



JOBBRIDGE: STEPPING STONE OR DEAD END?

NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND RESEARCH REPORT

REVIEWING THE NATIONAL INTERNSHIP SCHEME, JOBBRIDGE BASED ON THE VIEWS,
PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCE OF PARTICIPANTS AGED 18-25 YEARS

NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations in Ireland. It represents and supports the interests of voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people.

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By James Doorley

January 2015

CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| Foreword | 8 |
|-----------------|----------|

| | |
|------------------------|----------|
| 1. Introduction | 9 |
|------------------------|----------|

| | |
|---|----|
| 1.1 Introduction | 10 |
| 1.2 Youth Unemployment | 11 |
| 1.3 Policy Response to Youth Unemployment | 12 |
| 1.4 Introduction of JobBridge | 13 |
| 1.5 Overview of Scheme | 14 |
| 1.6 International and Theoretical Context | 15 |
| 1.7 Organisation of the Report | 15 |

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| 2. Review of the Literature | 16 |
|------------------------------------|-----------|

| | |
|---|----|
| 2.1 Introduction | 17 |
| 2.2 Theoretical and Contextual Framework | 17 |
| 2.2.1 From Welfare to Workfare | 17 |
| 2.2.2 The Casualisation of Work | 17 |
| 2.2.3 From Education and Training to Work First | 18 |
| 2.3 Defining and Exploring Internships | 19 |
| 2.3.1 Defining Internships | 19 |
| 2.3.2 A Bridge to Work? | 20 |
| 2.3.3 Young Peoples' Perspective | 21 |
| 2.3.4 Employers' Perspective | 21 |
| 2.3.5 Negative Implications of Internships | 22 |
| 2.3.6 Regulating Internships | 23 |
| 2.4 Review and Evaluation of Internship Schemes | 24 |
| 2.4.1 Progression Rates | 24 |
| 2.4.2 Satisfaction | 25 |
| 2.4.3 Employability | 25 |
| 2.4.4 External Perspective | 26 |
| 2.4.5 A Qualitative Study | 26 |
| 2.5 Conclusion | 27 |

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| 3. Methodology | 28 |
|-----------------------|-----------|

| | |
|--|----|
| 3.1 Introduction | 29 |
| 3.2 Research Purpose | 29 |
| 3.3 Research Design | 29 |
| 3.4 Data Collection Methods | 30 |
| 3.4.1 Questionnaire | 30 |
| 3.4.2 Recruitment Strategy for Questionnaire | 31 |
| 3.4.3 Semi-Structured Interview Preparation | 31 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 3.4.4 Recruitment Strategy for Semi-Structured Interviews | 31 |
| 3.4.5 Conduct of Semi-Structured Interviews | 31 |
| 3.5 Data Analysis Methods | 32 |
| 3.5.1 Quantitative Data Collection Methods | 32 |
| 3.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis Methods | 32 |
| 3.6 Ethical Considerations | 32 |
| 3.7 Conclusion | 33 |
| 4. Findings | 34 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 35 |
| 4.2 Socio-Demographic Profile of Participants | 35 |
| 4.2.1 Age Profile | 35 |
| 4.2.2 Gender Profile | 36 |
| 4.2.3 Location | 36 |
| 4.2.4 Nationality | 37 |
| 4.2.5 Educational Attainment | 37 |
| 4.3 Prior to Commencing Scheme | 38 |
| 4.3.1 Duration of Unemployment Prior to Scheme | 38 |
| 4.3.2 Information Available About the Scheme | 39 |
| 4.3.3 Nature of Decision to Participate | 40 |
| 4.3.4 Motivation to Participate in Scheme | 41 |
| 4.3.5 Welfare Payment Prior to Scheme | 41 |
| 4.4 About the Internship | 42 |
| 4.4.1 Type of Host Organisation | 42 |
| 4.4.2 Size of Host Organisation | 43 |
| 4.4.3 Did Role Match Position Advertised | 44 |
| 4.4.4 Was Intern Mentor Assigned | 44 |
| 4.4.5 Frequency of Meetings with Mentor | 45 |
| 4.4.6 Value of Meetings with Mentor | 45 |
| 4.4.7 Treatment by Staff in Host Organisation | 46 |
| 4.4.8 Concerns/Difficulties During Internship | 46 |
| 4.4.9 Nature of Concerns/Difficulties | 47 |
| 4.4.10 Concerns/Difficulties Raised with Mentor | 48 |
| 4.4.11 Concerns/Difficulties Resolved by Mentor | 48 |
| 4.4.12 Training | 49 |
| 4.4.13 Feedback on the Internship | 49 |
| 4.5 Role of Department of Social Protection | 50 |
| 4.5.1 Monitoring Visits | 50 |
| 4.5.2 Number of Monitoring Visits | 50 |
| 4.5.3 Raise Concerns with Department of Social Protection | 51 |
| 4.6 Completion and Assessment of Internship | 52 |
| 4.6.1 Completion of Internship | 52 |
| 4.6.2 Reasons for Early Termination | 53 |
| 4.6.3 Satisfaction with Internship | 54 |
| 4.6.4 Opinion on Internship | 54 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 4.6.5 Recommend JobBridge to Other Jobseeker | 56 |
| 4.7 Current Status | 58 |
| 4.8 Cross Tabulation of Results | 59 |
| 4.8.1 Respondents Who Felt Compelled to Participate | 59 |
| 4.8.2 Impact of Host Organisation Type on Internship | 60 |
| 4.8.3 Role Matching Advert | 61 |
| 4.8.4 Intern Assigned a Mentor | 61 |
| 4.8.5 Treatment of Interns | 62 |
| 4.8.6 Monitoring Visits by Department | 63 |
| 4.8.7 Internships Completed/Finished Early | 63 |
| 4.9 Socio-Demographic Profile and Satisfaction Rates | 64 |
| 4.10 Themes from Interview Process | 66 |
| 4.10.1 Motivation for participation | 66 |
| 4.10.2 Match Between Advert and Role | 67 |
| 4.10.3 Views on Host Organisation | 67 |
| 4.10.4 Role of Department of Social Protection and Monitoring | 68 |
| 4.10.5 Mentoring | 69 |
| 4.10.6 Networking | 69 |
| 4.10.7 Costs of the Internship | 70 |
| 4.10.8 Job Displacement and Cooling Off | 70 |
| 4.10.9 Intern Rights | 71 |
| 4.10.10 Employment Prospects | 71 |
| 4.10.11 Overall Views on JobBridge | 72 |
| 4.11 Conclusion/Summary of Findings | 73 |
| 5. Analysis and Recommendations | 75 |
| 5.1 Introduction | 76 |
| 5.2 Summary of Recommendations | 76 |
| 5.3 Recommendations | 78 |
| 5.3.1 Contribution to Employment | 78 |
| 5.3.2 Promoting Progression into Employment | 79 |
| 5.3.3 Monitoring for Compliance and Quality | 81 |
| 5.3.4 Curtailing Abuse of Cooling Off Period | 83 |
| 5.3.5 Top Up Payment | 83 |
| 5.3.6 Charter of Rights for Interns | 84 |
| 5.3.7 Mandatory Internships | 85 |
| 5.3.8 Advertising Internships | 85 |
| 5.3.9 Mentoring | 86 |
| 5.3.10 Support for Interns | 87 |
| References | 89 |
| Bibliography | 94 |
| Appendix 1: Survey | 96 |
| Appendix 2: Interview material | 104 |

List of Tables

| | | | |
|-------|----|---|----|
| Table | 1 | Age Profile | 35 |
| Table | 2 | Gender Profile | 36 |
| Table | 3 | Location | 36 |
| Table | 4 | Nationality | 37 |
| Table | 5 | Educational Attainment | 37 |
| Table | 6 | Duration of Unemployment Prior to Scheme | 38 |
| Table | 7 | Information Available About the Scheme | 39 |
| Table | 8 | Nature of Decision to Participate | 40 |
| Table | 9 | Motivation to Participate in Scheme | 41 |
| Table | 10 | Welfare Payment Prior to Scheme | 42 |
| Table | 11 | Type of Host Organisation | 42 |
| Table | 12 | Size of Host Organisation | 43 |
| Table | 13 | Did Role Match Position Advertised | 44 |
| Table | 14 | Was Intern Mentor Assigned | 44 |
| Table | 15 | Frequency of Meetings with Mentor | 45 |
| Table | 16 | Value of Meetings with Mentor | 45 |
| Table | 17 | Treatment by Staff in Host Organisation | 46 |
| Table | 18 | Concerns/Difficulties During Internship | 46 |
| Table | 19 | Nature of Concerns/Difficulties | 47 |
| Table | 20 | Concerns/Difficulties Raised with Mentor | 48 |
| Table | 21 | Concerns/Difficulties Resolved by Mentor | 48 |
| Table | 22 | Training | 49 |
| Table | 23 | Feedback on the Internship | 49 |
| Table | 24 | Monitoring Visits | 50 |
| Table | 25 | Number of Monitoring Visits | 50 |
| Table | 26 | Raise Concerns with Department of Social Protection | 51 |
| Table | 27 | Completion of Internship | 52 |
| Table | 28 | Reasons for Early Termination | 53 |
| Table | 29 | Satisfaction with Internship | 54 |
| Table | 30 | Opinion on Internship | 55 |
| Table | 31 | Recommend JobBridge to Other Jobseeker | 56 |
| Table | 32 | Current Status | 58 |
| Table | 33 | Respondents Who Felt Compelled to Participate | 59 |
| Table | 34 | Impact of Host Organisation Type on Internship | 60 |
| Table | 35 | Role Matching Advert | 61 |
| Table | 36 | Intern Assigned a Mentor | 61 |
| Table | 37 | Treatment of Interns | 62 |
| Table | 38 | Monitoring Visits by Department | 63 |
| Table | 39 | Internships Completed/Finished Early | 63 |
| Table | 40 | Socio-Demographic Profile and Satisfaction Rates | 64 |

FOREWORD

In 2011, NYCI supported the introduction of JobBridge to provide work experience opportunities for the many young people who felt shut out of the labour market. However we have always emphasized the need for quality internships which support young people into employment.

While the scheme has been the subject of much political debate, public comment and press attention, the voice and view of the real experts, i.e. the participants has rarely been heard. This report sets out to redress that imbalance by exploring the views and experience of, and the outcomes for; young people aged 18-25 who have undertaken a JobBridge internship. This report examines a number of issues, including participant motivation, the content and quality of the internship experience, the extent of mentoring and monitoring on the scheme, progression rates and levels of satisfaction with the scheme.

Our findings are mixed, while a majority of participants were satisfied with their internship and a significant minority secured employment following their internship, the research identified a large number of deficiencies in the scheme. These range from poorly-designed internships,

inadequate mentoring, instances of unacceptable treatment of interns, lack of rights and clarity concerning terms and conditions. Other issues identified included insufficient monitoring and auditing of the scheme to prevent abuse, job displacement and inadequate income support.

The findings of this report indicate strongly that JobBridge should be further examined to ascertain the extent to which the scheme is contributing to employment. Our report also indicates that JobBridge should be reformed to enhance the experience of participants, improve quality and increase progression into secure and sustainable employment. As the economy grows and employment recovers it is important that public funds are being invested in programmes that add value. We can't promise or guarantee young people jobs but we can offer and deliver quality labour market schemes and programmes. Given the challenging experience so many young people have endured securing a job in the last seven years, it is vital that JobBridge is a stepping stone into employment and not just another dead end.

James O'Leary
President
National Youth Council of Ireland

1

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The economic crisis which commenced in 2007 had a significant and swift impact on the levels of youth unemployment. The number of young people on the live register more than trebled in a three year period, from 29,950 in May 2006 (CSO, 2006) to 95,745 by August 2009 (CSO, 2009). The number of young people on the live register has declined significantly to 47,928 by December 2014 (CSO, 2015) yet this does not indicate that the number of young people in employment has grown. While the live register records the number of people signing on, the Central Statistics Office also produces quarterly data on those in employment. A comparison of the data from 2011 with 2014 demonstrates that the number of young people in the workforce has also declined from 147,200 in Quarter 1 2011 (CSO, 2011) to 140,200 in Quarter 1 2014 (CSO, 2014). The reduction in both youth employment and unemployment can be attributed to the continued high levels of emigration, greater numbers of young people prolonging their stay in education and increased numbers taking up education, training and work experience opportunities. In that context it is worthwhile to explore the effectiveness and quality of such schemes and programmes. This report explores and examines one of these initiatives, namely the National Internship Scheme, JobBridge (hereafter referred to as ‘the scheme’ or ‘JobBridge’).

The primary focus and purpose of this research is to explore the views and experience of, and the outcomes, for young people aged 18-25 who have participated in JobBridge. The scheme was introduced in 2011 and, as of January 8th, 2015, 36,434 jobseekers; of whom 10,125 were under 25 years of age have participated or are participating in the scheme (Humphries, 2015). Since 2011 it has been subject of much political debate, public comment and press attention. However, despite being much commented on and a significant labour market policy initiative, there has been limited published research or in-depth analysis of the scheme. The lack of research is not just an Irish phenomenon, as Perlin notes *“informal, barely studied, and little regulated, internships demand our scrutiny”* (Perlin, 2012: XV). The Department of Social Protection did commission an evaluation of the scheme (Indecon, 2013) which was published in April 2013. This report provided extensive quantitative analysis with respect to issues such as progression rates, levels of satisfaction, deadweight and displacement and a value for money assessment.

However there are a number of issues which have not been addressed elsewhere. NYCI is particularly interested in the experiences and views of young people aged 18-25 years who have participated on JobBridge. Second, this report focuses solely on the experiences of the interns, unlike the Indecon report

which examined the views of both interns and host organisations. Third, this report includes the results of an online quantitative survey and also incorporates the results of seven face-to-face interviews. The rationale for this mixed methods approach is to get a deeper understanding of the views of interns, their motivation for participation, their experience on the scheme and their perspective on the value of participation in JobBridge. In summary, this study is ultimately about seeking to explore and examine the quality of the JobBridge scheme for young jobseekers.

1.2 Youth Unemployment

As noted by NESC (2013:17) *“young people are hardest hit by the crisis”*, with youth unemployment in Ireland in February 2012 peaking at 31.6% (Eurostat, 2012). The unemployment rate among young people has declined gradually in the last three years and in November 2014 stood at 21.8% (Eurostat, 2015). Unemployment has particularly impacted on young people with lower levels of educational qualifications with a rate of 44% among those educated to lower secondary level compared to 19% among young graduates (OECD, 2014a). In June 2014 data from the Department of Social Protection indicated that 24,444 young people were long-term unemployed as they have been on the live register for one year or more (Burton, 2014b). The long-term unemployed represent 47.6% of the youth population on the live register, up from 21% in 2007 (OECD, 2013). As part of the reform of public employment services under the Pathways to Work initiative, the Department of Social Protection conduct a profile of all those who engage with the service, with participants being broken down by what is called a PEX, or probability of exit score, from the live register into high, medium and low PEX categories (Department of Social Protection, 2012a). The rationale for this approach is to better tailor services and supports according to the profile of the unemployed person. The most recent data from the Department of Social Protection indicates that of the 36,155 young people who had been profiled, 19% had a low PEX score or low probability of exiting the live register without significant support, with 71% in the medium category and 10% having a high PEX score (Burton, 2013a). The OECD have also found that the probability of the long term unemployed exiting unemployment is 40% compared to 65% for those who are unemployed for less than twelve months. As highlighted by Bell and Blanchflower, some sectors, such as construction and manufacturing, saw the number of young workers fall by 63.6% and 47.4% respectively (2010:5). Also the proportion of young people in Ireland in temporary employment has risen dramatically in recent years, from 11.4% in 2004 to 34.9% in 2012 (Eurofound, 2013:5). Further evidence from the Department of Social Protection suggests that many in this category are in a low-pay, no-pay cycle, as there is significant turnover in the youth cohort on the live register. Of the 66,000 young people new inflows to the live register in 2012, 40,000 had left nine months later (Department of Social Protection, 2013).

The impact of unemployment on young people is severe and also imposes both social and economic costs. At an individual level unemployment, as argued by Bell and Blanchflower (2010), increases the risk of malnutrition, sickness, mental health difficulties, loss of self-confidence and a higher risk of depression. They also found that youth unemployment, especially of a long duration, was associated with permanent scars on

life chances. This manifested itself in two ways; first, it increased the probability of further spells of unemployment later in life. Second, they found that young people who experienced unemployment suffered wage penalties on both re-entry and later in their career. Youth unemployment also impacts on wider society creating social exclusion, poverty and alienation. There is also an economic impact, with Eurofound estimating that the cost of young people not being in education, employment or training in the European Union is €153bn per annum (2012a). In Ireland the cost was estimated on 2011 figures at 2.8% of GDP or €4.3bn (Oireachtas, 2013).

1.3 Policy Response to Youth Unemployment

The policy response to youth unemployment to date has been limited and fragmented. In 2011 the National Youth Council of Ireland called on Government to develop a National Youth Employment Strategy involving all the key stakeholders; in particular young people who were unemployed and the youth sector (2011b). The OECD, too, has been critical of the lack of a national comprehensive national strategy to tackle high levels of youth unemployment (2013). One of the most significant decisions taken by successive Governments commencing in 2009 has been to impose significant cuts in Jobseeker's Allowance for young people under 26 years of age. These cuts were initially imposed on young people aged 18 and 19, however the October 2013 budget extended these cuts in welfare to young people up 25 years of age. This decision was defended by Government on the basis that it would incentivise young people to take up education, training and work experience opportunities rather than remaining inactive and claiming welfare (Burton, 2013b). However this justification was challenged on the basis that the budget changes affected over 20,000 young people and only provided funding for an additional 3,250 places (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2013).

Of the 51,350 young people in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance in January 2014, 43% were in receipt of €100 a week, 28% in receipt of €144 and 29% on the full adult rate of €188 (Burton, 2014a). Most of those in receipt of the full adult rate of €188 are in the 22-25 year old age bracket and joined the live register prior to the recent cuts, therefore within a few years the vast majority of young jobseekers will be in receipt of the lower rates. These reduced rates are leading to poverty among young people, with the Vincentian Partnership reporting (2013) that the minimum essential income for a single adult living as part of a household is €184 in 2014. For those young people who are not living with their parents or family it is even more difficult to survive on these low welfare rates. In 2014 Eurofound reported that 18% of young people in Ireland were experiencing high levels of deprivation (Eurofound, 2014).

Another key policy development in recent years is the proposal to introduce a Youth Guarantee. Such initiatives have been in place in the Nordic countries since the 1980s and consist of a commitment to guarantee all young people who are unemployed for a certain period an offer of an education, training or work experience opportunity. In 2011 the National Youth Council of Ireland proposed that the introduction of a Youth Guarantee scheme in Ireland should be explored (2011b). In 2013 the Council of the European Union

adopted a recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee. This proposed that EU member states should *“ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education”* (Council of the European Union, 2013:2).

While the contours of the Youth Guarantee were well known, this proposal set down a four month timeframe for delivering on the guarantee and was significant in that it emphasised the provision of quality opportunities. A fund of €6bn was agreed by EU leaders to support implementation of the youth guarantee in member states with high levels of youth unemployment. In order to access the EU funds member states were required to produce implementation plans. The Irish implementation plan published in January 2014 outlined the priorities of the Government, which included the introduction of a personal progression plan for all participants, with a focus on the long-term unemployed (Department of Social Protection, 2014b). An evaluation of existing Youth Guarantee schemes in Sweden and Finland suggests that, while such schemes were successful with work-ready candidates and the newly unemployed, they had been less successful in addressing needs of most disadvantaged and harder to reach young people (Eurofound, 2012b).

1.4 Introduction of JobBridge

In May 2011 the Government announced, as part of the Jobs Initiative (Department of Social Protection, 2011), the establishment of a new National Internship Scheme with up to 5,000 work experience places in the private, public and voluntary sectors. The Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton T.D., stated that one of the priorities of the scheme would be to *“give young people the opportunity to gain valuable experience as they move between study and the beginning of their working lives”*. The National Internship Scheme was formally launched in July 2011 with the title “JobBridge”. Any jobseeker who has been signing on the live register for three months or more is eligible to participate. A list of vacancies is advertised on the JobBridge website by host organisations, applicants submit their CVs and if successful at interview commence an internship of up to nine months. The intern receives an additional €50 per week on top of their existing social welfare payment. The host organisations are not allowed to make any payment to the interns except for internship-related expenses. Host organisations are required to nominate a mentor to support the intern and both parties are required to sign a standard agreement which sets out the rules of the scheme and the responsibilities of each party. Interns are required to work no less than 30 hours a week and no more than 40 hours. Interns and host organisations can terminate the internship early with one week’s notice. Host organisations are required to complete monthly online compliance reports and may be subject to a monitoring visit by an official from the Department of Social Protection.

1.5 Overview of Scheme

Over 36,000 jobseekers have participated in the scheme to date, with 28% of this cohort being under 25 years of age. Given these numbers it has become a significant labour market policy instrument in Ireland in a short period of time. As a result the scheme has been the subject of much and contrary political, press and public comment. On one side the scheme has been lauded by the Taoiseach (Irish Government News Service, 2013) *“JobBridge’s success and attractiveness speaks for itself”*. Indeed, one of the key findings in the Indecon report (2013:36) that 61% of participants were in employment 5 months after completing the scheme is impressive by international standards. On the other hand some opposition politicians have described the scheme as *“Scambridge”* (Murphy, 2012), designed to artificially reduce the unemployment figures and to facilitate employers to exploit unemployed people. Concerns about the exploitation of jobseekers and job displacement have been articulated since the inception of the scheme and still persist (Leech, 2011).

While the OECD (2014b:9) would be generally supportive of *“work first”* labour market policies such as JobBridge, they are critical of the scheme in its current guise, describing it as *“a large and expensive programme.... not targeted specifically at the most disadvantaged groups”*. Some organisations have also raised concerns about the quality of the opportunities being proposed by host organisations and the dangers that the scheme could create a *“sub-labour market”* (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2012). In this context we believe this report will make a contribution to getting beyond the rhetoric and explore the reality of the programme for those who are best placed to provide insight, namely JobBridge participants.

JOBBRIDGE: KEY NUMBERS (AS AT JANUARY 2015)

| | |
|---------------|---|
| 36,434 | INTERNS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE SCHEME |
| 10,125 | INTERNS UNDER 25 HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE SCHEME |
| 15,900 | HOST ORGANISATIONS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE SCHEME |
| 1,140 | HOST ORGANISATIONS HAVE TAKEN ON 5 OR MORE INTERNS |
| 376 | HOST ORGANISATIONS HAVE TAKEN ON 10 OR MORE INTERNS |
| 8 | HOST ORGANISATIONS HAVE TAKEN ON 100 OR MORE INTERNS |
| 5 | TOP HOSTING ORGANISATIONS HAVE TAKEN ON 805 INTERNS |
| 65,686 | INTERN POSITIONS HAVE BEEN ADVERTISED |
| 45% | OR 29,387 ADVERTISED POSITIONS HAVE NEVER BEEN FILLED |
| 9,000 | MONITORING VISITS SINCE SCHEME COMMENCED |
| 520 | COMPLAINTS RECEIVED ABOUT SCHEME |
| 43 | HOST ORGANISATIONS EXCLUDED FROM SCHEME INDEFINITELY |

At an operational level the scheme has largely remained unchanged since 2011, while the Government has expanded the budget, rising from €20m in 2011 to €85.8m in 2013 (Burton, 2014c), there have only been

minor changes arising from the recommendations of the Indecon report. However, the Irish Youth Guarantee plan suggests a major policy change with the development of a variant of the scheme for the most disadvantaged young people, initially referred to as JobBridge for Disadvantaged Youth, but now referred to as *“First Steps, the Youth Developmental Internship”*. It is proposed to provide 1,500 places for young people with low levels of educational attainment and/or who are long-term unemployed. Initially it was proposed that participation for those selected would be mandatory, which removes the voluntary nature of the scheme to date. However a recent briefing from the Department suggests that participation in First Steps may not be the only option offered to the young jobseeker but would be one of a range of options (Department of Social Protection, 2015). It is proposed that the new scheme will commence in the first half of 2015. The proposal to make some JobBridge internships mandatory would represent a radical departure from the current voluntary nature of the scheme at present.

1.6 International and Theoretical Context

The development of JobBridge in Ireland coincides with significant growth in the number of organisations offering such schemes and the numbers participating globally. Perlin (2012:27) has noted that this rapid growth is particularly pronounced in the United States, estimating that there are between one and two million interns annually in the US. The OECD have been to the forefront in the last twenty years in promoting *“activation and work first”* labour market policies which they argue are more effective in reducing unemployment than passive measures and long-term labour market programmes (2005). In the Irish context JobBridge represents a distinct move in the direction advocated by the OECD and away from existing concentration as identified by NESC (2011) on education, training and direct job creation measures in labour market policy. Therefore it is clear that the growth of internships is not just an Irish phenomenon and is central to a wider debate out the nature of work, labour market policy and indeed society itself. In that context we believe this research will not only contribute to a discussion about the scheme itself but to a broader debate about employment and labour market policy.

1.7 Organisation of the Report

In Chapter Two we undertake a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to this topic. In Chapter Three we detail the research purpose, the research methodology and the rationale for both the quantitative and qualitative approaches which form the basis for this report. In Chapter Four we outline the findings of both the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews conducted with the JobBridge participants. In Chapter Five we discuss and analyse the findings and make a number of recommendations.

2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This review of literature relevant to this research covers three broad areas: first, exploring the broader theoretical and policy framework, especially the growth of contingent labour nationally and globally as part of a broader shift in the role of the state and changing nature of labour market policies. Second, we explore definitions of internships and the impact and consequences of the internship model on young people and the nature of employment and finally examining literature which reviews and evaluates internships schemes.

2.2 Theoretical and Contextual Framework

2.2.1 From Welfare to Workfare

The growth of internships nationally and globally is part of a broader shift in the world of work and the role of the state in labour market policy. Jessop (1993) argued that the Keynesian Welfare State which flourished in the post war period was in terminal decline. He identified this welfare state model as one which focused on full employment, human development, regulation of private interests and welfare provision. This model he argued was being replaced by the Schumpeterian Workfare State which promotes product, market innovation, open economies and subordinates social policy to the demands of labour market flexibility and competitiveness. He identified a number of factors for this paradigm shift, such as the hollowing out of the state, the nature of production, rise of new technologies and the growing influence of international actors and global finance.

Jessop maintained that while the welfare state sought to extend social rights to citizens, the workfare state supported social policies dictated by the needs of the market with the citizen taking second place. In the labour market this approach favours market-led solutions, a flexible workforce, competitiveness and incentives to employers, including low-wage subsidies. Murphy (2009) outlines how this ideology manifested itself in Ireland when the economic crisis hit. She highlights how choices and decisions were made to reinforce low tax and low social spending policies which impacted most on the unemployed, social welfare recipients and low-paid public sector workers. She notes that the arguments to support cuts were predicated on myths that welfare was high, was a disincentive to work, was well ahead of the European average, and so on.

2.2.2 The Casualisation of Work

One of the consequences of this approach is the casualisation of work and a decline of employment in well-paid, permanent jobs with good terms and conditions and the prospect of a pension on retirement. Perlin

suggests that it could be argued that the Keynesian decades of stable and secure employment were an exception to the historical norm of contingent employment which was dominant prior to and since the welfare model. Hartley (2006) to some extent concurs in that he argues that the workfare state in the United Kingdom is part of the evolution of social policy from poor law, to welfare state to workfare state.

Perlin (2012:36) refers to the significant growth in atypical employment and what others refer also as “contingent” labour. Those engaged in internships, temporary work, part-time jobs, zero-hours contracts and sub-contracting comprise an ever growing segment of the labour force. Standing (2014) examines this world and refers to the predominantly young, female and migrant workforce working under these conditions as the “The Precariat”. He highlights the fact that many young workers are having the traditional entry into well-paid and secure employment elongated and frustrated by the proliferation of internships and temporary jobs. This trend had accelerated since 2008 with a report (Eurofound, 2011) on the impact of the recession on the labour market across Europe finding that job losses were concentrated in the mid wage category. There was a small decline in low paid jobs and growth in the number of high paid jobs. Stewart & Owens (2013) argue that what they call non-standard employment forms of employment are not only insecure in the traditional sense. They suggest that such employment transfers the risk of doing business to the worker by allowing the employer to evade labour laws and regulations. Perlin (2012:221) refers to internships as representing “*a slow drift away from this firm, humane consensus about work*”.

2.2.3 From Education and Training to Work First

The 1994 OECD Jobs Study is described by NESC as among the “*first generation of activation policies*” (2011:150). To a large extent the activation approach had limited impact on Irish policy until the economic crisis with Ireland following the welfare state model of providing income support, investing in education and training with limited job search assistance. During previous unemployment crises Government invested in training measures, such as Youthreach in 1988 and direct employment programmes such as Community Employment in 1994. As noted by NESC (2011:40) between 2004-2007 Ireland spent 48.3% of the labour market budget on training and 42.3% on direct employment measures, which was high by EU standards. The Grubb et al report (2009) on activation policies in Ireland for the OECD was published as the economic crisis worsened and unemployment soared. This report delivered a scathing critique of the existing public employment service and made a number of recommendations such the need for an increased focus on activation and engagement with the unemployed, greater conditionality of welfare payments and institutional reform. The Grubb blueprint for reform has been largely followed.

Others, such as Bothfeld & Betzelt (2011:4) have described these developments “*as the transfer of neoclassical economic ideas and norms into social policy*”. They outline the core elements of activation and work first policies as prioritisation of labour market participation, flexible employment policies, programmes focusing on target groups and reductions in and greater conditionality of welfare payments. Bothfeld & Betzelt argue that such policies are contradictory because on one hand they strongly promote labour force participation, yet they

also encourage flexible labour market conditions, which in turn undermine the capacity of workers to participate and earn a sufficient wage.

The OECD (2005) argued that job search assistance and work first strategies have a large impact on employment and are much more cost effective when compared to training and job creation measures. However, the UK's Commission on Employment and Skills (2011) presented a more nuanced picture. They found that work first policies did have a bigger impact for less cost in the short term, but that education and training may have better impacts in the long term, as they give people the skills required to survive downturns and transitions in the labour market.

Since the crisis, Government policy has shifted decisively in the direction proposed by the OECD, with increased activation and enhanced engagement, greater welfare conditionality for those on the live register, reductions in welfare to young people, etc. In contrast, investment in training, which was a feature of previous employment crises, was restrained. This is demonstrated by the fact that, despite the large increase in youth unemployment from 9.1% in 2007 to 31.6% at its highest point in 2012, the budget of Youthreach only increased by 2.4% from €66.9m in 2008 to €68.5m in 2013 (Cannon, 2014).

2.3 Defining and Exploring Internships

2.3.1 Defining Internships

Perlin (2012:30) reminds us of the origins of the term “internship”. It originates from the medical profession where trainee doctors were “interned”, essentially confined in a hospital for one to two years, to gain work experience before properly entering the medical profession. Perlin further notes that in the century since then, especially in the last three decades, the term and concept has entered and expanded rapidly throughout the broader labour market to such an extent that *“young people can hardly believe in a world before internships”* (2012:xiii).

An interesting aspect of the JobBridge programme is that the term “internship” is not defined anywhere on the scheme website, instead a general description is provided. Perlin argues to a certain extent that the ambiguity surrounding the concept helps to explain its spread and attractiveness for both companies and interns. Internships are about *“a foot in the door”, “a great way to get experience”, “make contacts”, “a win-win for employers and go-getter interns alike”* (2012:23). The European Youth Forum (2011a:5) did attempt to define internships in their paper as *“a form of learning in a real work situation which can either be part of a formal education programme or be done voluntarily outside formal education, with the aim of acquiring competencies through executing ‘real’ work tasks whilst being financially compensated and having access to according social protection”*.

2.3.2 A Bridge to Work?

When asked young people indicated that their chances of securing a job were grim with the lack of work experience being cited as a key barrier, with 75% strongly agreeing that the *“prospects for securing rewarding employment in Ireland are not very good”* (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2011:27). This survey was conducted in 2010, but little has changed in the interim with thirty two unemployed persons for each job advertised, which is the fourth high ratio in the European Union (NERI, 2013). A key argument in favour of internships is that they not only provide work experience, but also help jobseekers acquire the soft skills required to function and perform as part of a team or organisation. An analysis of vacancies advertised in Ireland in 2013 found that even for jobs in sectors such as caring, leisure and services, where pay and conditions would be lower than in other sectors, 64% of vacancies requested some work experience (Skills and Labour Market Research Unit, 2014). As NESC (2014) recently pointed out 23,636 young jobseekers under 25 years on the live register have never been employed due to the economic crisis. This cohort is particularly challenged to gain employment because the potential pool of jobs they can apply for is limited.

Another advantage espoused by proponents of internships is that they provide contacts and allow jobseekers to circulate in networks where job opportunities may arise. As NESC (2011) points out, even when the jobs market is depressed there is significant job replacement as people retire or leave the labour market. NESC quotes studies which find that for every new job created between now and 2020 there will be four replacement jobs. However the problem in a depressed labour market is that just over a third of jobs vacancies (35%), as noted by NESC, are advertised through the public employment service with many employers preferring to recruit through informal networks and contacts. Therefore young jobseekers with no experience and no contacts or networks in the labour market are competing with older jobseekers who have significant advantages on both fronts. Internships, it is suggested, assist in this regard because not only are young jobseekers gaining work experience, but also gaining contacts and access to networks where job opportunities may arise. To our knowledge this phenomenon has not been studied to any great extent and is an area which would merit further analysis.

The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions in the United Kingdom describes internships as *“an essential part of the career ladder in many professions”* (2009:99). This is significant because in the Irish context JobBridge would initially have been considered a measure designed to support the unemployed when jobs were scarce, whereas they are now being considered as an essential step in a career path. Perlin (2012:127) points out that this reality has largely been accepted by young jobseekers *“as part of the brave new economy of intense competition and altered expectations”*.

2.3.3 Young Peoples' Perspective

NYCI commissioned a poll in 2014, which included a number of questions on JobBridge (NYCI, 2015)¹ in order to gauge the awareness and attitudes of the general population of young people to the scheme. Despite significant publicity about JobBridge since 2011, only 54% of 18-25 year olds were aware of the scheme. Awareness was higher among 22-25 year olds (63%), the ABC1 socio-economic group (58%), and among those in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance (66%). The group who were aware of the scheme were then asked if they agreed that the scheme provides valuable work experience for jobseekers. Almost three quarters (74%) agreed that the scheme does so, with only 10% disagreeing. The views of young people across the gender, age, socio-economic and regional variables on this issue were consistent, except among the key target group for the scheme - those in receipt of a Jobseekers payment - where only 64% agreed. When asked if the scheme helps jobseekers into employment 58% agreed: again the level of agreement among those in receipt of a Jobseekers payment was lower, at 50%.

The respondents were also asked if they agreed that the scheme exploited those taking part. A majority (52%) agreed that the scheme did, with 30% disagreeing and 17% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. The number agreeing that the scheme was exploitative was highest among the 22-25 year olds (56%), those in the C2DE socio-economic group (56%) and among those in receipt of a Jobseekers payment (64%). When asked if the scheme takes the place of an actual paid job, 58% agreed with 29% disagreeing and 12% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Again there was a higher level of agreement among the 22-25 year olds (61%), the C2DE socio-economic group (67%) and among those unemployed and in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance (68%).

It is clear that the views of young people on JobBridge are mixed, a majority accept that the scheme provides valuable work experience and helps jobseekers progress into employment. However, a majority is also concerned and believes that the scheme exploits those taking part and leads to job displacement. It is not surprising that the older young people are more concerned about these issues as they are more likely to be dealing with the reality of finding a job. It has to be a matter of concern that jobseekers whom the scheme is in place to support are much more skeptical about the value of the work experience and progression and more likely to express concerns about exploitation and job displacement.

2.3.4 Employers' Perspective

Employers are very supportive of the internship model. A recent survey of employers by IBEC (Sweeney 2013:59) found that 61% of employers considered it important to provide internships/work experience as a means to improving the quality of further education and training and were currently doing it, with a further 37% believing it was important but not currently providing places. Indecon (2013:72) found that 96.1% of host

¹ Note on poll methodology: On behalf of NYCI, Red C conducted 412 face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of young people aged 18-25 throughout Ireland from the 17th June to 6th July 2014. Of these 51% were female and 49% were male. 50% were classified as being from the ABC1 social demographic group, 48% were classed as belonging to the C2DE social demographic group and 2% in the F category. 93% of the participants in the survey identified themselves as Irish. The margin of error in the results is +/- 4.9%.

organisations would recommend JobBridge to other employers. Of course, this is not surprising because internships present many advantages for employers. On one side there are the employers who use internships as Perlin notes (2012:29) as a *“far sighted recruiting tool”*. In this scenario the host organisation recruits and supports interns with the prospect of possible employment. This allows the intern to showcase their talents and skills, but also allows the host organisation to test-drive the intern as a potential employee. From the employer’s point of view this is a very cost effective and efficient recruitment model.

On the other extreme, according to Perlin (2012:28) with 50% of internships in the United States being unpaid or paid below the minimum wage and with little prospect of recruitment, employers are exploiting workers to drive down costs and maximise profits. He quotes a conservative estimate, based on the minimum wage from the United States, that companies saved \$2bn annually through internships (2012:124). Perlin notes that jobseekers are aware of the positive attitude of employers to internships and many engage in them because they believe internships send signals to employers which will aid recruitment. In this regard employers are directly and indirectly driving forward the expansion of internships in the labour market.

2.3.5 Negative Implications of Internships

Some of the key arguments against the internship model are that it exploits vulnerable jobseekers and leads to job displacement. Perlin recounts the centuries old apprenticeship model where you could *“earn while you learn”* (2012:46). The deal between the apprentice and master was a mutual one where the apprentice would commit themselves to the master to learn their trade, but in return the master was required to pass on the skills of the trade and, in some instances, provide housing, meals and clothing. Both parties gained from the relationship. Of course the vast majority of jobs today are not governed by the apprenticeship model, but prior to the rise of internships a similar relationship existed where employers took on young workers for entry level positions, who would learn on the job but would be paid a salary to rise over time. Perlin argues that the internship model disrupts this mutual relationship; the employer takes all the gain, while most of the burden falls on the intern. In the apprenticeship model the apprentice was gaining valuable skills which were recognisable, respected and in demand.

Perlin points out that no detailed analysis has been undertaken of the value and quality of internships, how much interns actually learn from them and if they make a contribution to earnings over the lifetime of a career. He further alludes to the paradox that while internships provide work experience for jobseekers, their pervasiveness may actually inhibit their chances of getting an entry level position.

Job displacement is one of the recurring themes of debate about internships, in that they could lead employers to replace existing paid jobs or that potential paid jobs are not created due to the availability of internships. Job displacement is hard to prove, except in instances where employers admit to it or where an existing paid job is directly replaced by an internship position. Indecon found (2013:87) that 6.5% of host organisations stated they were highly likely to recruit a paid employee if JobBridge did not exist, with 22.5% stating it was

fairly likely in the absence of the scheme. Perlin quotes estimates from France indicating that up to 60,000 internships should be full time paid positions (2012:71). This is an area which merits further study and examination given the implications and consequences.

2.3.6 Regulating Internships

Perlin notes that *“much of our evidence for apprenticeships, in every period, is gleaned from legal records. By contrast, the meteoric half century rise of internships has left barely a trace in official records”* (2012:47). It is a startling yet pertinent point. However, unlike apprenticeships, as previously stated, internships are ambiguous and diverse in nature and therefore it is more challenging to legislate in this area. The International Labour Organisation (2012), in commenting on the French “Cherpion Law” which states that internships cannot include tasks that could be done by workers in a full-time position, have noted that such laws are difficult to enforce. They support the idea that best practices need to be developed to promote quality and safeguard against exploitation.

The European Youth Forum launched a *“European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships”* in 2011 which called for legally binding contracts including a detailed task description and working conditions, decent remuneration, a legal basis for internships in law, promotion of best practice and monitoring and evaluation. In recent months the European Council proposed a draft text of a *“Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships”*. Traineeships appear to be the term agreed at European Union level to cover both apprenticeships and internships. The recommendation is not legally binding, but does carry some political weight, however the draft text has been criticised *“as limited and weak”* (European Youth Forum, 2014). Therefore, not only are there legal obstacles to regulating internships, but also it would appear political ones.

Some who are supportive of internships recognise that not all are of good quality and advocate for the development of minimum standards and codes of best practice (The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, 2009). The problem with this approach is that unscrupulous employers for whom such codes are designed are extremely unlikely to sign up for them voluntarily. Another crucial issue in the regulation of internships identified by Perlin is the lack of pressure from below. He argues that the labour movement in the United States does not understand or want to organise such cohorts. Likewise, he argues that interns have a collective action problem. While many complain about their plight they are afraid to speak out for fear of impacting their own career or reducing the number of internships. Others consider their internship as a temporary rite of passage and also, to a certain extent interns are locked in a competitive battle with one another for prized jobs which makes collective action challenging.

2.4 Review and Evaluation of Internship Schemes

In any analysis of JobBridge it is vital to review existing evaluations or studies on internships here in Ireland and globally. A key document in this regard was the evaluation of JobBridge by Indecon, which was commissioned by the Department of Social Protection. The final report (Indecon, 2013) examined issues such as a profile of participants, progression rates, satisfaction levels, dead weight, displacement, value for money and concluded by making a number of recommendations. The report, based on the responses of 2,364 interns, found that 28.4% of scheme participants were under 25 years of age (2013:9). While not broken down on the basis of age they found that only 15% of participants had a Leaving Certificate or less with 62.9% having a primary degree or higher qualification (2013:12). Surprisingly 72.3% of participants had previously been employed on a full-time basis, which is high in light of the fact that the scheme is often portrayed as a means to provide work experience for those not previously employed (Department of Social Protection, 2012b). Although in light of the significant job losses between 2008 and 2011 it has been argued that JobBridge facilitates jobseekers with work experience to explore new careers and sectors. A majority of those participating in the scheme were recently unemployed with 32.6% and 28.4% on the live register for 3-6 months and 6-12 months respectively, with only 14.9% on the live register for 2 years or more (2013:13). This data supports the OECD (2013, 2014) critique of the scheme outlined above that it lacks a targeted approach and is primarily attractive to well-educated persons who have full-time work experience and who have recently become unemployed.

2.4.1 Progression Rates

In terms of progression rates to employment, the most quoted statistic from the report (2013:36) is the 61% who have progressed to employment within five months of completing the programme. The report found that 25.7% had been employed by the host organisation, 12.4% by an employer in the same sector and 23.3% were employed in another sector. This is an impressive result when compared with a 34% progression rate recorded by a European Youth Forum study of 3,028 interns across Europe (European Youth Forum, 2011a). Although it is arguable that the results are not comparable as the European Youth Forum survey was conducted among some participants who were engaging in internships as part of their studies, and also a number who were still on an internship when they completed the survey.

Indecon found that 51.4% of interns were employed immediately on completion of their placement, with those under 25 slightly above the average at 51.6%. They also found a disparity in progression rates based on educational attainment, ranging from 39.4% to 54.5% for those educated to Junior Certificate level to Masters Degree or higher respectively (2013:39). Likewise, they found that internships in the private sector had a 54.8% progression rate, compared to 41.2% in the public sector and 43% in community and voluntary sector.

One of the more striking statistics contained in the report relates to the progression rates according to previous duration of unemployment. For those who had been unemployed for less than 6 months the

progression rates following JobBridge were found to be 57.1%, however for those previously unemployed for 3 years or more it falls to 28.2% with 51.4% returning to the live register (2013:44). Interestingly, while this group performs reasonably when it comes to gaining employment in their host organisation, they struggle to gain employment in organisations other than their host. Only 3.9% of those previously unemployed for three years or more found work in another sector, compared to 18.2% of participants who had previously been unemployed for less than six months. This would suggest that many employers are still reluctant to recruit people with previous long periods of joblessness which has been noted by Bell and Blanchflower (2010).

The Indecon report provided details on the progression rates, but it is not possible to make definitive claims with regard to the contribution of JobBridge to these rates without conducting further research.

Such research would entail the comparison of progression rates of JobBridge participants (as part of a treatment group) with a control group of jobseekers who did not participate on JobBridge. Indeed, in their report Indecon recommended that such a study be conducted every two years as part of an ongoing review of the scheme. In terms of the evaluation of labour market policies JobBridge is not unique, as the ESRI found there is limited analysis conducted on the impact of further education and training on progression rates in Ireland (ESRI, 2011).

2.4.2 Satisfaction

In terms of satisfaction with the scheme, Indecon (2013:69) found 65.8% of participants were either very satisfied or satisfied, compared to 22.4% who were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Among participants who remained jobless following completion of the scheme the level of satisfaction decreases (53.2%) and dissatisfaction increases (30.7%). The report also found that 66.2% of participants would recommend JobBridge to other people. This compares favourably with studies in the United States which found that 65% of former interns stated the internships *“they participated in needed improvement”* (Perlin, 2012:29). In the Indecon report (2013:71), the level of satisfaction among host organisations was much higher than that for interns, with 90.9% either satisfied or very satisfied.

2.4.3 Employability

The report (2013:54) also provides an insight into the view of the JobBridge participants with regard to the contribution of the scheme to their employability. The overall statistics are quite impressive, with 55.3%, 62.9% and 52% stating that the scheme contributing a lot to giving them new skills, providing quality work experience and improving chances of employment, respectively. However, the analysis shows a divergence of opinion between interns who gained employment from the scheme and those who did not. For example, while 68.2% of those in employment stated the scheme contributed a lot to improving their chances of employment, only 29.7% of those not in employment were of this opinion.

2.4.4 External Perspective

The OECD has commented on the performance of JobBridge as a labour market instrument in two recent reports on Ireland. They note, based on the Indecon evaluation, that JobBridge has been successful in supporting jobseekers with previous work experience, but less so with jobseekers with no experience (2013:74). They state that JobBridge seems to have acted more as a subsidy to employers *“rather than as a genuine internship programme aimed at facilitating the transition of inexperienced young workers to the labour market”*. They went on to propose a specific track within JobBridge for inexperienced young jobseekers. In a more recent report (OECD, 2014b) they again raised concerns about the cost and the general nature of the scheme and called for it to be targeted at vulnerable jobseekers who are at most risk of remaining unemployed.

2.4.5 A Qualitative Study

A study by Molloy, et al. (2013) explored the experience of twelve young graduates aged 20—24 who were JobBridge participants. All had third-level qualifications and only three had been unemployed for six months or more prior to JobBridge. All participants were subject to a semi-structured qualitative interview exploring themes such as motivation, positive and negative experiences, subsequent employment, scheme administration and recommendations. All the interviewees appear to be very motivated and were clearly participating in the scheme to advance their careers or to “break in” to a particular sector. Those who had experienced longer spells of unemployment were particularly motivated to participate to remain active and close to the labour market.

Molloy, et al., found that all twelve participants secured employment following participation in the scheme, ten with their host organisation and two with other organisations. This outcome is welcome, but is well ahead of the overall results found by Indecon. It does confirm that JobBridge can be very successful for well-educated, motivated participants who have only been unemployed for short periods. The limited financial support provided on JobBridge was identified by most participants as a significant challenge. The study found that three participants were concerned about the lack of contact and monitoring by the Department of Social Protection; one in particular had a challenging experience and would have welcomed greater scrutiny by the Department.

2.5 Conclusion

In this literature review of material relevant to this report, we addressed three areas. First, we discussed the place of internships within a broader theoretical and policy framework, where there is a shift in the role of the state and in the nature of labour market policies. Second, we explored material which traced the history of internships and discussed the recent global expansion of such schemes and the consequences for jobseekers, the labour market and the nature of work itself. We also discussed the views and perspectives of young people and employers. Finally we detailed some studies, in particular the Indecon report (2013), which evaluated the effectiveness of the JobBridge scheme.

3

METHODOLOGY

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the views and experience of, and the outcomes, for young people aged 18-25 who have participated in the National Internship Scheme, JobBridge. This chapter will detail the research purpose, the research design and the rationale for same. It outlines the methods used to recruit participants for both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research and detail the methods of data collection and analysis.

3.2 Research Purpose

While NYCI publicly supported the concept of a work experience programme and endorsed the establishment of JobBridge we have also been critical of certain aspects of the programme and the implementation process (Mullally 2011, Leech 2011). The Indecon report (2013) was welcome in that regard, however the terms of reference did not allow for the research to explore issues such as the motivation of participants, treatment of interns by host organisations, mentoring, monitoring by the Department of Social Protection and the costs of participation. While there is substantial data on the numbers and output, ongoing information is lacking on the quality of the scheme and outcomes for the participants. NYCI endeavours to ensure that all our policy and advocacy work is evidence informed. Therefore we decided it was important to engage directly with young people who have participated on the scheme to ascertain their views and experiences. The purpose of this research and report is to contribute to our knowledge of how the scheme works in practice, ensure the voice of young participants is heard and taken on board and to enhance and reform the scheme to improve quality and support progression to sustainable employment.

3.3 Research Design

As Bryman (2012:5) points out, social research *“draws upon the social sciences for ideas about how to formulate research topics and issues and how to interpret and draw implications from research findings”*. Social research seeks to explore developments, phenomena and problems in society and attempts to better understand those issues. As a result social research sometimes, as in this study, seeks to go beyond numbers and statistics and incorporate the views and experiences of the target group. There are two broad methodologies, namely deductive and inductive, underpinning social research. In its purest form the deductive approach involves testing an already formulated theory by means of data collection, which will result in the theory being confirmed, revised or rejected. In contrast, the inductive approach involves the development of

theory arising out of a research process. This research project is primarily inductive in that it seeks to develop findings based on the analysis of the data collected.

In social research there are two main research approaches, namely qualitative and quantitative, with mixed methods being a combination of both. It is important to acknowledge, as outlined by Creswell (2014), that the difference between them is not clear cut and that most studies are either more qualitative than quantitative and vice versa, with the mixed methods approach being in the middle of this continuum. This research employs a mixed method approach in that it consists of the collection of quantitative data through a questionnaire of a larger number of JobBridge interns and also the collection of qualitative information through a series of one-on-one semi-structured interviews with a smaller number of participants.

The reason for adopting the quantitative approach was because we decided it was important to collect data on a number of issues, some of which were addressed in the Indecon report (2013) and some of which were not. In some instances our data can be compared with the Indecon results and indicate potential differences between the general population of JobBridge participants and those aged 18-25. The quantitative data also provided NYCI with the opportunity to obtain information not collected by the Indecon report; such as about how participants found out about JobBridge, their primary motivating factor, the match between internship advert and role, the quality of mentoring and monitoring, etc. The collection of the quantitative information by means of an online questionnaire also supported the second qualitative phase of the project in two ways. First, it acted as the means to recruit participants for the interview phase, as we included a question at the end of the questionnaire with the option of participation in a more detailed one-on-one interview, and second, the results of the questionnaire informed the content of the interview questions.

As noted by Denscombe (2004:164), interviews are generally utilised when the researcher believes that the research topic *“would be better served by getting material which provides more of an in-depth insight into the topic, drawing on information provided by fewer informants”*. Therefore the rationale for complimenting the quantitative phase with a qualitative phase was the necessity to go beyond data and output and to explore and better understand the experience of participants. We decided this could be best achieved through a small number of semi-structured interviews as they would allow for consistency, while at the same time facilitating participants to raise and identify issues which we would not have been aware of.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

3.4.1 Questionnaire

In advance of developing a questionnaire we drew up a list of the issues which we wanted to explore. Apart from the standard questions regarding age, gender, location, nationality, educational attainment, etc., we began to draft a list of questions which followed a logical order in terms of views and experiences before, during and after the internship. We consulted the JobBridge website to assist in the formulation of the questions so as to ensure the terminology we were using was consistent with that used in the scheme. We also

consulted the Indecon report (2013) to examine the formulation of questions for that study with a view to enhancing our questionnaire. We also referred to the guidance provided by Denscombe (2004) in drafting the questions. We then uploaded the list of questions into SurveyMonkey.com. A copy of the questionnaire is available at Appendix 1.

3.4.2 Recruitment Strategy for Questionnaire

We used two methods to recruit participants for the questionnaire. First, we drafted an email with information on the background and rationale for the research with a link to the questionnaire. This email was sent to a list of approximately 300 contacts in the youth, community and voluntary sectors, and also to some organisations providing education, training and support to jobseekers. Second, we used Twitter to try and ensure a wider audience for the survey. The email and tweets with links to the survey were first circulated on May 7th and in the three days following the circulation of the survey, 26, 19 and 19 respondents respectively undertook the survey. Over the following three weeks another 20 participants undertook the questionnaire bringing the final total to 84, or just over 1% of the total number of young people aged 18-24 who have participated to date in the scheme.

3.4.3 Semi-Structured Interview Preparation

The first step in developing the questions for the semi-structured interviews was to review the quantitative data collected to date and to examine the gaps in the information and knowledge against the research purpose. We then drew up a draft list of interview questions guided by the main themes which we wished to explore. We consulted the guidance provided by Denscombe (2004) with regard to developing and carrying out interviews. Following internal discussion we redrafted the questions and also prepared a checklist for use during the interviews and an information and consent form for the participants.

3.4.4 Recruitment Strategy for Semi-Structured Interviews

We recruited all the participants for the semi-structured interviews through the questionnaire with 13 of the 84 (15.4%) questionnaire respondents indicating that they would be willing to do a more detailed one-on-one interview. Of the 13 respondents, 12 responded to this initial email. Of these 12 we arranged interviews with 8 participants, however 1 participant had to cancel the interview and it was not possible to re-arrange. We did engage with the other 4 respondents but it was not possible given our respective schedules to organise an interview.

3.4.5 Conduct of Semi-Structured Interviews

Once we had arranged a time and venue for the interview with each participant, we sent a further email with the information and consent form and the list of questions. (A copy of the information and consent form, the list of interview questions and interview checklist can be found at Appendix 2). We also further reminded the interviewees that the interview would be recorded, to confirm that they were aware of this in advance. All the interviews were conducted in public spaces (bar or foyer) of hotels which were convenient for the participants.

(The interview schedule can be found at Appendix 3). In advance of commencing the interview we again presented the information and consent form which they had received by email and reminded the participants that the interview would be recorded. Once the interviewee had signed the consent form, the interview commenced.

The length of the interviews varied, ranging from 35 and 65 minutes. We conducted all the interviews in line with the list of open-ended questions. As we were conducting the semi-structured interview, we did allow the participant to speak more widely on certain topics where this provided further information on their experience and gave greater insight, as discussed by Denscombe (2004). In some interviews we probed the interviewee further when they referred to a topic or issue relevant to our research.

3.5 Data Analysis Methods

3.5.1 Quantitative Data Collection Methods

As Denscombe (2004:237) points out, well-organised simple statistics *“can provide a clear foundation for discussion and critique – a solid foundation from which to progress the argument”*. Bryman points out that statistical information can be examined and presented according to variables, in this survey we decided to present both univariate and bivariate analysis. This is because we were not only interested in examining and presenting data such as progression rates and satisfaction levels across the whole cohort, but also to examine results such as motivation, host organisation type, experience of mentoring and so on according to certain variables such as satisfaction levels and whether they finished the internship early or completed the full term.

3.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis Methods

The recordings of the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim. Each interviewee was given a code (JB1-JB7). The transcripts were analysed on a thematic basis in line with the overall research purpose and according to what Denscombe refers to as units of analysis. We also listened back to all the interviews and took notes on some key comments and observations. We had identified some of the key areas and themes for the qualitative phase prior to formulating the list of questions, so this formed the basis for the analysis.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Denscombe (2004) outlines the key ethical principles which social researchers must abide by when conducting research. First, the researcher has a duty to respect the rights and dignity of the participants. This was a primary consideration in the conduct of the semi-structured interviews. All interviewees were provided with an information sheet and consent form in advance of the interviews which outlined their rights. This included information on the nature of participation, the right of withdrawal and data protection provisions.

Second, the researcher has a duty to avoid harm to the participants. We assured all participants that all the information they provided was confidential, their comments would be anonymised and that it would not be possible to identify individuals from the report. We were conscious that all the participants were young jobseekers who for the purposes and validity of the study may wish to comment honestly on their host organisation, the Department of Social Protection and other third parties. This commitment was given and at all times taken into account in the presentation of the findings to ensure that there would be no negative consequences for any of the interviewees.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we outlined the research purpose, the research design, including the rationale for the research design. We went on to discuss the methods used to recruit questionnaire respondents and interviewees and explained the methods of data collection and analysis. Finally we outlined the ethical considerations and principles underpinning the research.

4

FINDINGS

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the research undertaken. We begin by presenting the findings of the questionnaire which was developed and disseminated. We provide a profile of the participants and then go on to outline some of the key findings on a thematic basis. We then present the findings from the semi-structured interviews, beginning with an overview of the participants and their responses under each of the main themes.

4.2 Socio-Demographic Profile of the Questionnaire Participants

4.2.1 Age Profile

Table 1 gives an overview of the age profile of the participants in the questionnaire. 50% were aged 25 years, with 78.6% in the 23-25 year old age bracket. This is not a surprising result given the scheme is more attractive for those who have completed further or higher education.

Table 1

| What age are you? | | |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| 18 | 7.1% | 6 |
| 19 | 3.6% | 3 |
| 20 | 0.0% | 0 |
| 21 | 3.6% | 3 |
| 22 | 7.1% | 6 |
| 23 | 11.9% | 10 |
| 24 | 16.7% | 14 |
| 25 | 50.0% | 42 |

4.2.2 Gender Profile

Table 2 gives a breakdown of the gender profile of the participants. 61.9% of the participants were female, 35.7% were male and 2.4% were transgender.

Table 2

| What is your gender? | | |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Female | 61.9% | 52 |
| Male | 35.7% | 30 |
| Transgender | 2.4% | 2 |

4.2.3 Location

Table 3 provides details on where the participants live. Almost 43% of the respondents live in Dublin with only two, or 2.4% of those who answered the survey, living in the Ulster counties of Donegal, Cavan or Monaghan.

Table 3

| Where do you live? | | |
|--------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Dublin | 42.9% | 36 |
| Rest of Leinster | 20.2% | 17 |
| Munster | 21.4% | 18 |
| Ulster | 2.4% | 2 |
| Connacht | 13.1% | 11 |

4.2.4 Nationality

Table 4 details the nationality of the participants. The vast majority, 94%, are Irish with the other 6% being EU/EEA nationals.

Table 4

| What is your nationality? | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Irish | 94.0% | 79 |
| EU/EEA National | 6.0% | 5 |
| Other | 0.0% | 0 |
| Other (please specify) | | 0 |

4.2.5 Educational Attainment

Table 5 describes the educational attainment of the respondents. Almost three-quarters of the respondents have either an undergraduate or post-graduate qualification. Just under 12% had a Leaving Certificate or less, which indicates that JobBridge for the 18-25 year old cohort is primarily a graduate scheme.

Table 5

| What is the highest level of education you have completed? | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Primary Education | 1.2% | 1 |
| Junior Certificate | 2.4% | 2 |
| Leaving Certificate | 8.3% | 7 |
| Further Education (PLC/VTOS/Youthreach etc) | 14.3% | 12 |
| College Undergraduate | 38.1% | 32 |
| College Postgraduate | 35.7% | 30 |

4.3 Prior to Commencing Scheme

4.3.1 Duration of Unemployment Prior to Scheme

All those participating in the JobBridge programme have to be on the live register for a minimum of three months. Those who are unemployed for 12 months or more are considered more at risk of remaining unemployed. This question was posed to ascertain whether the scheme was attracting short- or long-term unemployed persons. Table 6 indicates that the majority of participants were unemployed for less than six months prior to commencing the scheme and that less than a fifth of participants were long-term unemployed.

Table 6

| How long were you unemployed (signing on) prior to commencing JobBridge Internship? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| 3-6 months | 53.0% | 44 |
| 6-12 months | 28.9% | 24 |
| 1-2 years | 12.0% | 10 |
| 2-3 years | 1.2% | 1 |
| More than 3 years | 4.8% | 4 |

4.3.2 Information Available About the Scheme

One of the areas we wanted to explore was how participants found out about the scheme. When the scheme was first launched in 2011, the Department of Social Protection developed and implemented a communications strategy, but less work has been done in recent times. Table 7 outlines that participants found out about the scheme from a wide variety of sources. The most common source for information about the scheme was the media, with over 20% finding out about the scheme from the host organisation. Other sources were from the Department of Social Protection, 18.3%, and by surfing the web, 18.3%.

Table 7

| How did you find out about the JobBridge scheme? | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| From Department of Social Protection | 18.3% | 15 |
| From host organisation offering internship | 20.7% | 17 |
| From other organisation | 3.7% | 3 |
| From media | 23.2% | 19 |
| By word of mouth | 12.2% | 10 |
| Surfing the web | 18.3% | 15 |
| Other source | 3.7% | 3 |

4.3.3 Nature of Decision to Participate

Participation in the JobBridge scheme is voluntary, although there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that those engaged in the activation process feel compelled to participate in education, training and work experience programmes. Therefore we posed a question in the survey to explore this issue and the details are outlined below in table 8. Over two-thirds indicated it was solely their own decision, with over 15% stating it was their own decision but they were encouraged to participate by the Department of Social Protection. However, 13.3% stated that they felt compelled to participate in the scheme.

Table 8

| Was the decision to apply for a JobBridge internship your own or influenced by Department of Social Protection (DSP) ? | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Solely my own decision | 68.7% | 57 |
| My own decision but encouraged by DSP | 15.7% | 13 |
| Felt compelled to participate by DSP | 13.3% | 11 |
| Other | 2.4% | 2 |

4.3.4 Motivation to Participate in Scheme

This question was posed to explore the main reasons why participants were motivated to apply for a JobBridge internship. The results are presented in table 9. The most common reason, unsurprisingly, was to gain work experience among almost 40% of respondents, with 18.1% and 13.3% citing the opportunity to work in a particular career field and particular host organisation respectively. Just over 10% stated their main motivation was to retain their social welfare payment. Interestingly only 9.6% stated their motivation was to learn new skills.

Table 9

| What was your main motivation in applying for JobBridge? | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Opportunity to learn new skills | 9.6% | 8 |
| Opportunity to gain work experience | 39.8% | 33 |
| Opportunity to work in host organisation | 13.3% | 11 |
| Opportunity to work in this career field | 18.1% | 15 |
| Opportunity to earn extra €50 a week | 4.8% | 4 |
| Retain my social welfare payment | 10.8% | 9 |
| Other | 3.6% | 3 |

4.3.5 Welfare Payment Prior to Scheme

Jobseeker Allowance payments for young people under 26 years have been cut by successive Governments in recent years, therefore the payment depends on their age and the time they joined the live register. This question was posed to get an insight into the range of payments this cohort were in receipt of prior to starting the scheme, all would be eligible for an additional €50 payment per week. Table 10 (overleaf) indicates that 41.5% and 30.5% respectively of respondents were in receipt of €144 and €188 per week before the top-up. Less than a fifth were receiving the lowest payment of €100. An analysis of this cohort indicates they are all on the live register for one year or less and therefore are subject to the reduced rates. Just under 10% were in receipt of other rates which may apply to persons with adult or child dependents and for those in receipt of housing assistance. Only one respondent was in receipt of no payment.

Table 10

| What rate of social welfare payment were you on prior to starting JobBridge | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| None | 1.2% | 1 |
| €100 | 17.1% | 14 |
| €144 | 41.5% | 34 |
| €188 | 30.5% | 25 |
| Other | 9.8% | 8 |

4.4 About the Internship

4.4.1 Type of Host Organisation

The Department of Social Protection categorises host organisations according to whether they are in the private, public or community and voluntary sector. Table 11 indicates that 43.2%, 25.9% and 29.6% of the respondents to this survey undertook their internship in private, public and community and voluntary and public sector host organisations respectively. There are significant differences in satisfaction levels and monitoring between sectors, which is discussed further in section 4.8.2.

Table 11

| What type of host organisation did you undertake internship in? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Private Sector | 43.2% | 35 |
| Public Sector | 25.9% | 21 |
| Community & Voluntary Sector | 29.6% | 24 |
| Other | 1.2% | 1 |

4.4.2 Size of Host Organisation

Since any employer with one or more full-time employee can participate in the scheme we decided it would be interesting to examine the size of the host organisations. Table 12 indicates that a 33.3% of respondents were in organisations of 10-50 employees with 29.6% in organisations of fewer than 10 employees. Over a fifth of host organisations had more than 200 employees.

Table 12

| What size was the host organisation? | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Fewer than 10 employees | 29.6% | 24 |
| 10-50 employees | 33.3% | 27 |
| 51-100 employees | 11.1% | 9 |
| 101-200 employees | 3.7% | 3 |
| More than 200 employees | 22.2% | 18 |

4.4.3 Did Role Match Position Advertised

This question was posed to explore whether the role and work which had motivated the participant to apply matched the advert for the position. Less than half or 46.5% of positions matched the role advertised to a large extent, with a further 35.2% matching to some extent. Worryingly, 16.9% of internships did not match the advert. In section 4.8.3 we further analyse the responses to this question which indicate that these internships from the perspective of the participants were not satisfactory.

Table 13

| Did the intern role you fulfilled match the advert for the position? | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Role matched internship advert to large extent | 46.5% | 33 |
| Role matched internship advert to some extent | 35.2% | 25 |
| Role did not match internship advert | 16.9% | 12 |
| Don't know | 1.4% | 1 |

4.4.4 Was Intern Mentor Assigned

According to the rules of the scheme all host organisations are required to appoint a mentor for each intern. Table 14 indicates that over 76.1% of host organisations did appoint a mentor but almost a quarter of host organisations did not assign a mentor or the intern does not appear to know if one was assigned.

Table 14

| Were you assigned an internship mentor? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes | 76.1% | 54 |
| No | 18.3% | 13 |
| Don't know | 5.6% | 4 |

4.4.5 Frequency of Meetings with Mentor

This question sought to explore how often the intern met with the mentor. The appointment of the mentor is only a first step and could be seen as merely meeting the technical requirements of the scheme. Once appointed it is important that the mentor meets with and supports the intern. The Department of Social Protection only provides guidelines and do not set down requirements in this regard. Table 15 shows that 44.8% of interns met with their mentors once a week, with 9% and 7.5% meeting their mentor every 2 weeks and once a month respectively. Just over 13% of interns met their mentor a few times during the placement and over a quarter never met their mentor.

Table 15

| If yes, how often did you meet the internship mentor? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Once a week | 44.8% | 30 |
| Once every 2 weeks | 9.0% | 6 |
| Once a month | 7.5% | 5 |
| A few times during internship | 13.4% | 9 |
| Never | 25.4% | 17 |

4.4.6 Value of Meetings with Mentor

This question was posed to further probe the value and quality of the mentoring from the perspective of the participant. Table 16 demonstrates that 60.3% found the meetings with their mentor useful, while 19% didn't. A further 20.6% were indicated that they didn't know if the meetings were useful.

Table 16

| Did you find the meetings with your internship mentor useful? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes | 60.3% | 38 |
| No | 19.0% | 12 |
| Don't know | 20.6% | 13 |

4.4.7 Treatment by Staff in Host Organisation

This question sought to ascertain the views and perspectives of the respondents with respect to their treatment as interns on the scheme. Table 17 outlines that 40.6% stated that they were treated like other staff members at all times. A further 36.2% indicated that they were treated well sometimes. Over a fifth of respondents stated that they were not treated at any stage like other members of the staff team.

Table 17

| In your opinion were you treated like other members of the staff team? | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes at all times | 40.6% | 28 |
| Sometimes | 36.2% | 25 |
| No not at all | 21.7% | 15 |
| Other | 1.4% | 1 |

4.4.8 Concerns/Difficulties During Internship

In this question we sought to explore if participants had actually experienced any concerns or difficulties during the course of the internship. The results presented in table 18 indicate that over half of the participants or 56.3% did experience concerns and difficulties with 39.4% stating they did not.

Table 18

| Did you experience any concerns/difficulties during the internship? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes | 56.3% | 40 |
| No | 39.4% | 28 |
| Don't know | 4.2% | 3 |

4.4.9 Nature of Concerns/Difficulties

With the previous question having established that some participants experienced concerns and difficulties we sought to ascertain the nature of those difficulties. With this question, participants were allowed to choose all relevant answers. Table 19 indicates that costs associated with the internships were a concern for half of those who answered this question. Job displacement also emerged as a significant issue as did how interns were being treated on the placement and the nature of some of the tasks assigned to them.

Table 19

| If you had concerns/difficulties could you outline the nature of those issues? Click on all relevant answers. | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Concerns about type of tasks assigned on the internship | 32.0% | 16 |
| Concerns about amount of work on internship | 36.0% | 18 |
| Concerns about hours of work on internship | 26.0% | 13 |
| Concerns about how I was being treated by host organisation/staff | 36.0% | 18 |
| Concerns about costs associated with internship, e.g. travel costs | 50.0% | 25 |
| Concerns that internship was leading to job displacement | 38.0% | 19 |
| Other | 14.0% | 7 |

4.4.10 Concerns/Difficulties Raised with Mentor

One of the key roles of the mentor is to provide support to the intern on the placement. It might be expected that an intern would have difficulties or concerns in a new work environment and this question was posed to discover if the intern raised concerns/difficulties with the mentor. Table 20 below indicates that 53.2% of respondents did raise their concerns/difficulties with the mentor, 25.8% didn't. Over a fifth stated that such an action was not applicable to their concern or difficulty. This might be explained by the fact that costs were an issue for 50% of the participants and this is an issue which the mentor could not resolve as the payment rate is determined by the Department of Social Protection.

Table 20

| If you had concerns/difficulties did you raise them with your internship mentor? | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes | 53.2% | 33 |
| No | 25.8% | 16 |
| Not applicable | 21.0% | 13 |
| Other | | 2 |

4.4.11 Concerns/Difficulties Resolved by Mentor

As a follow up question, respondents were asked if the concerns/difficulties were resolved by their mentor. Almost half or 49.1% indicate that their concerns or difficulties were resolved to large or some extent. However 28.3% stated that the concerns or difficulties were not resolved.

Table 21

| If you raised your concerns/difficulties with your mentor were they resolved? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes to a large extent | 18.9% | 10 |
| Yes to some extent | 30.2% | 16 |
| No not at all | 28.3% | 15 |
| Don't know | 22.6% | 12 |

4.4.12 Training

The participants were asked if they were given the opportunity to engage in training organised by the host organisation or allowed to take training run by others. A component of a quality internship programme should incorporate some aspect of training. Table 22 below indicates that 59.2% of participants had the opportunity to engage in training while on the placement.

Table 22

| Were you given any training internally in the host organisation or allowed to undertake training run by others while on the internship? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes | 59.2% | 42 |
| No | 39.4% | 28 |
| Don't know | 1.4% | 1 |

4.4.13 Feedback on the Internship

Any evaluation of an internship should include feedback from the participant. This question sought to discover if host organisations had sought feedback on the internship. Table 23 below indicates that 44.1% of interns were asked for their opinion, while 51.5% were not.

Table 23

| Did the host organisation seek your feedback on the internship? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes | 44.1% | 30 |
| No | 51.5% | 35 |
| Don't know | 4.4% | 3 |

4.5 Role of Department of Social Protection

4.5.1 Monitoring Visits

The Department of Social Protection conducts monitoring visits of a certain number of internships. Also in response to concerns, targeted monitoring visits may also be carried out. These monitoring visits are an essential aspect of the scheme to ensure that both host organisation and intern are abiding by the rules of the internship. These visits are particularly important for the intern. Table 24 below indicates that the Department of Social Protection carried out a monitoring visit at 28.6% of the host organisations of the respondents.

Table 24

| Did the Department of Social Protection conduct any monitoring visits during your internship? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes | 28.6% | 20 |
| No | 60.0% | 42 |
| Don't know | 11.4% | 8 |

4.5.2 Number of Monitoring Visits

In some instances the Department of Social Protection carries out more than one monitoring visit, however, table 25 below indicates that in over 90% of placements which were subject to a visit, only one visit took place.

Table 25

| If Yes, how many monitoring visits did the Department of Social Protection conduct while you were on your internship? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| 1 visit | 90.9% | 20 |
| 2-3 visits | 9.1% | 2 |
| More than 3 visits | 0.0% | 0 |

4.5.3 Raise Concerns with Department of Social Protection

This question sought to explore to what extent the participants were aware of and would be willing to raise concerns and difficulties they encountered on the placement with the Department of Social Welfare. Over 31% were aware of their right to raise concerns and would be willing to do so, while just under 10% were aware they could, but not sure how. Almost 25% were unwilling to raise any concerns or difficulties with the Department of Social Protection with over 21% not aware they could.

Table 26

| If you had concerns/difficulties with the internship which couldn't be resolved with host organisation, would you raise them with Department of Social Protection? | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes would raise with Department of Social Protection | 31.1% | 19 |
| Not aware I could raise issue with Department of Social Protection | 21.3% | 13 |
| Aware I could raise with Department of Social Protection but not sure how | 9.8% | 6 |
| Unwilling to raise with Department of Social Protection | 24.6% | 15 |
| Don't know | 13.1% | 8 |

4.6 Completion and Assessment of Internship

4.6.1 Completion of Internship

This question was designed to ascertain how many participants completed the internship and how many finished early. According to the standard agreement participants can terminate the internship with a week's notice. Table 27 indicates that almost two-thirds of participants completed the full duration of the placement with 30% finishing early.

Table 27

| Did you complete the full term of the internship? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes | 65.7% | 46 |
| No | 30.0% | 21 |
| Don't know | 4.3% | 3 |

4.6.2 Reasons for Early Termination

This question sought to explore the reasons why participants left the scheme early. As only 30% or 21 participants left the scheme early the overall numbers here are small and may need to be read with caution. The details are available below in table 28. It shows that almost 35% secured a job, with over 21% leaving because they were dissatisfied with the internship or host organisation.

Table 28

| If you finished the internship early, why? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| I secured a job | 34.8% | 8 |
| I decided to undertake another education/training opportunity | 13.0% | 3 |
| I left for other personal reasons | 0.0% | 0 |
| I was dissatisfied with the internship | 17.4% | 4 |
| I was dissatisfied with the host organisation | 4.3% | 1 |
| The host organisation ended the internship | 13.0% | 3 |
| Other | 17.4% | 4 |

4.6.3 Satisfaction with Internship

This question was posed to ascertain satisfaction rates among participants following completion of the programme. Table 29 below provides the details. A majority of participants, or 57.8%, were either very satisfied or satisfied with their internship. Just under 11% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, while 31.3% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Table 29

| Following completion of your internship how would you rate it? | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Very satisfactory | 21.9% | 14 |
| Satisfactory | 35.9% | 23 |
| Neither satisfactory or unsatisfactory | 10.9% | 7 |
| Unsatisfactory | 14.1% | 9 |
| Very unsatisfactory | 17.2% | 11 |

4.6.4 Opinion on Internship

In this question respondents were asked on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, their opinion to a list of eight statements. The details are provided in table 30 (overleaf). There was strong support for the suggestion that the internship had given new skills and valuable work experience with 71% and 68% respectively either agreeing or strongly agreeing with those statements. The support for the statement that the scheme had improved their chances of securing a job was slightly lower at just over 57% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Just under half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the internship has assisted them to identify the type of work/career they wanted to pursue.

In relation to the statement that the scheme was being used for free labour, opinion was almost evenly split with 44% stating they agreed or agreed strongly with that statement, with 43% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Just over 28% agreed or agreed strongly with the statement that the role was confused and that they didn't get the support they needed, but a majority, 57%, disagreed or disagreed strongly. Almost a third, or 31%, agreed or agreed strongly with both statements that the role was menial and/or the workload was too heavy. However 55% disagreed or disagreed strongly that the role was menial with 43% disagreeing or disagreeing strongly that the workload was too heavy for an unpaid position.

Table 30

| In relation to your internship, give your opinion on the following statements: | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|---------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree or disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Response Count |
| Internship gave me new skills | 36% | 35% | 5% | 9% | 14% | 63 |
| Internship gave me valuable work experience | 43% | 25% | 12% | 10% | 10% | 63 |
| Internship improved my chances of getting a job | 25% | 32% | 21% | 11% | 11% | 63 |
| Internship helped me identify type of work/career want to pursue | 27% | 22% | 24% | 14% | 13% | 63 |
| Internship role was confused and I didn't get direction and support | 14% | 14% | 15% | 28% | 29% | 62 |
| Internship role was menial and did not make use of my skills/potential | 22% | 9% | 14% | 20% | 35% | 64 |
| Internship role workload was too heavy for unpaid position | 19% | 12% | 26% | 24% | 19% | 63 |
| Internship was solely used by host organisation for free labour | 34% | 10% | 13% | 20% | 23% | 64 |

4.6.5 Recommend JobBridge to Other Jobseeker

This question was posed to ascertain the opinion of the respondents following the completion of their internship as to whether they would recommend the scheme to another jobseeker. Table 31 outlines the results with 45.3% indicating that they would recommend the programme, 31.3% indicating that they would not and 23.4% indicating that they did not know. A significant number of the respondents commented on this question with answers ranging from JobBridge being an opportunity to get insight into career options, to advising caution and with one respondent describing it as slavery.

Table 31

| Would you recommend JobBridge to another jobseeker? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes | 45.3% | 29 |
| No | 31.3% | 20 |
| Don't Know | 23.4% | 15 |
| Comments | | 15 |

| Number | Response Date | Comments |
|--------|-----------------------|--|
| 1 | May 26, 2014 8:15 am | Only if genuine experience/work given. |
| 2 | May 15, 2014 12:09 pm | I would advocate caution and suggest that you interview them as much as they interview you. Find out exactly what their expectation of an internship is. |
| 3 | May 14, 2014 7:29 pm | I would be cautious as I feel an organisation could easily manipulate the JobBridge programme. It would depend on the organisation. |
| 4 | May 14, 2014 6:15 pm | Depends on type of role. |
| 5 | May 13, 2014 1:01 am | It is slavery. |
| 6 | May 12, 2014 3:23 pm | Only if you want to figure out what you want to do in life, not if you think it will get you a job. |

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|--|
| 7 | May 12, 2014 1:25 pm | It depends. I am currently in one now that gave me faith in it again, however I participated in one already and I did not like it at all. Complete abuse of workforce. |
| 8 | May 9, 2014 4:08 pm | Depends on the host organisation. |
| 9 | May 9, 2014 10:16 am | Make sure they know what the internship is about. |
| 10 | May 9, 2014 9:25 am | It would depend on the quality of the internship that they would be taking. |
| 11 | May 8, 2014 1:29 pm | If there was a job at the end of the bridge. |
| 12 | May 7, 2014 10:51 pm | I would recommend if it was in an area of genuine interest to them. |
| 13 | May 7, 2014 9:27 pm | You have to remain enthusiastic whilst on shift it feels like an extended interview. |
| 14 | May 7, 2014 6:39 pm | For purposes of being able to keep up skills while job-seeking, it could be worth it, but the risks are high and you can get caught out. |
| 15 | May 7, 2014 4:56 pm | Depending solely on what organisation was offering the role. |

4.7 Current Status

A final question was posed to determine the current status of the respondents. Table 32 sets out the details and shows that while over 40% are in employment, 26.6% of these are in full-time work with 14.1% are in part-time work. These progression rates are significantly lower than those among young participants in the Indecon study, (2013:37) which indicated a rate of 51.6%. The results show that over 31% were unemployed with just over 12% currently on another education and training programme.

Table 32

| What is your current status? | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Employed full time | 26.6% | 17 |
| Employed part time | 14.1% | 9 |
| On other education/training programme | 12.5% | 8 |
| I am an emigrant | 1.6% | 1 |
| Unemployed | 31.3% | 20 |
| Other | 14.1% | 9 |

4.8 Cross Tabulation of Results

In terms of analysing the quality of the internships, we decided it would be useful to outline some of the results across more than one variable. The results of this data are outlined below.

4.8.1 Respondents Who Felt Compelled to Participate

In section 4.3.3 we outlined that 13.3% of respondents felt compelled to participate in the scheme by the Department of Social Protection. An analysis of the data for this cohort compared to those who stated that their participation was voluntary is detailed below. The group who felt compelled to participate were much more likely to be long-term unemployed, more likely to state the role did not match advert, less likely to be assigned a mentor and expressed 100% dissatisfaction with the internship.

Table 33

| | Felt Compelled to Participate | Participation Voluntary |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Long-Term Unemployed | 45% | 12% |
| Main Motivation to Remain on Welfare | 55% | 4% |
| Role Did Not Match Advert | 65% | 10% |
| Assigned a Mentor | 46% | 80% |
| Treated as Team Member at All Times | 10% | 48% |
| Had Concerns/Difficulties on Internship | 73% | 48% |
| Rated Internship Unsatisfactory or Very Unsatisfactory | 100% | 19% |

4.8.2 Impact of Host Organisation Type on Internship

In section 4.4.1 we outlined the percentage of respondents who undertook an internship in the three categories of host organisations, namely private, public and community and voluntary sectors. Further analysis of the data indicates significant differences between internships conducted in private and public sector organisations. In private sector host organisations, the interns were more likely to state that role matched advert and more likely to feel treated like other team members. In public sector host organisations, interns were more likely to be assigned a mentor and recorded lower levels of dissatisfaction with the scheme.

Table 34

| | Private Sector | Public Sector |
|--|----------------|---------------|
| Role Matched Advert | 52% | 35% |
| Assigned Mentor | 74% | 85% |
| Met Mentor a Few Times/Never | 38% | 52% |
| Treated Like Other Team Members at All Times | 52% | 26% |
| Rated Internship Unsatisfactory or Very Unsatisfactory | 35% | 22% |

4.8.3 Role Matching Advert

In section 4.4.3 we discussed the finding that 16.9% of participants indicated that the role did not match the role they applied for. A comparison of the respondents which found that the role matched the advert to a large extent and those who stated it did not match is outlined below. Table 35 below shows that where the role matched the advert the interns were more likely to be assigned a mentor and more likely to complete the internship. There is a vast difference between these cohorts in relation to how interns felt they were treated and also unsurprisingly in the levels of satisfaction.

Table 35

| | Role Matched Advert | Role Did Not Match Advert |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Assigned a Mentor | 81% | 50% |
| Completed Internship | 72% | 54% |
| Stated Treated as Team Member at All Times | 70% | 9% |
| Rated Internship Satisfactory or Very Satisfactory | 82% | 9% |

4.8.4 Intern Assigned a Mentor

In section 4.4.4 the results show that almost a quarter of interns did not have a mentor or did not seem to know if they had been assigned a mentor. Table 36 below shows the results for interns who were assigned a mentor and those who were not. Interns who were assigned a mentor were likely to experience fewer concerns or difficulties, more likely to complete the internship and twice as likely to recommend JobBridge.

Table 36

| | Assigned Mentor | Not Assigned Mentor |
|---|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Had Concerns/Difficulties on Internship | 52% | 63% |
| Completed Internship | 72% | 46% |
| Would Recommend to Other Jobseeker | 51% | 25% |

4.8.5 Treatment of Interns

In section 4.4.7 the results of the opinion of the interns with regard to how they were treated on the placement were outlined. Over 40% of interns felt they were treated like other members of the staff at all times, while 21.7% felt they were not treated like other members of staff. Table 37 indicates that where interns did not feel like they were treated like other members of the team, a significant number felt compelled to participate, almost all experienced difficulties, they were less likely to be subject to a monitoring visit and none would recommend JobBridge to another jobseeker.

Table 37

| | Felt Treated Like Other Members of Staff | Did Not Feel Treated Like Other Members of Staff |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Felt Compelled to Participate | 4% | 40% |
| Experienced concerns/Difficulties | 36% | 93% |
| Department Conducted Monitoring Visit | 36% | 20% |
| Would Recommend to Other Jobseekers | 80% | 0% |

4.8.6 Monitoring Visits by Department

In section 4.5.1 the results indicated that the Department of Social Protection had carried out monitoring visits on 28.6% of the internships. Table 38 gives more details in relation to the type of host organisation more likely to be subject to such visits. It would appear that monitoring visits are much more likely to take place in host organisations with fewer staff and in host organisations in the private and community and voluntary sector. The level of monitoring visits in the public sector is low and according to this survey none were conducted in organisations with 200 staff or more.

Table 38

| Size of Host Organisation | Received Monitoring Visit(s) |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Less Than 10 Staff | 35% |
| More Than 200 Staff | 0% |
| Category of Host Organisation | Received Monitoring Visit(s) |
| Private Sector | 45% |
| Public Sector | 11% |
| Community/Voluntary Sector | 36% |

4.8.7 Internships Completed/Finished Early

In section 4.6.1 we outlined the results which indicated that 30% of participants finished their internships prior to the projected finish date. Table 39 below provides more details on this. Interestingly early finishers recounted having fewer concerns and difficulties and expressed higher rates of satisfaction with the scheme. This may be because a majority of this cohort left to take up a job.

Table 39

| | Completers | Early Finishers |
|--|------------|-----------------|
| Experienced Concerns/Difficulties | 63% | 43% |
| Rated Internship Satisfactory or Very Satisfactory | 55% | 63% |

4.9 Socio-Demographic Profile and Satisfaction Rates of Interviewees

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven participants. The profile of the participants is outlined below, in tables 40. In answering the online questionnaire all of the participants were satisfied with their internship. However, in terms of recommending JobBridge to another jobseeker, only two would recommend to another jobseeker, two interviewees would not and three did not know if they would.

Tables 40

| Age | Number of Interviewees |
|-----|--|
| 22 | 1 |
| 23 | 3 |
| 24 | 1 |
| 25 | 1 |
| 26 | 1 (now 26, but 25 when completing survey/internship) |

| Location | Number of Interviewees |
|------------------|------------------------|
| Dublin | 2 |
| Rest of Leinster | 4 |
| Connacht | 1 |

| Educational Attainment | Number of Interviewees |
|---|------------------------|
| Further Education (PLC/Youthreach/VTOS) | 1 |
| College Undergraduate | 3 |
| College Postgraduate | 3 |

| Current Status | Number of Interviewees |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Employed Full Time | 1 |
| Unemployed | 2 |
| Pursuing Further Training/Education | 4 |

| Satisfaction With Internship | Number of Interviewees |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Very Satisfied | 1 |
| Satisfied | 6 |
| Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied | 0 |
| Dissatisfied | 0 |
| Very Dissatisfied | 0 |

| Would You Recommend JobBridge to Another Jobseeker? | Number of Interviewees |
|---|------------------------|
| Yes | 2 |
| No | 2 |
| Don't Know | 3 |

4.10 Themes from Interview Process

An analysis of the interviews was conducted on the basis of the key themes explored via the interview questions. The findings of that analysis are presented below. As noted in section 3.5.2 each interviewee quoted below has been given a code ranging from JB1 to JB7.

4.10.1 Motivation for participation

Many of the participants recounted that job hunting prior to JobBridge had been very difficult. A number stated that it was a frustrating and dispiriting process. As one participant put it;

“Had applied for ten jobs and didn’t even get a reply”. (JB5)

One participant was being offered work but only of a temporary nature which she was not prepared to accept because of the insecurity involved. Therefore, meaningful work experience was identified as a major barrier by almost all the participants with one participant stating;

“It was so frustrating to hear the words ‘You don’t have enough experience’.” (JB3)

All the interviewees identified the opportunity to gain work experience as being their primary motivating factor. While some stated they were enthusiastic about doing JobBridge, one participant indicated that she was not delighted to have to do it but saw it rather as a means to an end. A number of participants referred to the value of JobBridge in terms of enhancing their CVs, helping to secure interviews and giving them something to talk about and refer to in their interviews. Others felt it assisted in gaining access to further education programmes which previously they were not getting. As a participant put it;

“I’m applying for a job and I wouldn’t have been able to apply for it without JobBridge.” (JB5)

The participants who had been longer term unemployed also referred to the value of JobBridge in terms of giving them a purpose, in helping them avoid getting into a rut.

“Had spent nine months unemployed, for me it was important to have somewhere to go.” (JB4)

Apart from the work experience, a number identified that they had gained useful practical skills such as digital marketing, accounts, etc., arising from the internship which would also enhance their employability. One participant also indicated that the internship had opened up self employment or consultancy opportunities;

“Gave me the expertise to know how to offer a service.” (JB3)

4.10.2 Match Between Advert and Role

The participants reported mixed experiences with regard to how well the role which had been advertised corresponded with the actual role they were required to fill. Some indicated that the role which had been advertised was largely in line with the work they carried out, as one participant put it;

“Was exactly what it said on the tin.” (JB2)

However, another participant recorded that while her job title was “research assistant”, she had no idea what exactly she would be doing at the start of the internship. Two participants noted that while the role may have been different to what they expected, or changed and evolved over the placement, they appeared to be content with this scenario and the opportunity to widen their breadth of skills.

One participant, however, had a very difficult experience and felt she had been misled in relation to the work she was doing. The original position had been advertised as sales and accounts, but she had also been advised at the outset that they wanted her to do an additional piece of work in the area of computer programming, but she would be assisted by another person, that didn’t happen as she recounted;

“What I was told when I was taking it on, was that there would be someone there and that we would be doing it in tandem....that was the original plan, it didn’t happen like that at all, they put it on me completely to do it....I ended up bringing it home to suss it out, I had never dealt with the system before.” (JB6)

One of the participants referred to the standard agreement, which all scheme interns and host organisations are required to sign up to, which does provide some details on the role and tasks, but she never received a copy and she didn’t feel it was of much value.

“Standard agreement was tick list of stuff I was supposed to learn, but I didn’t get a copy of it.” (JB5)

4.10.3 Views on Host Organisation

While one participant did have a difficulty with her mentor and two others recounted isolated issues, all of the interviewees stated that overall they had a positive view of their host organisation and how they were treated, especially by the other staff. A number of participants recounted that they felt treated like any other member of the team. As one recalled;

“When they were going for lunch they would always ask me, I was always included in the coffee runs, I would say they were very inclusive.” (JB3)

A number of interviewees stated that their host organisations were very supportive in terms of allowing them time off for interviews, one recounted that the HR Department had given feedback and advice on their CV.

Another participant stated that he felt they hadn't taken him on because they needed extra staff but because they wanted to give him the opportunity. Others mentioned how their host organisations were accommodating in terms of hours of work and when issues arose. One interviewee stated that when she suffered an injury and had to take time off, her host organisation was very supportive.

"I can't say enough good things about them, they were so good to me." (JB5)

Three interviewees did recount instances where they felt badly treated because they were interns. Two participants did emphasise that these were isolated instances, one related to the intern being sent on a training course which was of little value to him but allowed the host organisation to claim a grant, as they explained to him. The other issue was relayed by one of the participants;

"One really frustrating incident was where I was offered the opportunity to clean out my mentor's cabinets." (JB7)

Another participant had ongoing difficulties with the manager of the host organisation, who was also her mentor, which ended up with the host organisation terminating the internship as she explains;

"I have a little boy and my friend was minding him while I was at work, but she also had two children and he got very badly sick so I had to take the week off.....I rang [my mentor] at the beginning of the week to tell him that when I was back in that I would have a doctor's cert... but he ended up sending me the termination letter on the Friday." (JB6)

4.10.4 Role of Department of Social Protection and Monitoring

The range of views on the role of the Department of Social Protection (DSP) ranged from excellent to a view that they couldn't answer basic questions about eligibility. Once the participants had commenced JobBridge a number stated that they only received a text every now and again, mostly in relation to the requirement of their mentor to complete the monthly compliance report. A number complained that it was difficult to get through to the JobBridge office.

One participant was surprised to get a letter from DSP as she recalls during the internship;

"When I was on it they sent me a letter, in the middle, I think it was January saying that if I didn't provide proof that I was searching for a job that they would stop my payment, even though they know I was on an internship, so that was the only contact I had from them." (JB1)

Another interviewee however recounted that when she went back to the local DSP office to sign off JobBridge to commence further studies they were very supportive and congratulatory, which she didn't expect.

Only one of the interviewees was in an internship which was subject to a monitoring visit, however rather than being random it had been prompted by her contact with them about changing her internship as she was having difficulties. She recalls that the DSP official was very helpful and professional;

"I started asking them if I could switch over to another internship when it started getting really pressurised on me, and at that point they did come out, for the meeting. They did handle it very well, they didn't say anything to him (mentor), they played it as part of the usual inspection." (JB6)

4.10.5 Mentoring

There was a distinct lack of mentoring for all the participants interviewed for this study. Some described getting guidance and direction with regard to individual tasks or roles, but none had any experience of a formal or regular mentoring process. In all cases it appears that at best the host organisations considered mentoring as equivalent to on-the-job training and at worst, apart from brief induction, didn't even provide that. Some interns never had any one-on-one meetings, but rather were part of group meetings with other interns. Others had different mentors depending which department in the organisation they were operating in. One recounted that mentoring from the HR manager was to be "as needs be". In one smaller organisation the intern stated that;

"Was never assigned a mentor formally, there was just a list of numbers I could call." (JB3)

Some of the interviewees were concerned at the lack of mentoring, feedback and performance appraisal and one felt that the lack of mentoring inhibited her in the role;

"The fact that there was no real direction with regard to doing the large scale project was frustrating." (JB7)

Another participant felt completely unsupported, stated when she asked the mentor a question it got a bad reaction so eventually she stopped asking him for advice or guidance. She stated that she felt;

"It was as if I had been taken on as a full time employee and should know the stuff." (JB6)

4.10.6 Networking

Four participants identified networking and contact making as a significant positive in the scheme. All indicated that the contacts made would be useful in terms of job hunting in the short term. As one interviewee noted;

"Hadn't realized until I was finished how much networking had gone on." (JB3)

Another, who was pursuing further education and wasn't engaging in immediate job search, stated that the contacts made would be important for her chosen career field in the longer term;

"I've met some really important people in this....and they are a bit more accessible to me now." (JB5)

4.10.7 Costs of the Internship

All of the participants emphasised that the additional €50, while welcome, was not a motivating factor for them in applying for the internship. Some made it clear that they would have undertaken the internship irrespective of whether there was an top-up payment or not. One of the participants lived within a 10 minute walk of the host organisation and therefore did not incur travel costs. Two interviewees indicated that the extra €50 just about covered their weekly petrol costs. Another participant indicated that the top-up covered his bus commuter ticket and food costs, because his host organisation had a subsidized canteen, with a little left over.

Two of the interviewees stated that they were only able to undertake the internship because they lived with their parents, one outlined how a fellow intern was leaving because of the costs;

"Your costs are not met, the other intern is leaving because of money, if I didn't live with my parents I couldn't afford it either." (JB 5)

Another participant felt that because a lot of the opportunities were in Dublin that this discriminated against participants who were travelling long distances or who had to move to and rent in Dublin. She had to sublet with friends in Dublin and she indicated that she was worse off on the scheme than before because of the costs.

"The money was definitely the hardest part because once you live in Dublin the rent is extremely high, then travel costs to get into the actual city, so it all adds up, yeah the money was definitely the hardest." (JB1)

4.10.8 Job Displacement and Cooling Off

Two participants raised concerns about abuse of the cooling off period and job displacement. There is a six month cooling off period between an intern finishing and a replacement intern in the same position being authorized. This rule is in place to prevent job displacement as host organisations cannot have a continuous intern in the same position. One interviewee stated that part of her role was to train in the next batch of interns who were replacing her. Two of the interns suggested that host organisations get around this rule, one stating;

"All they have to do is change the title of the position." (JB6)

The other interviewee who was positive about her experience did raise the paradox that while JobBridge gave her work experience, because it was now so pervasive in her career field it was reducing her chances of getting a job. She recounted her experience of job search;

“The other problem now is that it has taken over my chosen career, so every time I go onto job searches, I see this great post, great this is going to suit me and then I see the intern will receive and that’s it, heartbreaking, so I don’t look on JobBridge fondly.” (JB1)

4.10.9 Intern Rights

Four of the interviewees raised concerns in relation to their rights and legal position as interns. When one interviewee approached the HR Department of her host organisation about an issue she was told;

“You are not employed here, not on my books, nothing I can do.” (JB1)

Another intern who had to travel around the country as part of her role (in a public body) was concerned at the lack of clarity with regard to travel expenses. She stated;

“I don’t think they understand the reality of the money you were getting and the work you were doing.” (JB7)

The intern whose placement was terminated by the host organisation without any warning when she was on leave due to her child’s illness recounted that she told by the Department of Social Protection;

“Companies didn’t have to give an explanation, just a week’s notice.” (JB6)

Another intern suffered a serious physical injury and when she contacted the Department of Social Protection with a view to finding out where she stood with regard to time off to recover she recounted;

“Basically what I got from JobBridge was that I was a cost to the Exchequer, I had no rights as a worker.” (JB5)

4.10.10 Employment Prospects

Only one of the seven interviewees has secured full-time employment since completing the scheme, although a number had decided to pursue further education. The intern who had secured employed from his host organisation was clear that JobBridge had made a crucial difference;

“They approached me about their graduate programme and that led to me being taken on full time.” (JB2)

Another was clear that participation in the scheme had opened up new opportunities;

“Because of JobBridge I can apply for jobs in [my sector] that I wouldn’t have been considered for before.” (JB 3)

Other interviewees were a little more circumspect and still felt that it was still challenging to secure employment;

“They keep saying loads of people get jobs out of JobBridge but there are no open positions in [my sector].” (JB 5)

Another interviewee noted that some employers were still looking for paid work experience, some feedback that she had received was that;

“It was only an internship.” (JB6)

4.10.11 Overall Views on JobBridge

One of the interviewees sums up the feedback from all the interviews when she stated;

“So many pros and so many cons.” (JB5).

Many interviewees had reservations, although some interviewees thought that, on balance, the positives outweighed the negatives. As one participant put it;

“Far from a perfect system, does get a lot of bad press...I’m still glad that I did it.” (JB4)

Another was much more enthusiastic and stated;

“I have found it to be one of the most productive things I have done.” (JB3)

A number of interviewees referenced the bad press with one stating that as a result she was ashamed to say she was on JobBridge with another stating;

“I don’t advertise the fact that I am on a JobBridge, people think I am an employee.” (JB5)

Another interviewee could see the value of the scheme where host organisations had some potential to provide employment opportunities;

“JobBridge works well where a company is looking to expand but wants the cushion to audition a person and know if they are worthwhile paying.” (JB7)

One interviewee expressed concern at the how easy it was for companies to get an intern and about the nature of some of the positions advertised;

“When I look on the JobBridge website, I see manager, senior positions there as an internship.” (JB6)

4.11 Conclusion/Summary of Findings

A summary of the quantitative and qualitative findings of the research on one hand indicate that in the opinion of a majority of participants that JobBridge is providing work experience, some skills development and greater access to a difficult labour market. However, the quantitative analysis indicates significant levels of dissatisfaction of over 30% which has to be a concern. A recurring theme throughout both the quantitative and qualitative findings, even among those who are generally satisfied or who progress to employment, is the issue of quality. It appears, based on this analysis, that notwithstanding a number of positive elements and in some instances supportive host organisations, there is a lot of room for improvement. The problems identified in this research could be summed up as poorly-designed internships, inadequate mentoring and instances of unacceptable treatment of interns. Other concerns are the lack of rights and clarity with regard to the terms and conditions of interns, insufficient monitoring and auditing of the scheme to prevent abuse and job displacement and the fact that the limited additional income support of €50 a week put some participants under financial pressure.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the views and experience of, and the outcomes, for young people aged 18-25 who have participated in the National Internship Scheme, JobBridge. In this chapter we analyse the findings of the research and set out a number of recommendations. In particular, we recommend that it is necessary to conduct a fundamental review of JobBridge, examining issues such as progression rates and contribution to employability.

While some do secure employment after participation in the scheme, we need to explore whether this cohort would have gained employment in any event. As a 'lack of quality' emerged as a major theme in this research we discuss a range of recommendations in areas such as mentoring, monitoring, promoting intern rights and increased financial support to enhance the experience of participants and reduce job displacement. We also outline why, based on our research, the introduction of a non-discretionary variant of JobBridge would be flawed and counter-productive.

5.2 Summary of Recommendations

NYCI recommends that JobBridge should be reformed and revised to enhance the experience of participants, improve quality and increase progression into secure and sustainable employment. This section summarises the key policy recommendations resulting from the research (see detailed discussion of these in section 5.3 below).

I. Contribution to Employment

An analysis of JobBridge should be undertaken with the inclusion of a control group to determine the actual contribution of scheme to employment and employability.

II. Promoting Progression

The scheme should only be open to host organisations and sectors of the economy that demonstrate high levels of progression to employment.

III. Monitoring for Quality

The current monitoring system should be reformed with a greater emphasis on quality. It should also incorporate feedback from interns and primarily be directed at host organisations and sectors with higher levels of dissatisfaction.

IV. Curtailing Abuse of Cooling Off

The Department of Social Protection should enhance monitoring of compliance with the cooling off period to prevent job displacement.

V. Top Up-Payment

The weekly top-up payment for all participants on the JobBridge scheme should be doubled to €100 a week.

VI. Charter of Rights for Interns

A Charter of Rights for Interns should be developed in consultation with former and current interns which outlines their rights in relation to issues such as time off, holiday period, expenses, rights when ill/injured, force majeure leave, insurance, mentoring and support, treatment by host organisations. This Charter should be put on a statutory basis by means of primary or secondary legislation.

VII. Mandatory Internships

Participation in JobBridge should remain voluntary and the Department of Social Protection should ensure no young person is compelled to participate. Proposals from Government to introduce a mandatory variant of the scheme for 1,500 long term unemployed young people should be abandoned.

VIII. Advertising Internships

Proposed internship advertisements should be subject to greater scrutiny and host organisations should be required to confirm that the internship will largely match the position advertised. Where significant changes are made this should only be done with agreement of both intern and host organisation and approval by Department of Social Protection.

IX. Mentoring

A review of the mentoring process should be undertaken. The Department of Social Protection should organise workshops on mentoring to provide greater guidance and training on the role and duties of host organisations. Attendance at these workshops should be compulsory for persons appointed as mentors.

X. Support for Interns

The Department of Social Protection should organise regional or sectoral meetings/group engagements for interns to provide information and allow interns to seek advice/support on their placement. These meetings could also serve as a means to facilitate feedback from interns to improve the quality and monitoring of the scheme.

5.3 Recommendations

This section elaborates on the ten policy recommendations resulting from the research outlined above. It provides context and further detail on how and why these should be put into practice.

5.3.1 Contribution to Employment

An analysis of JobBridge should be undertaken with the inclusion of a control group to determine the actual contribution of the scheme to employment and employability.

As noted previously Perlin (2013) highlighted how ubiquitous internships have become globally. Despite this, no detailed analysis has been undertaken of the value and quality of internships, how much interns actually learn from them and whether they make a contribution to earnings over the lifetime of a career. He also highlights the danger that, as internships are so pervasive, this will lead to job displacement and inhibit job growth, especially of entry-level jobs. The same question can be posed in Ireland. JobBridge has grown to be a significant labour market initiative in the space of just under four years and internships are becoming more common in many sectors.

The level of progression to employment immediately after participation in JobBridge in our survey is 41% (27% full time and 14% part time) with 31% remaining unemployed and 12% on another education and training programme. The equivalent employment figure in the Indecon report is higher at 51% (Indecon, 2013:44), however this applies to interns of all ages and not just those under 25 years. Interestingly further analysis of the Indecon report indicates that the percentage in employment after JobBridge dropped to 28% for those who were unemployed for three years or more prior to participation in the scheme. The Indecon report found that 61% of participants were in employment within 5 months of completing the scheme. However, it is not clear to what extent their participation in JobBridge contributed to their employment: especially given that 63% of the cohort were third level graduates, 72% had been previously employed and 61% were unemployed for one year or less. It could be argued that an analysis of a cohort of jobseekers similar to the NYCI and Indecon surveys, of those who did not participate in JobBridge would have produced similar or better employment results.

On an individual basis the scheme does undoubtedly assist and support young people into employment, and these young people appear to succeed despite the scheme's deficiencies. A question arises, however, as to whether this cohort is work-ready in the first place. Does the existence of the scheme delay their entry into paid work? Likewise, is Government subsidising employers who should be creating paid positions? A detailed comparative study, to examine the progression rates between a group of unemployed persons who have undertaken an internship and a control group who have not, is necessary. Until such a study has been carried

out we will be unable to answer the questions above. It would also be useful to explore the types of jobs interns are securing following their placement, and the longer term impact of the internships on their career. In the absence of such a study a question arises as to whether, as Standing pointed out, employers have succeeded in creating an extra step into the labour market - and secured in the process significant amounts of unpaid work. In the absence of internships, would employers have created paid positions and would the participants have secured these jobs without working unpaid for six-to-nine months?

These considerations are even more important in the context of growing employment, which contrasts to the crisis in the labour market and rising unemployment which prevailed when the scheme was introduced in 2011. As the economy and employment recovers there is a need to focus not only on more jobs but on better jobs. We need to avoid a fixation with the numbers on the live register and focus on supporting jobseekers into well-paid and secure employment, away from the no-pay and low-pay cycle. It is in the interest of Government to support a living wage and secure employment with good conditions, as such workers contribute more in taxes to the exchequer and are less likely to need income support or return to the live register. While Government cannot dictate the sort of jobs created by employers, it can, through its policies, support and promote quality jobs. The quality jobs agenda is undermined when Government operates a scheme which subsidises employers to create unpaid positions which may be lacking in quality and ultimately leading to job displacement. It is, therefore, timely to undertake a fundamental review of JobBridge to examine whether the scheme is still necessary and how sustainable it is as currently operated.

5.3.2 Promoting Progression into Employment

The scheme should only be open to host organisations and sectors of the economy that demonstrate high levels of progression.

The primary objective of an internship should be to provide work experience and upskill the participant so that they can better access employment. Participation in the scheme is a significant investment of time by the intern who foregoes payment of a salary in the hope and expectation that the work experience will aid their employment prospects. Likewise the state and the taxpayer are making a significant investment of up to €85.8m (in 2013) and therefore it is important that the scheme is contributing to employment and employability. As outlined in section 2.3.4 employers are very supportive of internships and it is not hard to see why since they have access to the work and skills of additional staff while not being required to pay them. While host organisations are required to support, guide and mentor the intern, the scheme is effectively a subsidy for employers.

Among young people who have participated in the scheme (section 4.6.4) and among the youth population in general (2.3.3) there is considerable concern that JobBridge is exploiting interns, being used for free labour and leading to job displacement. In the view of one interviewee (JB1) the prevalence of internships in her

career field has led to a reduction in the number of entry level jobs. The best means to address this issue is to demonstrate clearly that internships are not replacing jobs and the vast majority lead to employment.

As outlined in section 1.5, over 15,900 host organisations have participated in the scheme, with 1,140 host organisations taking on 5 or more interns. The five organisations who have taken on the most interns have hosted 805 interns in total. Therefore we would argue that the current monitoring process is too narrowly focused on individual internships. Our research suggests that it may be useful, particularly in terms of preventing abuse and job displacement, to audit host organisations and sectors with regard to progression rates. At this point in the life of the scheme it should be possible to undertake an analysis of the progression rates from the 1,140 organisations which have taken on 5 or more interns. Likewise, an analysis can be undertaken examining the levels of progression in various sectors. At present JobBridge is open to all employers who have at least one employee working 30 hours or more a week. NYCI believes that this policy must be reviewed based on an analysis of progression rates on both an organisational and sectoral basis. We propose that if progression rates in an organisation or sector are low then that host organisation and sector should either have limited or no access to the scheme. Allowing only those host organisations or sectors where progression to employment is high would serve a number of purposes;

- Ensure interns are undertaking placements with a high probability of employment
- Reduce job displacement, as low progression rates may suggest certain host organisations and sectors are using JobBridge to replace paid work
- Ensure greater value for money for the State, as expenditure is supporting internships that will lead to employment and not subsidising internships that are replacing jobs.
- Provide greater incentives to host organisations to support the progression of participants into employment
- Assist in dispelling the perception among participants and the public that the scheme is leading to job displacement and is exploitative

Unlike the previous recommendation which, while invaluable in assessing the scheme, would take between approximately 12-18 months to complete, the value of undertaking the analysis of progression rates is that this could be completed in a much shorter timeframe.

5.3.3 Monitoring for Compliance and Quality

The current monitoring system should be reformed with a greater emphasis on quality. It should also incorporate feedback from interns and primarily be directed at host organisations and sectors with higher levels of dissatisfaction.

One of the key recurring themes to emerge from both our quantitative and qualitative research relates to quality. The research examined a number of issues not previously explored such as the role matching the advertising, mentoring, treatment of interns and the regulation and monitoring of internships. Across all these headings it is clear that the scheme is deficient and lacking in quality. It is important to state that - to judge from the satisfaction ratings (57.8%) and the interviews conducted - many young participants succeed despite these deficiencies. However, as the state runs the scheme, because it is funded from the exchequer and, most importantly, as it is designed to support jobseekers to access the labour market, we should expect and demand a much higher standard. In those instances where participants are clear about what they want from the internship, where the host organisation is supportive, where the sector is well regulated and where there are progression routes to employment these deficiencies can be overcome.

The finding that 31% of young participants in the scheme were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied is high and is a matter of concern. These participants were more likely to be long-term unemployed, felt compelled to participate, thought the role did not match the advert, did not feel treated like other team members by the host organisation and were less likely to be assigned a mentor. There is a clear mismatch between the intern and the host organisation. It is hard to see how such internships contribute to employability, it may even inhibit the prospect. It is also of concern that only 45.3% of participants stated they would recommend the scheme to another jobseeker.

At present the Department of Social Protection have a monitoring regime which consists of the completion by host organisations of an online monthly compliance report. This report confirms that the internship is proceeding in line with the standard agreement and that the intern has been in attendance in line with the agreement. Where host organisations are late or fail to complete the compliance report they may be subject to a monitoring visit and/or may be excluded from the scheme. The feedback from the interviewees is that this is largely a tick box administrative procedure which they had limited or no knowledge of. The Department of Social Protection also conduct regular monitoring visits of host organisations, these can be random or in response to a complaint or query from the intern or another party. Over 9,000 on-site monitoring visits have been conducted which is a significant number. The results from the monitoring visits are impressive with 97% being recorded as being in compliance. As pointed out by one of the interviewees (JB6) the official from the Department was very supportive and professional in dealing with her difficulties.

This 97% compliance rate is contradicted by findings in our research which indicate that 56% of participants had difficulties/concerns during the internship and 31% were dissatisfied. We know that only a percentage of internships will be subject to monitoring visits, our research indicates that to be around 29%. That is slightly higher than the 25% suggested by the 9,000 visits of the 36,000 internships to date. The current monitoring visit consists of completing a checklist with both the mentor and intern which confirms that a standard agreement has been signed, mentor been appointed, hours of work etc. It does not address many of the issues of quality addressed in this research.

We also found that internships in the private sector were four times more likely to be the subject of a monitoring visit, compared to those in the public sector. At present the Department does not collect data on the numbers of monitoring visits conducted in each sector. We are concerned at the low level of monitoring of JobBridge in the public sector as its research found that, while overall intern satisfaction ratings were higher in the public sector, there were areas where the public sector performed poorly. In the NYCI research only 35% of interns in the public sector reported that the work they ended up doing largely matched the advert they applied for, compared to over half in the private sector. Likewise 52% of interns in the private sector reported that they were treated like other members of the team at all times, compared to only 26% in the public sector. There may be a perception in the Department that the risk of abuse of the scheme and poor quality internships in the public sector is very low, our research would indicate otherwise.

The investment by the Department of Social Protection in monitoring visits is significant but a question arises as to whether monitoring visits are directed at the right targets and also whether the nature of the visit and the issues addressed are the right ones. We propose a reformed monitoring regime which puts greater emphasis on host organisations and sectors where risk of abuse is higher and also a review of the subjects discussed and addressed on the monitoring visits. Therefore we would propose the following reforms;

- Annual survey of interns addressing issues such as role matching advert, mentoring, treatment by host organisation, support in role, concerns or difficulties and how these are addressed among others.
- Analysis of progression rates on host organisation/sectoral basis
- The information gleaned from this survey/analysis would serve to inform focus of monitoring visits.
- The monitoring visits should be reformed and move beyond a checklist exercise to include questions/discussions on mentoring, treatment by host organisation, support in role and progression, opportunity to raise issues or concerns etc.

5.3.4 Curtailing Abuse of Cooling Off Period

The Department of Social Protection should enhance monitoring of compliance with the cooling off period to prevent job displacement.

When an internship finishes the host organisation cannot replace that internship position for 6 months. This cooling off period is a sensible policy to ensure that internships are not used on a rolling basis without interruption which could lead to job displacement. In some instances, the cooling off period is waived: for example, where the intern gets a job in the host organisation or another company or where the intern finishes their placement after less than 3 months (provided there are no complaints about the quality of the internship). The cooling off period is never reduced it is either maintained or waived.

The Department (Department of Social Protection, 2014c) does not collect data on the number of times the cooling off period is waived. We believe given the importance of the cooling off period that this policy should be reviewed and this data should be collected to inform monitoring. However, in the course of the interviews a more serious issue arose. It was alleged that some host organisations were circumventing the cooling off period requirements by simply changing the title of the position. Thus, a position initially advertised and filled as “Office Assistant” would subsequently be advertised and filled as “Office Administrator”, allowing the host organisation to bypass the cooling off period. It is a concern that this potential loophole was raised by two interviewees without prompting.

NYCI recommends that the Department of Social Protection needs to enhance monitoring of internship adverts and needs to initiate spot checks of organisations to ensure they are not utilising this potential loophole to use internships on a rolling basis which would lead to job displacement.

5.3.5 Top Up Payment

All participants on the JobBridge scheme should receive a weekly top-up to their existing social welfare payment of €100 a week.

At present JobBridge participants receive a weekly top-up of €50 in addition to the existing social welfare payment. As noted in section 1.3 71% of young people are on a reduced Jobseekers Allowance rate of €100 or €144. Therefore a significant number of young participants on the scheme are earning just €150 per week. A consistent message in this research, and in the other qualitative study referenced (Molloy, et al.), is that the limited income support in JobBridge places significant financial pressure on some participants. Depending on the circumstances and the location and distance to the host organisation the existing top-up does not meet the additional travel costs. It is clear that many could not participate without parental/family support and are

willing to endure the hardship as a means to an end. To an extent these participants see the investment paying off at some later stage. This may be a motivation if the end goal is a well-paid and secure job, but for young people with limited qualifications this is a more challenging task in the current labour market. Therefore, the existing €50 top-up payment should be increased. The most straightforward approach, while not addressing all the financial issues, would be to double the top-up payment to €100 per week.

5.3.6 Charter of Rights for Interns

A Charter of Rights for Interns should be developed in consultation with past and current interns which outlines the rights of interns in relation to issues such as time off, holiday arrangements, expenses, rights to time off for illness/injury, force majeure leave, insurance, mentoring and support, and treatment of interns. This Charter should be put on a statutory basis by means of primary or secondary legislation.

An issue of concern is the treatment of some interns by their host organisations. The finding that over a fifth of interns felt that they were not treated the same as other staff is troubling. While fitting into a new work environment can always be challenging, this figure is high and suggests some training and guidance for interns and greater scrutiny of host organisations may be necessary. Also a majority of participants experienced concerns or difficulties during their internship. While some of these concerns or difficulties were resolved by their mentor a majority of participants indicated that they were not. In the course of the interviews it was clear that many participants had problems with regard to rights to time off for illness and injury, force majeure leave, insurance coverage, expenses. In a number of cases the interns were treated poorly and/or could not get satisfactory responses from their host organisation or from the Department of Social Protection. While some of these issues are addressed in the Standard Agreement signed by both the host organisation and intern, not all are. In some instances the intern was not given a copy of the Standard Agreement. Therefore, we propose that, in consultation with interns, a Charter of Rights should be developed. This would clarify and strengthen their rights and support compliance. We propose the charter be put on a statutory basis by means of primary or secondary legislation.

5.3.7 Mandatory Internships

Participation in JobBridge should remain voluntary and the Department of Social Protection should ensure no young person is compelled to participate. Proposals from Government to introduce a mandatory variant of the scheme for 1,500 long-term unemployed young people should be abandoned.

Our research shows that the motivation to undertake a nine month internship is driven by work-ready participants who wish to gain work experience with the hope of some success in progression into full-time paid employment. The results of our research also show that 100% of participants who felt compelled to participate in the scheme, were dissatisfied with it. It is a concern that 13% of the respondents to the survey felt compelled to participate in the scheme on the basis that they were concerned that they may lose their social welfare payment. The dissatisfaction levels should demonstrate that participation without motivation is a waste of time and money for both the intern and the state.

This finding should also send a very strong warning signal to Government that the proposal as outlined previously to introduce “First Steps – A Youth Developmental Internship” which would make JobBridge mandatory for some long-term unemployed young people is a flawed and counterproductive approach. This group requires a range of intensive supports and access to tailored education and training rather than work experience which they may not be ready for. With the lack of quality, supports and regulation of JobBridge at present, forcing young people in this cohort into internships could be very damaging. While recent communications from Government suggest that a 25 hour pre-internship training course will be provided and that the internship may be one of the options available, we are still very concerned at the rationale behind this proposal. We believe other options such as a mixed training/work experience model would be more appropriate. We call on Government to abandon these proposals and put in place alternative measures to support long term unemployed young people rather than force them to take on an internship.

5.3.8 Advertising Internships

Proposed internship advertisements should be subject to greater scrutiny and host organisations should be required to confirm that the internship will largely match the position advertised. Where significant changes are made this should only be done with agreement of both intern and host organisation and approval by the Department of Social Protection.

It is apparent that some host organisations do not invest much time or effort prior to presenting an internship opportunity and in some cases do not understand what an internship is. As a result two problems arise based

on our research and analysis. First, a large percentage of internship positions are not filled. According to the Department of Social Protection (section 1.5) 29,387 internship positions, representing 45% of all internship positions advertised, have never been filled. While there may be valid reasons why a position has not been filled, this figure suggests that a significant number of the internship positions advertised are of poor quality and unattractive. There has been adverse public reaction to some internships advertised, unsurprisingly given the nature of the placement offered. It is highly likely that these positions were never filled. However, the absence of sufficient scrutiny of internship proposals has allowed these positions to be advertised and as a result has undermined confidence in the scheme among jobseekers and the public alike. There is a need for a much more detailed and qualitative analysis of proposed internships by host organisations. Therefore, we recommend that internship proposals should be subject to revised criteria.

Our study also indicates that many host organisations are advertising internships which bear no resemblance to the role which the interns end up doing. Some of this may be because the host organisation is poorly managed or the internship is poorly designed, in other cases it may be that the intern advert is designed to mislead the applicants or the Department of Social Protection. Our survey found that less than half of participants (46.5%) stated that their internship largely matched the advert. Likewise the feedback from the interviewees was that in some cases the intern role advertised bore no relation to the work they were requested to undertake. While it would be normal for the role to evolve over the period of the internship, it is not acceptable that the role differs significantly. In many cases, the participant is undertaking the internship to gain specific skills or acquire certain work experience. If a host organisation believes it can present an internship proposal and then change it at will, not only are they denying the jobseeker access to skills and experience which they had sought, but they are also undermining the overall quality of the scheme. Therefore, where the host organisation proposes or seeks to impose significant changes in the role then this should only be permitted in cases where both the intern and host organisation agree and where the Department of Social Protection is informed and approves. This will not only ensure that internship positions are more likely to match the advert, it will place a greater onus on host organisations to put more time and thought into the nature of the position they are offering.

5.3.9 Mentoring

A review of the mentoring process should be undertaken. The Department of Social Protection should organise workshops on mentoring to provide greater guidance and training on the role and duties of host organisations. Attendance at these workshops should be compulsory for persons appointed as mentors.

As this study indicates, even well-intentioned host organisations are not willing to invest the time and resources in mentoring interns, or appear to be unaware of how to do so. There is a need to redefine and

emphasise the mutual obligations of an internship. This would help ensure better experiences for the interns and better outcomes over all.

In an internship, mentoring should consist of regular meetings where the intern and the mentor discuss learning outcomes, training and skills development. Such meetings should facilitate performance appraisal and two-way feedback to improve or revise the internship with a view to maximizing their outcomes and progression.

In spite of the fact that a mentor is supposed to be appointed to support all interns, our survey found that only 76% of participants had been assigned a mentor or at least were aware that such a person had been appointed. While almost 45% met with their mentor on a weekly basis, 25% never met their mentor, and 13% only met 'a few times' during the internship. Only 60% found the meetings with the mentors useful. Based on the feedback from the scheme participants the quality of mentoring in all cases was poor. In the best case scenario it consisted of a supportive mentor who assisted with on-the-job training, whereas the worst case scenario consisted solely of a brief induction with no further meetings or support. This study indicates that mentoring on JobBridge requires an urgent review and overhaul.

5.3.10 Support for Interns

The Department of Social Protection should organise regional or sectoral meetings/group engagements for interns to provide information and allow interns to seek advice/support on their placement. These could also serve as a means to facilitate feedback from interns to improve monitoring and the quality of the scheme.

The Department of Social Protection already organise meetings or 'group engagements' with jobseekers to provide information on education, training and work experience opportunities. NYCI would recommend that the Department organise similar meetings/group engagements with interns. It is clear that despite the best efforts of the Department, many interns are not aware of their rights. The evidence of our research indicates that it can be isolating for an intern in a small host organisation and the opportunity to meet other interns and get information and guidance directly from the Department of Social Protection could be invaluable. These meetings could also serve as an opportunity for the interns to discuss and plan progression to employment.

Also, as outlined previously, there are issues relating to the monitoring of the scheme and the quality of some of the internships. We have outlined a number of proposals and recommendations to address these issues. However what is also evident from this small scale research is that the feedback and engagement from interns has provided invaluable information. Therefore, if properly designed the group engagement/meetings could also serve as a means of seeking information and feedback from the interns on a range of issues that could assist in monitoring the scheme and improving the quality of the scheme overall.

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APPENDIX 1

Appendix 1

JobBridge Participants Aged 18-25 Years Survey

1. What age are you?

18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

2. What is your gender?

Female
Male
Transgender

3. Where do you live?

Dublin
Rest of Leinster
Munster
Ulster
Connacht

4. What is your nationality?

Irish
EU/EEA National
Other

Other (please specify)

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

6. How long were you unemployed (signing on) prior to commencing JobBridge Internship?

3-6 months
6-12 months
1-2 years
2-3 years
More than 3 years

7. How did you find out about the JobBridge scheme?

From Department of Social Protection
From host organisation offering internship

From other organisation
From media
By word of mouth
Surfing the web
Other source

Other (please specify)

8. Was the decision to apply for a JobBridge internship your own or influenced by Department of Social Protection (DSP)?

Solely my own decision
My own decision but encouraged by DSP
Felt compelled to participate by DSP
Other

Other (please specify)

9. What was your main motivation in applying for JobBridge?

Opportunity to learn new skills
Opportunity to gain work experience
Opportunity to work in host organisation
Opportunity to work in this career field
Opportunity to earn extra €50 a week
Retain my social welfare payment
Other

Other (please specify)

10. What rate of social welfare payment were you on prior to starting JobBridge?

None
€100
€144
€188
Other

11. What type of host organisation did you undertake internship in?

Private Sector
Public Sector
Community & Voluntary Sector
Other

12. What size was the host organisation?

Fewer than 10 employees
10-50 employees
51-100 employees
101-200 employees
More than 200 employees

13. Did the intern role you fulfilled match the advert for the position?

Role matched internship advert to large extent
Role matched internship advert to some extent
Role did not match internship advert
Don't know

Comment

14. Where you assigned an internship mentor?

Yes
No
Don't know

15. If yes, how often did you meet the internship mentor?

Once a week
Once every 2 weeks
Once a month
A few times during internship
Never

16. Did you find the meetings with your internship mentor useful?

Yes
No
Don't know

Comment

17. In your opinion were you treated like other members of the staff team?

Yes at all times
Sometimes
No not at all
Other

Comments

18. Did you experience any concerns/difficulties during the internship?

Yes
No
Don't know

19. If you had concerns/difficulties could you outline the nature of those issues? Click on all relevant answers

Concerns about type of tasks assigned on the internship
Concerns about amount of work on internship
Concerns about hours of work on internship
Concerns about how I was being treated by host organisation/staff
Concerns about costs associated with internship, e.g. travel costs
Concerns that internship was leading to job displacement
Other

Add Comments

20. If you had concerns/difficulties did you raise them with your internship mentor?

Yes
No
Not applicable
Other (please specify)

21. If you raised your concerns/difficulties with your mentor were they resolved?

Yes to a large extent
Yes to some extent
No not at all
Don't know

22. Were you given any training internally in the host organisation or allowed to undertake training run by others while on the internship?

Yes
No
Don't know

23. Did you find this training useful?

Yes
No
Don't know

24. Did the host organisation seek your feedback on the internship?

Yes
No
Don't know

25. Did the Department of Social Protection conduct any monitoring visits during your internship?

Yes
No
Don't know

26. If Yes, how many monitoring visits did the Department of Social Protection conduct while you were on your internship?

1 visit
2-3 visits
More than 3 visits

27. Did you have the opportunity to meet with the official from the Department of Social Protection without someone from the host organisation being present?

Yes
No
Don't know

28. If you had concerns/difficulties with the internship which couldn't be resolved with host organisation, would you raise them with Department of Social Protection?

Yes would raise with Department of Social Protection
Not aware I could raise issue with Department of Social Protection
Aware I could raise with Department of Social Protection but not sure how
Unwilling to raise with Department of Social Protection
Don't know

29. Did you complete the full term of the internship?

Yes
No
Don't know

30. If you finished the internship early, why?

I secured a job
I decided to undertake another education/training opportunity
I left for other personal reasons
I was dissatisfied with the internship
I was dissatisfied with the host organisation
The host organisation ended the internship
Other

Comment

31. Following completion of your internship how would you rate it?

Very satisfactory
Satisfactory
Neither satisfactory or unsatisfactory
Unsatisfactory
Very unsatisfactory

Comments

32. In relation to your internship give your opinion on the following statements?

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

Internship gave me
new skills

Internship gave me
valuable work
experience

Internship improved
my chances of
getting a job

Internship helped
me identify type of
work/career want to
pursue

Internship role was
confused and I didn't
get direction and
support

Internship role was
menial and did not
make use of my
skills/potential

Internship role
workload was too
heavy for unpaid
position

Internship was solely
used by host
organisation for free
labour

33. Would you recommend JobBridge to another jobseeker?

Yes
No
Don't Know

Comments

34. What is your current status?

Employed full time
Employed part time
On other education/training programme
I am an emigrant
Unemployed
Other

35. Would you be willing to do a more detailed one to one interview (hour long) on your experiences of participation in JobBridge? If yes, please put your name, address and email address in the box below. Please note that I may not be able to interview all those who offer to do so.

Yes
No
Don't know

If yes please include your name and email address

APPENDIX 2

Appendix 2

Interviews: Information Sheet, Consent Form and Schedule:

Introduction

My name is James Doorley and I am a Masters student in NUI Maynooth conducting research for my MA in Applied Social Studies under the supervision of Dr. Hilary Tierney.

Study Information

My research is concerned with exploring the experience and views of young people aged 18-25 who have participated in the National Internship Programme, JobBridge. I have already conducted an online survey and I am now conducting a number of one to one interviews. The overall results will be presented in my dissertation.

Study Participation

I am conducting one to one interviews with participants in the JobBridge Programme which should take about one hour.

Participant rights

- There is no obligation on participants to take part in the interview.
- Participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.
- Participants have the right to only answer those questions they wish to answer.
- The data and information will be anonymised and no participant will be identified in my dissertation.
- The information will be used and stored safely and will be destroyed following the completion of my dissertation.

Contact Details

James Doorley

james@nyci.ie

Consent Form

I, _____ have read and

[print name]

understand the information provided on this research. I give my consent to participate in this study in the manner set out above.

Signed _____

Date: _____

Interviews with JobBridge participants

1. Could you tell me about your situation before you started Jobbridge, had you undertaken education or training?
2. Had you any success in terms of applying for jobs, getting interviews before JobBridge?
3. What attracted you to Jobbridge?
4. What attracted you to apply for the internship opportunity with the company/organisation you were working in?
5. Can you tell me something about the host organisation you were working in?
6. Did you get terms and conditions when you started?
7. Did you know what your entitlements to time off, if sick, etc?
8. Were you clear what your role/work was in the internship?
9. Tell me a little about the work you were doing?
10. What did you like most about the work you were doing?
11. What did you like least about the work you were doing?
12. Can you tell me a little about the mentoring, what was involved?
13. Did you undertake training on the internship, if yes can you tell me about it?
14. Did you receive information from Department of Social Protection (DSP) before/during the internship?
15. Did the DSP conduct any monitoring visits, if yes can you tell me about that?
16. What are your thoughts on the extra €50-did it meet your internship costs?
17. What about the other people in the company-were you treated well/like part of the team?
18. What was the best thing/highlight on the internship?
19. What was the most challenging part of the internship for you?
20. In your opinion did you learn new skills/get valuable work experience?
21. Do you feel it will be easier to get a job as a result of the internship?
22. Is there something you would like to say about the internship which we haven't covered to date?

Checklist for JobBridge Interviews

- Details on interviewee situation prior to JobBridge
- Details on interviewee job hunting
- Motivation in applying for JobBridge
- Details on type of host organisation
- Aware of standard agreement/terms and conditions
- Aware of entitlement, hours of work, time off etc
- Match between role and advert
- Details on type of work conducted
- Details on mentoring
- Any information on training undertaken
- Any contact with or monitoring by DSP
- Feedback on costs-views on €50
- Treatment by mentor/work colleagues
- Highlights of internship
- Lowlights of internship
- Views on whether got new skills
- Views on whether work experience useful
- Job prospects now
- Any other issues/thoughts on JobBridge

Schedule of Interviews with JobBridge Participants

- JB1 took place on 13th June 2014 12pm
- JB2 took place on 9th June 3pm
- JB3 took place on 5th June 3:30pm
- JB4 took place on June 11th 3pm
- JB5 took place on May 30th 5pm
- JB6 took place on May 26th 12:30pm
- JB7 took place on June 10th 3pm



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