



# **‘Getting Started’ in Social Care Training Programme**

Joint funded by



**EVALUATION REPORT**

# Introduction

The Association for Real Change is a membership organisation supporting anyone who is involved in the planning or delivery of support or services for people with a learning disability. Our work also benefits people with other support needs such as autism, mental health issues, long-term health problems and physical and sensory disabilities, and we are therefore committed to sharing our learning and experience across all sectors.

Like the rest of the adult social care sector, the learning disability sector faces significant challenges in recruiting and retaining support workers. This is projected to become an even bigger challenge given the changing demographics and as a result there is acknowledgement that proactive work needs to be undertaken to address the pipeline of workforce coming into the sector over the next five to ten years.

In discussions with their members ARC NI identified an opportunity to facilitate an innovative project, reaching out to a new market of unemployed people and offering training to equip them with skills required for working within the learning disability sector. When the project concept was developed in late 2015, there were approximately 44,330 unemployment claimants in Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>. ARC NI and its members recognised that people are unemployed for a variety of reasons, one of which is due to caring responsibilities. Hence whilst no formal experience may be in place, it was agreed that there may be individuals who have the correct values and attributes for working within the social care sector.

The Getting Started Collaborative was a one-year pilot project offering 75 participants, who have been unemployed or economically inactive for at least 6 months, the opportunity of taking part in a pre-recruitment 8 week training programme, with a guaranteed interview upon completion with a provider who had real vacancies.

Funding was secured from Ulster Garden Villages, with a contribution also from Bombardier and ARC NI. Ingeus provided funds in kind through free use of their facilities and time.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/default.asp7.htm>

# The Project Plan

## Partners

ARC NI believes in partnership working. The Collaborative partners identified as critical to enabling the success of this project were as follows:

- Ingeus, the contractual lead agency for the Department for Communities, formerly Department for Education and Learning, employment programme Steps 2 Success, across Greater Belfast, North Down and Newtownards in Northern Ireland<sup>2</sup>. Steps 2 Success is an opportunity for jobseekers in Northern Ireland to build skills and experience that will help them progress into work. People have to take part in Steps 2 Success if they are unemployed and on Jobseekers Allowance for nine months if aged 18 to 24 or 12 months if aged 25 or over.
- Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC), the regulator of Social Care Workforce
- Learning Disability providers namely Positive Futures; Praxis; and The Croft Community, all of whom are ARC NI members
- ARC NI, an organisation skilled in supporting best practice in the learning disability sectors' workforce

All of the above met as a planning group on numerous occasions throughout the delivery to agree roles and responsibilities, assess progress, identify challenges and agree solutions.

## Process

Ingeus worked with ARC NI to agree an informal assessment process to assess the enthusiasm and interest of any potential participant, alongside additional support to build participants confidence and self-belief in getting 'work ready' on a 1:1 basis.

ARC NI developed the training programme required by the project to introduce participants to the NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Care Workers

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<sup>2</sup> This geographical area was based on the scale of the pilot project and the service areas operated by the provider organisations

and utilised an online tool called “ A Question of Care’ developed by NISCC to enable participants to consider the values required to work in the social care sector.

The course included twelve sessions over an eight week period, during which individuals learnt about a comprehensive range of topics required to become a support worker for people with a learning disability.

These included:

- Promoting Positive Behaviour;
- Moving and Handling (safer client handling);
- Safeguarding;
- Human Rights; and
- Person Centred Practice.

Observational visits were facilitated by the providers of learning disability services and guest speakers attended sessions, including people with a learning disability and NISCC Ambassadors for Careers in Care.

On successful completion of the programme, participants undertook an exam to achieve the European Care Certificate. Interviews were scheduled and participants met with the providers to compete for support worker posts in the learning disability sector.

## Delivery

A total of 73 participants were engaged, over 5 cohorts in the project which occurred between November 2015 – December 2016.

## The Results

**73** participants took part in the training programme.



- 53** participants successfully completed the course.
- 47** participants attended interviews.
- 19** participants completed a successful interview and were offered employment.
- 10** participants completed the course and were unsuccessful at their interview however, secured employment in the care sector.
- 7** participants have secured employment in other industries.

## Positive Outcomes

The outcomes achieved were high with 73% of participants successfully completing the course and achieving a qualification (European Care Certificate). This was a fantastic achievement representing the success in the model delivered. Furthermore 93% of the 59 participants, who completed the project, reported a significant increase in their confidence, hence demonstrating an improvement in the softer outcomes of the project.

An evidenced outcome was the reduction in unemployment as 50% of participants' secured employment, and of this 80% was within the health & social care sector. Even for those that secured employment outside of this sector, their view was that

the 'Getting Started' project had given them the confidence to enter the labour market and become part of a workforce.

One of the participants has already been promoted to a senior support worker in an elderly residential home, demonstrating that the course was a suitable building block to be used alongside practical application of skills in work experience to demonstrate further capabilities of career progression.

## The Learning

### Challenges

As with many organisations, Ingeus experienced key personnel changes and although efforts were made to ensure a robust project handover there was a noticeable change in the candidates being put forward to the project. For the first two cohorts, large pools of enthusiastic and committed candidates were being referred to the Getting Started Collaborative. However, as the project progressed there was a noticeable reduction in the quality of candidates being referred. People who were not currently ready for work were being referred, for example those with multiple and complex needs. These candidates were participating because they were required to, to maintain their benefit payments, rather than having the capacity, or interest in securing employment. This presented additional layers of support being put in place by ARC NI to increase participants' confidence and self-belief. That said, there was a noticeable increase in the participants presenting with little or no basic or essential skills. The purpose of the project was to introduce new people to the social care sector and a consequence of the above was that for some individuals, their personal circumstances were not pertinent to employment within a caring/support role.

The majority of the participants on the programme were from Belfast, which resulted in some participants being unable to accept the employment offered to them at the end of the course. This was due to an inability to travel for work. A key barrier that was raised by successful candidates was the lack of affordable public transport available to meet certain shift patterns i.e. Night cover

Whilst the Provider organisations were open to employing an individual with little or no experience, in some cases depending on the individual, the out workings of this in practice became challenging to manage long-term. Due to the nature of the work, and the people being supported by this new workforce, providers assessed a need for increased management support. This is on top of an already robust management and induction process. Currently the learning disability sector is facing financial crisis and to increase management capacity, if not commissioned, is not a sustainable option. Their concluding reflections are that individuals need to have, or be able to access, opportunities to gain demonstrable experience, whether on a voluntary or paid basis.

## Conclusion

ARC NI is keen to share the learning of the 'Getting Started' project. As such ARC NI welcomed the opportunity of being included in a scoping paper, authored by The Social Care Institute for Excellence and funded by J P Morgan. The purpose of the scoping was to inform development of projects to improve the chances of the long term unemployed in inner cities to gain the confidence and skills they need to become part of the workforce. ARC NI welcomed the opportunity therefore of highlighting the benefits of this innovative approach of introducing a new market to the social care sector, however evidencing the various routes of support required for both an individual and organisation to ensure high quality support.

ARC NI utilises evidence of practice to influence and lobby for change, to further support the learning disability sector. ARC NI therefore took the opportunity of sharing the results of the 'Getting Started' project within a submission to the Department for the Economy's public consultation regarding the introduction of the 'Apprenticeship Levy' in Northern Ireland.

In conclusion ARC NI has advocated the need for Apprenticeships in Social Care to become a priority area, particularly for Level 2 & 3. ARC NI and its members believe this would enable people to gain relevant work experience, enable high quality support provided by the provider organisation and increase candidates' chances of success.