

Local Employment Services Network

Local Employment Services Networks (LESNs) were established in 1995 to meet the specific needs of long-term unemployed and other groups who are distant from the labour market. The LESNs form one strand of the dual-stranded National Employment Service (NES) and operate in parallel with the existing FÁS Employment Services.

Overall objective

In the context of the dual-stranded approach of the National Employment Service, the Partnership Companies in designated areas are contracted to provide Local Employment Services (LESN). The objective is to assist those most disadvantaged in the labour market to obtain employment. Each LESN provides a local gateway, or access point, to the full range of services and facilities that are available to help people to enter or return to the world of work and to identify and avail of the supports necessary to achieve this.

Key Services

The services provided by LESNs are tailored to the needs of each individual client, and to the local environment within which they operate. These services include career guidance, personal development, training and education, job mediation, employment supports, and after-care following employment.

The ethos of the LESN is to deal with each of its clients as an individual, and to provide them with a personalised service that addresses their needs in relation to employability and employment. The LESN maintains a relationship with the client and provides a continuum of service from initial contact through preparation for employment and follow-up, until the client is fully integrated into the working population

Local Focus

In each area, the services are provided in different contexts, with different challenges, and the LESNs develop local responses to these. It is therefore locally relevant and focused on addressing local priorities taking into account the demography of the target area, local employment opportunities, etc. The LESNs make their services available to clients through a network of clearly identifiable local Contact Points and/or outreach services and provide more intensive supports in Local Employment Centers.

The groups targeted by the LESN include long-term unemployed (1 Year Plus), lone parents, early school leavers, persons with a disability, members of the Traveller community, ex-prisoners, ethnic minorities/refugees, low income smallholders, persons who are homeless and persons with a history of substance misuse.

Responding to Changes in the Economic and Labour Market Environment

Over the last two years the Partnerships/LESN's have responded in a flexible manner to the changes taking place in the economic and labour market environment. The main response is the agreement to take direct referrals from the Department of Social Protection as part of the NEAP (National Employment Action Plan); this is in addition to their ongoing work with disadvantaged target groups. The Partnerships/LESN's have dealt with in excess of 40,000 direct referrals nationally within the current resource allocation.

Summary

The strength of the LESN is its local focus on particular groups in areas experiencing economic and social exclusion. The aspect of the LESN valued most by the clients is its user-friendly personalised services. It has built a strong relationship with its client group. Many of the clients see the LESN as an independent access point to a range of education and training provision and to employment. In particular the confidential and the voluntary nature of registration is of importance.

The experience of the LESN means that the LESN is well placed to provide a range of supports and services to those job-seekers who are most distanced from the labour market. Many LESN clients will require support for an extended period and will need to access a range of linked interventions (literacy support, counseling, money advise, education, training, self employment options, etc.) These extensive community connections and credibility are of importance in a context where the client is particularly disadvantaged and distanced from the labour market. The LESN has the capacity through its links to the Partnerships to optimise on behalf of its clients a range of opportunities operating at a local level. These include statutory agencies, social partner (employers, unions) and community/voluntary sector groups. The location of the LESN within the Partnership framework ensures ease of access to this wide range of interests and expertise.

LESN National Employment Action Plan Statistics for 2010:	
1st time interviews offered to NEAP clients	44,000
Clients who attended for 1st interview with LESN	31,000

Number of Progression for NEAP clients:	
Progressed through Education, Training and Employment.	16,000

Regular Client Caseload registration statistics for 2010:	
Number of new clients who voluntarily registered with the LESN	30,000

Number of Progressions for Regular Caseload Group:	
Progressed through Education, Training and Employment.	17,000

(based on returns from all LESNs)