

**Speech by the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton, TD**

**at the Ballymun Youth Guarantee Showcase Event**

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014.**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

I am very pleased to join you here this afternoon for this event to promote the Ballymun pilot Youth Guarantee and to showcase the range of opportunities that are available to young jobseekers in the area.

I would like to thank the members of the **Local Implementation Group** for organising the event and all of the exhibitors for taking the time to raise awareness of the education and training courses and work experience opportunities that they deliver.

It is excellent to see them all under the one roof.

I would also like to pay a special thanks to the **Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYP)** for encouraging young people in the area to come along today to see them for themselves what is available.

## **YOUTH GUARANTEE**

Youth unemployment is a personal and societal tragedy.

Research shows it can leave permanent scars.

The country is now recovering from the greatest financial and jobs crisis in its history, but it would be foolish not to recognise that we still face significant challenges.

Unemployment is one – particularly youth unemployment.

In some countries right now, the rate of youth unemployment is close to 60%.

Thankfully, recent data in Ireland is more positive.

It shows our youth unemployment rate at 25%, down from its crisis peak of 33%.

But this is still far too high.

If not tackled, the youth unemployment crisis will become a tragedy not just for the individual young people themselves, but for their communities and the country as a whole.

This is why, under Ireland's Presidency of the EU Council last year, I prioritised the development of a co-ordinated and concerted response to the challenge of youth joblessness – brokering agreement on the EU-wide Youth Guarantee.

It is a guarantee that young jobseekers under the age of 25 will be supported to secure a job or receive a work experience, training or educational opportunity within a short period of becoming unemployed.

As I said at the recent launch of Ireland's implementation plan, the Youth Guarantee can be summed up in a single word: opportunities.

It's about making sure we give our young people the opportunities they need to achieve their full potential.

And today we see a great example of the wide range of opportunities that are available.

## **BALLYMUN PILOT**

I don't have to tell you that Ballymun had its problems even before the recent crash.

The very obvious and welcome improvement in the physical infrastructure of the area masks very high levels of disadvantage.

Youth employment is significantly lower here than the national average, and a much higher percentage of that employment is unskilled or semiskilled.

Youth unemployment is also much higher.

Levels of educational attainment are much lower than the national average and there is a clear link between these statistics.

But Ballymun also has an awful lot going for it.

There is a great community spirit here and very vibrant public, community and voluntary sectors that have a long history of working well together.

They have been very much to the forefront in terms of developing innovative approaches to dealing with the problems of social and economic disadvantage.

That is why the area was chosen to develop and trial a new approach to tackling youth unemployment in a disadvantaged area.

I was delighted when the Ballymun pilot Youth Guarantee was one of the first of its kind to receive approval from the European Commission.

**It is a very exciting partnership of all the key players - public employment services, employer and trade union representatives, education and training providers, local development and youth organisations; and led by Paul Carroll of my Department.**

They have come together for one purpose - to significantly improve the employment prospects of young jobseekers in Ballymun and help support them into employment.

I recently visited the local team and was struck by very palpable sense of teamwork and the obvious commitment of all those involved.

The team have set themselves the huge task of providing the guarantee of an offer not just to all newly unemployed 18 to 24-year-olds in Ballymun within a short time of them registering in the local Intreo Centre, but to **all** of those currently on the Live Register over the lifetime of the pilot.

Each young jobseeker will receive a guarantee of access to career guidance, leading to identification of an individual career plan with follow-through to training, education, work experience or full-time employment.

Experienced guidance workers from the **Ballymun Job Club** will continue to support participants while progressing along their pathway to employment.

I would like to thank **Mick Creedon and his team** for the great work that they are doing in that regard.

## **EMPLOYER BUY-IN**

A particular focus of the pilot is to involve and build strong links with employers – not just to maximise the take-up of the existing incentives and supports, like JobBridge and JobsPlus, but also to generate new innovative work placement and work experience opportunities.

It will also ensure that the career guidance and training elements of the guarantee are tailored to the needs of the labour market.

We are fortunate that employer representatives are fully committed to the pilot through the involvement of **Tony Donohoe of IBEC and Jamie Cudden of Activating Dublin**, which is a joint initiative of Dublin Council Chamber and the City Council.

It is also great to see local employers, like **Martin McMahon, MD of Accent Solutions**, getting actively involved by recruiting young people from the area and providing them with work experience opportunities.

SuperValu in Ballymun is another employer offering wonderful support to this initiative.

SuperValu is currently working with the Department to identify recruit new staff from the Live Register – a great example of an employer's commitment to the local community and what we in the Department can do to assist employers.

This kind of active support from local employers is key to the success of the pilot and I would encourage others in the area to join the campaign.

## **WIDE RANGE OF OPTIONS**

The Department of Social Protection now manages the public employment service, and its Intreo service is a one-stop shop for jobseekers and employers alike.

Intreo provides a provides a range of employment supports and services to employers such as free recruitment, job matching and cash incentives to make it easy and attractive for employers to hire job-ready candidates from the Live Register.

Young people are not a homogenous group.

They vary enormously in terms of their background, life experience, educational attainment, skills level and employment experience.

Some have had the benefit of a good education, are highly skilled and readily-employable.

I know that the team have been working with employers to encourage them to recruit these job-ready young people from the area, or offer internships.

There are also a significant number of young people in the area who are not yet job-ready.

Many have low levels of educational attainment and have little or no work experience.

Some face additional barriers such as literacy and numeracy difficulties, substance misuse issues and criminal records.

The project team are committed to providing them with the guidance and support that they need to help them identify suitable progression opportunities and embark on their pathway to employment.

For some, this will inevitably be a longer path that will continue well beyond the pilot.

Addressing their needs will require new, innovative approaches with regard to personal development, basic skills, education, training, development and work experience options.

I know that the team have been working hard with a wide range of service providers and employers to develop these.

I am delighted to see the **UCD Innovation Academy** here.

I look forward to seeing how the innovative proposals in relation to supporting creative thinking and entrepreneurship develop.

I know that discussions are also underway with **Young Social Innovators and Young Entrepreneurs**.

I know that employers in the local area and across the city are being actively canvassed to provide opportunities for work experience and placements.

These include:

- providing pre-employment skills;
- participation in the local **Jobs Club**, for example by giving motivational talks;
- facilitating a **job sampling tour**, showcasing their business and giving an overview of the type of attributes they look for in candidates. I know that Microsoft have already agreed to do this;
- **Hosting or support a training event** in the area or business sector, for example in relation to C.V. skills and interview techniques;
- **Hosting or joining a blended learning opportunity** – a mix course of education, training and work experience;
- providing **work shadowing opportunities**.

It doesn't necessarily require a significant commitment – but each of these opportunities can be of real benefit as part of the young person's integrated career plan.

That is why I am calling on all employers to come forward with offers to participate in some form.

I know that the project team would be delighted to explore any ideas or suggestions.

I know that Ballymun team are also in discussions with **Business in the Community** to explore how to best leverage the potential for collaboration.

## **INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

A unique feature of the Ballymun Youth Guarantee has been the active involvement of young people and their representatives in the design and delivery of the pilot.

**The National Youth Council** is represented on the National Steering Group, and BRYR has played a key role in capturing the views of local youth and feeding them into the process.

Many of the suggestions that they have made, particularly in relation to how best to communicate with young people in the area, have already been taken on board by the team.

I would like to pay a particular thanks to those **young people who featured in the video “The Voice of Ballymun”** which so eloquently captured the hopes and aspirations of young people in the area and set the challenge for the service providers and employers.

## **BYG WEBSITE**

I am also very happy to take the opportunity to formally launch the official Ballymun Youth Guarantee website [www.youthguarantee.ie](http://www.youthguarantee.ie) .

The website provides a lot of useful information on the initiative and the opportunity for employers and young jobseekers to engage with it and give feedback.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Government is committed to getting young people back to work because of the huge benefit that work has on a person’s self-esteem, financial independence and future life.

I’ve consistently stated that a fiscal response to the economic crisis was never going to be enough – that there had to be a social response too.

The Youth Guarantee is a key element of that social response – putting our young people, our future, front and centre.

While still at an early stage, the pilot has a vital role to play, not just for the young people of Ballymun but also for the wider community across Ireland, and the work being undertaken here will inform the further development and roll-out of the national Youth Guarantee.

As I said, implementing the Guarantee is a challenge that will require close collaboration and commitment from all of the stakeholders.

From what I can see here today, there is no shortage of commitment, energy and enthusiasm and I would like to thank all of you for your whole-hearted support.

I wish you and the young people of Ballymun every success.

**Thank you**