



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta  
National Economic & Social Council

# Labour Market Transitions: Barriers & Enablers

## Helen Johnston

6<sup>th</sup> Annual NERI Labour Market Conference  
*Labour Market Transitions and Activation*  
NUI Galway, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018

# Outline of Presentation

- **Based on a qualitative study of low work intensity households in a disadvantaged suburb of Dublin**
- **3 case studies – lone parent, migrant, Traveller**
- **Discussion of barriers and enablers**
- **Conclusions**



# **NESC Study: in a Disadvantaged Suburb of Dublin**

**92 Interviews with:**

- **33 jobless households (34 people)**
- **16 local services**
- **11 county/regional services**
- **11 local employers**
- **12 government departments / agencies**
- **9 national stakeholders**



## ANNA – Lone Parent





## GRETA - Traveller



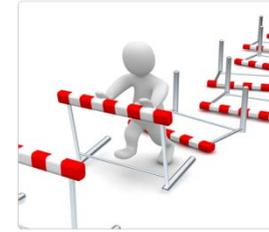


## ULYSSES - Migrant





# Barriers



- **Loss of secondary benefits**

- **Disability / Illness**
- **Caring responsibilities**
- **Discrimination**

- **Uncertain hours of work**
- **Wages do not cover living costs**

- **Lack of confidence**
- **Demotivation**

- **Low Literacy**
- **Poor English Language**
- **Low level of qualifications/ skills**
- **Cost of courses**

- **Lack of affordable housing**
- **Lack of affordable child care / after school care**
- **Cost of transport**



# Enablers



- Informed & helpful Intreo case officers
- Good information
- Brokers
- Family Income Supplement (Working Family Payment)
- Secure income
- Secondary benefits

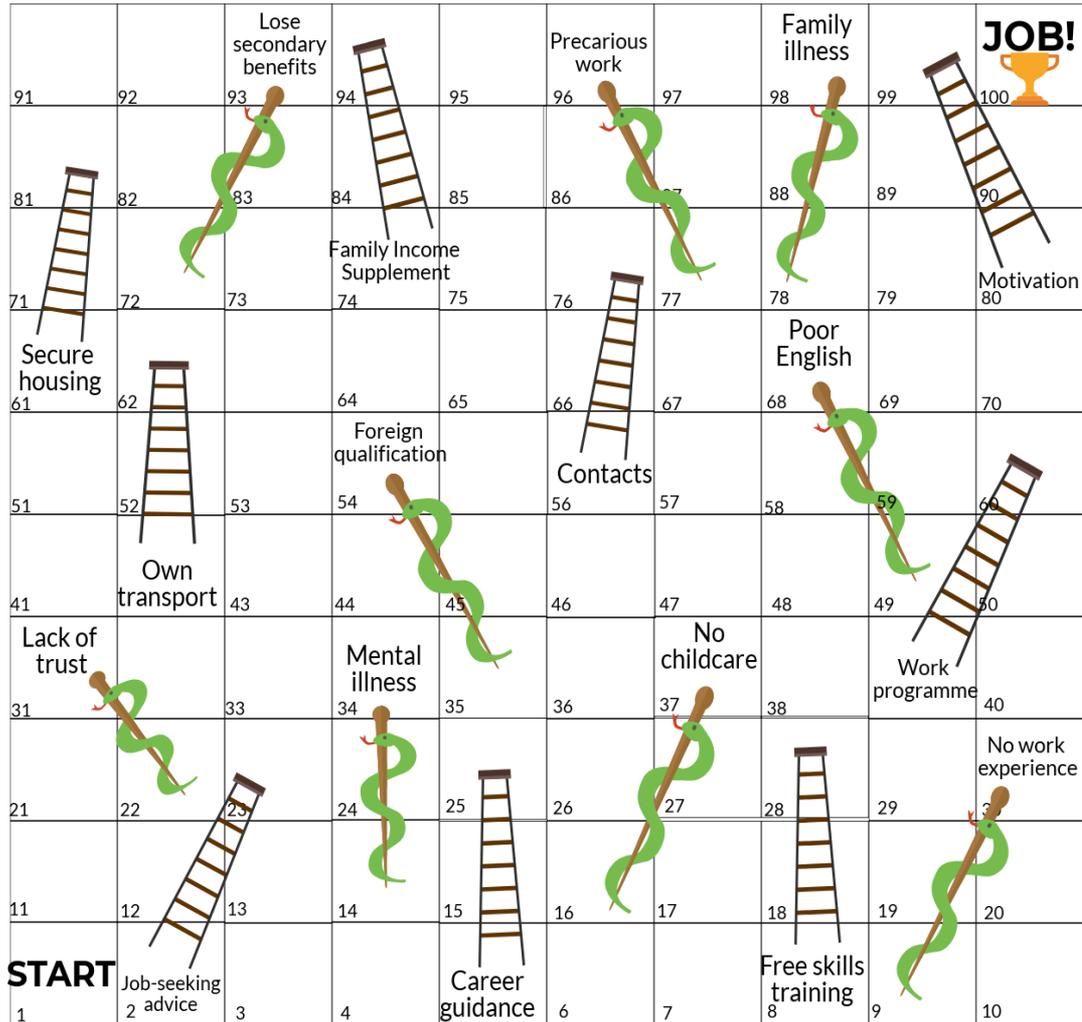
- Local jobs
- Contacts
- 'Understanding' employers

- Good education
- Access to relevant courses

- Family supports
- Hope
- Resilience

- Council house (HAP?)
- Childcare available (ACS?)
- Costs of childcare covered

# Summary of Key Barriers and Enablers



# Conclusions

## Supports required for vulnerable groups:

- Vulnerable groups include
  - lone parents
  - people with a disability
  - ethnic minorities
  - those with literacy difficulties, poor English, no work experience or contacts
- Vulnerable groups need supports tailored to their circumstances, e.g.
  - Childcare, literacy supports
  - Actions to tackle discrimination

## The critical role of case officers in Intreo:

- Case officers need time to engage with clients
- Trust between clients and case officers needs to be fostered
- The most disadvantaged clients are likely to benefit from working with the most experienced & qualified case officers

# Conclusions – *Need for Tailored Services*

**Some services tailored to the particular circumstances of families/individuals are already available, e.g. HAP, Affordable Childcare Scheme. However,**

- The intensity of services could be increased
- More flexibility is needed at local level to tailor services to people's needs
- Services need to bridge gaps which are problematic for vulnerable groups

## Care

- The Affordable Childcare Scheme is positive, but there is limited after-school care, and few childminders can avail of it. Work needs to continue to address these shortcomings.

## Housing

- More public housing, and additional affordable private sector accommodation, is needed

## Transport

- Support with public transport costs could help people move from welfare to work

## Health

- The fact that the medical card can be kept for 3 years after leaving welfare needs to be promoted more widely
- Timely access to mental health supports is important

# Conclusions - *Training Pathways and Progression*

## Ensure disadvantaged groups can access training and education

- Financial support needs to cover the costs of attending training, including childcare and transport
- The new apprenticeships being developed need to be accessible to disadvantaged groups

## Focus on low skilled adults

- Upskill the low skilled who are in employment. The National Training Fund and Skillnets can support this
- As many disadvantaged adults had a poor experience of school, ensure adult education uses a different approach

## Improve career guidance provision

- Career guidance is particularly important for disadvantaged groups, who are less likely to be aware of the full range of career opportunities
- Current career guidance provision is patchy, but needs to be consistently available

## Ensure investment in education is effective

- Provide more alternatives to school-based education
- Some disadvantaged people with degrees face other barriers accessing appropriate employment, e.g. recognition of qualifications, childcare. Supports are needed to address this

## Strengthen links between further education and training, and the labour market

- Continue to link training resources to skills needs

# Conclusions

## *Role of Employers*

### **Addressing labour shortages**

- Those out of the labour market for a long period are a potential labour supply for employers with staff shortages
- Employers should be encouraged to engage more with applicants with atypical CVs, e.g. through recognising the value of volunteering

### **Engaging with employers**

- Employment support and training services need to engage more comprehensively and consistently with employers
- Employers should be encouraged to engage with disadvantaged communities, through e.g. social clauses

### **Precarious employment**

- There is a concern about the use of precarious working practices
- Actions should be continued to address negative issues arising from these practices

### **Self-employment**

- There are a range of supports to move into self-employment
- However, greater flexibility in the administration of these supports could help those with little or no capital to progress into self-employment

## Conclusions – *Supports & Employment Schemes*

Supports exist to help people move from welfare to work, e.g. Working Family Payment (FIS), HAP, Affordable Childcare Scheme, etc.

*However:*

- They may not provide enough certainty to take the risk of moving into work
- Timely assessment and payment required

**Employment schemes provide a range of benefits, including work experience, and an increase in confidence.**

*However:*

- All employment schemes should incorporate training
- Better links are needed between employment schemes and the labour market.



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