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# Good Practice Sharing

**Inter-institutional cooperation – role of public institutions and NGOs**

**Connect Ireland – Employment Support Programme**

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24 & 25 Sept 2024 | Maramures, Romania

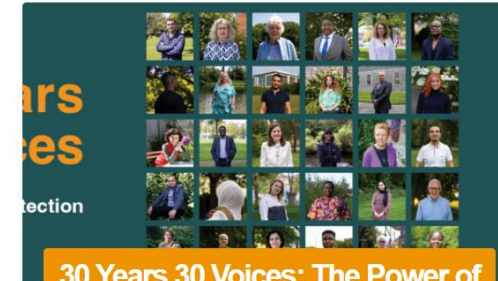


# Irish Refugee Council

The Irish Refugee Council provide services and support for people seeking protection and people recognised as refugees in Ireland and advocate for humane and dignified protection procedures and responses to people fleeing persecution.



Press Release: Irish Refugee Council budget submission calls for Child Benefit or equivalent payment



30 Years 30 Voices: The Power of Protection



'Now I live on the road': new report on homelessness among people seeking protection

## IRC Priorities

- Deliver high quality support and advice to people in the protection process and people who have been granted status
- Provide holistic integration supports from the day a person arrives in Ireland
- Support and protect children and young people in the protection process
- Raise public and political awareness and advocacy
- Evidence based research and policy
- Pilot best practice models
- Build capacity among key actors to bring about positive changes in practice and policy

## Connect Ireland – Employment Support Programme

- **Problem Addressed:**

- *The Connect Ireland programme design was designed on an understanding that new refugees in Ireland often suffer from lack of confidence and motivation as a result of time spent under the conditions of ‘Direct Provision’ system arrangements for asylum seekers which severely limit their personal autonomy.*



# 'Connect Ireland – Employment Support Programme'

- **How Objectives are reached:**

- The Connect Ireland programme developed by NLN (National Learning Network) in partnership with the Irish Refugee Council (IRC), built on existing programmes run by NLN for people with disabilities. The pilot programme employed, a tailored assessment/brokerage/advocacy approach to assist people to avail of existing training and support services to progress to education and/or employment. Each participant was assigned a 'broker' and invited to participate in a series of individual meetings with their broker over a period of twelve weeks.
- A person-centred model is at the core of the programme, after an initial engagement, participants worked with brokers on a personalised assessment of skills, barriers to employment, and an individualised progression plan to help access existing services and community supports such as training, education, health, housing and supported employment, based on needs identified. The original programme has been continued by IRC with cohort meetings, private & public industry meeting events and elements of refugee training moving online.



# 'Connect Ireland – Employment Support Programme'

- **Resources Needed:**

- *The pilot programme (12 weeks) supported 20 clients, 5 in each of four NLN training centres across Ireland. In each centre one broker was deployed for one day each week to support these clients, trained by employment officer IRC with some travel & evaluation costs. Approx cost roll out €60k.*

- **Evidence of Success:**

- Although no state funding was provided, since 2016 NLN and IRC run abridged versions of Connect Ireland. To improve efficiency, online elements added, and solid collaborations developed with marquee Irish public & private employers to match job seekers with roles.
- 2023 IRCs employment programme impact: 354 people enrolled for upskilling, 148 for the employment supports programme, 98 completed, 27 progressed to sustainable employment, 50 secured internships. 9 employer partnerships secured.

- **Timeline:**



Sept 2016

Present

# 'Connect Ireland – Employment Support Programme'

- **Employment Partners**



**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin



**Beacon  
Hospital**



**An Roinn Fiontar,  
Trádála agus Fostaíochta**  
Department of Enterprise,  
Trade and Employment



**An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt**  
Department of Justice



**TALENT BEYOND  
—BOUNDARIES—**

# ***‘Connect Ireland – Employment Support Programme’***

- **Potential for Learning or Transfer:**

- The Irish Refugee Council has identified that living for prolonged periods under the ‘Direct Provision’ system is very damaging for refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland. Enforced dependency and isolation from mainstream society not only deprives people of the opportunity to develop their use of the English language but also results in a loss of confidence.
- There is learning for similar programmes for refugees across Europe when seeking to support transition to employment for new entrants into an economy. Communication and collaboration is key, when the programme is run in a coordinated manner this can help to provide regular opportunities for members of the broker team (across locations) to exchange information and insight from their work with the programme. Furthermore, this allows brokers to pool information gathered and work with marquee public and private employers to match job seekers with available roles and build up a shared repository of information and contacts.

- **Challenges Encountered:**

- The fundamental principle of ‘linkage’ underlying the Connect Ireland pilot programme assumes that a range of services appropriate to new refugees needs is available, and that the problem is primarily one of access to services that can be facilitated by skilled ‘brokerage’. However, during the pilot, brokers’ experiences showed that the availability of appropriate referral services varies considerably between locations.

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# Thank you!

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