SECTION ONE

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Policy and Labour Market Context

Over the last number of years, European economies including Ireland have experienced important structural changes: the modernisation and liberalisation of product and service markets, globalisation, the rapid development of information and communication technology. Influenced by these developments the labour market has undergone fundamental changes. As a result, for many individuals the traditional pattern of a long-term job with a single employer requiring little or no skill development has begun to vanish and it is being replaced by a working life that consists of several different jobs requiring different skills.

Competitive pressures as well as technological changes and shifting consumer preferences have forced many enterprises to rethink traditional organisational strategies and practices. Increasingly businesses have needed to react with greater flexibility to changes in supply and demand. Technological developments have allowed enterprises introduce new and more flexible arrangements in the organisation of production procedures.

These new scenarios challenge policy makers as well as individuals. In meeting this challenge, a balance must be reached between businesses' need for flexibility and employees' need for job security and employability. Striking this balance is not an easy task.

Despite the fall in unemployment and the growth in employment in recent years, unemployment and low participation in the labour market are heavily concentrated in particular groups in society and within particular geographical areas. These concentrations take different forms in different areas, reflecting skill or area differences. However, it is a common feature that people with low earning potential are those most likely to have poor employment prospects due to a lack of positive employability characteristics

Employment and social inclusion goals are strongly interrelated in the framework established by the European Employment Strategy and further strengthened by the conclusions of the Lisbon Summit. Employment is a key factor in social inclusion, both at the macro level – in order to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of our welfare systems – and at the micro level – because paid employment is the best route out of poverty.

Following the Lisbon Summit in March 2000 the EU leaders set the goal of creating a competitive and inclusive knowledge-based economy with more and better jobs and increased social cohesion. They acknowledged that creating new jobs and raising employment rates is the key to a cohesive and prosperous Europe. This is to be achieved by reducing unemployment and by offering every citizen the possibility of access to the labour market and the chance to remain employable during the whole of

their working life. It would follow therefore that the emphasis on labour market policies must encourage the promotion of employability, including lifelong learning, training and more flexible forms of work. Ireland currently has 65% employment rate, and the growth over the past five years has been dramatic. This is very close to the Lisbon Summit's objective of 70%. However, the objective of creating a more accessible labour market is often more challenging.

The consultation paper from the Forum on the Future of Work states that the Lisbon's summits strategy is linked with a wider vision involving the following

- High quality and efficient public services
- The maintenance of social cohesion
- The promotion of social inclusion

The Forum on the Future of Work identified a number of important "drivers" that are likely to influence the shape of the workplace of the future. The "drivers identified are the following:

Increasing competition resulting from globalisation, EU enlargement, trade liberalisation and deregulation of previously protected industries.

Changing and more fluid industry boundaries as a result of regulation d convergence of technologies, and the entry of new competitors with different business models and lower cost structures.

The transition to a knowledge based economy with economic activity increasingly concentrated in high skill sectors, an increasing premium on the skills and knowledge of the workforce and growing importance attached to lifelong learning.

More intense international competition for investment and jobs and more mobile capital.

Advances in information and communications technology and its rapid spread both inside and outside the workplace, transforming how work is done and how individuals organise their lives.

Rapid technological change, providing opportunities for new production methods and new products and services, and the emergence of 'new economy' activities that exploit digital technology.

International legislative and regulatory changes, including European directives, relating to the workplace.

Increasing awareness and expectations on the part of consumers with regard to both private and public goods and services.

Increasing demands for better quality, more customised, cost-effective public services and awareness of the need to improve the delivery of public services.

Changes in the profile of the workforce, particularly the increasing employment of women, rising skill levels, increasing national and ethnic diversity and the growing proportion of older workers.

Changes in the expectations and needs of individual in relation to work and employment and a desire for more control over their lives generally.

The Forum goes on to state that the preferred competitive strategy is explicitly seen to be one that offers the opportunity for successfully combining a dynamic enterprise economy with social solidarity. It is clear that the Community and Voluntary sector can play an important part to ensure greater solidarity and inclusion. The implications of the EU vision for organisations in the community and voluntary sector and their ability to adapt to the changes required have yet to be determined.

The Forum identifies the main challenges facing the businesses and public services is to respond to competitive and financial forces, while continuing the shift to a knowledge society with value added economic activities, quality public service and commitment to equal opportunities.

The main aim of the Forum is to seek to establish an understanding of how different sectors of the economy are placed in terms of the workplace implications of Ireland's competitive and social vision. It is of significance that the consultation document did not refer to the community and voluntary sector. It would be important that the sector is included in the consultation process as it is not exempt from the impact of the change drivers outlined by the Forum.

1.2 Employability for Life
Employability can be defined as the relative capacity of an individual to achieve meaningful employment given the interaction between personal characteristics and the labour market. (See Appendix I) The ESRI in its study of employability found that individuals who suffer reduced levels of employability tended to have the following characteristics;
▪ To be older
▪ To have limited previous attachment to the labour market
▪ To come from a lower social class
▪ To have high levels of fatalism about their ability to control their lives
▪ An exposure to high levels of psychological distress
▪ To have low levels of education.

To the above one could add the following a lack of skills relevant to the contemporary pattern of labour demand and the presence of unemployment traps.

In recent years Ireland has experienced record levels of economic growth. However the economy will likely experience fluctuations, primarily in response to changes to global markets, to changes in levels of economic activity and to political and technologies changes. The degree to which an individual can acquire new skills and knowledge will to a large extent determine not alone their quality of employment and level of income but also their capacity to adapt to changes in economic and labour

market conditions. To-day's labour market requires an individual to be flexible, adaptable and to be open to learning new skills. Many employers consider these, as key employability factors required by an individual in order to be successful within the labour market. As a result the concept of 'employability for life' and not a 'job for life' should now be the goal for many individuals within the labour market. It is against this background that the concept of life-long learning and employability becomes increasingly relevant to policies and actions to address poverty, social and economic exclusion and to ensure a more equal labour market.

1.3 Defining Labour Market Exclusion

Defining exclusion is a complex matter. This arises because individual's welfare, personal, family and labour market circumstances are complex and not easy to label. The definition of long-term unemployment is also complex, as is the idea of defining exclusion in terms of distance from the labour market. The European Commission acknowledges that the labour market has become more complex - due to technological and social developments, changes in the nature of work, more developed welfare services and state involvement in training programmes and employment schemes - that there is "now a wide spectrum of states between being completely inactive and completely employed". (Labour Market Studies, Ireland, Series One, 1997, EU Commission, Page 185).

However, while it is difficult to arrive at a clear definition of exclusion there exists relatively easily identifiable estates, neighbourhoods, communities, etc. where individuals do not have the opportunity to compete on an equal basis within the labour market. This primarily arises due to low levels of education, skills, erratic or no employment history, personal/family circumstances, welfare dependency and the urgent need to generate income that in turn undermines attempts at long-term career planning and reinforces the low value placed on education and/or training, low levels of self-esteem, etc. Individuals living within such communities need to be provided with support to access education, training and/or employment more so than other groups in order to ensure greater equity and efficiency within the labour market as a whole.

In these areas most of the indicators used to define exclusion (income levels, labour force participation, Live Register, long-term unemployment, school drop out rates, welfare dependency, number of households headed by LTU, lone parent, literacy levels, education and skill levels, etc.) are either above or below the national average. In terms of establishing a more equal labour market policies and actions in these areas should be developed that would for example bring labour force participation, long-term unemployment, numbers in employment, etc. up or down to the national average.

1.4 Employment and Employability: Defining Labour Market Policy

An important question that arises is whether or not labour market policies should be about filling any job including low paid unskilled employment with no long-term prospects or is it about developing an individual's employability? Like many labour market questions the solution is not black or white. In this case it is not one or the other. Individuals should be supported to access employment. However labour

market policies should also be aimed at assisting individuals, particularly in disadvantaged areas to reach their full potential and to enhance their employability. This is necessary if in the long-term individuals in disadvantaged areas are to be assisted to overcome poverty and social exclusion. A necessary strategy to achieve this objective is to raise the skill, education levels but also the labour market aspirations of individuals living within these communities.

If the above is not seen as a central part of labour market policies then there is a danger that individuals living within particular communities would be further disadvantage, as it would make it more difficult for them to overcome the barriers that exist between the "primary" and "secondary" labour markets. Without wanting to get too theoretical the concept of a Duel Labour Market (DLM) can act as a good metaphor for the point that is been made.

DLM notes the existence of labour market territories. These territories are defined by factors such as low paid jobs, jobs based on gender, race, etc. In its simplest form DLM identifies two sorts of employers, two sorts of employees and two sorts of labour markets. One labour market the "primary" is characterised by higher skill and better paid employment. Jobs in the "primary" labour market tend to have better working conditions and career prospects. In contrast the "secondary" market is characterised by low paid, low skilled, insecure employment with poor working conditions and little or no long-term career prospects. The result is two labour markets with barriers between them that individuals in the "secondary" labour market find it difficult to overcome. Because of the relationship between labour markets and house policy particular communities tend to house individuals either in the "secondary" labour market or with skills, education levels that means that the only realistic employment prospects is in the "secondary" labour market.

In terms of the achievement of greater equality within the labour market it is important that labour market programmes are developed, such as Fast Track to Information Technology (FIT), to assist individuals to develop their employability in terms of education and training that will help them to overcome the barriers between the two labour markets. Other actions should include strengthening active labour market measures and prevention policies to avoid the persistence of long-term unemployment, broadening participation in the labour force, especially with regard to women and older workers, strengthen policies aimed at reconciling work and family life, consolidating policies aimed at maintaining an individual's employability, in particular by improving access to lifelong learning supports.

1.5 Management of Discrimination
The management of discrimination and equal opportunities in the employment relationship is an extremely important subject for organisations and for society in general is a multi-level and multi-approach aspect of employee relations. The ability to manage discrimination in a positive manner is an essential skill for managers in all organisations that have to deal with employee relations. All organisations need to be able to make distinctions and to discriminate in areas such as selection, appraisal and promotion. This is necessary as individuals are not all the same and have different

labour market characteristics, skills and abilities. However distinctions based on characteristics that are not relevant to a particular job such as sex, sexuality, marital status, colour, nationality, disability or age are considered as unfair forms of discrimination which affect the basic human rights of individuals. Thus like any organisation with employees the community sector needs to recognise that managing diversity and providing equal opportunities should form part of a range of actions that can be used to create effective and committed workers. The ability to mange diversity and utilise all members of the working population is an essential part of organisational development and in this regard community and voluntary sector is no different from any other sector in the economy or society.

Unfortunately many employers still look for "Mr Average" when it comes to recruitment. Appendix II outlines an article by Andrew Bolger in the Financial Time that highlights the extent of discrimination that exists among recruitment agencies. In the work place discrimination can take a variety of forms. However Sally Howe[1] identified that discrimination can take place at three levels as follows:

- Individual, where members of an organisation demonstrate prejudice against another individual often as a result of stereotypical thinking. Examples include: "women with children are less reliable", All Travellers are dirty", "older people are slow on the uptake", "young people are unreliable", etc.

- Structural, where the requirements for appointments or promotion have the effect of excluding certain groups or individuals. This may be deliberate or accidental and often results from an over-reliance on levels of experience and qualifications when defining entry into a job.

- Organisational, reflecting common assumptions about the type of job certain groups of people are capable of performing. Examples include: "women are best at secretarial work", men are most suited to transport and haulage".

Howe goes on to outline that the consequences of unfair discrimination are many, however the most significant include:

- Failure to select/promote the best individual for the job because of restrictions placed on applicants as a result of discriminatory practices;

- Failure to create a balance workforce containing individuals with a diversity of experience whose creativity and ideas can be utilised by the employer;

- The creation of resentment and poor morale, which undermine team spirit and co-operation.

One of the main difficulties that the sector faces in addressing the issues raised in this Report is the use of language. For example for the community and voluntary sector probable more that any other sector "to discriminate" tends to be a negative term and is associated with bad practices. The community and voluntary sector tends to be more sensitive about such a term because many organisation in the sector represent

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[1] "Discrimination" by Sally Howe in "*Employee Relations*" by Graham Hollinshead, Peter Nicholls, Stephanie Tailby (1999), Financial Times Pitman Publishing

and advocate on behalf of individuals who are discriminated against in a variety of different ways. However in the course of managing their day-to-day activities all organisations have to discriminate i.e. "to make a distinction". Distinctions have to be made in a range of areas, for example which computer should be purchased, which services should be provided, which is the best form of advertisement, etc. Distinctions have also to be made in the areas of human resource management such as the selection of the "right" individuals for a particular job, promotion and at time dismissal. The main issue is not that organisations have to make a distinction and thus discriminate but how this is done. Like any organisation in the private or the public sector organisation in the community sector are not exempted from the need to clarify and address the question of how distinctions are made. The main principle is that when there is a need to discriminate it is important that the distinction is based on fair and not unfair grounds or characteristics.

1.6 Managing Diversity
Like any organisations in the public and private sectors organisations the community and voluntary sector have to manage and respond to the changes that are taking place in the labour market and the labour force. There is now a much more divers work force and labour market that at any time in the history of the State. This trend is likely to continue and the community and voluntary sector needs to take into account the interest, aspiration and employment prospects of diverse groups of employees. Increasingly community organisation will have to learn how to manage diversity in the workplace. In managing diversity organisations take as their starting point the fact that all individuals are different, and that the potential of all members of the working population should be utilised. Managing diversity aims to be 'inclusive' and recognises that each and every individual is unique in his/her needs and experiences, individuals, not groups are the primary focus. A managing diversity approach is about confronting traditional attitudes such as 'this is the way we do things around here'.

The managing diversity approach is different from the equal opportunities approach. The equal opportunities approach is focused on the needs of the members of particular groups and uses special initiatives to focus attention on the issues affecting particular groups. This approach also tends to treat members of a particular group as if they all had the same characteristics. However the two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Ford (1996)[2] suggests that the more individualistic diversity approach and the group-orientated, equal opportunities approach can coexist happily as two strategies to achieve the same end – namely, removal of discrimination. A diversity approach alone may lead to complacency of the 'I already do this ' type, but the more positive image created may help disperse the hostility that some equal opportunities programmes have engendered. Ford used the example of Rank Xerox to show that a diverse management approach can add worth to an organisation if it is supported by equal treatment policies and practices. In Rank Xerox the use of both approaches have been used like the promotion of positive action initiatives, such as recruitment advertising to encourage applications from groups that are underrepresented, support for equal opportunities legislation and an emphasis on the value of the individual. Rank Xerox's self-image stresses its works on 'valuing equality" and "promoting diversity".

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[2] Ford, V (1996), "Partnership is the secret of progress", People Management, 8 February

Various international and EU documents and legislation underpin the individual's right to access work and how they should be treated once in work. This includes the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the EU Social Charter. The rights include the right to fair and equal treatment, equality before the law, privacy, the right to work and to join a trade union, freedom of beliefs, the right to leisure and holidays and the right to a decent standard of living. In Ireland the requirement of the EU Social Charter is implemented through legislation and the establishment of bodies such as the Health and Safety Authority and the Equality Authority. The Equality Act 1998 prevents unfair discrimination on nine grounds as follows, marital status, age, religion, membership of the traveller community, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender, family status. Like all employing organisations the community and voluntary sector is subjected to the same law as other sectors. Thus at the level of the organisation, legal requirements and procedural guidelines help establish systems to minimise discrimination and ensure equal treatment. However just because there is legislation is no guarantee that discrimination will not take place and the legal systems and procedures need to be backed up with a proactive management approach in order to avoid merely paying lip service to the ideal. It is not sufficient simply to have a policy; it must to actively put into practice and examples of good practice must be set.

When investigating the reasons why organisations with a stated commitments to equal opportunities did not act more vigorously to implement it, Liff suggests three possible explanations:

1.   the relationship between line managers and personnel/HRM specialists;

2.   the conflicts between equal opportunities and other priorities facing managers;

3.   resistance from employees.

1.7 The role of Management
As will all organisations within the workplace of the community and voluntary sector, managers have the primary responsibility to ensure that working systems provide equality of opportunity for all. Codes of Practice developed by the organisation may exist to promote good management practices, but these need to be implemented and enforced on a day-today basis. What, then, are the operational realities of managing equal opportunities? In this section the Report examines the processes of managing equality and diversity in the following areas[3]:

-   Recruitment and selection
-   Training and development
-   Promotion and appraisal

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[3] The process suggested in this section is based on an a Chapter "Discrimination" by Sally Howe in "*Employee Relations*" by Graham Hollinshead, Peter Nicholls, Stephanie Tailby (1999), Financial Times Pitman Publishing and "*Modern Management*", Siobhan Tiernan, Michael Morley and Edel Foley, (2001) Gill and Macmillan.

Recruitment and selection

It is essential that any organisation with a commitment to equality of opportunity thoroughly examine its approach to recruitment and selection. Good practice requires that selection criteria must be based on a detailed analysis of the job to be performed. The development of a person specification is crucial to ensure that all candidates are compared against objective criteria rather than each other. Two important products are derived from the process of job analyses, the job description and the person specifications. The job description is a statement of the main tasks and responsibilities of the job. The person specification should outline the skills qualifications, knowledge and experience the individuals should have in order to carry out the tasks.

Organisations should choose recruitment sources that can reach all sections of the community. Recruitment by word of mouth is potentially discriminatory. Positive action could involve targeting particular groups and the use of multimedia.

The design and content of recruitment advertisements is most important, the content should not discriminate against particular groups.

An application form provides a consistent set of data on all candidates. CVs are less reliable because of individual variations in style and content. However application forms tend to discriminate against individuals with literacy difficulties. A compromise would be to design a form specific for the job and leave blank spaces for supporting information.

The application method (form or CV) should allow candidates to state non-work experience as well as employment history

When short listing the candidates should be assessed against objective criteria and the results recorded. Staff involved in this stage of the recruitment process should be training to recognise and minimise bias.

The interview is the most commonly used selection method. However in general interviews alone have a poor record in predicting job performance. Most managers have little training yet rely on the process to select the best person. McMahon (1988)[4] found that 90% of job categories was filled with the assistance of the interview. McMahon (2000)[5] notes that a range of factors including the number of interviewers and the professionalism of the method and the panel will influence the effectiveness of the interview. In terms of discrimination and in order to minimise bias interviewers should have received training in how to conduct a structured selection interview. Questions asked should not be intrusive the interviewer should seek to obtain factual evidence of ability and not impressions of personality.

A number of other methods are also available such as intelligence, aptitude, proficiency and personality tests. The use of such tests can help to generate a more objective selection process if used along side the interview, which tends to be more subjective and open to bias. However tests should be carefully chosen to ensure they

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[4] McMahon, G, (1988) "Personal selection in Ireland: Scientific Prediction or Crystal Ball Gazing?" *IPM News*, 3 (3) October.

[5] McMahon, G, (2000) "Choosing the right kind of interview for the job" *Irish Times*, 9 October

do not unfairly discriminate. The test should be validated, suitable for particular groups and obtained from a reputable test agent.

Training and development
Garavan, Costine and Heraty (1995)[6] draw a distinction between training on the one hand and development on the other. They defined training as a "planned, systematic effort to modify or develop knowledge, skills and attitudes through learning experience in order to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities". Development is seen as a broader concept relating to the individual and his/her future career in the organisation. It is not concerned with immediate performance but future potential with a view to enable them to take up a future role in the organisation. While both are important in terms of the work of the Equal Project one could argue that development as defined above is more important to groups such as Travellers, long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged groups.

Good practice would identify a number of steps to be taken in terms of training and development within organisations.

- Training and development policy

The organisation should formulate a training and development policy. The policy should state what the organisation is prepared to do, it should outline the specific objective and a timeframe and who will be responsible. Training and development policies should contain a statement on equality of access. In order to limit bias access should be provided to training and development for all employees.

- Identify needs

The organisation would need to identify accurately the training and also the development needs of all employee. The most common method used to identify needs is a survey and one-to-one discussions with the employee. Tests can also be used to identify training and development needs.

- Planning and conducting the training and the development activities

There is a wide range of methods that can be used to deliver training. Organisations have to make an assessment of the best method to use taking into account the profile of the employees and the training and development objectives. Training methods include, on-the-job, coaching, counselling, mentoring, secondment, project work, formal classes, group discussions, case studies, computer assisted training. Whatever the method the principle should be to achieve a high learning transfer. Restrictions, such as the need to stay away from home extensively, should be minimised to ensure that access to training is available to all. All training and development courses should contain a specific commitment to equal opportunities. Training and development materials should be free of bias and to use a full cross-section of ages, sexes and races in examples and exercises.

- Evaluation

Training and development activities should be evaluated to ensure that control is maintained and to enable a considered assessment of the outcome to be undertaken.

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[6] Garavan, T, Costine, P, and Heraty, N (1995) *Training and Development in Ireland: Context, Policy and Practice*, Oak Tree Press, Dublin.

Evaluation of training and development activities should include equal opportunities criteria.

Promotion and appraisal

Building equal opportunities into promotion requires much the same discipline as for recruitment and selection. Many organisations seem to have a 'glass ceiling', which prevents particular groups from advancing with the organisation. Access to promotion should not be based on stereotypical assumptions or prejudice that excludes non-typical applicants. Some organisations have set specific targets for the numbers of women or other underrepresented groups in senior management. Action plans can than be formulated to help bring this about.

Assessing the work of employees is an important aspect of human resource management. Performance appraisal has been defined as

" *a procedure and process which assists in the collection, checking, sharing and use of information collected for and about people at work for the evaluation of their performance and potential for such purposes as staff development and the improvement of that work performance*"[7].

Appraisals are used to examine the past performance as well as the future potential of the employee. Tyson and York (1992)[8] identified a number of objectives for an appraisal system. These include determining developmental needs in terms of work experience and training, determining how well an individual is doing in a particular job and whether any changes are required, to identify people who have the potential to take on wider responsibilities. The identification of promotion potential and career development are also important functions of an appraisal system.

A wide range of methods is available to organisations in order to carry out appraisals. These include ranking, paired comparison, critical incident, free form narrative, self-assessment, assessment centres, performance objectives, oriented systems and rating. Whatever the method used in appraisal schemes, the criteria adopted should be carefully structured to ensure that the categories used are as far as possible quantifiable and objective. Impressionistic systems that allow greater subjectivity are much more prone to bias.

Like in other aspects of life discrimination exists in the work place. The tendency to judge others by how much they are "like us" is very high and can lead to the exclusion of particular individuals and groups from opportunities in the work place. The role the wider society plays to influence in terms of the level of discrimination that takes place in the work place cannot be over stated. This arises because individuals who work in organisation bring their own biases with them when they start work. However organisation can take steps to limit and control discrimination and to promote equality and including in work places that are increasingly diverse. Over the last number of Government legalisation had generated a minimum standard that organisations have to achieve with regards to equality in the work place. However legalisation alone is not a guarantee of equality of treatment as individual

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[7] McMahon, G. and Gunnigle, P. (1994) Performance Appraisal: How to get it right. Productive Personnel Limited in association with IPM (Ireland).
[8] Tyson, S. and York, A (1992) Personnel Management, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

employee's biases plays an important part in determining the level of discriminations that takes place in any organisations. Boards of Management and managers have a major role to play in establishing the right tone for the organisation. The development of good human resource practices is an important element in the fight against unfair discrimination. This section of the report has outlined some of the more acceptable practices that can limit discrimination.

Progress in fighting discrimination has been achieved however much more still needs to be done. Disabled individuals still experience major difficulties in finding meaningful employment, particular groups such as long-term unemployed and Travellers still fell marginalised and find it difficult to find and progress within employment. As a result many are only comfortable with self-employment. Instilling a respect for difference as well as similarities will not happen over night.

Community and voluntary organisation have an important role to play to address discrimination. One could argue that the role they play is even more important as may organisation in the sector represent the interest of groups that suffer discrimination thus it is more important that community and voluntary organisations lead by example to the other sectors in society.

For many organisations it is too easy to have written policies to which "lip-service" is paid. Organisations have to develop actions to ensure the policies are implemented. As outlined above have good selection, recruitment and appraisals systems plays an critical part in address discrimination and encouraging disadvantaged groups to develop within organisations. For all organisations including those in the community and voluntary sector the effective management of diversity is a central element in addressing discrimination. Kandola and Fullerton (1994)[9] note in the conclusion to their survey on managing diversity that

"it was discovered that the skills necessary to manage diversity are essentially a restatement of an old theme, namely good interpersonal or communication skills. It is these skills that need to be emphasised in training managers in the diversity-oriented organisation. Good managers of diversity are essentially that – good managers, and good managers are those who deal with employees as individuals rather than expect everyone to be equally motivated and to work in the same way."

The lesson here is that managers in organisations have to see all employees as individuals and not members of a particular group. Moving to the stage of an individual employee approach will help address the dangers involved in labelling employees as members of this or that group. However systems have yet to be developed that enables each individual to develop to their own potential and the ability of organisations to do so is limited by a lack of resources and in some cases a commitment to address discrimination in its various forms.

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[9] Kandola, R. and Fullerton, J. (1994) "Diversity, more than just an empty slogan" Personnel Management, November 1994.

SECTION II

RATIONAL AND METHODOLOGY

2.1   Background to this Report

Equal at Work is a Dublin-wide initiative under the EU EQUAL Programme. Created and developed through the Dublin Employment Pact, Equal at Work involves 48 partner organisations from the public, private and community & voluntary sectors in a pioneering attempt to develop new and more inclusive models of recruitment and in-work progression. Through this initiative, the partners in the project aim to break entrenched patterns of labour market exclusion and long-term unemployment, and to contribute to the development of an employment culture in Dublin which is open and diverse.

The community and voluntary sector has grown considerably over the past few years and in many parts of the sector this growth has been an ad hoc one based on funding available or current Government priorities. It is recognised however as a significant employer in Dublin and a growth area. The sector has become increasingly complex over the past number of years and the fact that many different Governments Departments fund the sector, means that within one organisation there may be four or five different systems for recruitment, training and remuneration of staff. The Community and voluntary sector site believe that the systems for grant aiding or funding programme and staff costs should be more coherent in order to ensure consistent terms and conditions for staff in this sector. The sector has not come together before to examine their own operating systems and this will provide a new energy for the work.

The broad aim of this site is to create recruitment opportunities and progression routes within the community and voluntary sector, develop a code of practice for HR systems and create a mechanism for negotiating work conditions and qualifications in the sector.

Within the site two working groups have been set up:

The focus of the first working group is Policy & Practice. Specifically the aim of this working group is to explore and propose systems which facilitate open access to employment and career opportunities within the community and voluntary sector, to raise awareness of real and potential barriers that may exist and may impede equality and diversity in these practices.

The second working group is concerned with the perceived inequalities for staff employed in the Community & Voluntary sector as compared with those undertaking equivalent work in the statutory sector – difficulties retaining staff, limited progression routes, restricted salaries, a lack of security for workers due to short term contracts, and an undervaluing of community and voluntary work, which is still understood by many in the context of a vocation.

The actions being undertaken include the following:

- Conducting comparative research on wages and working conditions in the community and voluntary and public sectors and, in addition, the collection of data from a range of community and voluntary organisations detailing their current practices in HR and the perceived barriers to promoting equality and diversity in their practice.
- Conducting case studies on a range of site organisations, highlighting the complexity and diversity of the sector and the working conditions within it and, in addition, a number of detailed case studies carried out to gain a more in-depth insight into the day to day HR issues in organisations and how organisations have developed responses to these.
- The Development of a pilot Project based on outcomes of case studies concentrating on existing good practice in terms of funding mechanism and the relationship between community and voluntary organisations and their funders.
- The development of a training module on the issues of HR policies and practices will be included into existing NCI training courses targeting the community and voluntary sector.

The site is led by Exchange House Travellers Service with partners from the following organisations: Southside Partnership, Co-operation Fingal, Fingal Community Forum, Integrating Ireland, KWCD Partnership, Ballymun Job Centre, Dublin Inner City Partnership, Southside LES, Rural Dublin LEADER Company, FAS, South Inner City Community Development Association, Merchant's Quay Ireland, IMPACT, National College of Ireland, ICTU, Forum of People with Disabilities, The Linkeage Programme, Focus Ireland, SIPTU

2.2 Rationale for the Study

The specific aim of Working Group I of the Community and Voluntary Sector Site is to explore and propose systems which facilitate open access to employment and career opportunities within the community and voluntary sector and to raise awareness of real and potential barriers that may exist and may impede equality and diversity in these practices. It was decided by the working group that in order to achieve this aim it would be necessary to collect baseline data from a range of community and voluntary organisations detailing their current practices in HR and to investigate the perceived barriers to promoting equality and diversity in their practice.

As a result a detailed survey of community and voluntary organisations was conducted. This survey was designed to elicit data on existing human resource practices in the voluntary and community sector, specifically in relation to recruitment and in-career development. The survey sought information on any specific measures, which promote equality and diversity in these areas. In addition a focus group was held with respondents to the survey to further investigate exiting barriers and innovation in promoting equality and diversity in recruitment and in-career progression in this sector.

2.3 Methodology

Defining the voluntary and community sector

It is acknowledged in the White Paper on Voluntary Activity, 2000 and elsewhere (Donoghue 1998), that the voluntary and community sector in Ireland is diverse and difficult to categorise. The white paper adopts Faughnan's (1990) broad classification of voluntary and community organisations-:

- Mutual support and self-help organisations
- Local development associations
- Resource and service providing associations:
- Representative and co-ordinating organisations:
- Campaigning and advocacy organisations

The European Commission makes a useful distinction between different types of organisations based on their primary activity-:

- Service delivery or provision: to provide to their members or clients, services such as social services, health care, training, information, advice and support
- Advocacy: organisations whose purpose is to campaign, lobby and otherwise argue on behalf of some cause or group with the aim of changing public perception or policy
- Self-help or mutual aid: organisations typically formed by groups of individuals with some common interest or need in order to provide mutual help, information, support and co-operation
- Resource and co-ordinators: so-called 'intermediary bodies' which co-ordinate the activities of ,or provide information and support to, either individual organisations working in a particular field or to the sector in general

These classifications are useful in so much as they illustrate the diversity of organisational types which make up the sector, however as Faughan (1990) emphases, that, like any classification system, they only partially recognises the wide variations of size, structure or culture embraced in each category.

Survey

From combined sources a database of circa 720 voluntary and community organisations in existence in the greater Dublin area with one or more paid employees was compiled. From this database a random sample of 180 organisation was surveyed using a postal questionnaire. The questionnaire sought to elicit data on recruitment and progression policy and practices in these voluntary and community organisations, and in particular, information on practices which promote equality and diversity. The questionnaire specifically sought information regarding policy and practice in the following areas

- Equal opportunities
- Work/life balance
- Staff recruitment
- Promotion of diversity within the organisation
- Staff promotion and progression opportunities

- Volunteer opportunities
- Staff training

Relevant data were received from 40 organisations giving a response rate of twenty-two per cent.

Focus Group

A focus group was held with participants from eleven respondents to the initial survey phase of the study. The focus group followed a similar structure to the survey questionnaire- equal opportunities, work/life balance, staff recruitment, promotion of diversity within the organisation, staff promotion and progression opportunities, volunteer opportunities, and staff training to further investigate existing barriers and innovation in promoting equality and diversity in recruitment and in-career progression in this sector.

SECTION III

FINDINGS OF STUDY

3.1 Organisational Profile

The legal form of almost all respondents (96%) was company limited by guarantee. The remaining seven per cent of organisations held charitable trust status (incorporated under the Charities act 1973). All of the respondent organisations held a charity number.

Although all the organisations selected for the survey were based in the greater Dublin area it is important to note that the majority of respondent organisations held a national remit (sixty eight per cent). Fifteen per cent held a local only remit and additional three respondents said they held a Dublin wide remit. Four respondents had an international focus as International Aid Organisations.

Thirty six per cent of respondents had an annual expenditure of less than one hundred thousand Euro. Over half of the respondents (51%) had an annual expenditure of between one hundred thousand and five hundred thousand Euro annually. Three respondents had an expenditure of between half a million Euro and a million Euro. Two respondents had expenditure greater than this.

Table 3.1A Annual expenditure of respondent organisations

Annual expenditure	% of n*
€0 ≤ €100k	36%
€100k ≤ €500k	51%
€500k ≤ €1000k	8%
Greater than €1000k	5%
Total	**100%**

*n=40

All of the respondent organisations employed staff on a full-time basis and three quarters (75%) employed staff on a part time basis. Over three-quarters (77%) of the organisations employed less than twenty staff with thirty seven per cent of respondent organisations employing five people or less. Only two organisations employed more than fifty people.

Table 3.1B Number of core staff employed by organisations

Numbers of core staff employed	No. of respondents	% of n*
1-5	15	37%
5-10	7	17%
10-20	9	22%
20-50	6	15%
50+	2	5%
Total	**40**	**100%**

*n=40

Forty five per cent of respondents had volunteers and thirty seven per cent employed staff under a government employment scheme, the majority of whom were employed under the Community Employment Scheme. It is worthwhile noting that 57% of scheme workers were employed in organisations with less than five core staff.

Table 3.1.c Numbers of scheme workers and volunteers with the organisations

Numbers scheme workers/volunteers In organisation	Scheme workers		Volunteers	
	No. of respondents	% of n*	No. of respondents	% of n*
1-5	8	20%	6	15%
5-10	2	5%	3	7%
10-20	4	10%	2	5%
20-50	1	2.5%	3	7%
50+	0	0	4	10%
Total	15	37%	18	45%

*n=40

When asked what the primary role of the organisation was thirty per cent of respondents described themselves as a community development organisation. Twenty per cent describe their primary role as an information and advice service and a further fifteen per cent described themselves as a family support service. Ten per cent of respondents describe themselves as a training and employment service, ten per cent as an international aid organisation and ten per cent as a lobbying and advocacy organisation.

A quarter of all respondents (25%) described their primary target group as individuals with a particular health issue and a further fifteen per cent said women. Ten per cent described their primary target group as socially and economically excluded groups and ten per cent said the international poor. Three respondents said ethnic minorities and similarly three respondents said the general public. Other target groups included the homeless, the voluntary and community sector and the lesbian and gay community.

3.2 Human Resource Policy and Practice

Statement of policy

The respondents were asked whether they held a written statement of policy in a number of key areas related to the promotion of equality and diversity within recruitment and career development in their organisations. Almost half of all respondents (47%) reported not holding a written statement is any of the following categories.

Thirty five per cent of respondents stated they held a written policy on equal opportunities, thirty eight per cent of respondents reported holding a written policy on staff recruitment and 30% on staff training policy. Twenty two per cent said they had a policy on volunteer opportunities and the same percentage reported having a written policy on the promotion of diversity in the organisaiton. Fifteen percent of respondents reported having a written work/life policy statement and just three respondents reported having a written statement on the promotion and progression of staff.

When asked with whom the responsibility lay with in regard to implementing these policies 22 per cent of those respondents who held a written statement on at least one of on the above polices said the manager (or equivalent) of the organisation and 18 per cent said responsibility lay with the management committee.

Table 3.2 a   Written statement/policy/initiative held by the organisation

Written statement/policy/initiative	No. of org.	% of n
Equal opportunities policy*	14	35%
Work/life balance policy	6	15%
Written statement on staff recruitment	15	38%
Specific policy to promote diversity in the organisation	9	22%
Written statement on promotion and progression of staff	3	7%
Volunteer opportunities policy	9	22%
Staff training policy	12	30%

* n=40

It is worthwhile noting that, although almost half of all respondents (47%) reported not having a written policy in relation to any of these areas, all of the respondent organisations practiced at least some of these policies. Of those organisations who did not have written statements on any of the above policies over half (28% of total respondents) cited lack of staff and time resources as the main barriers to putting the specified policy in place. The following statement typified this response

> *'We are currently working on drafting these policies, although we operate all these policies we have not got them formally written down yet. This is due to time pressure, we are aware of the need to have written statements'*

A further eight per cent of respondents said they saw no need for statements on these policies. Typically this response was from organisations with very low numbers of paid staff-:

'In this organisation there aren't sufficient staff numbers to warrant time spent developing any of the above policies'

3.3 Equal Opportunities Policy

Equal opportunities policy was defined as a policy whereby all employment and promotion opportunities are available and accessible to all qualified applicants including all nine grounds stated in the Employment Equality Act 1998 (These are: gender;· marital status;· family status;· age;· disability;· race;· sexual orientation;· religious belief; and membership of the Traveller Community).

Of the 35% of organisations who stated that they held a written statement on equal opportunity almost all (with the exception of one respondent) said that there had been consultation between management and staff in designing the organisations' policy. Half of these said that an evaluation of the policy had taken place (17% of all respondents) and all, excluding one respondent, said a programme of positive action been planned (including time limits) as a result of this evaluation. It is worthwhile noting that all the organisations with twenty or more employees have written statement on equal opportunities policy.

In the focus group most of the participants reported that their organisations have some form of written equal opportunities policy. Two spoke of their recent production/updating of their staff manual and said they were fairly satisfied that these manuals took on board equality issues across the nine grounds of the equal status legislation. However it was highlighted that the existence of such policies does not guarantee their implementation and much work remains to be done.

The main barriers highlighted to the implementation of an equal opportunities policy cited in the focus group were the lack of time and staff resources and the lack of real understanding and therefore commitment to the equality agenda. The participants agreed that this perception that *'not everyone in the organisation buys into equality as an important issue'* applied to staff and management, and thus, the question arises as to how penetrating organisational policies actually are for some organisations. One representative noted that it is a mistake to assume there is now a greater understanding of equality issues than in previous years. The reality is that for most organisations there may actually only be a *'grudging compliance with equality legislation'*.

The participants felt that there is not actually any real debate happening regarding equal opportunities for staff in the Community and Voluntary Sector. A lot of work needs to be done to get beyond *'polite dogma'*. There is a need for an opportunity for organisations to debate the fundamental question "Why bother being equal?" It was recommended that the first step is for the organisation to have the opportunity to get the groundwork right and clarify why equality of opportunity is a good thing generally and for them in particular. Otherwise there is the danger that they devote significant energy and resources to writing up an impressive handbook or document which may have little practical application.

Participants noted that at the broader societal level, there is an entire culture to challenge if equality of opportunity is to be implemented and this is also true for many organisations in the Community and Voluntary sector. It was noted that this work has been on going since the early 1990s within the private sector. Based on the experience of equality-focused consultative groups in IBEC the most effective way of ensuring that employers will take an interest in equality of opportunity policies in their recruitment is to raise their awareness of the added value that such a policy can

have for them in terms of skills availability and diversity among their workforce. While some employers had initially suggested that quota systems be put in place, it was felt that this would lead to reluctant compliance whereas highlighting the benefits was likely to have a more effective result.

A participant who was a member of one of these IBEC consultative committees. She noted the fact that it was more difficult for the smaller employer with a smaller budget to see such benefits. Other participants agreed with this point and noted that in general, training can be a huge issue for smaller organisations in view of the constraints on resources - both financial and staff time. Even where organisations see the benefits, development of equal opportunities policies may only be put on their 'to do list'.

Disability access was cited as a particular example of how financial implications act as a major barrier to ensuring that policies are followed through. One organisation gave the example of the fact that their offices are not wheelchair accessible so in reality they cannot hire a person needing such access. Furthermore, they cannot get a grant until they have a person with such needs on their staff. Other organisations noted similar barriers – one organisation in which a staff member is a wheelchair user, said they get round their access problem by locating their staff member outside of their head office (which is not disability accessible) and ensuring that meetings this person must attend are not set for that office.

It was recommended that awareness raising and lobbying needs to take place within the sector in relation to disability access. Facts and figures need to be collected. This issue is not taken seriously and needs the organised approach used in relation to gender equality.

3.4 Work/life Balance

All of the organisations employ full-time staff and three-quarters (75%) employ staff on a part-time basis. Sixty per cent of the organisations said provision was made for unpaid leave and 37% said provision was made for flexitime working. 40% of all organisation made some provision for job sharing/work sharing and a quarter of all organisations made provision for employment or career break and the same percentage made provision for teleworking/home working. Six of the respondent organisations offered annualised hours and two organisations made provision for term-time work (two organisations).

Table 3.4   Work/life balance arrangements are provided by the organisation

Flexible working arrangement	n	%	Flexible working arrangement	n	%
Full-time work	40	100	Unpaid leave	24	60
Shift work	2	5	Flexitime	15	37
Job-sharing/work sharing	16	40	Part-time work	30	75
Annualised hours	6	15	Term-time work	2	5
Employment or career break	10	25	Tele-working/Home working	10	25

n=40

Participants in the focus group noted that their organisations are conscious of the need for flexible work arrangements for staff, and offer flexitime, part-time work arrangements and time off as needed.

It was noted that job-sharing is not promoted widely and this seems to be based on fear-e.g. the perception of increased cost of PRSI and reduced productivity (even though neither of these are in fact true from the experience of organisations who have provided this opportunity to their staff).

It was noted that sometimes there is an assumption that a particular ethos of caring for the welfare of staff will be operational within the Community and Voluntary Sector. In many people's experience there can be many contradictions, and disappointment, particularly in relation to staff politics, approaches to conflict management and a lack of reference to espoused values in the work. It was felt that many organisations verbally support such policies but the implementation does not always follow and contradictory messages can be given. For example one representative noted that her request to her organisation to work at home following an illness was not accommodated. Another person noted how she was not informed of the fact that she could work flexi hours if she wished until she heard from another colleague some time after she had started in her job.

It was also noted that for some organisations policies and procedures may be set out but are only tested as time goes on. For example, in one organisation policies and procedures were 'borrowed' from other organisations. The first maternity leave among staff is now taking place and operational details are now becoming evident.

Overall however, it was felt that most organisations try to be as innovative and accommodating as possible within restricted budgets.

It was also noted to be important for organisations to be consistent with the offer of arrangements supporting work-life balance as inconsistencies can result in unequal treatment and can cause feelings of resentment among staff.

It was recommended that the private sector has a lot to offer on some of these issues and lessons need to be gathered and taken on board.

Section 3.5 Staff Recruitment

Recruitment Process

When a job becomes vacant or a new position is created within the organisation most of the respondents had well defined recruitment practices in place. 88% of respondents drew up a new job description or reviewed the existing one, 73% said a job analysis is undertaken and 78% of respondents drew up a person specification. A similar percentage (76%) or respondents said a recruitment panel is assembled and 70% said a written record of the interview process of the successful candidate is placed in the personal file.

Thirty five per cent of respondents said that the main barrier to putting these specified policies in place was that they did not have enough resources or recruit often enough to warrant investing in the development of these practices. The following statement typifies this response

> ' We have a small recruitment function and lack the necessary resources to invest in these processes'

A further twenty per cent said that they had not ever given any thought to the introduction of that particular practice 4

> 'We never though of introducing that practice but we will include it in future'

However far fewer respondents (30%) said that the job advertisement normally contains a statement of non-discrimination (on the basis of the nine grounds named in the Employment Equality Act, 1998). 22% of respondents said that the job advertisement normally contained a statement inviting candidates to identify any special needs and informed that adjustments will be made. The main reason cited for this was the expense of lineage in the printed media.

Only six respondents said that an offer of feedback was made to unsuccessful candidates on their application and interview performance. The main reason cited for this was the lack of staff time and resources.

Table 3.5a Recruitment practices in the organisation when a job becomes vacant or a new post being is being considered

Recruitment practice	No. of organisations	% of n*
A recruitment panel is assembled to deal with the recruitment and selection of staff	31	76%
A Job analysis is undertaken	29	73%
A new job description is drawn up or the existing one is reviewed	35	88%
A person specification is drawn up	31	78%
The job advertisement normally contains a statement of non-	12	30%

discrimination on the basis of the nine grounds named in the Employment Equality Act, 1998		
The job advertisement normally contains a statement inviting candidates to identify any special needs and informs that adjustments will be made	9	22%
The applications of current staff are normally treated on an equal basis with external applicants	18	45%
An offer of feedback is made to unsuccessful candidates on their application and interview performance	6	15%
A written record of the interview process successful candidate placed in the personal file	28	70%

*n=40

Interview process

With regard to the interview process the majority of the respondents had well defined practices in place. 85% of respondents reported that all the same pre-defined questions are asked of all interviewee's providing an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions and 76% said that the interview panel use a written sheet to record the information given by the applicant at interview.

Thirty seven per cent of respondents felt that the interview location was accessible to disabled candidates. Only three respondents said that they us aptitude tests as part of the selection process and similarly three respondents said that they use some other form of assessment as part of the selection process.

Table 3.5b   The elements of which the interview process normally consists

Interview Process	n*	% of n*
The interview panel use a written sheet to record the information given by the applicant at interview	31	76%
All the same pre-defined questions are asked of all interviewee's providing an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions	34	85%
The interview location is accessible to disabled candidates	15	37%
A disability car parking position indicated on letters of invitation to interview	15	37%
Aptitude tests are used as part of the selection process	3	7%
Other forms of assessment are used as part of the selection process (please specify)	3	7%

*n=40

The majority of respondents said the final responsibility with regard to drawing up the interview questions was a joint decision between the recruitment panel (73%). Twenty three per cent of respondents said the responsibility lay with the manager or equivalent.

When asked with whom the final responsibility lay with regard to selection and appointment of staff the majority of respondents said it was a joint decision between the recruitment panel (67%), twenty three per cent of respondents said the manager (or equivalent) and ten per cent said the management committee.

Table 3.5c   With whom does the final responsibility lie with regard to the following functions

Recruitment Function	Joint decision between recruitment	CEO (% of n)	Management committee (% of n)	Programme Co-ordinator (% of n)

	panel (% of n)			
Drawing up the interview questions	73%	23%	2%	2%
The final selection for the appointment	67%	23%	10%	-

*n=40

The participants in the focus groups suggested that it is important to have an objectively fair recruitment and selection process and to have this process documented. Issues such as appropriate language to be used during the process should be included. Most organisations have now moved to a more competency based, job relevant focus, with less emphasis on skill and educational qualifications. It was noted however that this approach can present significant challenges in relation to setting measurements and trying to achieve some standardisation across the sector. It was also noted that skill and educational qualifications are important, and the ideal approach is where people with relevant competencies may be employed on the basis that they can then be supported to acquire skill and educational qualifications which might enhance their work performance.

A number of issues were highlighted regarding recruitment and selection. One was the issue of confidentiality within small organisations and within the relatively small size of the Community and Voluntary Sector generally. Among the implications noted were: the fact that everyone in the organisation is likely to know who is applying for a job coming up (both from within the organisation advertising the job and from other organisations); managers/board members from one organisation are asked to participate on interview boards of other organisations so a candidate for a job, who has not mentioned their interest in a job change, may find themselves being interviewed by their manager; various perceptions of people's competency exist within workplaces and informal negative assessments through the 'grapevine' can be damaging to someone's chances of selection (this latter point was especially noted to be the case for someone who has been in an organisation for some time and has attempted to make progression through the organisation, but may be perceived in the same light as when they were first hired). Although it was noted that this is a universal phenomenon in a small country, it was suggested that equality awareness training for all the workforce in an organisation could help alleviate some of these issues.

A critical issue in relation to good practice for recruitment and selection (especially for internal candidates) is how (and when to begin) to gather information on a candidate while respecting confidentiality.

Training is needed for those involved in Community and Voluntary recruitment and selection. The lack of the appropriate skills for this process within the sector was highlighted. This training should cover equality legislation, and also practical elements such as setting up an interview team of at least two people, putting in place systems for interviewers to take proper notes at interviews so that they can stand over the decision made. The need for transparency and fairness should be highlighted. Also it is important that those involved in interviewing are clear in their approach to rating candidates and in how best to make a final selection decision in the case where candidates appear to have equal ratings. The difference between personal bias and prejudice and feeling that one candidate fits in better than another needs to be

explored and agreement reached on best practice to ensure equality of opportunity for all candidates. In some cases such close scoring results may be due to the fact that the job specification was very broadly set out. The reason for this may have been to maximise the benefit of the worker to the organisation but it can create difficulties in scoring one candidate over another.

The difficulties that can arise in relation to interviews for internal candidates were highlighted. Besides the fact that the person will be well known to the interviewers, the experience of the group suggests that internal candidates often do not perform as well as external ones at interviews. Sometimes it has to do with their feelings of awkwardness with their colleagues but sometimes it's to do with the fact they may be good at their job but not at interviews. Some participants noted how in their experience the internal candidate who was known to be the best person for the job didn't get it because their scores were lower than other candidates.

In relation to an internal candidate not getting a job the issue of how they are informed of this outcome was noted. Some felt that organisations are often insensitive in this regard/ While external candidates get a formal letter, internal candidates are often told in a casual way by their manager which even if it meant to be a more personalised approach can cause embarrassment for them within their workplace. It was recommended that internal candidates should be asked what their preference is in this regard.

The suggestion was made that there should be a separate internal and external recruitment process - jobs should be made available internally first and if it is not possible to fill the job with the right person, it should be advertised externally. This is the practice in some organisations, for example in one organisation support workers are recruited from CE staff who are all trained in support skills. The idea was suggested that good practice regarding employee support and development should result in all employees developing the skills and confidence they need for career advancement, including job application and interviews.

The question was raised as to the difference between an internal person applying for a job and it being a promotion for them. It was noted that in terms of good employment practice there is need for clarity in this regard – to be called a promotion, the job must be clearly related to the original job and in fact should obviously be a continuum with that job.

A feeling was expressed that the Community and Voluntary Sector have become more formal in their approach to recruitment and selection with use of formal application forms, expectations of formal qualifications e.g. Youthwork, Childcare etc. while the Private Sector have developed a broader competency based approach. Not all agreed with this and some felt that for some jobs e.g. management level certain qualifications are actually needed and that many organisations in the sector avoid a focus on skills/educational qualifications where possible.

Section 3.6   Promoting Diversity within the Organization

When asked whether the organisation had a specific policy aimed at the recruitment of the following groups almost 28% said they did in relation to economically disadvantaged (including long-term unemployed) and a further twenty per cent said they did so in relation to women. Twelve per cent said such a policy existed in there organisation in relation to individuals with practical experience but lacking necessary qualifications and the same percentage said such a policy existed in relation to lone parents. Four respondents said they had a policy specifically aimed at older people and similarly four respondents said they had a specific policy in place aimed at the recruitment/staff progression of people with physical or learning disability.

Table 3.6a   Specific policy aimed at the recruitment/staff training and development of any of the following groups

Target Group	Recruitment and/or Staff Training and Development Policy	
	Number of Organisations	% of n
Young people (including early school leavers)	3	7
One parent families	5	12
Older people	4	10
People with a physical learning/disability	4	10
Ex-offenders	3	7
Women	8	20
Individuals with practical experience but lacking necessary qualifications	5	12
Economically disadvantaged (including long-term unemployed)	11	28
Ethnic minorities (including members of the Travelling Community	2	5
Drug users/ex-drug users	1	2.5

*n=40

When asked what was the main barrier to the recruitment/staff training and development of excluded groups the main reason (40%) cited was that the organisation was to small or lacked the resources to provide the necessary support.

'We are a small organisation with limited resources and obligations to external beneficiaries, therefore feel obligated to recruit skilled 'low risk staff'

'The main barrier is staff resources to provide necessary support and training. Without the right resources it's a negative experience for everybody involved'

A further eighteen per cent said the lack of qualified applicants was the main barrier

'We just don't get applications from these groups with the necessary academic qualifications'

A further five respondents stated that it was against their own equality ethos to give preference to one group over another.

Almost a quarter of all respondents (23%) cited some form of training or team working to promote staff development of disadvantaged or excluded groups

' We work as team and support one another, we also run counselling services for staff'

'Our staff include three lone parents in part-time positions, training has included Confidence Building, Business English (to improve literacy skills) and Stress Management. Having training in small groups and also as part of the bigger team has helped to increase confidence'

'When someone starts working here we identify their training needs immediately and make a high investment in training at this stage to upskill'

Section 3.7   Staff promotion and progression

A total of twenty-six positions were recruited for in responding organisations during 2002. Of these eighteen were newly created positions and it is worthwhile noting that eleven of these positions are attributable to one organisation that experienced extraordinary growth during this period. Seven of the positions recruited for were recruited for internally.

Thirty five per cent of organisations said that no opportunities existed for staff promotion within the organisation. The main reason cited for this was the size of the organisation and it is worthwhile noting that all of the organisations with less than five employees fell into this category. Almost half of all respondents (45%) of respondents said that limited opportunities for progression existed within the organisation-:

> *'There is some progression available but it's very limited'*

> *'There is some (progression), however the organisation has a flat organisational structure with an administration, project workers and co-ordinators for each of the projects so everybody is considered equal and progression is limited'*

Twenty per of respondents said that opportunities for staff promotion and progression existed within the organisation.

Only seven respondents said they maintained a record of applicants who put themselves forward for promotion and their progression rates throughout the promotion process.

Almost all of the organisations (94%) reported using some form of employee performance indicators. 52% of the organisations said the most significant form of employer performance indicator used by their organisation was to hold an informal annual review, 25% said that individual career plans were developed for each employee and 17% said that the most significant indicator for their organisation was a system in whereby each staff member receives individual support and/or mentoring in achieving career goals. Forty per cent of the respondents reported having two or more of the above processes in place.

Table 3.7a Employee performance indicators

Employee performance indicators	n	% of n
Informal review of the year	21	52%
Individual Career plans are developed for each employee	10	25%
The staff member receives individual support and/or mentoring in achieving career goals	7	17%

*n=40

Overall the participants in the focus group felt that the development of a fair and effective system of staff appraisal seems to be slow in the sector. In one organisation staff appraisal involves the team leader and line manager preparing the appraisals and then meeting with each staff member and reading it to them. A number of issues were noted, in particular the lack of transparency and information control which are reflected in this approach.

One organisation has recently introduced a completely new performance appraisal – and is currently piloting in one of their centres. A series of questions is asked concerning the apraisee's past performance, based on the values of the organisation and skills needed for the job in question. Both parties (appraiser and person being appraised) fill out responses to these questions, responses are discussed and a 3rd document is agreed. This sets up goals and training needs.

The difficulty of ensuring effective appraisal of people while on probation was noted. Supervisors and managers sometimes tend to avoid being honest, and where necessary critical, and the result can be an inappropriate appointment to a job. Supervisors and managers need training to carry out proper appraisal. They need to understand the different approaches to appraisal (which can reflect the organisational management style) – autocratic or democratic.

Appraisal of volunteers was discussed. In one organisation, which is almost totally reliant on volunteer service, it was noted that a formal process is in place. Applicants for training courses are assessed, some offered training places and on successful completion of training some are offered positions. On-going supervision is then provided to all volunteers. It was agreed that organisations should be very clear as to what performance appraisal is about and it should be a planned process never a surprise for people.

Promotion and career development were noted to be very limited in the Community and Voluntary sector. Most organisations are too small and too flat. In one organisation it was noted that there is no pathway for a clerical worker to progress to development worker as the gap is too wide and then the next step would be manager but there is only one position and rarely a vacancy. In another organisation the influence of the Board of Management in nominating candidates for Board positions was noted as having an impact on the developmental direction of the organisation including staffing. The same manager has been managing for 20 years and there have been no gaps and no new blood at management level.

Issues for women progressing to management/director level were also noted. While gender barriers were suggested, the question was also asked if women are interested in taking on the stress of such positions.

It was noted that if organisations want committed staff, they must support staff development and ensure the ethos of the organisation is inclusive and promotes a sense of ownership of the organisation's work. In many situations, staff can only make progression by moving into other organisations. A further issue in this regard is the tendency for the sector to be so specialist focused (e.g. disability etc.) and the fact that this puts limits on people's transferable skills and policy insights.

In relation to opportunities for training for career development, it was noted that these are often limited within the sector. Many people have to take the initiative and support their own training. In view of the fact that opportunities are scarce within the sector, the importance of ensuring availability of training for movement into the private sector was noted (if people wished to pursue such opportunities).

Throughout all of this discussion the constraints of funding for training were highlighted, especially in the current cut backs and it also noted that staff funding in many organisations is only available to those with very low levels of education and skills. It was suggested that this is an equality issue for other workers.

In one organisation, exit interviews were carried out with people leaving. The main issues noted were the lack of career advancement. This is now being addressed and the organisation is being supported to set up a system where career pathways are developed across all jobs in the organisation and the system is linked into staff appraisal. when people leave.

A suggestion was made that the fact that there are a lack of opportunities for some staff to progress through some organisations may actually be to do with the level of difficulty organisations have in replacing certain categories of workers. It was suggested that it is relatively easy to hire a good manager from the private sector, but quite difficult to replace a good project worker. A common saying within the sector was quoted - 'don't do your job too well or you'll be stuck there'. Furthermore it was suggested that a board doesn't always want to encourage progression and is not too worried if there is a turnover of managers as it is less costly to hire managers at lowest levels.

The importance of lateral opportunity within the Community and Voluntary sector was noted particularly in terms of job enrichment. Ways of providing such enrichment for people who stay on in organisations that have no progression opportunities to offer, were also noted - encouragement to move to another area of work, engagement in training, exploration of job swap opportunities, involvement in extra projects.

Such possibilities would, however, require commitment on the part of management and may not be possible if resources are scarce – it may just mean additional work for the worker.

Section 3.8 Scheme Workers and Volunteer Policy

Scheme workers policy
Six scheme workers applied for paid positions in the responding organisations during 2002 and one scheme worker was recruited. Of those organisations who had scheme workers over half said the main barrier was the lack of specific experience or qualifications for posts (26% of total respondents) One respondent referred to the compounded nature of this problem

> *'It's a combination of things, the lack of relevant training and work experience compounded by a lack of confidence and self-esteem'*

A further four organisation said the main barrier was the lack of availability of suitable entry-level positions.

> *'We haven't had any openings in the type of entry level positions they (scheme workers) are in a position to take up'*

Volunteer Policy

Forty five per cent of the respondents said they employ staff on voluntary basis. The main barrier cited to employing voluntary staff was the lack of time and space resources necessary to train, manage and supervise a volunteer workforce (38%).

> *' We used to but found it was more work than it was worth, people use it for their CV's.   We train them up and then they don't show up'*

Eleven per cent of respondents said that the nature of their work does not lend itself to volunteering. Two respondents said that volunteers are not interested in the type of opportunities available and one responded said insurance was the main barrier in their organisation.

Almost half of the respondents who employ volunteers (46%) said that they encourage volunteers to apply for paid positions in the organisation. Thirty per cent said that they maintain a system of records on volunteers (duties performed, evaluation of work etc) and the same percentage said that volunteers are included equally with paid staff in the decision-making processes.

Table 3.8 Volunteer policy in the organisation

Recruitment practice	n	% of organisations with volunteers
Volunteers are encouraged to apply for paid positions in the organisation	8	46%
The organisation maintain a system of records on volunteers (duties performed, evaluation of work etc.)	6	30%
Volunteers are included equally with paid staff in the decision making processes	6	30%

*n=40

3.9 Staff Training
Training provision

All of the organisations that responded made some provision for financial assistance and/or time off with pay in relation to training. A high proportion of fulltime staff are eligible for financial assistance and/or time off with pay in relation to induction (95%), attending conferences/workshops/lectures/seminars (85%), one-off training (80%), on the job training (72%) and certified courses (57%).

The equivalent figures for part-time staff are even more noteworthy with practically all organisations who employ staff on a part-time basis making provision for financial assistance and/or time off with pay in relation to these categories.

Table 3.9a The categories of staff which are eligible for financial assistance and/or time off with pay in relation to training

Type of Training	Full-time		Part-time	
	N	% of organisations with full-time staff	N	%of organisations with part-time staff
Induction	38	95%	30	100%
On the job training	29	72	27	89%
Attending conferences/workshops/lectures/seminars	34	85	30	100%
One-off training	32	80	29	96%
Certified courses (FETAC, NUI, HETEC, professional)	23	57	21	70%

N=number of respondent organisations

All of the organisation who employed scheme workers made provision for financial assistance and/or time off with pay for scheme workers in relation to induction (100%). However the equivalent figures for the other categories are relatively low with 60% of the organisations who employ scheme workers making provision for financial assistance and/or time off with pay in relation to on the job training and one-off training and 53% in relation to attending conferences/workshops/lectures/seminars and certified courses.

Although the absolute numbers are low a substantial shortfall exists in training provision for scheme workers and voluntary workers when compared with full-time and part-time employees.

Table 3.9b
The categories of staff which are eligible for financial assistance and/or time off with pay in relation to training

Type of Training	Scheme		Volunteers	
	N	%of organisations with scheme workers	N	%of organisations with volunteers
Induction	15	100%	18	100%

On the job training	9	60%	6	33%
Attending conferences/workshops/lectures/seminars	8	53%	6	33%
One-off training	9	60%	6	33%
Certified courses (FETAC, NUI, HETEC, professional)	8	53%	2	11%

N=number of respondent organisations

When asked whether provision is made for childcare and other caring responsibilities is made when training does not take place during regular working hours, half of all respondents (50%) said no provision is made. A quarter of all respondents said some provision is made and the remaining 25% respondents said that the situation had not arisen in there organisation.

Identification and prioritisation of staff training needs
Half of the respondents (50%) said that the responsibility for the identification of training needs lay with the staff members themselves and a third said that the responsibility lay with management, a further four respondents (10%) said the management committee and two respondents said the client group.

Half of the respondents (50%) reported some kind of evaluation of staff training had been conducted. Of these half said the responsibility lay with management and a further 40% said the responsibility lay with staff. Two respondents said the responsibility lay with the funders and two respondents said the said the responsibility lay with the management committee.

Almost three-quarters of all respondents (73%) said that the responsibility for deciding the training budget lay with management, 17% said the management committee and four respondents said the funders.

Table 3.9c   The groups are actively involved in the following training functions

Group Involved	Training Function					
	Identification of Training Needs		Evaluation of staff training		Training Budget	
	n*	% of n*	n*	% of n*	n*	% of n*
Staff	20	55%	7	18	-	-
Clients	2	5%	-	-	-	-
Management	14	33%	9	23	29	73
Funders	-	-	2	5	4	10
Management Committee	4	10%	2	5	7	17
Total	40	100%	20	50%	40	100%

*n=40

Almost half of the organisations (45%) said that staff training needs were primarily identifies through a system of staff reviews and appraisals, 28% said through an evaluation of service provision and a further twenty two per cent said that staff members identify there own training requirements. Two respondents said in consultation with the client groups.

Sixty eight per cent of respondents said that they prioritise staff training needs as a response to service provision and relevance to the job role and organisational goals. T

'If a training gap is affecting client service this would be a priority'

'So that staff have all the skills they need to carry out their role in a professional manner'

'Training needs are prioritised by a demand or need that has to be met. Pre-planned staff training needs has not been a priority'

Four respondents said that each staff member had a specific training budget allocated to them on which they made submissions.

Table 3.9d How the organisation identifies staff training needs

Identification of Training Needs	n*	% of n*
Consultation with client groups	2	5%
Evaluation of service provision	11	28%
Reviews and appraisal	18	45%
Staff members identify their own training requirements	9	22%
Total	40	100%

*n=40

Budgetary constraints on training provision

Three quarters of the respondents (75%) said that they allocated one per cent or less of their overall budgets to staff training needs. 17% said they allocated between one and five per cent and of their overall budget to staff training needs. Two respondents said they did not have any budget allocation to staff training although all organisations said that they provided some type of staff training.

Table 3.9e Percentage of overall expenditure allocated to staff training needs

% of overall expenditure allocated to staff training needs	%
Zero	5%
≤ 1%	75%
1%→5%	17%
Not evaluated	2%
Total	100%

When asked what was the most relevant source of funding for staff training the majority of respondents (55%) said grant aid assistance from the statutory sector and government departments, 15% said income earned from financial donations and fundraising and a further 20% cent of respondents said they had no specific allocation for staff training and allocated funds for staff training from a variety of sources in their overall budget. 10% of organisations said that their training was provided for by an external agency.

When asked how the source of funding for staff training impact on decisions regarding the training provided those organisations who allocated funds for staff training from a variety of sources in their overall budget were the organisations which felt most constrained in their ability to meet the training needs of staff-:

'Hugely limited financial resources restrict the amount spent on training and dictates the type of training provided'

> *'There's a big problem when it comes to accredited training, there's no funding available for it and staff reach a point where they want a third level qualification but its very expensive and we cant afford to pay for it'*

Those organisations that had a dedicated source of funding for staff training from a government grant felt they had little autonomy over their training budgets

'All staff training is funded from our government grant which was cut this year, the first area to be cut was training, very little will take place this year'

Some of the organisations had found innovative ways of dealing with these constraints such as various forms of partnership training

> *'Other groups come in and share their experience and expertise with us and in return we go to their organisation, we get a good response because of our charitable status'*

> *'Because of the lack of funding we may send one person to be trained in a certain area and they come back and train the rest of the staff up'*

> *'Because of the expense of quality training in this area I've initiated a programme of mentor training for every individual in the organisation, where the more qualified and experienced member of staff will act as the mentor, and its working really well'*

Those organisations for whom training was provided for by an external agency felt they had the most reliable source of funding

> *'All our staff training is provided by an external funded, it is relevant and high quality'*

However some of the organisations felt that when this was the case they had no control over how decisions regarding staff training needs were being met

> *'Another organisation pays for all our funding and so far all our training needs have been met. We don't really know how the decisions are made'*

The organisations who funded staff training from earned income or fundraising were those who felt the most autonomous with regard to training decisions

> *'We have great flexibility with regard to staff training because it comes out of our own income, it works well because it allows us to invest highly in staff where and when its needed and allows us to offer our staff a pathway'*

The focus group participants noted that in general lack of resources is a major constraint on staff training opportunities within the Community and Voluntary sector. Most organisations tend to rely on staff coming in with the necessary skills for the job.

SECTION IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In an effort to bring about a more equal labour market the Equal at Work Project is a pioneering attempt to develop new and more inclusive models of recruitment and in-work progression. Both are key areas in order to improve access and employability for particular individuals and groups within a labour market that is for many individuals currently unequal.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Profile of Respondent

All of the respondent organisations employed staff on a full-time basis and three quarters (75%) employed staff on a part time basis. Over three-quarters (77%) of the organisations employed less than twenty staff with thirty seven per cent of respondent organisations employing five people or less. Although all the organisations selected for the survey were based in the greater Dublin area it is important to note that the majority of respondent organisations held a national remit (sixty eight per cent).

Profile of focus group participants

Human Resource Policy and Practice

Statement of policy-The respondents were asked whether they held a written statement of policy in a number of key areas (Equal opportunities policy*/Work/life balance policy/Written statement on staff recruitment/Specific policy to promote diversity in the organisation/Written statement on promotion and progression of staff/Volunteer opportunities policy/Staff training policy) related to the promotion of equality and diversity within recruitment and career development in their organisations. Almost half of all respondents (47%) reported not holding a written statement is any of these categories, however, all of the respondent organisations practiced at least some of these policies. Of those organisations who did not have written statements on any of the above policies over half (28% of total respondents) cited lack of staff and time resources as the main barriers to putting the specified policy in place similarly in the focus group

Equal opportunity policy-Thirty five per cent of organisations said they had a written equal opportunity policy. The main barriers highlighted to the implementation of an equal opportunities policy cited in the focus group were the lack of time and staff resources and the lack of real understanding and therefore commitment to the equality agenda. The participants agreed that this perception that *'not everyone in the organisation buys into equality as an important issue'* applied to staff and management, and thus, the question arises as to how penetrating organisational policies actually are for some organisations.

Work/life balance policies All of the organisations employ full-time staff and three-quarters (75%) employ staff on a part-time basis. Sixty per cent of the organisations said provision was made for unpaid leave and 37% said provision was made for flexitime working. 40% of all organisation made some provision for job sharing/work sharing and a quarter of all organisations made provision for employment or career breaks and the same percentage made provision for teleworking/home working. In

the focus groups it was felt that most organisations try to be as innovative and accommodating as possible within restricted budgets. Specific issues include the need to be equitable in the application of policies across all members of staff including men so as not to reinforce existing, or create new inequalities. The need for clarity and transparency in the application of these policies was also highlighted.

Recruitment Process

When a job becomes vacant or a new position is created within the organisation most of the respondents had well defined recruitment practices in place. 88% of respondents drew up a new job description or reviewed the existing one, 73% said a job analysis is undertaken and 78% of respondents drew up a person specification. A similar percentage (76%) or respondents said a recruitment panel is assembled and 70% said a written record of the interview process of the successful candidate is placed in the personal file. With regard to the interview process the majority of the respondents had well defined practices in place. 85% of respondents reported that all the same pre-defined questions.

Thirty five per cent of respondents said that the main barrier to putting these specified policies in place was that they did not have enough resources or recruit often enough to warrant investing in the development of these practices.

In the focus groups it was note that most organisations have now moved to a more competency based, job relevant focus, with less emphasis on skill and educational qualifications. It was noted however that this approach can present significant challenges in relation to setting measurements and trying to achieve some standardisation across the sector.

Recommendations

- There is a need for information, guidance, support and resources for relevant personnel in the development of written staff polices in a number of key areas related to the promotion of equality and diversity within recruitment and career development in their organisations. (Equal opportunities policy/Work/life balance policy/Written statement on staff recruitment/Specific policy to promote diversity in the organisation/Written statement on promotion and progression of staff/Volunteer opportunities policy/Staff training policy). In addition the same supports should be in place to ensure that these policies are equality proofed.

- Further exploration of the business case for equality and diversity, and barriers to its promotion as it pertains to the specific characteristics of the voluntary and community sector. In addition the relevance of the business case for equality and diversity, beyond the ethically and legal dimensions and including the economic imperative to the sector should be actively promoted.

- Baseline research on provision for wheelchair access and awareness raising and lobbying around this within the sector.

Promoting Diversity within the Organisation

When asked whether the organisation had a specific policy aimed at the recruitment of the following groups almost 28% said they did in relation to economically disadvantaged (including long-term unemployed) and a further twenty per cent said they did so in relation to women. Twelve per cent said such a policy existed in there organisation in relation to individuals with practical experience but lacking necessary qualifications and the same percentage said such a policy existed in relation to lone parents. Four respondents said they had a policy specifically aimed at older people and similarly four respondents said they had a specific policy in place aimed at the recruitment of people with physical or learning disability.

When asked what was the main barrier to the recruitment/staff training and development of excluded groups the main reason (40%) cited was that the organisation was to small or lacked the resources to provide the necessary support.

Recommendations

- Awareness raising and capacity building in the area of the implementation of work/life balance policy. Specific issues include the need to be equitable in the application of policies across all members of staff so as not to reinforce existing, or create new inequalities. The need for clarity and transparency in the application of these policies was also highlighted.

- The move to a competency based, job approach can present significant challenges in relation to setting measurements and trying to achieve standardisation and transparency in recruitment processes across the sector. Investigation and development of good practice in viable support systems whereby people with relevant competencies may be employed on the basis that they can then be supported to acquire skill and educational qualifications which might enhance their work performance needs to be addressed.

- There is need for the sector to be more innovative in its approach and to find ways of opening up options to those who may be excluded. There is need to think creatively about a job before it is advertised – e.g. consider taking on a worker at a lower level than actually needed but taking account of the training and mentoring supports they would need to up-skill. The sector must not be so rigid about recruitment.

Staff Promotion and Progresion

Thirty five per cent of organisations said that no opportunities existed for staff promotion within the organisation. The main reason cited for this was the size of the organisation and it is worthwhile noting that all of the organisations with less than five employees fell into this category. Almost half of all respondents (45%) of respondents said that limited opportunities for progression existed within the organisation. Twenty per of respondents said that opportunities for staff promotion and progression existed within the organisation.

Almost all of the organisations (94%) reported using some form of employee performance indicators. Overall the participants in the focus group felt that the development of a fair and effective system of staff appraisal seems to be slow in the sector and the constraints of funding for training were highlighted and it is also noted

that staff funding in many organisations is only available to those with very low levels of education and skills. It was suggested that this is an equality issue for other workers.

Recommendations
- There is a need for research looking at the reality of progression within individual organisations, within the sector, between different strands within the sector and between the sector and the public and private to investigate perceived barriers and develop mechanisms for overcoming these.

- Exploration of lateral job enrichment strategies within, across and between sectors such as mentoring and the development of career pathways.

Scheme Workers and Volunteer Policy
Six scheme workers applied for paid positions in the responding organisations during 2002 and one scheme worker was recruited. Of those organisations who had scheme workers over half said the main barrier was the lack of specific experience or qualifications for posts (26% of total respondents). A further four organisation said the main barrier was the lack of availability of suitable entry-level positions.

Forty five per cent of the respondents said they employ staff on voluntary basis. The main barrier cited to employing voluntary staff was the lack of time and space resources necessary to train, manage and supervise a volunteer workforce (38%).

Recommendations
- The development of strategies to develop career progression pathways linking existing prior life and work experience with training and other interventions to entry level positions within the sector and within the public and private sector for scheme workers and volunteers.

Staff Training
All of the organisations that responded made some provision for financial assistance and/or time off with pay in relation to training. A high proportion of fulltime staff are eligible for financial assistance and/or time off with pay in relation to induction (95%), attending conferences/workshops/lectures/seminars (85%), one-off training (80%), on the job training (72%) and certified courses (57%).

All of the organisations that responded made some provision for financial assistance and/or time off with pay in relation to training. A high proportion of fulltime staff are eligible for financial assistance and/or time off with pay in relation to induction (95%), attending conferences/workshops/lectures/seminars (85%), one-off training (80%), on the job training (72%) and certified courses (57%). The equivalent figures for part-time staff are even more noteworthy with practically all organisations who employ staff on a part-time basis making provision for financial assistance and/or time off with pay in relation to these categories.

Sixty eight per cent of respondents said that they prioritise staff training needs as a response to service provision and relevance to the job role and organisational goals

The focus group participants noted that in general lack of resources is a major constraint on staff training opportunities within the Community and Voluntary sector. Most organisations tend to rely on staff coming in with the necessary skills for the job.

Recommendations
- Because of the number of small organisations in the sector the importance for quality human resource training (and updating on good practice) for non human resource managers was highlighted.

- Equality awareness training is needed for Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations. Fundamental questions on what equality means need to be explored. There is a need for equality awareness training specifically focussed on the alleviation of the negative impact on recruitment processes associated with the small size of the Voluntary and Community Sector such as issues of confidentiality.

- The constraints of funding for training were highlighted and it is also noted that staff funding in many organisations is only available to those with very low levels of education and skills. It was suggested that this is an equality issue for other workers.

The following are based on a Planet/ADM workshop on employability held in May 2002 that suggested a number of actions would be required to increase employability for individuals in disadvantaged areas if a more equal labour market is to be achieved.

- Current labour market policies tend to focus on getting people into any job in order to meet the labour needs of the economy. It can be difficult to sell the benefits of the process of employability to policy makers. However, policy makers must be convinced that in the long term, investing in a person's employability will achieve a more equitable labour market.

- The demands placed on individuals by poverty means that individuals tend to be only interested in getting a job immediately rather than developing their full potential and many get frustrated with the length of time it takes to build skills for better jobs and the lack of support to enable them to so. Thus the practice of placing people in low skilled jobs can in itself create many barriers to people's efforts to enhance their employability (especially in relation to cost and availability for further education/training). The concept of "Life Long Learning" must be translated into practice and a lot of attention paid to supporting individuals in the early stages of this process.

- There is a need to identify the supports required following employment take up particularly into low skilled employment and for a model to be developed to deliver this support.

- There are individuals belonging to groups such as Travellers and other ethnic minorities, who have the aptitude and/or skills, yet experience other barriers such as discrimination/racism when seeking employment. There are therefore two

things to look at when developing actions to encourage a more equal labour market – the need to enhance, skills, ability and opportunity and to address negative attitude and behaviour.

- There is a need to challenge the academic or formal job requirements (such as Leaving Cert or third level qualifications) set by the labour market. Employers of all types including private sector, Statutory Agencies, Government Departments and local development agencies involved in providing employment opportunities have a role to play to open up their organisations to disadvantaged groups within the labour market.

Conclusion

The results show that many of the organisations involved in the research lack the resources to develop and implement actions that are considered good human resource practices. Unlike an organisation that have the capacity to generate its own income in order to invest in HR practices or the public sector that have resources that can be dedicated to the development and implementation of HR policies and practices the community and voluntary sector have little or no resources of its own. To a large extent the sector is dependent on funding from Government and other sources in order to develop and implement actions and projects. This funding tends to be for a specific purpose and has conditions attached to it. In general the sector does not have access to funding that it can use to develop good HR practices and to comply with various employment legislation. If community organisations are to develop and implement policies and practices in relation to HR funding will have to be provided. It is recommended that grants are made available to the sector to enable them to develop and implement good HR practices. This should include training and managers, staff and Boards of Management, grants to employ staff with skills in HR, funding to enable organisations to undertake HR audits and to evaluate their practices.

It is very important that organisations in the sector have the opportunity to share good practices and experiences. It is clear that many of the organisations are unclear as to what is good practice. Another draw back for the sector is that many of the organisations are small and have limited resources and find it difficult to set aside the time or the financial resources to develop good practices and to exchange experiences. In addition the sector itself is difficult to define and tends to contain a multitude of different types of organisations carrying out a range of different activities. However one thing they all have in common is the fact that they are employers and subjected to the same legislative demands as employers in other sectors. It is clear that the sector would benefit from the development of a body that could support the organisations to develop good HR and employment practices. The sector could use IBEC the employers' body as an example. A number of options are available for consideration

- Organisations in the sector as employers could develop closer ties with IBEC and maybe form a branch within the confederation.
- The organisations in the sector could come together and form a new body that could represent and support the sector as employers, along the lines that IBEC supports its members.

- The sector could identify an existing organisation that would have the capacity to develop an employer support service to the organisations in the sector.

It is consultative paper on the Workplace of the Future the National Centre for Partnership and Performance outlined a range of issues that would need to be addressed if Ireland is to remain a competitive economy. These have been noted in this report. Of significance is the fact that the Centre in the Paper did not refer to the Community and Voluntary sector. This is a major omission that would need to be redressed. It is recommended that the sector should become involved in the consultative process that is currently underway by the Forum on the Workplace of the Future.

Information sharing and a forum for discussing best practice is needed within the sector in relation to many of the issues discussed. From this it may be possible to agree a broad based written policy for the sector. Resource packs, and training courses are needed for those involved in staff recruitment and selection. Training should include training for Board members on the issues involved. Such a commitment should be built into service level agreements between organisations and funders (e.g. with Health Board) and Government should be monitoring progress.

Money to maintain and support equal opportunities is vital. Options such as EU funding should be explored as a way of piloting new approaches. One example of an innovative use of such funding which was noted was the Northside Partnership NOW programme which built the capacity of women working in the home to engage positively in the recruitment process and access employment. Besides the valuable outcomes for the women, significant learning regarding equal opportunities for women was gained.

Career development is central to that of achieving a more equal labour market. At the level of the individual, there is a need to look at core competencies in order to facilitate self-initiated and supported learning. For an employer, there is a need to examine company employee-development policies and practices. All employees should have access to career training and development, regardless of their status within the organisation. Career guidance must be provided as well as mediation and diverse models of training and supports are required in order to meet the diverse needs of different individuals and groups.

It is acknowledged in the White Paper on Voluntary Activity, 2000 and elsewhere (Donoghue 1998), that the voluntary and community sector in Ireland is diverse and difficult to categorise. A greater understanding of the structure of the sector is essential to the future development of all policy and practice within the sector.