term memory loss with particular regard to verbal messages, also poor concentration and tire easily.	1
Brain Injury	1
Cardiac problem	1
Cerebral Palsy	5
Cerebral Palsy and mental health problems	1
Cerebral Palsy - wheelchair user	1
Cerebral Palsy, full time wheelchair user.	1
Club foot - one foot shorter than the other - have to wear high supports on shoes.	1
Communication difficulty	1
Cystic Fibrosis	1
Damaged leg. Other problems with back and shoulder	1
Deaf from the age of four from meningitis.	1
Deaf	3
Deaf and no speech	1
Deaf. Lost hearing at the age of three due to Meningitis	1
Depression	20
Depression Schizophrenia	1
Depression, stress, high blood pressure, tiredness, migraine, had surgery to have a growth removed	1
Depression and slow learner	1
Diabetes	2
Diabetes and anxiety	1
Downs Syndrome	3
Due to illness - joint problem restricting walking long distance, visual impairment, unsuitable for driving	1
Dwarfism	1
Dyslexia	2
Epilepsy	6

Epilepsy and coordination difficulties	1
Epilepsy and depression	1
Epilepsy and mild learning disability	1
Epilepsy and psychosis	1
Bad eyes and ears	1
Genetic neurological disorder	1
Hard of hearing	1
Hearing Impairment	2
Hearing impairment, mild form of cerebral palsy.	1
Hearing loss	2
I am deaf and I suffer from panic attacks	1
I am deaf in left ear and hard of hearing in right.	1
I had a kidney removed with cancer - cannot do certain types of work.	1
I had a mood disorder when I would drink on top of medication	1
I have mental health issues	1
I intended to end my own life	1
I tend to do my own thing. I'm not great at direction. I forget what I'm supposed to do.	1
I took a bad reaction to medication and it left me with involuntary movements in my back	1
I was diagnosed with schizophrenia and psychosis	1
Injury to right lower leg i.e. ankle, tib and fib	1
Intellectual disability	3
Intellectual disability with dislocation of both hips.	1
Intellectual or learning difficult to say	1
Issues with reading and writing, depression	1
Lack of confidence, retention skills are not good, need guidance at work	1
Learning - slow learner	1
Learning difficulties	4
Learning disability	17
Limited use of my left arm and fingers	1
Literacy problems	1
Liver disease, blood circulation and fatigue	1
Long term back problems	1
Lung disease; kidney disease; blood pressure; learning disability	1
Manic depression	2
Memory loss	1
Mental and physical	1
Mental disability	4
Mental health - medication	1
Mental health	2
Mental health condition	1
Mental health difficulties	1
Mental health problem (depression)	1
Mental health problems	3
Mental illness - depression	1
Mental Illness	6
Mental illness e.g. depression and nervous breakdown	1
Mental illness for about 20 years, nerves	1
Mild Cerebral Palsy	1
Mild Down's Syndrome	1
Mild intellectual disability and spatial difficulties	1

Mild learning disability	3
Mild learning disability and physical disability on right hand side	1
Mild learning disability, I get tired easily	1
Mild Spina Bifida and hydrocephalus	1
Mildly handicapped	1
Mobius Syndrome	1
Moderate mental handicap and visual impairment	1
Movement disorder	1
Multiple Sclerosis	3
My ankle gets very sore when I'm on it all day(that's the reason I'm doing part time work)	1
My hands	1
Myotubler Myopathy	1
Nbi-polar	1
Nerves anxiety	1
Nervous breakdown	1
Panic attacks, psychiatric	1
Paralysed left side	1
Partially blind	1
Petite low in blood	1
Petite Mal Epilepsy	1
Physical - fractured spine	1
Physical - legs/back	1
Physical	3
Physical and brain injury due to RTA	1
Physical and language	1
Physical and some mental illness	1
Psychiatric problems	1
Psychiatric, very serious	1
Rheumatoid Arthritis	1
Rheumatoid arthritis/lupis	1
Schizophrenia	4
Schizophrenia Mental Illness	1
Schizophrenia, varicose veins	1
Short sighted, anxiety	1
Slight Aspergers	2
Slight learning disability	1
Slight shake in left hand (due to brain tumor)	1
Slight weakness on right side, limp in right leg	1
Slow learner	3
Slow learner, cannot read or write that much	1
Slow learner, epilepsy and sleep problems	1
Speech impediment and I am running in to poor health	1
Speech mostly. Has come on well over time. Mildly handicapped.	1
Speech problems	1
Spina Bifida	7
Spina bifida and hydrocephalus	2
Spinal Injury	1
Stress, mental health	1
Stroke	1
Total loss of hearing in left ear, scoliosis	1
Tourette's Syndrome	1

Usher Syndrome Type 2: partial hearing loss and eyesight deteriorates through time.	1
Visually impaired	4
Wrist injury	1
Total	244

Annex 2

**Detailed Occupational Classification of Clients in Employment
on the Supported Employment Programme**

	Number	%
Hairdressers and barbers managers	1	.1
Planning and quality control engineers	4	.4
Other engineers and technologists n.e.c.	1	.1
Primary and nursery education teachers	1	.1
Other teaching professionals nec.	5	.5
Librarians	1	.1
Laboratory technicians	1	.1
Engineering technicians	1	.1
Draughtspersons	2	.2
Authors, writers, journalists	4	.4
Information officers and guidance specialists	2	.2
Driving instructors (excluding HGV)	1	.1
Environmental health, Occupational hygienists	1	.1
Local government clerical officers and assistants	1	.1
Accounts and wages clerks, other financial clerks	3	.3
Filing, computer and other records clerks	3	.3
Other clerks (n.e.c.)	102	11.1
Stores, Storekeepers, despatch and production clerks	12	1.3
Warehousemen/women	29	3.2
Legal secretaries	1	.1
Receptionists	13	1.4
Receptionist/telephonists	3	.3
Computer operators, other office machine operators	1	.1
Bricklayers, masons	2	.2
Painters and decorators	2	.2
Electricians, electrical maintenance fitters	1	.1
Computer engineers, installation and maintenance	2	.2
Welding trades	2	.2
Tyre and exhaust fitters	4	.4
Sewing machinists, menders, darners and embroiderers	1	.1
Carpenters and joiners	5	.5
Cabinet makers	1	.1
Other woodworking trades n.e.c.	4	.4
Gardeners, groundsmen/groundswomen	23	2.5
Horticultural trades	6	.7
Security guards and related occupations	17	1.9
Other security and protective service occupations n.e.c.	1	.1
Chefs, cooks	5	.5

Waiters, waitresses	8	.9
Bar staff	7	.8
Care assistants and attendants	26	2.8
Other childcare and related occupations	13	1.4
Housekeepers (domestic)	4	.4
Caretakers	13	1.4
Launderers, dry cleaners, pressers	8	.9
Other personal service workers	8	.9
Other sales representatives n.e.c	3	.3
Sales assistants	104	11.3
Retail cash desk and check out operators	13	1.4
Petrol pump attendants	2	.2
Merchandisers	2	.2
Telephone salespersons	2	.2
Bakery and confectionery process operatives	2	.2
Other food, drink and tobacco process operatives	5	.5
Other Assemblers/lineworkers	7	.8
Packers, bottlers, canners, fillers	7	.8
Drivers of road goods vehicles	5	.5
Bus conductors and coach drivers	3	.3
Taxi, cab drivers, chauffeurs and couriers	4	.4
Fork truck drivers	2	.2
Other transport and machinery operatives n.e.c.	4	.4
Other plant, machine and process operatives n.e.c.	16	1.7
Farm workers	3	.3
Other farming occupations	1	.1
Other building and civil engineering labourers	6	.7
Goods porters	1	.1
Refuse and salvage collectors	1	.1
Drivers mates	2	.2
Postal workers, mail sorters	2	.2
Hotel porters	5	.5
Kitchen porters	43	4.7
Counterhands, catering assistants	42	4.6
Shelf fillers	7	.8
Car park attendants	4	.4
Cleaners, domestics	93	10.1
Other occupations in sales and services n.e.c.	25	2.7
All other labourers and related workers	5	.5
All other gainful occupation n.e.c	141	15.4
Total	918	100.0

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