



Evaluation of the National Pilot for the Supported Employment Programme

Volume I

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in association with Goodbody Economic Consultants and Leigh-Doyle & Associates

Commissioned by FÁS



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1. Introduction, objectives and research methodology

1.1 Introduction

Tom Martin & Associates/TMA along with their partner organisations, Goodbody Economic Consultants and Leigh-Doyle & Associates, are pleased to present this final report to FÁS on the evaluation of the National Pilot for the Supported Employment Programme.

This Section of the report outlines the objectives of the evaluation and the research methodology which TMA utilised to achieve these objectives. This Section also features a description of the main terms used in the report given that there is widespread variation in usage both within FÁS and the organisations which are in receipt of funding from the Pilot Programme.

Section 2 provides an executive summary and recommendations.

An overview of the National Pilot for the Supported Employment Programme is outlined in Section 3 and the outputs of the Pilot Programme are detailed in Section 4.

The supports provided to people with disability and to employers under the Pilot Programme are documented in Section 5.

The following section, Section 6, is concerned with describing the organisational structures and resources of the consortia selected to provide supported employment services in their catchment area.

Section 7 provides an overview of the administration of the Pilot Programme while the following section examines the benefits accruing from implementation of the Programme.

Finally, Section 9 presents recommendations for the future operation and administration of the Programme.

Appendix 1 contains an introduction to the case studies prepared of four projects funded under the Pilot Programme; the case studies are presented in a separate volume. A list of the employers surveyed is provided in Appendix 2. The questionnaires used in the quantitative survey are included in Appendix 3.

Terminology

The report utilises the following terms:

- Contracts to operate the Supported Employment Programme were awarded by FÁS to 24 **consortia**; each consortium consists of two or more organisations with experience in providing services to people with a disability;
- Within each consortium there is a **consortium sponsor organisation** who is legally responsible for the performance of the contract;
- The other members of the consortium are referred to as **consortium member or partner organisations**;
- The **project** is the supported employment service operated by the consortium in its catchment area;
- The person entrusted with the day-to-day operation of the project is the **team leader** or project co-ordinator;
- The team leader is responsible for a team of **job coaches** and, where relevant, administrative staff;

- **Participants** are people with a disability who are registered with a project and who receive supported employment services ranging from needs analysis to on-the-job supports.

Though the full name of the programme is the National Pilot for the Supported Employment Programme this has been shortened in the text to the Pilot Programme.

1.2 Objectives

The overall objective of the evaluation is to provide an assessment of the operation and impact of the Supported Employment Programme to date, and to identify areas which can be built upon to ensure that the Programme achieves maximum effectiveness in meeting the objectives of:

- facilitating the integration of people with disabilities into paid employment in the open labour market;
- providing supports to assist with this integration process;
- meeting the labour requirements of employers.

The following sub-section outlines the research approach which the consultants used to achieve these objectives.

1.3 Research methodology

The consultants utilised a number of research approaches in order to obtain the wide range of data required. These included the following:

Desk research

A review was undertaken of the following published material:

- FÁS Pilot Programme guidelines;
- quarterly reports provided by the projects/consortia to FÁS;
- minutes of a meeting attended by job coaches representing 18 projects;
- publicity material produced by the projects;
- previous studies on supported employment in Ireland including the study carried out by team member, Sue Leigh-Doyle, for the National Rehabilitation Board.

One large provider of services to people with a disability provided the consultants with a report of an internal evaluation of the organisation's involvement in the Pilot Programme.

The minutes of a meeting attended by job coaches representing 18 projects were studied; a copy of these minutes was also sent to FÁS.

Focus groups

Three in-depth focus group sessions were held with the following groups of informants:

- project co-ordinators/team leaders;
- FÁS Community Services managers;
- FÁS Community Services staff with responsibility for supported employment.

A range of issues was discussed at these focus group sessions; the session with the project co-ordinators focused on issues such as programme objectives, outputs and reporting procedures. The session also provided an opportunity for the consultants to obtain the views of project co-ordinators on contentious topics such as job readiness and the 15 hour rule.

The consultants also attended part of a meeting of job coaches from 18 of the 24 projects.

Personal and telephone interviews

The consultants undertook a comprehensive programme of personal and telephone interviews with a cross-section of stake-holders involved in the Pilot Programme including the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, FÁS staff, consortia sponsor organisations, consortia member organisations, team leaders/project co-ordinators, job coaches, administrative staff, participants and employers. A number of visits were made to projects around the country.

Quantitative surveys

Separate self-completion questionnaires were provided to all 24 projects and a cross-section of employers. The questionnaires used in the survey are included in Appendix 3 below and were submitted to FÁS for its approval prior to their use. As agreed with FÁS, the distribution of the employer questionnaires was undertaken by the projects themselves using selection guidelines laid down by the consultants in relation to company size and industry sector (see Appendix 2 for a list of employers surveyed).

Case studies

In-depth case studies were prepared of four projects and involved detailed interviews with consortia sponsor organisations, consortia partner organisations, team leaders/project co-ordinators, job coaches, administrative staff, participants, employers and others. Particular focus was placed on interviewing participants at the different stages of the supported employment process from needs assessment to on-the-job supports. Similarly, interviews were held with employers who had an employee with a disability and with employers who no longer employed a person with a disability.

A total of face-to-face interviews were held with 34 participants during the course of the research process. The interviewees were drawn from the major disability sectors: learning, physical, hidden, sensory and mental health. They also included participants who:

- were waiting to be placed in employment;
- were in employment, and;
- had been placed in a job but were no longer in employment.

Additionally, the consultants held regular progress meetings with FÁS staff.

1.4 Acknowledgement

The consultants wish to acknowledge the valuable contribution of all those who assisted in the evaluation process.

2. Executive summary and recommendations

2.1 Findings

This review of the FÁS National Pilot for the Supported Employment Programme covers the period November 2000 when the first consortium launched its project to June 2002.

The consultants employed a number of research approaches during the course of their work programme. These included desk research, focus group sessions, telephone and personal interviews, quantitative surveys and the preparation of four case studies. A wide variety of informants were interviewed during the course of the research and face-to-face interviews were held with 34 project participants with a disability.

The Pilot Programme was launched by FÁS in 2000 as an active labour market initiative to assist people with disabilities to integrate into paid employment within the open labour market while at the same time meeting the labour market requirements of employers.

Following a tender process, FÁS awarded contracts for the provision of supported employment services to twenty four consortia consisting mainly of organisations providing services to people with a disability.

Each consortium operates a project that provides supported employment services to people with disabilities for a defined catchment area. The projects employ on average a project co-ordinator and five job coaches.

While the majority of projects were operational in 2001, three only commenced operations in 2002. The late start for the latter can be attributed to the fact that a number of applicants initially did not meet the selection criteria and were asked to resubmit tenders.

The Pilot Programme is available nation-wide with the exception of Tipperary where there was a lack of suitable applicant organisations.

Outputs

The 24 projects provided supported employment services to 1,918 people with disabilities registered with them during the period under review. Of this total, 775 participants, or 40 per cent, were placed in employment.

The analysis of programme participants shows that males slightly out-numbered females and that sixty per cent of the participants were in the 18–34 age category. Participants with a learning difficulty accounted for just under half of all participants registered with the projects.

A total of 36 per cent of participants had been unemployed at the time of registration while 40 per cent had been on either a vocational or rehabilitation training course. The remainder either had worked in sheltered workshops or had been in employment.

Referrals of participants from the consortia member organisations amounted to 73 per cent of all Pilot Programme participants.

Participants placed in employment

The profile of participants placed in employment was similar to that of all participants with the exception that referrals from consortia member organisations accounted for 81 per cent of participants placed in employment.

The vast majority of participants placed in employment worked in low-skilled positions within the services sector with the retail and hotel sub-sectors predominating. Sixty two or 8 per cent of participants were placed in other FÁS initiatives such as Community Employment.

The average number of hours worked per week by participants placed in employment across all 24 projects was 15.9 hours (each of the projects calculated the average number of hours their participants worked per week and these figures were in turn averaged). Ten per cent of the participants, however, worked for less than 5 hours per week.

The average hourly wage received by participants across the projects was €6.22. A total of 48 participants (6 per cent) were recorded as receiving less than the National Minimum Wage though this figure may be over-stated (some projects did not, for example, know that the National Minimum Wage of €5.97 per hour does not apply to people who have less than two years work experience).

Four fifths of the participants placed in employment had an employment contract while three quarters were entitled to annual leave.

Ninety six per cent of participants placed in employment retained their State benefits such as the Disability Allowance. Thirty eight per cent were engaged in other State sponsored activities such as Sheltered Workshops or Day Activity centres.

Drop-outs

A total of 376 participants left the Pilot Programme prior to placement while 172 participants left employment after placement. No quantitative information is available on the reasons for the latter but it is believed that lack of preparation for work skills is a factor in some of these.

Employers

The survey of employers who employed a participant indicated high levels of satisfaction with both the participant as an employee and the support provided by the job coach. The vast majority of employers surveyed would recruit a Pilot Programme participant again in the future and they would also recommend the programme to other employers.

Project staffing and structure

A total of 159 people were employed by the 24 projects of which 21 were project coordinators, 123.5 were job coaches and 14 were administrators/other staff.

Staff turnover has been a major difficulty for the projects; staff turnover across the projects averaged 30 per cent. A number of factors contributed to this situation including the short-term nature of contracts, uncertainties over the future continuation of the Pilot Programme and lack of benefits such as sick pay. The high level of turnover has had an adverse impact on the operation of the projects and militates against the development of a cadre of experienced project staff, particularly job coaches.

The projects were equally divided between those that operated their job coaches from a central location and those that operated from the offices of consortium partner organisations.

Consortia

The consortia member organisations are mainly disability service providers and the majority of consortia have members with expertise in providing services both to people with a learning disability and to people with a physical disability.

A number of consortia featured a diverse membership including health boards, employers' representative bodies and local development organisations. FÁS was a member of three consortia and the preparation of a case study of one of these indicates that its contribution to the development of a close working relationship between project staff and local FÁS staff has been significant.

Differing concepts of supported employment

There were some difficulties associated with the administration of the Pilot Programme. These difficulties arose largely as a result of the fact that a number of consortia disregarded the terms of their contract with FÁS and/or the Pilot Programme guidelines. As an example, there were instances where consortia effectively restricted access to the project to the clients of member organisations contrary to their contractual agreement with FÁS.

The number of participants placed in employment working for less than 5 hours per week highlights that some consortia chose to ignore Pilot Programme guidelines that participants should be placed in jobs with a minimum of 15 hours per week (though exceptions could be made on a case by case basis).

These situations arose largely through the fact that some consortia member organisations had previously been involved in the provision of supported employment services to people with a disability with funding provided by the health boards or through their participation in EU-funded projects. Their understanding of supported employment in the main implied that all people with a disability—regardless of the severity of their disability—could access the open labour market. Their concept of supported employment had, therefore, a strong emphasis on social inclusion whereas the FÁS Pilot Programme is an active labour market initiative and is explicitly targeting people with a disability who are able to work for 15 hours per week. The Pilot Programme also had a strong focus on the employment needs of employers.

These difficulties in the operation of the Pilot Programme were initially compounded by low levels of monitoring and supervision of the projects locally/regionally by Community Services division of FÁS and by a lack of awareness of the Pilot Programme generally within the organisation. There were also problems within the organisation in terms of managing the information flows from the projects. The provision of specific resource within Community Services division at head office level is helping to re-address some of these issues.

Benefits

The Pilot Programme has brought significant benefits to the large number of participants who have been assisted to integrate into paid employment within the open labour market. It has facilitated the provision of specialised supported employment services to a much wider target audience than had previously been available. The participants have developed new vocational skills and importantly an enhanced sense of their own self-worth.

There have been also gains for employers who have been able to tap into a new source of recruits particularly during the early stages of the Pilot Programme when tight labour market conditions prevailed. The feed-back from employers indicates that not only were people with a disability a source of labour they had not previously considered but it has also opened their eyes to their abilities.

The cost of the Pilot Programme to the State has been estimated at €8,129 per participant placed in employment. When the cost of State benefits is factored in—the vast majority of participants placed in employment retain their State benefits, then the average cost per participant placed in employment rises to €14,392.

Excluding State benefits, the average Pilot Programme cost per participant placed in employment of €8,129 is, based on figures supplied by FÁS, nearly twice the cost of people placed in employment by the Local Employment Service, estimated at €4,758. However, comparisons must bear in mind the more intensive level of support provided by job coaches in the Pilot Programme.

2.2 Conclusions

Key findings and conclusions in relation to the review of the Pilot Programme are as follows:

1. The operation of the Pilot Programme has led to the implementation of a supported employment service on a nation-wide basis;
2. The Pilot Programme has successfully demonstrated that supported employment can assist people with a disability with the appropriate supports to access the open labour market. During the period November 2000 to June 2002, a total of 775 Programme participants were placed in employment;
3. It has also shown that supported employment is suitable for all the major disability sectors (learning, physical, hidden, sensory and mental health). It should be recognised, however, that this review only covered the first 20 months of the Pilot Programme's operation and longitudinal research will be needed to fully assess its outcomes;
4. The Pilot Programme has addressed a gap in the provision of information and advice on employment opportunities to people with a disability which hitherto they have difficulties accessing;
5. An important outcome of the Pilot Programme is that it has demonstrated to employers the value of employing a person with a disability;
6. The high drop-out rate of participants prior to placement and of participants who left employment after placement suggests the need for an in-depth review of participant selection and recruitment procedures; additionally, the case of the latter, it also points to the need for preparation for work—as opposed to vocational—skills training;
7. There are differing understandings of supported employment particularly with regard to the target group to whom supports should be offered to access the open labour market;
8. There were difficulties associated with the administration of the Pilot Programme as some consortia chose to ignore the contract they had signed with FÁS and also disregarded Pilot Programme guidelines. There were also difficulties with the way in which FÁS staff within the regions interpreted the guidelines and with the way in which data from the projects was processed;
9. The issue of double-funding arises in a number of instances of which the participation in other State-sponsored programmes such as Day activity centres by participants placed in employment is one. It is inevitable given the need for a wide range of supports for people with a disability that there will be an overlap of funding provision;
10. A more pressing issue is the fact that despite being placed in employment the overwhelming majority of participants still retain their State benefits such as the Disability Allowance. There is an ingrained belief among participants and their immediate families that once State benefits are relinquished they are difficult to get back;
11. While the Pilot Programme has demonstrated positive benefits both for people with a disability and employers, the cost per individual placement is relatively high;
12. The consortia approach to the provision of supported employment services has shown the potential to work well and with appropriate modifications should be retained;
13. The operation of the Pilot Programme has led to the development of examples of good practice that should be built upon in relation to future supported employment initiatives;
14. The concept of supported employment used in the Pilot Programme could be extended to other labour market-disadvantaged groups.

2.3 Recommendations

A number of recommendations to improve the operation and administration of future supported employment initiatives are presented below:

Programme duration

- The suggested minimum period for the operation of a future supported employment initiative is 3 years.

Structure

- The use of consortia to provide supported employment services on behalf of FÁS should be continued;
- Consortia selection should have regard to the objective of covering all areas of the country;
- The membership of consortia should be extended to include community development organisations, local business representative groups as well as the disability service providers;
- FÁS should not be a member of a consortium but should have an observer status within the consortium's policy-making committee;
- Each consortium should have its own legal identity and this should be separate from the legal identity of the sponsor organisation;

Operations

- Each consortium should have a full-time project co-ordinator;
- Guidelines should be developed by FÁS for implementation by projects in relation to job description, person specifications and recruitment and selection procedures for staff;
- Where possible and feasible, the project should be based in a central location that is independent of consortium member organisations; consideration should be given to using the premises of existing mainstream employment service providers such as FÁS, LES, etc.;
- Detailed guidelines should be developed for entry onto future supported employment initiatives. These should include specific guidelines on the level of job readiness of potential participants and minimum number of hours worked per week. FÁS should develop a suitable job ready definition to be used in relation to programme participant selection;
- These guidelines should be complemented by structures which seek to assess the level of job readiness of people with a disability at the time of application. This may involve inputs from both FÁS Placement Officers and project personnel. The development and implementation of these structures can help increase project throughput as job coaches can then concentrate on the placement of participants who have been assessed as job ready. Applicants lacking vocational or work preparation skills can be directed to other FÁS initiatives or to external Department of Health and Children-funded supports such as club houses;
- The existing Pilot Programme operating guidelines should be further developed to include instructions on the type of placements that will be allowed. For example, to minimise potential instances of double-funding placements in a consortium member organisation should be disallowed as should placements in public sector bodies;

- Where consortium member organisations lack specific expertise across all disability sectors, the projects should develop their own panels to whom they can refer participants for further assessment;
- In accordance with Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/FÁS policy and strategy documents, projects should be open to applications from all people with a disability in their catchment area. Particular attention should be placed on identifying the population for whom supported employment services should be provided. Additionally, the projects should be more proactive in seeking information on the numbers of people with disabilities in their catchment area that could avail of their services and in developing promotional strategies to increase awareness among their target group;
- Support should be provided to facilitate the development of internal administration and reporting systems within the projects. This should draw on existing best practice developed by the Pilot Programme-funded projects;

Monitoring and reporting

- In order to ensure the effective operation of future supported employment initiatives, both consortia and FÁS regional staff should adhere to the programme terms and guidelines;
- The Community Services Division of FÁS should continue to retain responsibility for future supported employment initiatives. However, consideration should be given to the development of formal information linkages between the projects and FÁS Employment Services Division;
- Revised guidelines for quarterly reports should be developed that take into account the data required for the monitoring of projects. As an example, the quarterly reports should be revised to include new placements for the quarter and the cumulative total placements. The revised guidelines should also draw on the work commenced internally by FÁS to streamline reporting procedures;
- Internal systems should be developed so that information flows from the projects are captured, analysed and disseminated to relevant decision-makers within FÁS;
- Monitoring visits to projects should take place twice a year and should involve meetings with project staff, participants and employers;
- Community Services staff having responsibility for future supported employment initiatives should receive training in new reporting and monitoring systems;
- Additional training in disability awareness should be provided to FÁS staff interfacing with project staff and participants;
- Additional training in the aims and objectives of supported employment programme provision should be provided to FÁS staff interfacing with project staff and participants;
- There is a need for longer term monitoring and evaluation to assess impact and cost-effectiveness over time;

Promotion

- Resources should be allocated for both the internal and external promotion of any future supported employment initiatives;
- Additional resources should be set aside to increase the level of awareness among employers of other related FÁS supports such as the Employment Support Scheme and disability awareness training. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's new Workway initiative has the potential to assist in the process of educating employers to the advantages of employing people with disabilities;

- The Irish Association of Supported Employment (IASE) should be encouraged to take a more active role in the promotion of supported employment;
- Consideration should be given to the development of a common branding identity strategy and standard for supported employment projects to increase the level of recognition among employers. Both FÁS and IASE should be involved in the development of the promotional standard;

Training and development

- Basic training, with certification, should be provided for project co-ordinators and job coaches. In addition, some further development for project co-ordinators and job coaches should be provided;
- Project staff should be fully briefed on the National Minimum Wage legislation;
- Consideration should be given to the role of the Irish Association for Supported Employment in skills development;

Other

- FÁS in conjunction with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment should discuss with the Department of Health and Children and associated agencies the provision of a supported employment service for people with a disability having higher support needs.

3. Overview of the National Pilot

3.1 Launch of Pilot Programme

Training and employment services for people with disabilities were restructured in June 2000 as part of the Government's policy of mainstreaming services to people with disabilities. The objective of the Government's policy is to provide services to people with disabilities in an integrated way which offers them more choice than was previously available. This approach is in accordance with the recommendations in the *Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities*, which was published in 1996.

Under the restructuring, policy responsibility for vocational training and employment of people with disabilities in the open labour market transferred from the Department of Health and Children to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Responsibility for social skills/personal development training (referred to as 'Rehabilitative Training') and for Sheltered Occupational Services remained with the Department of Health and Children.

Employment and vocational training policies for people with disabilities are now formulated in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment as part of general labour market policy, underlining the move from a medical attitude to disability to an inclusive economic and social view of disability.

The Department's policies are being developed through a three dimensional approach, which involves:

- (1) facilitating the progression of people with disabilities into sustainable employment through the *development of their skills*;
- (2) *stimulating awareness* amongst employers of the contribution which people with disabilities can make to their businesses and encouraging companies to more actively consider recruiting people with disabilities to fill their vacancies;
- (3) providing specific *employment supports* for people with disabilities and employers.

Underlying the Department's policy approach is the recognition that people with disabilities have a contribution to make to the economy.

To encourage the progression of people with disabilities into the open labour market, the Government, through the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Mary Harney T.D., announced in July 2000 the provision of €5.1 million for the development and implementation of a national supported employment initiative. In April 2001, the Minister announced additional funding for the supported employment initiative.

The National Pilot for the Supported Employment Programme was launched by FÁS in 2000. Applications were invited from interested organisations to provide a supported employment service to people with a disability.

Preference was given to organisations working to integrate people with disabilities in the open labour market. FÁS indicated that preference would be given to proposals which:

- involved a consortium of organisations that could service a geographical area using a co-ordinated approach;
- would employ 3 or more job coaches;
- could deal with a full range and extent of disabilities.

FÁS also indicated that new and existing promoters of supported employment programmes would be eligible to apply.

Successful applicants were expected to provide a supported employment service from October 1, 2000, to December 31, 2001.

In its documentation, FÁS outlined the following aims for the Pilot Programme:

- to facilitate the integration of people with disabilities into paid employment, in the open labour market;
- to provide support to assist with this integration process;
- to meet the labour requirements of employers.

FÁS also outlined its concept of supported employment and emphasised that the Pilot Programme was an employment initiative that sought to integrate people with disabilities—who traditionally had difficulties getting into paid employment—in the open labour market, by providing supports on the job.

FÁS described supported employment as having four key strands which would be carried out by a single individual, often referred to as a job coach. The four strands involved:

1. a needs assessment, with the individual, 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;
4. providing the employee with necessary support and coaching in the workplace. The amount of support provided should decrease over time as the employee learns the skills required for the job and adapting to the workplace.

Additionally, the job coach would, where circumstances dictated, provide supports to employers and co-workers to facilitate the integration of the employee with disability into the work-place.

3.2 Funding

FÁS indicated that the following tasks would be funded under the Pilot Programme:

- needs assessment of individual participants and identification of preferred and suitable employment options;
- pre-employment guidance, e.g. interview preparation, on-the-job communications, assistance in completing application forms, etc;
- sourcing of suitable employment and carrying out of job analysis;
- placements of job-seekers with employers in integrated work settings;
- identifying and sourcing work adaptation equipment necessary to do the job;
- provision of on-going job-related support to the employee, as required;
- provision of guidance and advice to the employer, in relation to the integration of the employee into the workforce;
- development of a workplace mentor to facilitate full integration of the employee into the workforce;
- management and administration of the project.

Specifically, funding would be made available towards the following costs:

- recruitment of job coaches;
- salary of job coaches including Employer PRSI contributions;

- team leader or co-ordinator for projects that involved 5 or more job coaches;
- administrative and overhead costs associated with operating the Programme;
- on-going training and development of job coaches;
- transport costs for job coaches/team leaders;
- costs related to recruitment of participants and/or employers for the Programme.

FÁS stated that it would arrange initial training for the job coaches for successful projects.

3.3 Programme requirements

FÁS provided information to prospective consortia in relation to the eligibility of people with disabilities who could participate in the Pilot Programme and to businesses who would employ them.

The requirements for people with disability were that they should have a disability and the nature of that disability should be such that they genuinely needed the initial support of a job coach to obtain, and integrate into, employment in the open labour market. FÁS also expected that most job-seekers would be placed for a minimum of 15 hours per week though exceptions would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Participants could not be employed by an immediate family member.

FÁS stated that employers would be required to fully comply with employment legislation as regards conditions of employment, including employment contract, tax and PRSI deductions. Remuneration would, at a minimum, be in accordance with the terms of the National Minimum Wage Act, 1999 and would be a matter for agreement between the employer and the employee (or in conjunction with the Job Coach as an advocate for the employee).

FÁS further specified that successful consortia would be responsible for the recruitment of participants for inclusion on the Supported Employment Programme. FÁS stipulated that every effort should be made to ensure gender-balance amongst participants. Additionally, FÁS and Local Employment Services would also have a right to refer people with disabilities to the projects of successful consortia.

3.4 Selection of applicants

A committee was convened within FÁS to assess applications from interested consortia who wished to participate in the Pilot Programme.

The committee reviewed the applications and preference was given to those consortia that could service both a geographical area using a co-ordinated approach and a full range and extent of disabilities and would employ 3 or more job coaches. The committee also reviewed the composition of the consortium, its unit costs and the ratio of job coaches to participants.

The committee's review indicated that the number of job coaches and unit costs varied greatly between the applicant consortia. The selection committee decided that to maximise the number of consortia that could offer the Pilot Programme it was necessary to establish a financial framework and specify a job coach-to-participant ratio. In relation to the latter, the committee determined a 1:6 ratio of job coach to participants as this was in the middle of the range of ratios in the proposals submitted by applicant consortia.

The consortia whose proposals had met the initial selection criteria had their costs adjusted in line with the financial framework.

Given that costs outlined in the proposals greatly exceeded the available budget, additional criteria for selecting the remaining proposals were agreed. These included:

- the range and extent of people with disabilities who would receive a service;

- the agencies' understanding and experience of supported employment;
- adjusted unit costs;
- examination of the programme intent through evaluation of the expected outcomes and projected targets;
- clarity of expected outcomes;
- specific geographical target area;
- number of proposed participants.

To further maximise the number of proposals that could receive funding the selection committee agreed to reduce the number of requested job coaches in remaining proposals.

The selection committee approved a total of 24 consortia to receive funding for the provision of a supported employment service.

It should be noted that not all consortia were approved at the same time. Though the majority of applicants were given approval in 2000 some did not receive the go-ahead until late 2001 or early 2002. This occurred because a number of applicants were not successful initially because they did not meet the selection criteria; when the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment provided additional funding in 2001, they were requested to resubmit applications (in some cases, they were encouraged to widen the composition of their consortium).

Three consortia, County Roscommon Supported Employment Partnership, Meath Consortium for Supported Employment and Waterford Employment Support Agency, did not start until 2002.

Two consortia (Laois and Kilkenny) were selected though they have less than 3 job coaches.

The successful consortia and their respective catchment areas are listed below by the date their project commenced:

Consortium	Date started	Catchment area
Dublin South West Supported Employment Service	November 2000	Dublin areas 10, 12, 22, 24
Wicklow Supported Employment Network	December 2000	County Wicklow
Clare Supported Employment Service	January 2001	County Clare
Kildare Coalition of Supported Employment	January 2001	County Kildare
Disability Employment Network (DEN)	February 2001	North Dublin (city and county)
Carlow Access Movement	February 2001	County Carlow
Monaghan Supported Employment Service	March 2001	County Monaghan
Laois Consortium of Supported Employment	March 2001	County Laois
Work Web West	March 2001	County Mayo
Wexford Consortium of Supported Employment	March 2001	County Wexford
County Louth Supported Employment Partnership	April 2001	County Louth and South Monaghan
Galway Supported Employment Consortium	April 2001	Galway (city and county)
Work Start West Cork	April 2001	West Cork
Dublin South Supported Employment Initiative	April 2001	Dublin areas 2, 4, 6, 14, 16, 18 and South County Dublin
Midland Supported Employment Agency	April 2001	Counties Offaly, Westmeath and Longford
Breannán Consortium	May 2001	County Kerry
Work Access – Limerick Supported Employment	May 2001	Limerick (city and county)
Kilkenny Supported Employment Service	June 2001	County Kilkenny
North West Supported Employment Partnership Programme	June 2001	Counties Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal and Cavan (west)
Cavan Supported Employment Service	November 2001	County Cavan
County Roscommon Supported Employment Partnership	January 2002	County Roscommon
Meath Consortium for Supported Employment	April 2002	County Meath
Waterford Employment Support Agency	April 2002	County Waterford

It can be seen that some counties appear to be covered by more than one consortia. For example, two consortia, North West Supported Employment Partnership Programme and Cavan Supported Employment Service are funded to provide supported employment services to people with a disability in Cavan.

In Cork, First Employment Services (FES) provide supported employment services in Cork city and county while Work Start West Cork cover from Clonakilty to Castletownbere. The exact boundary between the catchment areas of these two projects is not clear-cut.

Even where there are clearly defined boundaries between projects such as county boundaries, a person with a disability living in the catchment area of one project may find it easier for transport reasons to avail of the services of a neighbouring project.

3.5 Contractual arrangements

Contracts were signed between FÁS and the sponsor organisations within the consortia selected to participate in the Pilot Programme. The sponsor (or lead) organisation within each consortium was entrusted with a number of responsibilities. These included:

- to oversee the recruitment and provision of team leader;
- to oversee the recruitment and provision of job coaches;
- to oversee the recruitment of participants;
- to provide a safe and secure environment for all staff and users of the service;
- to comply with the terms and conditions laid down in the agreement with FÁS;
- to co-operate with all FÁS departments and the Local Employment Service (LES).

The sponsor in conjunction with the other members of the consortium was required to carry out the following additional roles:

- to provide a well-organised Programme for participants. A major requirement was the provision of quality supports, assisting integration into the open labour market and facilitating progression;
- to provide development and training of the employee in the work-place that will build the employability of the individual in the open labour market, with clear targets and supports for progression;
- to administer the Programme satisfactorily in relation to achieving performance targets, finances, financial and non-financial records, statutory obligations, etc.

The contractual agreement signed between FÁS and the individual consortium made specific reference to the following:

- The name and address of the sponsor;
- The names and addresses of the consortium members;
- The catchment area for which the consortium would provide supported employment services;
- The commencement and termination dates for the Supported Employment Programme;
- The funding allocation;
- The average ratio of participants to job coaches;
- The name and address of the person who is responsible for the Supported Employment Programme.

Instructions were provided to the successful consortia in relation to publicising their project e.g. launches, brochures, etc. The consortia were also made aware of their obligations under the Freedom of Information Act.

For its part, FÁS undertook to provide grant aid and monitor the programme. It also undertook to provide support and assistance and initial training for job coaches.

The use of consortia in the delivery of supported employment services reflects a core value in the FÁS' Statement of Strategy 2002–2005 to form alliances and working partnerships with other organisations and service providers to meet organisational goals.

The initial contract between FÁS and the majority of consortia was for the provision of supported employment services up to the end of December 2001. Towards the end of 2001, FÁS announced that it was extending the duration of the Pilot Programme for a further twelve months i.e. the Programme would now terminate at December 31, 2002. Following the

government's decision to fund a new supported employment programme, FÁS announced that the Pilot Programme would be extended to March 31, 2003.

3.6 Internal programme administration within FÁS

The Supported Employment Programme was initially developed by the Social Inclusion Unit within Programme Development.

The Unit developed detailed operating guidelines for the Pilot Programme in December 2000 which were sent to all successful applicants.

The guidelines stipulated that the sponsor in conjunction with other consortium organisations was to provide the Unit on a quarterly basis with information on all new participants in the Participants' Summary Report. Additionally, the sponsor and/or consortia organisations were also required to compile on a quarterly Indicator and Operational Report Forms and a Quarterly Operational Report. Both of these documents were to be sent to their local FÁS Community Services Unit.

The Pilot Programme guidelines indicated that at least two formal reviews would be undertaken of consortia by FÁS staff responsible for the monitoring of the Supported Employment Programme.

In June 2001, the management of the Pilot Programme was transferred to the Community Services Division. As each participant on the Pilot Programme had to be registered with the Employment Services Division, the projects, therefore, interacted with Community Services for contract and reporting purposes and with Employment Services for the registration of participants.

The Social Inclusion Unit retained an involvement in the Pilot Programme from a policy development perspective.

4. Programme outputs

4.1 Introduction

The Pilot Programme is delivered throughout the country through 24 consortia consisting of two or more organisations which operate projects to provide supported employment services to people with disabilities.

This Section outlines the outputs of the Pilot Programme. The data on outputs was largely obtained through the application of a self-completion questionnaire to each of the 24 projects.

4.2 Overall results

The National Pilot for the Supported Employment Programme provided services to 1,918 people with a disability during the period November 2000 to June 2002. These services included needs assessment, job placement and job retention and supports.

The operation of the Pilot Programme has resulted in a total of 775 people with a disability being placed in employment between November 2000 and June 2002. However, 172 of this total had left employment after placement. It should be noted that some of these were subsequently placed in other jobs. Reasons advanced for the turnover of participants include the lack of interpersonal skills or that their employers were adversely affected by declining business.

Additionally, of the 1,918 participants to whom supported employment services had been provided, 374 left the Programme prior to placement. Many of these left because they were not job ready or because they wished to pursue other opportunities in education or vocational training.

The majority of people with a disability to whom services have been provided under the Pilot Programme have a learning disability. People with a learning disability account for 61 per cent of all people with a disability placed in employment under the Pilot Programme between November 2001 and June 2002. The majority of placements, 84 per cent, took place during the twelve months ending June 2002; this reflects a number of factors including that consortia had different start dates and that there was a settling-in period for project staff.

Four-fifths of the Pilot Programme participants placed in employment in the period under review were referred by consortia member organisations.

4.3 Programme participants

This sub-section examines data in relation to all Programme participants while Section 4.4 below focuses on those participants who were placed in employment.

Fifty eight per cent of the 1,918 people with a disability to whom employment-related services were provided under the Pilot Programme during the period November 2000–June 2002 were male and forty two per cent were female (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Gender of Pilot Programme participants	%
Male	58
Female	42
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

As shown in Table 4.2, just under 60 per cent of the Programme participants were in the 18–34 age group while a just under a quarter were in the 35–44 age category. The remainder were in the 45–65 age group.

Table 4.2

Age group	%
18–34	59
35–44	24
45–65	17
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

People with a learning disability accounted for 47 per cent of the total number of participants. As indicated in Table 4.3, a quarter of all participants were in the mental health category while 19 per cent had a physical disability. The remaining ten per cent was made up of people with a sensory disability (6 per cent) and people with a hidden disability (4 per cent).

Table 4.3

Participants by type of disability	%
Learning	47
Mental health	24
Hidden	4
Physical	19
Sensory	6
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The projects were asked to identify the pre-registration status of participants during the period November 2000–June 2002. The responses show (Table 4.4) that just over a fifth of participants had been unemployed for more than 12 months at the time they registered with the Pilot Programme. Fourteen per cent had been unemployed for less than 12 months at time of registration.

Twenty two per cent of all participants had been involved in vocational training at the time they registered of which 16 per cent were with specialist training providers, 2 per cent with FÁS and the balance with other vocational training providers.

Sixteen per cent of participants had been involved in rehabilitative training at the time they registered with the Pilot Programme.

Six per cent of participants had been in employment prior to joining the programme. This amount is made up of 3 per cent in supported employment and 3 per cent in competitive employment.

Two per cent were in full-time education while the pre-registration status of 19 per cent of Programme participants fell into the "Other" category; the majority of the latter are believed to be people who had worked in a sheltered work-shop.

Table 4.4

Pre-registration status	%
Vocational training – specialist	16
Vocational training – FAS	2
Vocational Training – other	4
Full-time education	2
Unemployed (>12 months)	22
Unemployed (<12 months)	14
Employment – Competitive	3
Employment – Supported	3
Rehabilitation training	16
Other	19
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

As indicated in Table 4.5, consortia member organisations were the predominant source of referrals of participants during the period November 2000–June 2002. Just under three-quarters of all referrals, 73 per cent, were from consortia member organisations. Six per cent of referrals were from FÁS and two per cent were from LES. It should be noted that the LES was a partner organisation in a number of projects e.g. First Employment Services in Cork. Other sources of referrals, mainly self-referrals, accounted for 19 per cent of the total.

Table 4.5

Source of referral	%
Consortia member organisations	73
FÁS	6
LES	2
Other	19
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The following sub-section examines data relating to the Programme participants placed in employment.

4.4 Participants placed in employment

The survey of projects funded under the Pilot Programme indicates that a total of 775 participants had been placed in employment during the period November 2000–June 2002 (see Table 4.6).

As noted above, male participants accounted for 58 per cent of all programme participants and also accounted for a similar percentage, 57 per cent, of all participants placed in employment during the period under review.

Table 4.6

Gender of participants placed in employment	%
Male	57
Female	43
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Participants in the 18–34 age bracket accounted for over half, 54 per cent, of the participants placed in employment in the period November 2000–June 2002. The second age group, 35–44, accounted for a slightly higher proportion of employment placements, 30 per cent, then its share of total programme participants (24 per cent). Sixteen per cent of the participants placed in employment were in the 45–65 age group as shown in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7

Age group of participants placed in employment	%
18–34	54
35–44	30
45–65	16
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Six out of every ten programme participants placed in employment had a learning disability (Table 4.8). Seventeen per cent of participants placed in employment had a mental health disability. Participants with a physical disability formed the next largest group at 15 per cent followed by sensory (6 per cent) and hidden (3 per cent).

Table 4.8

Main type of disability	%
Learning	60
Mental health	17
Hidden	3
Physical	15
Sensory	6
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The analysis of participants in employment during the period November 2000–June 2002 indicates that 30 per cent had been unemployed at the time they registered with the Programme (Table 4.9). Eighteen per cent of programme participants placed in employment had been unemployed for more than twelve months at the time of registration while twelve per cent had been unemployed for less than twelve months.

A total of 26 per cent of participants placed in employment had been in vocational training at the time they registered with the Pilot Programme; the majority of these (19%) had been receiving training from specialist training providers. Two per cent were involved with FÁS vocational training while 5 per cent were with other vocational training providers.

Thirteen per cent of participants placed in employment had been receiving rehabilitative training at the time of registration. Interviews with project staff indicate that the participants with rehabilitative training can be equally successful in sustaining employment in the open labour market as their counterparts with vocational training particularly where they have a strong personal commitment to working in a mainstream setting.

A small percentage of participants (1 per cent) were in full-time education at the time of registration with the Programme.

Six per cent of participants placed in employment had previously been in employment at the time they registered with the Programme: three per cent had been employed through a previous supported employment initiative while a further three per cent had found employment in the competitive market.

Many of the participants who found employment under the Pilot Programme previously worked in sheltered workshops. The majority of these were included in the "Other" category which accounts for a quarter of all participants placed in employment. Interviews with participants suggest that many had been involved in sheltered workshops prior to finding employment under the Pilot Programme.

Table 4.9

Pre-registration status of participants placed in employment	%
Vocational training – specialist	19
Vocational training – FAS	2
Vocational Training – other	5
Full-time education	1
Unemployed (>12 months)	18
Unemployed (<12 months)	12
Employment – Competitive	3
Employment – Supported	3
Rehabilitation training	13
Other	24
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Though consortia member organisations were the main source of referrals for participants on the Pilot Programme (73 per cent), they were, as shown in Table 4.10, a proportionately larger source of referrals of participants placed in employment during the period November 2000–June 2002. Consortia member organisations were the source of referral for 81 per cent of all participants in employment. FÁS was the source of referral for 6 per cent of Programme

participants placed in employment while the LES accounted for 1 per cent. The balance of 12 per cent was mainly made up of self-referrals.

Table 4.10

Source of referral of participants placed in employment	%
Consortia member organisations	81
FÁS	6
LES	1
Other	12
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

4.5 Nature of employment

This sub-section provides details of the participants placed in employment during the period under review, November 2000–June 2002, in terms of industry sector and company size.

A high proportion of participants placed in employment worked in the services sector and, in particular, in the retail, catering, wholesale and hotel sub-sector. Forty per cent of participants were employed in this sub-sector while an additional 30 per cent were employed in the "Other services" category (tourism, personal services, etc.). As indicated in Table 4.11, a further ten per cent were employed in transport/communication, financial services, cleaning and security sub-sectors.

Eight per cent of the participants worked in food and drink companies while a further 5 per cent were employed in the engineering sector.

Two per cent of participants worked in the textile and clothing/footwear manufacturing sectors.

Table 4.11

Industry sector	%
Textile manufacturing	1
Clothing and footwear manufacturing	1
Food/drink/tobacco manufacturing	8
Construction	3
Retail/wholesale/hotel/catering	40
Engineering assistance	5
Chemical manufacturing	1
Printing and paper	2
Other services	30
Transport/communications	2
Financial services	3
Cleaning	4
Security	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The analysis of the data provided by the projects on the types of jobs obtained by participants shows that the majority are in low skill categories such as cleaners, kitchen assistants, retail assistants and general operatives.

There are isolated incidents of where participants have been placed in employment within consortia member organisations which were not permitted under the Pilot Programme. A small number of placements occurred in public sector bodies raising issues such as double-funding and whether they could be construed as being open market employment.

Sixty two Programme participants, or 8 per cent of the total, had been placed on other FÁS schemes such as Community Employment or the Social Economy Programme during the November 2000–June 2002 time-frame (Table 4.12).

The projects have argued strongly for participants to be allowed access to other FÁS schemes given that many have never worked before and though they might possess the appropriate vocational skills they lacked preparation for work skills. They acknowledge that there is an issue of double-funding but stress that the actual amount of service provided by the job coach is minimal and generally takes the form of keeping lines of communication open with the participant.

Table 4.12
Participants placed on other FÁS schemes

	No.
<i>Total</i>	62

Just under two-thirds of the participants were employed in companies with a work-force of less than 50. A quarter of participants were employees of companies employing less than 10 while 39 per cent were employed in companies employing between 11–50 employees.

As shown in Table 4.13, sixteen per cent of participants were employees of companies in the 51–100 size category while seven per cent were employed in firms whose work-force was between 101–200.

Six per cent of Programme participants were employed in companies with a work-force of between 201–500 while a similar percentage found employment in firms employing over 500 people.

Table 4.13
Participants placed by company size

	%
Less than 10	25
11–50	39
51–100	16
101–200	7
201–500	6
Over 500	6
<i>Total</i>	100

The following sub-section examines the terms and conditions of participants placed in employment with respect to hours worked, remuneration and availability of employment contracts.

4.6 Terms and conditions of participants placed in employment

The majority of Pilot Programme participants placed in employment during November 2000–June 2002 had only been in employment for less than 12 months (see Table 4.14 below). Forty seven per cent of respondents had been in employment for less than six months while a further thirty seven per cent had been employed for between six and twelve months.

Fourteen per cent of respondents had been in employment for between 12–18 months and the balance had been employed for more than 18 months.

Table 4.14
Length of time in employment

	%
Less than 6 months	47
6–12 months	37
12–18 months	14
Over 18 months	2
<i>Total</i>	100

Over half of the participants placed in employment during the period under review worked for less than 15 hours per week; 10 per cent worked for less than five hours per week with 43 per cent worked between 6 and 15 hours per week.

A third of participants worked between 16 and 25 hours per week while five per cent were employed for between 26–35 hours per week. As indicated in Table 4.15, the balance of 8 per cent worked for more than 36 hours per week.

Table 4.15

Hours worked per week	%
Less than 5 hours	10
6–15 hours	43
16–25	33
26–35	5
More than 36 hours	8
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The projects surveyed were asked to calculate the average hours their participants worked per week. The responses ranged from the lowest at 10 hours per week to the highest at 20.7 hours with the average being 15.9 hours per week (Table 4.16).

Table 4.16

Average hours worked	Hours
Average	15.9
Median	15.9
Mode	12.0

The projects were asked to specify the gross average pay (excluding State benefits or subsidies) of participants placed in employment. The responses shown in Table 4.17 indicate that just under half (46 per cent) of the participants placed in employment earned between €50–100 per week while 18 per cent earned less than €50 per week. Twenty per cent received between €101–150 per week while four per cent earned between €151–200 per week. The balance, 12 per cent, were paid a weekly wage of over €201.

Table 4.17

Weekly wage levels	%
Less than €50	18
€50–100	46
€101–150	20
€151–200	4
More than €201	12
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The projects were requested to specify the average hourly wage level of the participants that they had placed in employment. The responses ranged from €5.28 to €9.93 an hour with the average across the projects being €6.22 which is above the National Minimum of €5.97 Wage (Table 4.18).

Table 4.18

Average hourly wages	€
Average	6.22
Median	6.00
Mode	5.97

A total of 48 participants placed in employment, or 6 per cent of the total, were recorded as being paid less than the National Minimum Wage (Table 4.19). Caution should be exercised in using this figure as the interviews with project co-ordinators and job coaches suggest that there is a lack of awareness of the specific details of National Minimum Wage legislation and this may also be reflected in the data provided by the respondents to the questionnaire. Under the National Minimum Wage legislation, an experienced adult worker is entitled to an average hourly rate of pay that is not less than €5.97 per working hour in a week, a fortnight or no longer than a month. An experienced adult worker is defined as an employee who is not

(i) under age 18, or (ii) in the first two years after the date of first employment over age 18, or (iii) a trainee undergoing a course that satisfies the conditions set out in Statutory Instrument No. 99 of 2000. The law sets out the correct minimum rate of pay in accordance with a person's employment circumstances e.g. under age 18. Thus, for example, an employer would not be required to pay the €5.97 rate per hour if the Pilot Programme participant had never worked before. It is recommended that information on the National Minimum Wage legislation be provided to the projects for dissemination to project co-ordinators and job coaches.

Table 4.19
Participants receiving less than the National Minimum Wage No.

<i>Total</i>	<i>48</i>
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There was a significant variation in the level of terms and conditions offered to the participants placed in employment as shown in Table 4.20 below.

Seventy five per cent of the participants had an employment contract to which the 11 per cent of participants included in the "Other" category can be added because all of these were offered the same terms and conditions as their co-workers.

Sixty five per cent of participants were entitled to annual leave. A sick pay scheme was available to 26 per cent of participants while 13 per cent could avail of worker representation.

Fourteen per cent of participants could avail of over-time opportunities.

Table 4.20
Terms and conditions

	%
Employment contract	75
Provision of over-time	14
Worker representation	13
Sick pay scheme	26
Annual leave	65
Other	11

The percentage of participants recorded as not having an employment contract—14 per cent—may include some cases where it was not that the employer was unwilling to provide it but that neither the job coach nor participant had sought it. Were the projects to strictly enforce the FÁS guidelines, it is likely that the percentage of participants without a contract would be reduced.

4.7 State supports provided to participants

This sub-section examines the State supports provided to Pilot Programme participants.

The vast majority of participants placed in employment retained their State benefit or subsidy; for example, eighty seven per cent of participants placed in employment kept their Disability Allowance (Table 4.21). Only four per cent of participants in employment were not in receipt of State benefits or subsidies. Those holding on to their Disability Benefit, Invalidity Pension or Unemployment Assistance accounted for 6 per cent. The balance was accounted by participants in the "Other" category.

Interviews with a wide variety of informants have pointed to the strongly held attitude among participants—and particularly their immediate families—of the importance of retaining their State benefits in case the job did not work out. Participants with mental health difficulties highlighted the need to retain their medical cards; some said it was more important to retain their medical card than their job.

Table 4.21

Retention of State benefits/subsidies	%
None	4
Disability Allowance	87
Disability Benefit	3
Invalidity Pension	1
Unemployment Assistance	2
Other	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The projects surveyed were asked to specify the number of participants placed in employment who availed of other State sponsored programmes when they were not at work. The responses are shown in Table 4.22 below.

Thirty eight per cent of the total number of participants in employment as of June 30, 2002, were engaged in other State sponsored programmes when not employed. Thirteen per cent attended sheltered workshops while nine per cent attended day activity centres. Sixteen per cent attended other non-specified State sponsored programmes.

It is noted that the participation of Pilot Programme participants in other State sponsored programmes raises issues in relation to double funding; these issues require additional data collection and analysis that were outside the parameters of this study.

Table 4.22

Attendance at other State sponsored programmes	%
Sheltered workshops	13
Day activity	9
Other	16

4.8 Participants leaving Pilot Programme or employment

The questionnaire sought information from the respondents on the numbers of participants who had (a) left the Pilot Programme prior to placement and (b) had left employment after placement.

Table 4.23 shows that 376 participants left the Pilot Programme prior to placement while 172 participants left employment following placement.

Table 4.23

Participants who left the Pilot Programme prior to placement or who left employment	No.
Participants who have left the Pilot Programme prior to placement	376
Participants who had been placed in employment but were no longer in a job	172

The questionnaire did not seek data on the reasons why participants left the Pilot Programme prior to placement or why they had left employment following placement in a job.

However, the feed-back from the interviews and case studies indicates that many of the participants who left the Pilot Programme prior to placement were not job ready or wished to pursue other opportunities such as education or vocational training. It is believed that the former resulted from lack of adherence by some consortia to Pilot Programme selection guidelines.

Similarly, a number of reasons were advanced as to why participants had left employment following placement. In some cases the participants lost their job because their employer suffered a down-turn in business; in other cases, the participant left to pursue other choices e.g. further education. It is worth pointing out that there was consensus among the project personnel and employers interviewed that the lack of work preparation—as opposed to

vocational—skills was often a key factor as to why participants had not been able to hold down jobs. Work preparation skills were defined as including punctuality, personal and interpersonal skills. Employers in particular highlighted the need for employees with a disability to interact socially with both supervisors and fellow employees.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the North Western Health Board which is the sponsor organisation for the North West Supported Employment Partnership Programme project is currently piloting a training initiative to develop work preparation skills. The Training Understanding and Supporting Ability (TUSA) initiative—which is being funded by FÁS—aims to provide trainees with the skills knowledge and attitude necessary to progress to specific skills training, further education or supported/open employment. The TUSA initiative was developed in response to people with disability who had been placed in employment under the Pilot Programme but who had been unable to hold their job due to their lack of work preparation as opposed to vocational skills. Section 4.11 below examines factors which can influence the effectiveness of placements.

4.9 Project perspectives

The projects surveyed were asked to respond to a series of statements using the following scale: Strongly agree; agree; neither agree nor disagree; disagree; strongly disagree.

The results indicate that a high proportion of the projects agreed that networking among consortium members had been a major benefit of the Pilot Programme. Ninety two per cent of respondents agreed with the statement while 8 per cent were neutral on this issue.

Statement 1:

Networking among the consortium members has been a major benefit of the Pilot Programme	%
Strongly agree	63
Agree	29
Neither agree nor disagree	8
Disagree	–
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Seventy one per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that the model of organisational structure where job coaches are based in a central location is the most effective. Just over a fifth of respondents were neutral on the issue while eight per cent disagreed.

Statement 2:

The model of organisational structure where job coaches are based in a central location is the most effective	%
Strongly agree	54
Agree	17
Neither agree nor disagree	21
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	4
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Respondents were asked whether they considered the Job Coach training provided by FÁS had been effective. Three-quarters of respondents agreed with the statement while 17 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed. Four per cent disagreed with the statement while the remaining four per cent strongly disagreed.

It is important to point out that a number of consortia did not avail of the job coach training provided by FÁS but contracted directly with the Open Training College for the provision of training for their job coaches.

Statement 3:
The Job Coach training provided by FÁS has been effective %

Strongly agree	21
Agreed	54
Neither agree nor disagree	17
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	4
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Over ninety per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement that the Job Coach training provided by FÁS had been relevant while eight per cent were neutral on the issue.

Statement 4:
The Job Coach training provided by FÁS has been relevant %

Strongly agree	25
Agree	67
Neither agree nor disagree	8
Disagree	–
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Three-quarters of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that the Supported Employment Programme had enabled people with a disability to access mainstream employment. Twenty one per cent agreed with the statement while 4 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Statement 5:
The Supported Employment Programme has enabled people with a disability to access mainstream employment %

Strongly agree	75
Agree	21
Neither agree nor disagree	4
Disagree	–
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

There was slightly less support for the statement that the Supported Employment Programme had developed an awareness among employers of the value of employing people with a disability.

A quarter of respondents strongly agreed with the statement while 58 per cent agreed. Thirteen per cent of respondents were neutral on the issue while four per cent disagreed.

Statement 6:
The Supported Employment Programme has developed an awareness among employers of the value of employing a person with a disability %

Strongly agree	25
Agree	58
Neither agree nor disagree	13
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

4.10 Factors influencing effective placements

The analysis of the data collected through interviews with project staff, participants, employers and other informants suggest that there are a number of factors which influence the effectiveness of a placement of a participant in employment.

The factors that are likely to be present in a successful placement include:

- **Matching process:** There was widespread support from informants that a key factor underpinning a successful placement was the close matching of the skills and work aspirations of a participant with the needs of the employer. Project staff and employers believed that a correct matching process was fundamental to a successful placement. Project staff, in particular, highlighted the need for this matching process to be successful otherwise employers would lose faith in supported employment in general and the Pilot Programme in particular. There was a perception among project co-ordinators that as job coaches became more experienced in their job their ability to develop good job matches improved;
- **Work preparation skills:** some of the employers interviewed have indicated the importance of employees with a disability having good social and inter-personal skills in order that they can interact with colleagues and managers. Good social and inter-personal skills can also facilitate people with disabilities to integrate socially with the rest of the workforce. Reference was made earlier of the need to ensure that participants have adequate knowledge of the world of work i.e. punctuality, etc. The TUSA initiative was developed by the North Western Health Board in response to Pilot Programme participants who been unable to hold their job due to their lack of work preparation as opposed to vocational skills;
- **Personal commitment:** Project staff and employers commented that where a participant had a strong personal commitment to seeking employment in the open labour market the chances of him or her being successful was significantly increased. This was also believed to be the case even if the participant had only undertaken rehabilitative training;
- **Work-based training provided by job coaches:** Employers have commented on the importance of the initial training provided to participants by their job coaches. The quality of this initial (and any subsequent top-up) training input can have an important bearing on the long-term effectiveness of the placement.

Interviews with project co-ordinators indicate that other factors can be helpful in facilitating successful placements. One project co-ordinator reported that recruiting job coaches from different industry/service sectors can be an advantage to be able not only in terms of communicating with employers but also of using their knowledge of that sector to identify the skills and attributes required of participants to be successfully placed. As will be shown in Section 6, other organisational and project resource factors can also be of influence.

5. Support services provided

5.1 Supports provided to participants

The Pilot Programme provides funding to the 24 projects for the provision of supported employment services to facilitate people with a disability to access open labour market employment.

The projects through their job coaches provide a range of services to participants. These services can be categorised into four phases:

- Needs assessment;
- Work trials;
- Job placement;
- Job retention and support services.

Each of these phases is described in detail below. Section 5.2 examines participant throughput with respect to each of the four phases.

1. *Needs assessment*

The first activity which the job coach will normally undertake with the new participant is to develop a vocational profile. This will include gathering personal information details such as name, date of birth, marital status, current occupation and contact details.

The job coach will also collect information for the vocational profile on the participant's family and residential situation. The profile will also contain information on the participant's education and work experience background.

As part of the vocational profile, the job coach will undertake an assessment of the participant's skill set such as literacy, numeracy and communication skills.

The job coach will also seek to assess the type of work that the participant would like to do and the type of work that he or she is best suited.

The job coach will generally seek the participant's permission to contact other people for further information. These may include the participant's immediate family or his or her key worker if he or she is receiving services from a service provider. These contacts may provide the job coach with valuable information on the type of work for which the participant has particular skills or experience.

In some cases it may be necessary for the job coach to meet with the family of the participant to explain the process of supported employment service provision and to deal with any queries regarding the participant's move into mainstream employment. Immediate family members may have concerns about the participant's continued entitlements to social welfare benefits if he or she were to take up employment.

The feed-back from the interviews with participants indicates that they greatly appreciated the work carried out by the job coach during the needs assessment stage. For some it was the first time they had been able to obtain specialist input in terms of planning their career. They contrasted the time and support that the job coach was able to give them with the "less intensive" service they had previously received from employment service providers.

It should be noted that the Pilot Programmes guidelines state that people with a disability who wish to avail of employment support services must register not only with a project but also with their local Employment Services office.

2. *Work trials*

Where the participant has expressed an interest in working in a particular job category but has no work experience in that sector, the job coach may arrange for a work trial placement. The job coach will seek to place the participant in a position where he or she will be carrying out the type of work for which they had expressed an interest. The placement will generally be short-term in duration i.e., two weeks, and the participant will not be paid.

Pilot Programme guidelines permit a limited amount of work trials to take place. Contacts with the projects suggest that only a small number of participants availed of work trials.

3. *Job placement*

Having identified the participant's preferred work option, the job coach will start searching for employment opportunities. The feed-back from consortia indicates that job coaches utilise a number of sources for information on employment opportunities:

- FÁS;
- LES;
- Newspaper advertisements;
- Cold-calling to employers;
- Follow-up of information received from miscellaneous sources.

The time-scale for identifying a job which would be suitable to the participant can take a number of days or months depending on the type of employment option that the participant has expressed a preference for. Job coaches in rural areas often experience greater difficulties in placing participants because of the smaller number of companies.

Though employment opportunities may be available which suit the participant's expressed career preference, the lack of transport facilities—particularly in rural areas—may mean that some of these opportunities may not, in fact, be an option. It must be stressed, however, that transport is not an issue in relation to the implementation of the Pilot Programme by FÁS.

Where a job coach identifies a suitable job opportunity, he or she may provide support to the participant in developing a CV or in providing assistance with interview preparation.

Where an interview is arranged, the job coach may be involved in ensuring that the participant attends in time—even to the extent that they may bring the participant to the interview. The job coach may also sit in on the interview where requested by the participant and the employer.

If the participant is successful in his or her application for the job, the job coach can play a major role in training him or her in the tasks associated with the job. The interviews with employers indicates that the provision by the job coach of induction training to the new employee is a major advantage of the Pilot Programme as it frees them from a considerable time commitment.

The job coach may also provide advice to the employer on any adaptation of premises and equipment that may be required for the participant. Where relevant, the job coach will provide information to the employer on work adaptation grants available from FÁS.

The job coach may also have a role in assisting the participant to travel to his or her place of employment. This might involve accompanying the participant from their home to their place of work to ensure that they gain familiarity with their itinerary.

Some consortia permit job coaches to transport participants to and from their places of work; other consortia do not allow this for insurance reasons and others because of the time commitment involved.

4. *Job retention and support services.*

In the first few weeks of the participant's new job, the job coach will call on him or her on a regular basis to ensure that they are settling in satisfactorily. The regular contact is important for the participant who may have concerns about their performance and for employers because they may require re-assurance on certain issues particularly if it is the first time they have employed a person with a disability.

The job coach will seek to ensure to develop natural supports within the work-place who can assist the new employee to settle into the work environment. Natural supports are defined as the use of existing resources and strategies within a work setting or culture that promotes, facilitates and assists a person in becoming a member of that culture, including solving problems and being socially accepted. Supervisors and co-workers provide natural supports in the main.

Discussions with employers highlight the importance of the job coach being on call should they have any difficulties with the new employee with a disability.

An analysis of the time allocation by job coaches in one consortium indicates that at least 50 per cent of their time is spent on paper work. FÁS requires information on job coach activity and the consortia themselves need information on the time spent by job coaches on service delivery and this is reflected in the amount of time job coaches must spend on this activity.

The amount of time that job coaches spend with participants at the latter stages of the support service cycle will influence the numbers of new participants that can be taken on by the project. Thus, where a job coach must spend a considerable amount of time placing a participant in a job and providing a hand-holding service to both participant and employer the amount available to take on new participants will necessarily be limited.

The projects surveyed provided information on the level of supports provided to participants placed in employment as of June 30, 2002. Table 5.1 shows that nine per cent of participants required full-time support by job coaches while a further 19 per cent received daily supports from their job coaches.

Thirty one per cent of participants in employment had weekly support provided to them by their job coaches. In the case of 17 per cent of participants, the job coach provided intermittent supports backed-up with natural supports (line managers, colleagues, etc.).

Seven per cent of participants received occasional supports from the job coach and natural supports. Finally, 18 per cent of participants received natural supports with the job coach being available to troubleshoot.

Table 5.1

Level of support provided to participants (no. = 749)	%
Full-time support by job coach	9
Daily support by job coach	19
Weekly support by job coach	31
Intermittent supports by job coach and natural supports	17
Occasional supports by job coach and natural supports	7
Natural supports with job coach available to troubleshoot	18
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

5.2 Participant throughput and time-scales

This sub-section examines the throughput of participant in the four phases of needs assessment, work trials, job placement and job retention and support services. It also provides data on the length of time participants typically spent at each stage.

The questionnaire applied to the 24 projects sought information on the number of participants by each of the four phases; in other words, it sought to obtain a picture of the throughput of the projects.

As at June 30, 2002, forty six per cent of participants were receiving needs assessment services while 3 per cent were in receipt of work trials related services (see Table 5.2 below).

A fifth of participants were being provided with job placement supports while the balance of 31 per cent were in receipt of job retention and supports service.

Table 5.2

Service provision	%
Participants at:	
• Needs assessment	46
• Work trials	3
• Job placement	20
• Job retention and supports	31
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The table indicates that there are large numbers of participants at the needs assessment phase. The analysis of the data shows that in some cases projects had difficulty in advancing participants beyond the needs assessment phase because they were not job ready and their referring organisation would not take them back. Though it was not within their remit, a number of projects reported that their job coaches spent time seeking alternative options i.e. vocational training programmes, for participants who were not job ready.

The high percentage of participants at the needs assessment phase also reflects the fact that many of the job coaches employed by the project were new and thus had to develop not only skills in interacting with people with disabilities but also with employers. The process of conducting needs assessment was initially a time-consuming process for job coaches, particularly those with little or no previous job coaching experience. The length of time taken was exacerbated in situations where there was no background information readily available on the participant.

In other cases, the participant had significant support needs that required his or her job coach to undertake a more extensive search of the local labour market to find a suitable job match. In such cases, the project often found it necessary to work with other participants though continuing to search in “background mode” for employment opportunities for the higher support needs participants. Thus, these harder to place participants remained at the needs assessment phase simply because the projects came to the conclusion that finding suitable jobs for them would only materialise after job coaches had built up a knowledge of and contact with local employers.

A number of projects indicated that with stricter adherence to selection criteria and greater experience on the part of the job coaches that the numbers of participants at the needs assessment phase could be reduced.

The small percentage of participants are work sampling can be explained by the fact that the Pilot Programme guidelines only permit a two week job sampling period for each participant. The feed-back from the projects indicates that work trials were infrequently used.

Data was collected on the amount of time that participants spent on average in each of the four phases of the supported employment process. The analysis of the data supplied by the projects interviewed indicates a wide variation of time spent by participants at each phase.

Table 5.3
Average time spent by participants
at each of the four supported employment phases

	Weeks
Needs assessment	4–6
Work trials	1
Job placement	8–16
<i>Job retention and support services</i>	<i>4–6</i>

It should be emphasised that these figures were based on data provided by a small number of projects. It should also be noted that the figure for time spent on job retention and support services was for intensive supports provided by the job coach; less frequent and intensive support was often provided over a longer time period to participants placed in employment.

The average time spent by participants in the job placement phase was largely determined by the needs of employers. Seasonality was also a factor during the summer and Christmas periods as employers typically tended to postpone recruitment decisions.

The projects which supplied data pointed out that the average time spent on each of the four phases had in some cases decreased dramatically. While greater experience and knowledge on the part of project staff was an influencing factor across all of the projects contacted, a more significant element was the adherence to Pilot Programme selection criteria. One project said that in the beginning a participant might have spent up to 20-24 weeks at the needs assessment stage. Since it had started to implement Pilot Programme selection criteria to new applicants, the time spent by participants at the needs assessment phase had been reduced to approximately 4 weeks.

5.3 Supports provided to employers

Self-completion questionnaires were administered to employers through the 24 projects. Each project was asked to disseminate the questionnaire to a cross-section of employers on their books (small/medium/large, manufacturer/services company. Additionally, the projects were also asked to send the questionnaire to an employer who had employed a participant in the past but no longer did so. It should be noted that the decision to allow projects to select employers to whom the questionnaire would be disseminated was approved by FÁS.

It is important to point out that despite the involvement of the projects in the selection of employers the profile of the employers in terms of company size and industry sector who responded to the questionnaire is almost identical to the profile of employers of all participants placed in employment.

A total of 87 employers completed the questionnaire and the analysis of the data provided is shown in Table 5.4 below.

The majority of respondents, 65 per cent, employed less than 50 people while five per cent employed more than 500 people.

Twenty nine per cent of employers who employed a participant employed less than 10 people. Just over a third of respondents, 36 per cent, employed between 11–50 people.

Sixteen per cent of respondents employed between 51–100 while a further eleven per cent employed between 101–200. Three per cent employed between 201–500.

Table 5.4

Employment size	%
<10 employees	29
10–50	36
51–100	16
101–200	11
201–500	3
>500	5
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The vast majority of employers who employed a participant were in the services sector with only a small proportion of respondents (13 per cent) being involved in the manufacturing sector while another 4 per cent were in construction (Table 5.5).

The largest single service sub-sector was retail/wholesale/hotel/catering which accounted for 44 per cent of all respondents. The next largest category was Other services with 29 per cent (this category included public sector organisations, personal care and business service providers, etc.).

Table 5.5

Sector	%
Textiles manufacturing	–
Clothing & footwear manufacturing	–
Food & drink manufacturing	7
Chemical manufacturing	–
Engineering assistance	6
Printing and paper	–
Construction	4
Retail/wholesale/hotel/catering	44
Financial services	4
Other services	29
Transport/communications	1
Security	–
Cleaning	–
Other (electronic manufacturing, horticulture)	6
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The majority of respondents employed one participant (Table 5.6). Just under three-quarters of respondents employed one participant while a fifth employed two participants.

Two per cent of respondents employed three participants while five per cent of respondents had four participants employed. One per cent of respondents employed five participants. The responses of the employers who employed three or more participants were very positive and it is worth noting that the majority of these were in the private sector.

Table 5.6

Number of participants employed	%
One participant	73
Two participants	19
Three participants	2
Four participants	5
Five participants	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The respondents were asked to specify how long the participant(s) had been with the company and the average hours the participant(s) worked. As shown in Table 5.7, the average length of time the participants had been employed by the respondents was 8 months while the average number of hours worked per week was 16.5 hours.

Table 5.7
Indicators of length of time & hours worked

Average length of time employed	8 months
Average hours worked per week	16.5 hours

The respondents were then asked to respond to a number of statements using the following scale: Strongly agree; agree; neither agree nor disagree; disagree; strongly disagree.

All of the respondents agreed with the statement that the support provided by the Job Coach in relation to sourcing the employee to match the job was very helpful; 77 per cent strongly agreed while 23 per cent agreed.

Statement 1:

The support provided by the Job Coach in relation to sourcing the employee to match the job was very helpful	%
Strongly agree	77
Agree	23
Neither agree nor disagree	–
Disagree	–
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Over three-quarters of employers strongly agreed with the statement that the on-going support provided by the Job Coach after the employee had been recruited was a vital element of the Supported Employment Programme. Twenty per cent agreed with the statement while 3 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed. One per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement.

Statement 2:

The on-going support provided by the Job Coach after the employee has been recruited is a vital element of the Supported Employment initiative	%
Strongly agree	76
Agree	20
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

A high percentage of respondents were in agreement with the statement that the Job Coach had assisted them to manage an employee with a disability. Twenty nine per cent of respondents agreed while sixty eight per cent strongly agreed. Two per cent neither agreed nor disagreed while one per cent disagreed with the statement.

Statement 3:

The Job Coach has helped us to manage an employee with a disability	%
Strongly agree	68
Agree	29
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The employers surveyed were asked to respond to the statement that the employee had contributed to the work of the company. Ninety five per cent agreed with the statement of which 40 per cent agreed and 55 per cent strongly agreed. Three per cent were neutral on the statement while one per cent disagreed.

Statement 4:

The employee has contributed to the work of the company	%
Strongly agree	55
Agree	40
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Ninety per cent of employers who responded to the survey agreed with the statement that the employee was an integral member of the work team of which 51 per cent strongly agreed and 39 per cent agreed. Seven per cent neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement while three per cent disagreed.

Statement 5:

The employee is an integral member of the work team	%
Strongly agree	51
Agree	39
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

There was less agreement compared to the preceding statements with the statement that the Supported Employment Programme had helped to alleviate staffing shortages within the company. Just under a quarter of respondents—23 per cent—neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement while seven per cent disagreed.

Forty four per cent agreed with the statement while twenty six per cent strongly disagreed. The percentage of respondents strongly agreeing with this statement was the lowest recorded for all of the statements.

Statement 6:

The Supported Employment initiative has helped to alleviate staffing shortages within the company	%
Strongly agree	26
Agree	44
Neither agree nor disagree	23
Disagree	7
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Ninety three per cent of the employers who responded to the survey agreed with the statement that the Supported Employment Programme had helped to make them realise the value of employing a person with a disability. Forty one per cent agreed with the statement while 52 per cent strongly agreed. The balance of seven per cent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Statement 7:

The Supported Employment initiative has made us realise the value of employing a person with a disability	%
Strongly agree	52
Agree	41
Neither agree nor disagree	7
Disagree	–
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Almost all of the respondents, 98 per cent, were in agreement with the statement that management within the company had a better understanding of the barriers faced by people

with a disability, of which those strongly agreeing (54 per cent) were in a majority over those agreeing (44 per cent).

Two per cent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Statement 8:

Management have a better understanding of the barriers faced by people with a disability	%
Strongly agree	54
Agree	44
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	–
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

An overwhelming majority, 98 per cent, of respondents agreed with the statement that staff have a better understanding of the barriers faced by people with a disability, divided evenly between those that agreed and those that strongly disagreed (47 per cent). Six per cent neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Statement 9:

Staff have a better understanding of the barriers faced by people with a disability	%
Strongly agree	47
Agree	47
Neither agree nor disagree	6
Disagree	–
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Respondents were asked if they would recommend the Supported Employment Programme to other employers. A total of 99 per cent said they would of which a very positive 66 per cent strongly agreed while a further 33 per cent agreed. Only one per cent of the respondents said they would not recommend the Programme to other employers.

Statement 10:

I would recommend the Supported Employment Programme to other employers	%
Strongly agree	66
Agree	33
Neither agree nor disagree	–
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Finally, the employers were asked if they would recruit people with a disability under the Supported Employment Programme in the future. Ninety five per cent of employers said that they would recruit a person with disability under the Programme in the future while the balance said they did not know. None of the respondents said that they would not recruit a person with disability in the future.

Statement 11:

Recruit a person with disability under the Supported Employment Programme in the future?	%
Yes	95
Don't know	5
No	–
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

6. Project organisational structures and resources

6.1 Composition of consortia

Each consortium operating a supported employment project consists of two or more organisations interested in assisting people with a disability to access open labour market employment. Though the stated requirement of the Pilot Programme was for consortium with three or more member organisations, one consortium (Clare Supported Employment Service) has only two partners, the Brothers of Charity and Enable Ireland.

The average number of member organisations in the twenty four consortia is 5.8 while the median is 6 and the mode is 5 as shown in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1

Number of member organisations in consortium	No.
Average	5.8
Median	6.0
Mode	5.0

The consortium with the largest number of member organisations was Wexford with nine, while three consortia (West Cork, Roscommon and Dublin South West) had eight member organisations.

The Pilot Programme was open to all organisations interested in assisting people with a disability to access open labour market employment. The majority of the consortia members were organisations which were almost exclusively involved in the provision of services to people with a disability. These include the major disability service providers such as the Brothers of Charity, Enable Ireland, National Training and Development Institute (NTDI), the Sisters of Charity, St. John of Gods and St. Michael's House. They also includes national organisations such as the Irish Wheelchair Association and the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI).

The Health Boards are involved in a number of Pilot Programme consortia. The consortium in the North West is led by the North Western Health Board while Aontacht Phobail Teoranta (APT), a unit of the Midlands Health Board, is the sponsor organisation for the Midlands consortium.

Also involved in the Pilot Programme consortia are local development organisations; the consortium in Monaghan is led by the County Monaghan Partnership while three local development organisations (Laois LEADER, Portlaoise Community Action Programme and Mountmellick Development Association) are members of the Laois consortium.

Two consortia have employers representative bodies: IBEC in the case of Work Start West Cork and Mayo Chamber of Commerce in the case of Work Web West (Mayo). The trade union, SIPTU, is a member of the Work Start West Cork consortium.

The Local Employment Service (LES) is directly and indirectly a member of a number of consortia; indirectly, in the sense that the LES is a partnership member in Partnership Tra Lí which is a member of the Breannán Consortium selected to provide supported employment services in Kerry.

FÁS is a member of three consortia, Laois, Wexford and Monaghan. In the case of the Laois consortium, the FÁS representative is a member of both the main policy committee and the management committee.

As noted above, the Wexford consortium has the largest number of member organisations, and it also has one of the most representative. Its membership includes FÁS, the South Eastern Health Board, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, County Wexford Partnership, Gorey Information and Unemployment Centre and disability service providers such as NTDI. In many ways, the range of member organisations within the Wexford project represent the ideal in terms of representation of different sectors that provide services to people with a disability. Project co-ordinators have spoken of the need for a holistic approach to the delivery of services to people with disabilities and the composition of the Wexford project would appear to go some way towards meeting this.

Interviews with project personnel have also highlighted the need for greater linkages between FÁS and the health boards and this too seems to have been achieved within the Wexford consortium.

There is a value as the Laois Consortium of Supported Employment project has demonstrated in having consortium members apart from disability service providers. The composition of LCSE includes local development organisations and FÁS as well as disability service providers (the one change that the existing member organisations would like to see is the inclusion of employer-based representative bodies). The involvement of non-disability service providers gives the project a wider perspective and in the case of LCSE provides access to a number of community-based supports.

Consortia with large numbers of member organisations can, however, be unwieldy particularly in relation to obtaining consensus on issues such as the 15 hour rule. Consortia with a smaller number of member organisations such as the Clare Supported Employment Service with two were able to overcome contentious issues more quickly.

The involvement of FÁS in consortia which have been successful in their applications for Pilot Programme funding raises issues regarding the impartiality and transparency of the selection process. There is also the issue that difficulties may arise if FÁS were to monitor a consortium of which it is a member organisation. FÁS was only involved in three consortia and it is understood that this happened by chance. FÁS staff should not be members of consortia boards or committees though consideration should be given in future programmes to the development of closer linkages between FÁS and the supported employment consortia.

6.2 Consortia member organisations' expertise in disabilities

The questionnaire sent to the twenty four projects sought information on the main types of expertise for which consortia member organisations had expertise.

Table 6.2 shows that twenty three projects had consortia member organisations with expertise in learning disability while a similar number had member organisations with expertise in physical disability. Eighteen respondents said member organisations had an expertise in mental health while thirteen projects had expertise in sensory disability. Half of the 24 projects said they had a member organisations with expertise in hidden disability.

Table 6.2
Main types of disabilities for which consortium member organisations have expertise

	No.
Learning	23
Mental health	18
Hidden	12
Physical	23
Sensory	13

Anecdotal feed-back suggests that service providers to people with a learning and physical disabilities have had an involvement in the provision of supported employment which pre-

dated the introduction of the FÁS Pilot Programme. This may explain the large representation of service providers for these two disability areas in Pilot Programme consortia.

Where there are gaps in the expertise in major disability groups within a consortium, a number of projects have sought to put in place structures such as panels of expertise to which they can refer participants for more detailed assessments. Some project co-ordinators have sought to develop linkages with groups providing services to people with disabilities of a kind not represented within their consortia so as to provide information and training for their job coaches.

6.3 Organisational structure

The consortia differed in terms of how they organised the structure of their projects. Some consortia organised their project so that it operated from a central location meaning that all project staff worked from a central office which either could be situated in a member organisation's premises or could be independent of a member organisation.

In other instances, the consortia member organisations utilised a structure for their projects whereby job coaches were located in the premises of member organisations.

There were also consortia that operated hybrid structured projects in that some job coaches who were centrally-based while others were partner-based.

Ten of the projects said that their job coaches were based in a central location while eleven said they were based in the premises of consortium partner organisations (Table 6.3).

Three projects had an organisational structure where some of their job coaches were based in a central location while others were partner-based. This hybrid form of organisational structure was often found in projects which covered a large geographical area.

Table 6.3

Organisational structure	No.
Centrally-based job coaches	10
Partner-based job coaches	11
Both centrally and partner-based job coaches	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>24</i>

Interviews with project co-ordinators indicate that projects where staff were based in a central location were easier to manage and operate. They also point out that a centrally-based project staff structure facilitated learning and interaction among job coaches. There were also the advantages of economies of scale from operating a centrally-based project.

The consortia could also be differentiated as to whether they had decided to operate their project from a location that was independent of any of their member organisations. The Clare Supported Employment Service operates from a premises in Ennis which is physically separated from those of its member organisations. On the other hand, the Laois Consortium of Supported Employment operates from the offices of its sponsor organisation, the Sisters of Charity. The consensus among those interviewed during the course of the study is that projects located in high street locations that were independent of member organisations were more likely to succeed in attracting the participation of people with a disability and the support of employers.

The consortia could also be classified according to whether they had decided that job coaches employed by the project should cover a geographic area or a specific disability group. In Clare, for example, the job coaches cover a geographic area e.g. North Clare, and provide services to people with a variety of disabilities. By contrast, each job coach in First Employment Services (FES) in Cork provides services to a specific disability sector e.g. learning disabilities.

Interviews with project co-ordinators indicate that some projects did not have a legal status that was separate from that of the consortium sponsor organisation. This, in some instances, has caused difficulties in determining lines of authority within the project.

6.4 Consortia staffing

The Pilot Programme is delivered through 24 consortia who operate a project to provide supported employment services to people with a disability in a specific geographic area.

The Pilot Programme funding allows for the employment of project co-ordinators to head a team of job coaches and administrators.

The total number of staff employed by the 24 projects amounted to 159 full-time equivalent positions. This total was made up of 21 project co-ordinator or team leaders, 123.5 job coaches, 14 administrators and a part-time office cleaner (Table 6.4 below).

Four projects did not have a team leader while the largest project, DEN, had both a team leader and deputy team leader. One project, the Breannán Consortium in Kerry, did not have any job coaches as of June 30, 2002, as its previous job coaches had left and had not yet been replaced.

Administrators were employed in fourteen projects though four of these were part-time positions.

The three Dublin-based projects employed 39.5 full-time equivalent positions or a quarter of the total staff numbers employed by all 24 projects.

Table 6.4
Project staff

	No.
Project co-ordinator/team leaders	21.0
Job coaches	123.5
Administrators	14.0
Other	0.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>159.0</i>

The analysis of the staffing of projects points to the importance of projects having a full-time team leader who can provide direction to the activities of the project. It is neither efficient nor effective to expect job coaches to take on project management tasks such as marketing in addition to their own duties. It is preferable to amalgamate small projects to ensure that each project has a full-time team leader.

6.5 Staff turnover

Staff turnover has been and continues to be a major difficulty for the supported employment consortia. These difficulties have been attributed to the following:

- The short-term nature of contracts;
- Uncertainty over the continued future operation of the Pilot Programme;
- Differentials in pay and conditions offered to job coaches within the same consortium;
- The lack of employment benefits such as sick pay, etc.

As indicated in Table 6.5, the average level of staff turnover among the projects was 30 per cent; the median was 26 per cent. The analysis shows that two projects had a staff turnover ratio of 100 per cent while six consortia had no staff turnover.

There was a considerable variation in the incidence of staff turnover among the 24 projects; the longest established project had a staff turnover of zero per cent while the shortest established project had a staff turnover of 14 per cent.

One of the projects which had a very low staff turnover indicated that its central location set-up was an important factor. The project co-ordinator believed that having all the job coaches in one location was beneficial not only because of the support the co-ordinator could provide but also (and more importantly) the support they received from other job coaches. The central location helped to reduce the sense of isolation reported by job coaches in projects which did not have a centralised structure. The project co-ordinator maintained that allowing job coaches latitude in organising their daily schedules was also an important factor in holding onto staff.

Table 6.5

Consortia staff turnover	%
Average	30
Median	26

In addition to the difficulties associated with a high staff turnover, there is the problem of loss of key skills, and the length of time taken up with the recruitment/selection process and the need to provide training to new staff. The interviews with team leaders and job coaches point to a situation where there are long delays between the time a job coach is selected and he or she starts work. Part of the delay was attributed to the need to obtain Garda clearance which could take considerable time. The delay could be longer if the applicant was not an Irish national.

The feed-back from the interviews with consortia member organisations and project co-ordinators indicates that productivity has been severely affected by high staff turnover.

A number of the job coaches interviewed have pointed to the ironic situation that they are expected to seek benefits such as sick pay for the participants they place in employment yet they themselves do not have such entitlements in their own employment.

6.6 Input of consortia member organisations

In developing the Pilot Programme for the Supported Employment FÁS sought to encourage networking among organisations providing services to people with a disability and hence the requirement that the service would be delivered through consortia.

Though there was a requirement that consortia should consist of three or more organisations providing services to people with disabilities, FÁS was not prescriptive as to how consortia should structure themselves.

The feed-back from the interviews indicates that for many of the large disability service providers the Pilot Programme was the first time that they had worked together with other organisations in the same sector. One project co-ordinator said that his first task was to introduce the representatives of the member organisations to each other as even though they were all from major service providers in the area they had never met. Thus one indirect outcome of the Pilot Programme has been the development of personal linkages between consortia member organisations.

The interviews with consortia member organisations suggest that one of the advantages of the consortia approach is that it has widened their exposure to other disability sectors. They say that they have gained knowledge of other sectors and the barriers that people with disabilities in those sectors face in accessing employment. It is clear for example that many of the large service providers to people with a learning and a physical disability have developed a greater understanding of the needs of people with mental health difficulties. Similarly, there is a greater awareness among consortium member organisations of the challenges facing people with hidden disabilities such as brain injuries in gaining access to the open labour market.

The disability service providers have reported benefits from participation in consortia where there is representation from a range of sectors. They have been able to develop linkages with other groupings such as community development organisations.

The inputs of the member organisations have taken a number of different forms. In general, the most significant contribution of the member organisations to their respective consortia has been their knowledge and expertise they have gained from previous involvement in supported employment provision. This knowledge and expertise has had a major bearing on the organisational structure they adopted with respect to their project. At the development stage of some consortia, member organisations who had previously been involved in supported employment provision felt strongly that the project should be delivered from a location that was physically separate from any member organisation, i.e. that the service should be perceived by people with a disability as being provided by a mainstream or high street-based organisation—and not associated with any one disability group. A number of consortia felt it was important that the supported employment project should have a separate legal identity from the consortium member organisations so that it would be perceived as providing a mainstream service.

Similarly, in the case of a small number of consortia, there was a strong belief that the FÁS-funded supported employment service should be open to all people with a disability in the catchment area and not just the clients of the member organisations. It should be pointed out, however, that this is what they had contracted to do.

A number of consortia had a mixture of member organisations which had previous experience of supported employment and those which had none. The consortia approach was thus a valuable method of transferring the experiences from the former to the latter.

The member organisations also had a major role in deciding the structure of their projects particularly in terms of deciding where the project co-ordinators and job coaches should be located. In some consortia, the decision was taken that project staff should be located in one central location while in others they would be situated in the offices of the partner organisations. In a few cases, the member organisations opted for a hybrid structure where some staff were based in one location while others operated from partner organisations' premises.

The inputs of the consortium member organisations included the following:

- **Accommodation/premises:** In a number of cases the project was accommodated in the premises of a member organisation, usually the sponsor organisation. This happened even where the consortium member organisations had decided to provide a mainstream, high-street location. In the case of First Employment Services in Cork, the project was initially based in the premises of its sponsor organisation, Enable Ireland, while its own building was being fitted out. The Disability Employment Network (DEN) project in Dublin is based in the premises of two member organisations, the Irish Wheelchair Association and Prosper Fingal.
- **Information:** As noted in Section 4 above, the majority of referrals to the projects came from consortium member organisations. While this may be disappointing in terms of lack of access to supported employment services by people with disabilities outside the support structure of the disability service providers, it had one major advantage in that job coaches had access to sources of information on individuals registering with the project. The job coaches interviewed spoke of the benefits of being able to talk to key workers/supervisors within the referring agencies or to other support staff such as social workers and psychologists for additional information which could help them to make informed career choices for participants. This information was deemed particularly important in dealing with people with a learning and with a mental health disability. The ease with which job coaches could access information on participants referred from member organisations was contrasted with the difficulties experienced in obtaining relevant personal and employment related information on participants who had been referred from an external source.

- **Specialist support services:** Related to the above input, projects in theory could access the range of support services within consortium member organisations such as social workers, occupational therapists and psychologists. It is difficult to determine, however, the extent to which projects actually used such support services as opposed to using them as a source of information on participants. In some cases, projects were able to refer participants to support services for expert advice; this appears to have happened during the early stages of the project. A number of projects did, however, experience difficulties in obtaining access to support structures within the consortium member organisations and overcame such difficulties by establishing their own panels of social workers, psychologists and other sources of specialist expertise to whom they could refer participants for advice.
- **Training:** From the projects' perspective, a major input from the consortium member organisations was the training which was made available to some consortia in disability awareness. In the case of DEN, the member organisations provided disability awareness training which the job coaches interviewed said was of major benefit to them in their work and supplemented their job coach training.
- **Transport:** The availability of transport is a major issue to the majority of projects, particularly those based in rural locations. In some cases, the member organisations provided transport for participants who had difficulties accessing public transport. The provision of transport services where available was mainly, however, limited to the participants who are clients of consortia member organisations.
- **Access to networks:** The experience of the Laois Consortium Supported Employment project is an example where the project has benefited from access to the member organisations' networks for information and contacts. The LCSE member organisations have provided the project with information on employer contacts and access to training supports for project participants. The LCSE job coaches have a good relationship with their local FÁS offices and this can be largely attributed to the fact that FÁS is both a member of the project's policy making and management committee.
- **Review:** One of the key inputs of the consortia member organisations has been reviewing the progress of projects in terms of throughputs and placements and suggesting measures for improving the efficient operation of the project.

No analysis of the input of consortia member organisations would be complete without reference to the support provided by the consortia sponsor organisations. Projects would not be able to provide the level of service they have without the contribution of the sponsor organisations. This is particularly true in relation to recruitment and selection of project staff. The high level of staff turnover (30 per cent on average across the twenty four projects) would have been a major cost to, and time constraint on, the projects had the recruitment and selection of staff not been largely undertaken by the sponsor organisation. In many of the projects surveyed, the recruitment and selection procedures have been prolonged because of the need to obtain Garda clearance. The contribution of the sponsor organisations has, in many cases, been an uncosted subsidy to the project.

Consortia sponsor organisations have assisted with project administration such as pay-roll and purchasing. They also have provided access to their organisation's financial expertise and have arranged extensions of their insurance cover to the projects.

Additionally, the consortia sponsor organisations have contributed a significant amount of management support to the projects.

In a number of projects, the consortium sponsor organisation was the dominant partner to such an extent that the other member organisations were effectively sleeping partners.

It is apparent that the collaboration between the member organisations in many consortia was initially intensive, particularly in preparing a tender to FÁS and then when successful in terms

of getting the project operational. The collaboration tended to be less pronounced as the project developed though in some innovative consortia there was an active networking process to promote the service to both employers and people with a disability.

As shown in Section 4.9 above, the majority of project co-ordinators (63 per cent) strongly agreed with the statement that networking among consortium members has been a major benefit of the Pilot Programme.

The interviews with consortia member organisations indicate that many saw their main input as providing referrals to their respective projects. They argued that their projects would not have met the placement targets that FÁS had set had they solely relied on external referrals. They pointed to the need for job coaches to gain experience in placing participants—a process made easier where there was a readily available supply of information on participants referred by member organisations. Sponsor organisations pointed to their various uncosted contributions to the project as a justification for referring their service users to the project. A number of consortia also used this argument to justify the dividing out of their project's job placement targets, and, consequently, job coaches, among member organisations. In other words, job coaches were allocated to work exclusively to provide supported employment services to the clients of specific member organisations.

6.7 Sourcing of participants

The results of the questionnaire applied to the twenty four projects show that the majority of the participants registered with the projects and of the participants placed in employment were referred by consortia member organisations. Almost three-quarters of participants registered with the Pilot Programme were referred by consortia member organisations while they were the source of referral for 81 per cent of the participants placed in employment.

The contract which the consortia signed with FÁS obliged them to provide supported employment services to all people with disabilities in their catchment area.

As noted above, the consortia member organisations saw their main role as supplying the projects with participants. A number of the main disability service providers had undertaken surveys of their client base and had found that a significant percentage wanted to access employment in the open market. Other service providers had been involved in the provision of supported employment services prior to the introduction of the Pilot Programme and saw it as an opportunity to extend their involvement in this area. They saw the launch of the FÁS Pilot Programme as an opportunity to meet the expressed desire of their clients to obtain employment in the open labour market.

A number of consortia, however, effectively sought to use the Pilot Programme as a means of providing an additional service to their service users. Consortia member organisations essentially shared out the project's placement targets amongst themselves thereby restricting the number of external referrals that the project could accept. The feed-back from interviews with consortia member organisations suggest that they perceived this allocation of places for their service users as a quid pro quo for the resources that they had made available to the project. These arrangements made it difficult for people with a disability not in receipt of services from consortia member organisations to access supported employment services even though in some cases they may have met the entry criteria more readily than internal referrals. Interviews with FÁS staff highlighted difficulties in referring people with disabilities to their local supported employment projects because they were closed to external referrals.

In some cases it was only when external pressure was brought to bear that consortia allowed their projects to be open to external referrals.

Even where there was a willingness among consortia member organisations to accept referrals from external sources, the fact that job coaches often originated from member organisations or were based in their premises and had knowledge of their service users resulted in these projects having a higher proportion of internally-referred placements.

The availability of support services within consortia member organisations such as transport was in some cases the key influencing factor as to why internally-referred participants were able to avail of job opportunities over their externally referred counterparts.

Resource constraints limited the ability of projects to effectively promote their services to all people with a disability with the result that the only section of the target population that was informed about the Pilot Programme was the clients of consortia member organisations.

There was a wide-spread lack of information among consortia of the potential numbers of end-users for their services. Only three of the 24 projects had attempted to determine the potential number of people with disabilities in their catchment area.

6.8 Procedures for selection of participants

This sub-section examines some of the issues concerning the selection of people with disabilities onto the Pilot Programme with particular emphasis on the topics of job readiness of participants and 15 hour rule.

The discussion of the selection procedures used by the consortia has to be taken in the context of what concept of supported employment most consortia member organisations had familiarity with. As noted above, many of the consortia member organisations had been involved in the provision of supported employment services to their clients with funding from the health boards or through participation in EU programmes. Their concept of supported employment focused on the rights of all people with disability to access open employment regardless of the level of support that they might require. The concept that the early adopters of supported employment in Ireland developed (and which borrowed heavily from the US model) had a dual focus: employment in the open market and social inclusion.

The FÁS Pilot Programme also has a dual focus: assisting people with a disability to access open labour market opportunities and assisting employers to meet their labour requirements. The Pilot Programme has an emphasis on the selection of people with a disability being job ready, being able to work 15 hours per week (with exception being given on a case-by-case basis) and being capable of continuing in employment after the phased withdrawal of job coach supports.

From the perspective of the disability service providers, the FÁS concept of supported employment appeared to be targeted at the more able section of the disability sector and was thus substantially different from their understanding of supported employment. Even though these service providers signed up for the Pilot Programme, their concept of supported employment was quite different from that which FÁS was funding.

This fault-line was exposed during the operation of the Pilot Programme with particular respect to the criteria for selecting participants. It appears that some consortia disregarded the selection criteria set out in the FÁS guidelines and effectively used the funding to continue the type of supported employment provision that they had been providing to their clients in the past i.e. a service aimed at all service users regardless of their level of support needs. This approach resulted in the selection of participants who at face value did not meet the FÁS selection criteria. The analysis of data supplied by the consortia in response to the research questionnaire indicates that 10 per cent of all participants placed in employment were working for less than 5 hours per week. There have been cases of participants placed in employment for as little as two hours per week. Similarly, there have been situations where the job coach was assisting the participant to carry out the work and thus effectively becoming a co-worker.

These differences in the interpretation and application of selection criteria were not immediately addressed by FÁS. However, the implementation of regular monitoring visits by FÁS, the exchange of information among project co-ordinators and low placement rates prompted consortia member organisations to revisit their project's selection criteria particularly with respect to the ability of participants to work a 15-hour week.

A number of projects have used the 15-hour rule as a key element of their selection process and have strongly advocated that it should remain. Others, however, believe that it is too rigid particularly for participants who might never have worked before or whose current physical capability may though they might not be able to work 15 hours per week initially they could achieve this target over a period of time.

Additionally, those arguing for a relaxing of the 15-hour requirement point out that there are situations where employers may only want an employee to work less than 15 hours per week.

The situation is complicated by the fact that though there is flexibility within the FÁS selection guidelines to place a participant for less than 15 hours (this can be done on a case-by-case exception basis), there has been considerable variation as to how this flexibility has been interpreted regionally by Community Services. It has been reported that some regions will permit exceptions while others have flatly refused to allow any.

Tension arising from differences on the issue of the 15-hour rule have arisen between FÁS and the consortia, between consortia member organisations, between consortia member organisations and project staff and between project staff.

6.9 Impact of Pilot Programme on consortia member organisations

Surveys of their clients by the disability service providers revealed that a significant percentage of people with a disability are interested in seeking employment opportunities in the open market. The results of such surveys prompted a number of organisations such as the Brothers of Charity and Sunshine House to put in place supported employment initiatives.

There is no doubt that people with disabilities welcome the opportunities to access open labour market job opportunities that the FÁS Pilot Programme has facilitated. The feed-back from the interviews with participants is that they prefer to be working in the open labour market and making a contribution to mainstream society rather than spend their days attending day care units.

The consortia member organisations have pointed out that the Pilot Programme allows them to offer supported employment services to their clients that previously may only have been available on an ad-hoc basis. For other consortia member organisations the Pilot Programme fills a gap in their service provision that in the past had been beyond their capacity to provide.

An interesting development is that some disability service providers have developed what amounts to a parallel supported employment service to the supported employment project which they as consortia member organisations operate.

In some cases this parallel structure was required to serve the needs of clients who had been placed in employment prior to the Pilot Programme as the FÁS guidelines stipulated that the projects could not provide services to people with a disability who were already in employment. In other instances, this parallel structure has led to the recruitment of job coaches to provide supported employment services to service users with higher support needs. In one consortium, the sponsor organisation has appointed a staff member to provide supported employment services to people with a disability in minority groups e.g. members of the Traveller Community, who have proved difficult for the consortium's job coaches to provide. This parallel supported employment structure is funded through the service provider's block funding from the health boards though in some cases the latter may be unaware that this form of service is being provided.

There have been reports of difficulties arising from competition between the job coaches funded by the Pilot Programme and supported employment personnel employed directly by the consortia member organisations with Health Board funding.

An issue raised in the focus group meeting with the project co-ordinators was the possibility of a parallel supported employment provision where by people with a disability with higher support needs could avail of another support structure where there was more intensive job

coach support than would be available under the FÁS Pilot Programme. There is support among the projects for the view that there should be closer integration between FÁS and the Health Boards to ensure that people with higher support needs can avail of supports to enable them to access the open labour market.

The second impact of the Pilot Programme on a number of consortia member organisations is that many of their more able service users have left to take up positions in the open market and this has left a gap in those organisations that had operated sheltered workshops. Interviews with consortia member organisations have indicated that one direct consequence of the Pilot Programme has been considerably reduced levels of activity within the sheltered workshop or, in some cases, closure. Managers of sheltered workshops are faced with service users whose productivity is much lower because of age or medical reasons and because of this have had to scale down operations.

Thus for the consortia member organisations that had operated sheltered workshops, the Pilot Programme has represented somewhat of a double-edged sword in that while they welcome the opportunity for their service users to access employment in the open labour market they have to deal with the consequences of a fall-off in revenues from the closure of sheltered workshops.

7. Programme administration

7.1 Introduction and overview

This Section provides an overview of the programme administration of the Pilot Programme by FÁS. It deals with issues ranging from the selection of projects to communication with 24 consortia.

The data on programme administration issues was derived from the three focus group sessions with project co-ordinators and FÁS Community Services managers and staff, from the series of personal and telephone interviews and from the preparation of the four in-depth case studies.

The interviews with consortia member organisations and project staff highlight the genuine appreciation for the speed in which FÁS developed and implemented the National Pilot for the Supported Employment Programme. Prior to the Pilot Programme, only a small number of disability agencies provided supported employment services and they were only available in a limited number of geographic areas. Few disability service providers that were involved in the provision of supported employment services had full-time job coaches and the majority of staff who were involved in the provision of supported employment services had other duties. Additionally, supported employment services were, in the majority of cases, confined to the clients of the disability service providers.

From a standing start and in a relatively short period of time, FÁS developed and implemented a nation-wide supported employment programme. The Pilot Programme was conceived by FÁS in June 2000 and became operational later that year when the first project, Dublin South West Supported Employment Service, commenced the provision of supported employment services in November 2000.

One of the aims of the Pilot Programme was make supported employment services available to all people with disabilities and not just those attending the services of major disability service providers.

The main difficulty experienced by FÁS in relation to the administration of the Pilot Programme was, as noted in Section 6.7 above, that some of the consortia were more interested in following a different form or "model" of supported employment from that they had been contracted to do by FÁS. Though the Pilot Programme is an active labour market initiative, some of the consortia effectively treated it as a social inclusion measure.

Notwithstanding the fact that they had entered into a legal contract with FÁS to provide supported employment services with Pilot Programme funding, some consortia:

- ignored Pilot Programme guidelines particularly with respect to participant selection criteria and placement of participants in jobs of considerably less than 15 hours or where they earned less than the National Minimum Wage;
- restricted entry into the projects to their own service users.

Given resource constraints within FÁS, these factors created significant difficulties in relation to programme administration. The transfer of responsibility internally within FÁS for the Pilot Programme to the Community Services Division in 2001 initially made for difficulty in addressing the consortia's lack of adherence to the terms of their contract with FÁS.

FÁS Employment Services Division also faced difficulties with the projects as some refused to accept people with disabilities that placement officers had referred to them.

7.2 Selection of consortia

Following a public call for tenders for the Pilot Programme, an internal committee was established within FÁS to assess the proposals submitted by consortia wishing to provide a supported employment service. The application guidelines outlined the criteria for selection of applicant consortia (see 3.1 above). Additional criteria were developed when the budgets submitted by the initial applicants exceeded the funds available under the Pilot Programme by a factor of four.

A number of consortia were selected on the basis of their initial proposals to operate supported employment projects in their respective geographical areas based on the original funding allocation from the Government. When additional funding became available for the Pilot Programme in 2001, the internal selection committee asked applicants in geographical areas where there were no projects operating to resubmit funding applications. In some cases, the applicants were encouraged to seek other organisations to join their consortia.

The selection process resulted in 24 consortia being selected to operate Pilot Programme-funded supported employment projects throughout the country. The lack of applications meeting the selection criteria in Tipperary means that the county does not have a consortium providing supported employment services.

Two of the twenty four consortia did not have the stated number of job coaches (Laois and Kilkenny) and four of the consortia did not have a project co-ordinator or team leader.

7.3 Launch and promotion of the Pilot Programme

The Foot-and-Mouth crisis in 2001 had an adverse impact on the launch and initial operational stages of the Pilot Programme. In particular, it created problems for the central Social Inclusion Unit in relation to briefing Community Services personnel within the regions on the new initiative. It is important to point out that the Community Services Division was provided with a copy of the Pilot Programme guidelines and it is, therefore, not a question that Community Services did not receive any information on the Pilot Programme but that the provision of a regionalised briefing sessions by the Social Inclusion Unit would have greatly assisted Community Services staff to understand its aims, operating procedures and reporting formats.

The focus group sessions with FÁS Community Services regional staff indicates that they encountered difficulties in supervising the Pilot Programme due to the lack of consultation and briefing. They also pointed to a lack of training on processing the information flows emanating from the projects.

Interviews with key informants have indicated that the low levels of awareness of the Pilot Programme both internally within FÁS and externally could be attributed to the lack of resources provided for marketing and promotion. The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Mary Harney T.D., announced the launch of the supported employment initiative in July 2000 and in April 2001 provided details of additional funding for the initiative. FÁS produced a brochure that explained the services provided under the Pilot Programme and which is generally available in FÁS offices. However, until recently, the only data on the FÁS web site in relation to supported employment were details on how to apply for Pilot Programme funding.

In August 2001, the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, announced that her Department has providing funding of €0.9 million to IBEC and ICTU for a new initiative, Workway, to promote the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector. The Workway initiative involves IBEC and ICTU jointly establishing a number of regional networks involving employers, trade unions, people with disabilities, service providers and relevant State Agencies, coming together to raise awareness of the employment potential of people with disabilities. The networks would explore local skills availability and employment opportunities that are available locally. It would provide information to

employers, employee representatives and people with disabilities on supports that are available to assist the integration of people with disabilities into the workforce. The feed-back from the Pilot Programme consortia is that while welcoming the Workway initiative there is still a lack of awareness of the Pilot Programme among people with a disability and among employers.

7.4 Operational and reporting procedures

The projects were required under Pilot Programme guidelines to submit quarterly returns to their local Community Services unit. The guidelines specified the type of information and format to be submitted.

The analysis of the quarterly reports reveals a wide variation in the preparation and presentation of the data by the Pilot Programme projects. Some of the quarterly reports differed considerably from the Pilot Programme guidelines.

The situation was compounded in some cases by uncertainty among Community Services staff as to the correct method for submission of quarterly data.

It also appears that the data contained in the quarterly reports was not collated at either a regional or national level and thus there was little information at head office level on key Pilot Programme performance indicators.

The lack of information on overall Pilot Programme performance at both a regional and national level within FÁS was frustrating for the projects. They were also concerned that despite numerous requests they were not getting any feedback on the type and format of information presented in the quarterly reports.

Community Services staff have reported difficulties with the fact that some projects were not registering participants with FÁS as stipulated by Pilot Programme guidelines.

There were also difficulties in the manner with which the Community Service units within the regions applied FÁS's own Pilot Programme guidelines, particularly in relation to the 15-hour rule. The Pilot Programme guidelines stated that all participants placed in employment should be capable of working 15 hours per week; exceptions could be allowed on a case-by-case basis. Some regional units would not permit participants to be placed in employment for less than 15 hours per week in any circumstances while others were more flexible. The variation in the application of the exception to the 15-hour rule by FÁS regionally resulted in considerable tension between Community Services staff and the projects.

7.5 Communications

As noted above, there have been difficulties in relation to the lack of feed-back provided to the projects on the information provided in the quarterly reports. This has been a source of considerable frustration to the projects since the quarterly reports were time consuming to prepare and potentially could be a valuable source of information to FÁS.

An analysis by FÁS of its own internal files suggest that there has been low levels of communication with the Pilot Programme projects; a number of recommendations have been developed by Community Services to rectify this situation including the development of a supported employment newsletter.

The projects have pointed to a lack of awareness of the Pilot Programme within FÁS generally. It is apparent that in some regions there has been low levels of awareness among FÁS Placement Officers of the Pilot Programme and this has led to difficulties in relation to communications between FÁS and the projects. Additionally, some of the Placement Officers interviewed during the course of the research confused the Pilot Programme with other FÁS supports such as the Employment Support Scheme.

The low levels of awareness among Placement Officers may have been a factor in the small number of referrals from FÁS to the projects; another more influential factor was the fact that many of the projects were effectively closed to external referrals, a situation which caused considerable tension among Placement Officers.

There have been isolated cases of where projects had arranged placements for participants who were then sent to their local FÁS Employment Services office to register only for the Placement Officer to arrange a placement elsewhere.

7.6 Job Coach training

The initial Job Coach training provided by FÁS has been rated as both efficient and effective by the projects. Seventy five per cent of the projects agreed with the statement that FÁS Job Coach training had been effective while 92 per cent agreed that it had been relevant (see Section 4.9 above for more details).

The feed-back obtained from interviews with project staff who participated on the Job Coach training provided with FÁS funding by the Open Training College in association with Optima has also been positive.

The report on the internal evaluation of the Job Coach Training by the Open Training College and Optima indicates that it was valuable and relevant to people working in the job coach role.

8. Benefit analysis of National Pilot

8.1 Introduction

A key outcome of the Pilot Programme is that supported employment services have been provided to over 1,900 people with a disability during the period November 2000-June 2002 and that out of this total 775 people with a disability had been placed in employment during the period under review.

This appears to be a credible outcome of the Pilot Programme given that it effectively had only been in operation for 18 months. Many of the people with disability who have been supported had been unemployed at the time they registered with the Pilot Programme.

The feed-back from the participants indicates high levels of satisfaction of obtaining employment in the open labour market and of moving away from segregated settings. Equally important has been the real sense of benefiting financially from drawing a wage.

From an employer's perspective, there have been the benefits of being able to recruit loyal and hard-working employees, particularly during the early stages of the Pilot Programme when there were severe shortages of candidates. Employers have gained a valuable understanding of the barriers faced by people with a disability. The bottom line is that the overwhelming majority of employers who had employees with disabilities supported by the Programme would recommend it to others.

The following factors have, however, to be taken when considering the output of the Pilot Programme in terms of numbers of people with disabilities placed in employment in the open market:

- Only a small minority of people with disabilities supported by the Pilot Programme were referred from outside of the consortium partners. In a number of the cases, the projects were effectively closed to people with a disability who were not clients of a consortium organisation member;
- 48 or 6 per cent of the 775 participants placed in employment received less than the National Minimum Wage;
- Fourteen per cent of those placed in employment under the Pilot Programme did not have a contract of employment;
- 8 per cent of the 775 participants placed in employment were placed in other FÁS schemes such as Community Employment;
- Though the average number of hours worked per week by the 775 participants placed in employment across the 24 projects was just under 16 hours, ten per cent were employed for less than 10 hours per week. There have been situations where people with a disability have been employed for 2 hours per week;
- A small percentage of participants were placed in employment in companies that were owned by consortia member organisations or in public sector bodies.

These factors have themselves to be placed in the context that supported employment is for many organisations a relatively new service activity. Discussions with the projects indicate that there has been a large learning curve in relation to skills development and operating processes and the full extent of the benefit of this learning has yet to accrue.

8.2 Benefits for participants

The participants to whom employment services have been provided by the various consortia have been the major beneficiaries of the Pilot Programme. Just over 1,900 participants have been in receipt of supported employment services between November 2000 and June 2002 of which 775 have been placed in employment.

It is important to point out that while 775 participants have been placed in employment the remaining participants may also have gained valuable outcomes from their participation in the Pilot Programme. These might include advice on future training needs or opportunities to engage in work sampling activities.

The benefits for the people with a disability who have participated in the Pilot Programme are numerous and include the following:

- availability of supported employment services on an almost nation-wide basis;
- potential access to a dedicated and specialist supported employment service regardless of whether they attended a disability services provider;
- access to services which facilitates the expressed desire of a significant percentage of people with a disability to access the open labour market;
- opportunities to earn a regular wage;
- progression from rehabilitation and vocational training programmes;
- inclusion in mainstream economic and social activities;
- development of new personal and vocational skills;
- availability of support from job coaches to deal with difficulties at work;
- improved self-confidence and health;
- depending on hours worked, retention of State benefits.

The personal interviews with 34 Pilot Programme participants indicate high levels of satisfaction with personal and vocational outcomes from participation in the Pilot Programme. The participants feel the Pilot Programme has been invaluable to them in helping them to achieve their goal of integrating with mainstream employment. Even those who have been placed in jobs but were no longer in employment believed they have learned important lessons and were eager to try again.

The participants repeatedly stressed the high levels of service provided to them by their job coaches from the time of initial needs assessment to on-the-job supports. The support from their job coaches has not been limited to job placement but also to other areas such as personal and vocational skills development.

Participants also emphasised the contribution of the Pilot Programme in assisting them in their desire to leave the sheltered setting of their service provider and integrate into mainstream economic activity.

Project personnel reported improvements in participants' confidence levels and self-esteem and noted that they had developed other skills, most notably independent living skills.

It is clear from the consultation with participants that no other employment service provider had provided the same level of services to help them access open labour market opportunities compared to that which they had received from their job coaches. For participants who were not attached to the services of any disability services organisations, the Pilot Programme potentially filled an important gap in the provision of employment support services given that in many cases they had previously had disappointing experiences with employment service providers.

8.3 Benefits to employers

The operation of the Pilot Programme has brought benefits to employers which is important given their role in the success of any supported employment initiative.

An important benefit to employers that was more apparent during the early period of the Pilot Programme was the provision of job applicants at a time when there was a tight labour market and businesses were finding it difficult to fill positions. Though the employment market has become less buoyant some of the employers interviewed are still experiencing difficulties in filling posts. The Pilot Programme has introduced employers to a new source of labour that previously they had not considered.

The feed-back from employers indicates that not only were people with a disability a source of labour they had not considered but it had also opened their eyes to their abilities. They also appreciated the fact that employees with a disability were often loyal and dedicated to their job.

Employers greatly appreciated the services they received from the job coaches not only in sourcing potential new employees but also in providing induction and other training to the employee with a disability. Employers' positive views on the contribution of job coaches in the provision of training cannot be understated. They also valued the on-going support from the job coach should difficulties arise with their employee with a disability; their sense of value was heightened if this was the first time they had hired an employee with a disability.

The Pilot Programme has also allowed employers to gain an insight—albeit limited—into the difficulties experienced by people with a disability. Though this insight was necessarily limited to the world of work it also gave employers a sense for the barriers faced by people with a disability in other facets of their lives.

The interviews with employers indicated that there always will be a small percentage of businesses whom are favourably disposed towards employing people from disadvantaged groups. A small number of the employers interviewed had family members who were people with a disability while some businesses such as retail outlets and hotels employed people with a disability because it enhanced their business profile within their community.

The overall feed-back from employers is that they have gained from the operation of the Pilot Programme and they have strongly indicated that they would not only take on another employee with a disability but they would also recommend the initiative to other employers.

8.4 Benefits to the State

The benefit of the Pilot Programme to the State is more difficult to assess because its full impact may only become apparent over the longer term. As an example, the increased numbers of people with a disability opting for supported employment will reduce the requirement for the disability service providers to invest in day care centres with their associated high capital and operating costs.

The State has contributed significant resources, €6.3 million, to the Pilot Programme during the period under review. An important question arises therefore as to whether it has derived any economic benefit from this investment.

Given that 775 participants were placed in employment during the period under review, the average cost of placing a participant in employment is estimated at €8,129. This average cost per participant probably understates the true cost because the figure of 775 includes 172 participants who left their employment. However, it is not known how many of these 172 participants were placed in other jobs.

The average cost of €8,129 has to be viewed in the context that the vast majority of Pilot Programme participants continue to draw State benefits and furthermore to avail of the services of Health Board-funded facilities such as day care centres. Only 4 per cent of the

participants placed in employment during the operation of the Pilot Programme have come off State benefits. Given that 87 per cent of participants placed in employment retain their Disability Allowance, then the average cost per participant placed in employment to the State rises to €14,329.

The average Pilot Programme employment placement cost excluding State benefit costs of €8,129 per participant is considerably higher than the employment placement cost associated with other organisations targeting labour market disadvantaged groups. Figures supplied by FÁS indicate that the average employment placement cost of LES clients is €4,758 for jobs of a comparable number of hours per week. The average employment placement cost for the Pilot Programme is, therefore, 170% higher than the cost of a roughly comparable service. Caution should, however, be exercised in comparing employment placement costs between different organisations and programmes as, for example, the Pilot Programme expenditure includes a large element of set-up costs that arguably would not be the case with the LES.

From an economic viability perspective, it can be concluded that the operation of the Pilot Programme during the period under review has provided limited returns to the State with respect to its €6.3 million investment.

However, it has to be said that the Pilot Programme has resulted in a number of benefits to the State that are less tangible to quantify. These include:

- Contribution to the more efficient operation of the economy by assisting in the provision of a pool of untapped labour resources to employers. This was particularly true during the early stages of the Pilot Programme when companies were experiencing difficulties in filling positions. Employers were thus saved of the time and effort of recruitment, particularly if they would have had to resort to sourcing recruits from outside the State;
- The Pilot Programme has increased awareness among employers of an untapped pool of labour that exists in the form of people with disabilities;
- The Pilot Programme has made an invaluable contribution in terms of assisting people with a disability to avail and sustain employment opportunities and has made employers realise that people with a disability can make loyal and hard working employees;
- As noted above, with larger numbers of people with disabilities engaged in the workforce there may be a consequent reduction in the need for hospital and day care facilities with their related high capital and operating costs.

From a policy perspective, the Pilot Programme has helped the government to achieve its stated aim of assisting people with a disability to integrate into mainstream employment. Furthermore, it has filled an important gap in the provision of employment-related services to people with a disability that previously was only available on an ad-hoc basis and a limited availability.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

9.1 Conclusions

The following conclusions have been drawn following a detailed analysis of the data collected during the course of the research:

1. The operation of the Pilot Programme has led to the implementation of a supported employment service on a nation-wide basis;
2. The Pilot Programme has successfully demonstrated that supported employment can assist people with a disability with the appropriate supports to access the open labour market. During the period November 2000 to June 2002, a total of 775 Programme participants were placed in employment;
3. It has also shown that supported employment is suitable for all the major disability sectors (learning, physical, hidden, sensory and mental health). It should be recognised, however, that this review only covered the first 20 months of the Pilot Programme's operation and longitudinal research will be needed to fully assess its outcomes;
4. The Pilot Programme has addressed a gap in the provision of information and advice on employment opportunities to people with a disability which hitherto they have difficulties accessing;
5. An important outcome of the Pilot Programme is that it has demonstrated to employers the value of employing a person with a disability;
6. The high drop-out rate of participants prior to placement and of participants who left employment after placement suggests the need for an in-depth review of participant selection and recruitment procedures; additionally, the case of the latter, it also points to the need for preparation for work—as opposed to vocational—skills training;
7. There are differing understandings of supported employment particularly with regard to the target group to whom supports should be offered to access the open labour market;
8. There were difficulties associated with the administration of the Pilot Programme as some consortia chose to ignore the contract they had signed with FÁS and also disregarded Pilot Programme guidelines. There were also difficulties with the way in which FÁS staff within the regions interpreted the guidelines and with the way in which data from the projects was processed;
9. The issue of double-funding arises in a number of instances of which the participation in other State-sponsored programmes such as Day activity centres by participants placed in employment is one. It is inevitable given the need for a wide range of supports for people with a disability that there will be an overlap of funding provision;
10. A more pressing issue is the fact that despite being placed in employment the overwhelming majority of participants still retain their State benefits such as the Disability Allowance. There is an ingrained belief among participants and their immediate families that once State benefits are relinquished they are difficult to get back;
11. While the Pilot Programme has demonstrated positive benefits both for people with a disability and employers, the cost per individual placement is relatively high;
12. The consortia approach to the provision of supported employment services has shown the potential to work well and with appropriate modifications should be retained;
13. The operation of the Pilot Programme has led to the development of examples of good practice that should be built upon in relation to future supported employment initiatives;

14. The concept of supported employment used in the Pilot Programme could be extended to other labour market-disadvantaged groups.

9.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in relation to the future operation and administration of future supported employment initiatives.

The recommendations are grouped under the following headings:

Programme duration

- The suggested minimum period for the operation of a future supported employment initiative is 3 years.

Structure

- The use of consortia to provide supported employment services on behalf of FÁS should be continued;
- Consortia selection should have regard to the objective of covering all areas of the country;
- The membership of consortia should be extended to include community development organisations, local business representative groups as well as the disability service providers;
- FÁS should not be a member of a consortium but should have an observer status within the consortium's policy-making committee;
- Each consortium should have its own legal identity and this should be separate from the legal identity of the sponsor organisation;

Operations

- Each consortium should have a full-time project co-ordinator;
- Guidelines should be developed by FÁS for implementation by projects in relation to job description, person specifications and recruitment and selection procedures for staff;
- Where possible and feasible, the project should be based in a central location that is independent of consortium member organisations; consideration should be given to using the premises of existing mainstream employment service providers such as FÁS, LES, etc.;
- Detailed guidelines should be developed for entry onto future supported employment initiatives. These should include specific guidelines on the level of job readiness of potential participants and minimum number of hours worked per week. FÁS should develop a suitable job ready definition to be used in relation to programme participant selection;
- These guidelines should be complemented by structures which seek to assess the level of job readiness of people with a disability at the time of application. This may involve inputs from both FÁS Placement Officers and project personnel. The development and implementation of these structures can help increase project throughput as job coaches can then concentrate on the placement of participants who have been assessed as job ready. Applicants lacking vocational or work preparation skills can be directed to other FÁS initiatives or to external Department of Health and Children-funded supports such as club houses;
- The existing Pilot Programme operating guidelines should be further developed to include instructions on the type of placements that will be allowed. For example, to

minimise potential instances of double-funding placements in a consortium member organisation should be disallowed as should placements in public sector bodies;

- Where consortium member organisations lack specific expertise across all disability sectors, the projects should develop their own panels to whom they can refer participants for further assessment;
- In accordance with Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/FÁS policy and strategy documents, projects should be open to applications from all people with a disability in their catchment area. Particular attention should be placed on identifying the population for whom supported employment services should be provided. Additionally, the projects should be more proactive in seeking information on the numbers of people with disabilities in their catchment area that could avail of their services and in developing promotional strategies to increase awareness among their target group;
- Support should be provided to facilitate the development of internal administration and reporting systems within the projects. This should draw on existing best practice developed by the Pilot Programme-funded projects;

Monitoring and reporting

- In order to ensure the effective operation of future supported employment initiatives, both consortia and FÁS regional staff should adhere to the programme terms and guidelines;
- The Community Services Division of FÁS should continue to retain responsibility for future supported employment initiatives. However, consideration should be given to the development of formal information linkages between the projects and FÁS Employment Services Division;
- Revised guidelines for quarterly reports should be developed that take into account the data required for the monitoring of projects. As an example, the quarterly reports should be revised to include new placements for the quarter and the cumulative total placements. The revised guidelines should also draw on the work commenced internally by FÁS to streamline reporting procedures;
- Internal systems should be developed so that information flows from the projects are captured, analysed and disseminated to relevant decision-makers within FÁS;
- Monitoring visits to projects should take place twice a year and should involve meetings with project staff, participants and employers;
- Community Services staff having responsibility for future supported employment initiatives should receive training in new reporting and monitoring systems;
- Additional training in disability awareness should be provided to FÁS staff interfacing with project staff and participants;
- Additional training in the aims and objectives of supported employment programme provision should be provided to FÁS staff interfacing with project staff and participants;
- There is a need for longer term monitoring and evaluation to assess impact and cost-effectiveness over time;

Promotion

- Resources should be allocated for both the internal and external promotion of any future supported employment initiatives;
- Additional resources should be set aside to increase the level of awareness among employers of other related FÁS supports such as the Employment Support Scheme and disability awareness training. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's

new Workway initiative has the potential to assist in the process of educating employers to the advantages of employing people with disabilities;

- The Irish Association of Supported Employment (IASE) should be encouraged to take a more active role in the promotion of supported employment;
- Consideration should be given to the development of a common branding identity strategy and standard for supported employment projects to increase the level of recognition among employers. Both FAS and IASE should be involved in the development of the promotional standard;

Training and development

- Basic training, with certification, should be provided for project co-ordinators and job coaches. In addition, some further development for project co-ordinators and job coaches should be provided;
- Project staff should be fully briefed on the National Minimum Wage legislation;
- Consideration should be given to the role of the Irish Association for Supported Employment in skills development;

Other

- FÁS in conjunction with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment should discuss with the Department of Health and Children and associated agencies the provision of a supported employment service for people with a disability having higher support needs.

Appendix 1: Case studies

The consultants prepared short case studies of four Supported Employment projects:

1. Disability Employment Network (Dublin North);
2. First Employment Services (Cork);
3. Clare Supported Employment Service;
4. Laois Consortium of Supported Employment.

The projects were selected having regard for the following criteria:

- Catchment area served (e.g. rural/urban);
- Number of job coaches (e.g. large/small);
- Presence of team leader;
- Organisational structure (e.g. partner-based/central location);
- Open/closed for external referrals.

The consultants carried out a brief literature review that involved in the main studying the quarterly reports produced by the projects and their respective project questionnaires. The research team also reviewed other documentation including publicity material published by the projects.

The main focus of the data collection process was a series of intensive face-to-face interviews in each of the four case study projects with the following categories of informants:

- consortia sponsor organisations;
- consortia member organisations;
- team leaders;
- job coaches and, where relevant, administrative staff;
- participants;
- employers;
- others e.g. participants' family members.

Particular emphasis was placed on interviewing participants at different stages of the supported employment process i.e. needs assessment, work sampling, job finding, placement and on-going employment supports. Interviews were also held with participants who had been placed in employment but who had left their job.

Interviews were also held with employers who had a participant on their staff and with employers who no longer employed a participant.

The face-to-face interviews were supplemented by a number of telephone interviews.

The case studies are presented in a separate volume.

Appendix 2: List of employers surveyed

This section lists all of the employers surveyed during the research process. The majority of employers were surveyed by means of a questionnaire but a number were interviewed personally by the consultants.

2 R Kunststofftechnik

Anglers Rest

APT

Asgard Lodge Nursing Home

Association of Parents and Friends of the Mentally Handicapped Carrickmacross Company

Automatic Plastics

Ballygar Wood Products

Banagher Concrete

Bandon Motors

Belmont Hotel

Bowe Furniture

Brothers of Charity

Buy & Sell

Byrdan

Campbell Catering

Cappagh Nurseries

Carlow, Kilkenny & Tipperary S R Rural Transport

Centra

Connaught Waste Recycling

Cork County Council

County Donegal VEC

Department of Social and Family Affairs

Dolebusters

Dooleys

Dunnes Building Services

Dunnes Stores

Enable Ireland

Equifax

Eurotech

Fairways Hotel

Finola Foods

Four Seasons Hotels

Gaines Europe
Glenbrook Nurseries
Glenore Garden Centre
Green Door Bakery
Hertz
Holmes O'Malley Sexton
Hotel Westport
Houlihan Solicitors
Inishowen Fine Foods
IWA Wheelchair Repair Service
Jouita Limited
Kellehers Garage
Kennedy Accountants
Kildare & West Wicklow Doctors on Call
King Ireland
Kylemore Clinic
Leahys Fruit & Vegetable
Londis
McHugh and Kramp
Medtronic
Michael Murphy & Co.
Midland Health Board
Mid-West Recycling
Molly's Kitchen
Moloney Financial Services
Mount Errigal Hotel
Murphys Village Hotel
Neriki Europe
Newtowncunningham Properties
NWHB Laundry Service
O'Connors Bakery
PEM Fastening Systems
Pouladuff Dismantlers)
Powerscourt Golf Club
Provence Food
Raffertys Restaurant
Rehan Electronics

Revoclife Limited
Roadstone Paving
Samirish
Seven Horse Shoes
Shamrock Lodge Hotel
Slaney Plaza Cinema
Slieve Russell Hotel
South County Bar & Café
Spar
St. Joseph's Home
Star Restaurant
Supermacs Restaurant
SuperValu
Templecrone Co-operative Agricultural
Tesco (3)
Texaco
The Health Boards Executive
The Hunters Lodge
Townley Hall Golf Club
Tullamore Court Hotel
Tullaroan District & Heating
Value Centre Cash and Carry
West Wood Club
Western Health Board (2)

Appendix 3: Questionnaires

The self-completion questionnaires sent to the 24 Pilot Programme funded projects and to employers of participants are included below.

Questionnaire for projects funded by the FAS National Pilot for the Supported Employment Programme

1. Basic project data

Name of project:	
FAS Project No.:	
Name of respondent:	
Contact details: tel/fax/email	
Number of partner organisations:	
List of partner organisations:	
Name of sponsor/lead partner:	
Main types of disabilities for which the partner organisations have expertise (please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health <input type="checkbox"/> Hidden <input type="checkbox"/> Physical <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory

2. Project structure

Date project started:	
Geographic area covered:	
As of June 30, 2002, total number of project staff:	Total [] <i>Of which:</i> Co-ordinators/Team Leaders [] Administrative staff [] Job Coaches [] Other positions []
Are job coaches located in partner organisation's premises or in a central location (please tick):	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners' premises <input type="checkbox"/> Central location
Please specify your project's employee turnover (in percentage terms) from project start to June 30, 2002	Staff turnover [] %

3. Participant data i.e. those registered with project

Total number of people with a disability registered with project from start date to 30 June, 2002:	Total []
Number of participants categorised by gender:	Male [] Female [] Total []
Number of participants classified by age:	18-34 [] 35-44 [] 45-65 [] Total []
Number of participants categorised by main type of disability:	Learning [] Mental health [] Hidden [] Physical [] Sensory [] Total []
Number of participants classified by pre-registration status i.e. what was their status at the time they registered with the project:	1. Vocational training – specialist [] 2. Vocational training – FAS [] 3. Vocational Training – other [] 4. Full-time education [] 5. Unemployed (>12 months) [] 6. Unemployed (<12 months) [] 7. Employment – Competitive [] 8. Employment – Supported [] 9. Employment – Other [] 10. Rehabilitation training [] 11. Other [] Total []
Number of participants classified by source of referral:	Partner organisation [] FAS [] Local Employment Service [] Other [] Total []

4. Data on participants who have been placed in employment

Total number of participants placed in employment from project start date to 30 June, 2002:	Total	[]	[]
Number of participants placed in employment by gender:	Male	[]	[]
	Female	[]	[]
	Total	[]	[]
Number of participants placed in employment by age:	18–34	[]	[]
	35–44	[]	[]
	45–65	[]	[]
	Total	[]	[]
Number of participants placed in employment by main type of disability:	Learning	[]	[]
	Mental health	[]	[]
	Hidden	[]	[]
	Physical	[]	[]
	Total	[]	[]
Number of participants placed in employment by pre-employment status:	1. Vocational training – specialist	[]	[]
	2. Vocational training – FAS	[]	[]
	3. Vocational Training – other	[]	[]
	4. Full-time education	[]	[]
	5. Unemployed (>12 months)	[]	[]
	6. Unemployed (<12 months)	[]	[]
	7. Employment – Competitive	[]	[]
	8. Employment – Supported	[]	[]
	9. Employment – Other	[]	[]
	10. Rehabilitation training	[]	[]
	11. Other	[]	[]
Total	[]	[]	
Number of participants placed in employment by source of referral:	Partner organisation	[]	[]
	FAS	[]	[]
	Local Employment Service	[]	[]
	Other	[]	[]
	Total	[]	[]

5. Employment data on participants placed by the project

Number of participants placed in employment categorised by State benefits or subsidies:	None	[]	[]
	Disability Allowance	[]	[]
	Disability Benefit	[]	[]
	Invalidity Pension	[]	[]
	Unemployment Assistance	[]	[]
	Other	[]	[]
	Total	[]	[]
Number of participants placed by industry sector:	1. Textile manufacturing	[]	[]
	2. Clothing and footwear manufacturing	[]	[]
	3. Food/drink/tobacco manufacturing	[]	[]
	4. Construction	[]	[]
	5. Retail/wholesale/hotel/catering	[]	[]
	6. Engineering assistance	[]	[]
	7. Chemical manufacturing	[]	[]
	8. Printing and paper	[]	[]
	9. Other services	[]	[]
	10. Transport/communications	[]	[]
	11. Financial services	[]	[]
	12. Cleaning	[]	[]
	13. Security	[]	[]
Total	[]	[]	
Number of participants placed on other FAS schemes e.g. Community Employment:	Total	[]	[]
Number of participants placed in employment by company size:	<10 employees	[]	[]
	11–50	[]	[]
	51–100	[]	[]
	101–200	[]	[]
	201–500	[]	[]
	>500	[]	[]
Total	[]	[]	

6. Terms and conditions of participants placed in employment

Number of participants placed in employment by length of time in job:	<6 months [] 6–12 months [] 12–18 months [] >18 months [] Total []
Number of participants placed in employment by hours worked per week:	<5 hours [] 6–15 hours [] 16–25 hours [] 26–35 hours [] >36 hours [] Total []
Average hours worked per week:	
Number of participants placed by gross average pay per week <i>excluding</i> State benefits or subsidies:	<€50 [] €50–100 [] €101–150 [] €151–200 [] >€201 [] Total []
Average hourly wage levels:	
Numbers of participants placed receiving less than the minimum wage:	
Number of participants placed by terms and conditions of employment:	Employment contract [] Provision of over-time [] Worker representation [] Sick pay scheme [] Annual leave [] Other (please specify) []
Total number of participants who have left employment following placement:	Total []
Total number of participants who left the Programme prior to placement:	Total []

7. Supports provided by project

Number of participants placed in employment by level of support provided as of 30 June, 2002:	1. Full time support by Job Coach.....[] 2. Daily support by Job Coach.....[] 3. Weekly support by Job Coach.....[] 4. Intermittent support by Job Coach and Natural Supports[] 5. Occasional supports provided by Job Coach and Natural Supports.....[] 6. Natural supports with Job Coach available to troubleshoot.....[] Total[]
Number of participants placed in employment by engagement on other state sponsored programme when not employed as of 30 June, 2002:	Sheltered workshop [] Day activity [] Other [] Total []
Number of people with a disability registered with the project at the following stages of activity as of June 30, 2002:	Needs assessment & job development [] Job sampling/work experience [] Job placement [] Job retention and support services [] Total []

8. Potential target population

Is the project aware of the total number of people with a disability within its catchment area who could be assisted by the Supported Employment Programme?	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet
If yes, please specify the numbers of people with a disability who could be assisted by the Supported Employment Programme	Total []

9. Project perspectives

[Please respond to the following statements using the following scale: Strongly agree (SA); Agree (A); Neither agree nor disagree (N); Disagree (D); Strongly disagree (SD)]

1	Networking among the consortium members has been a major benefit of the Pilot Programme	SA	A	N	D	SD
2	The model of organisational structure where job coaches are based in a central location is the most effective	SA	A	N	D	SD
3	The Job Coach training provided by FAS has been effective	SA	A	N	D	SD
4	The Job Coach training provided by FAS has been relevant	SA	A	N	D	SD
5	The Supported Employment Programme has enabled people with a disability to access mainstream employment	SA	A	N	D	SD
6	The Supported Employment Programme has developed an awareness among employers of the value of employing a person with a disability	SA	A	N	D	SD

10. Additional information

If there are any issues which you would like to raise in relation to the FAS National Pilot for the Supported Employment Programme, please list them here:

All information supplied will be treated in confidence.

Thank you for your co-operation; please return to Tom Martin & Associates/TMA, Marketing and Management Consultants, Priory House, 19 Priory Hall, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin. Tel: (01) 283 5252 Fax: (01) 283 5251 Email: info@tma.ie

Questionnaire for employers with an employee assisted under the FAS National Pilot for the Supported Employment Programme

1. Company details

Name of company:					
Name of manager/respondent:					
Size of company (please tick):	<input type="checkbox"/> <10 employees	<input type="checkbox"/> 11–50			
	<input type="checkbox"/> 51–100	<input type="checkbox"/> 101–200			
	<input type="checkbox"/> 201–500	<input type="checkbox"/> >500			
Business sector (please tick):	<input type="checkbox"/> Textile manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/> Construction			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Clothing and footwear manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/> Printing and paper			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Food/drink/tobacco manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/> Other services			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Retail/wholesale/hotel/catering	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering assistance			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Chemical manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/> Transport/communications			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial services	<input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Security				
How many of your employees are or have been assisted under the FAS Supported Employment Programme?	Number	[]			
How long has this employee(s) been with the company (in months)?	No. of months	[] Employee 1	[] Employee 2		
How many hours a week does this employee(s) work?	No. of hours worked a week	[] Employee 1	[] Employee 2		
Name of organisation which helped place this employee(s)?					

2. Your views on the Supported Employment Programme

[Please respond to the following statements using the following scale: Strongly agree (SA); Agree (A); Neither agree nor disagree (N); Disagree (D); Strongly disagree (SD)]

The support provided by the Job Coach in relation to sourcing the employee to match the job was very helpful	SA	A	N	D	SD
The on-going support provided by the Job Coach after the employee has been recruited is a vital element of the Supported Employment initiative	SA	A	N	D	SD
The Job Coach has helped us to manage an employee with a disability	SA	A	N	D	SD
The employee has contributed to the work of the company	SA	A	N	D	SD
The employee is an integral member of the work team	SA	A	N	D	SD
The Supported Employment initiative has helped to alleviate staffing shortages within the company	SA	A	N	D	SD
The Supported Employment initiative has made us realise the value of employing a person with a disability	SA	A	N	D	SD
Management have a better understanding of the barriers faced by people with a disability	SA	A	N	D	SD
Staff have a better understanding of the barriers faced by people with a disability	SA	A	N	D	SD
I would recommend the Supported Employment Programme to other employers	SA	A	N	D	SD

3. Future of Supported Employment Programme

Would you recruit people with a disability under the Supported Employment Programme in the future? (please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
What improvements, if any, would you like to see made in the Supported Employment programme in the future?	

Signature of company respondent: _____

All information will be treated confidentially; please return to Tom Martin & Associates/TMA, Marketing and Management Consultants, Priory House, 19 Priory Hall, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin.