

PRESS RELEASE

LAUNCH OF 2007 REVIEW OF READY FOR WORK PROGRAMME DEMONSTRATES ITS CONTINUED SUCCESS IN GETTING HOMELESS PEOPLE BACK INTO EMPLOYMENT

The 2007 Annual Review of the **Ready for Work** programme was officially launched today, (Tuesday, November 27th) by Mr Billy Kelleher, Minister for Labour Affairs, at a reception held at the head offices of Anglo Irish Bank, Dublin. At the launch, the Chair of the Ready for Work programme, Sean FitzPatrick announced that almost 70% of participants on the programme went on to start employment.

The 2007 Review documents the progress which has been made by businesses over the past year in tackling the issue of homelessness through the provision of jobs and work experience for homeless people. Funded under the National Development Plan, the programme is managed by Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI) and supported by FÁS, Anglo Irish Bank and Marks & Spencer, Ready for Work is a unique initiative that provides pre employment training, organises work experience placements and offers one-to-one guidance to people who are looking to move on from homelessness into employment or training. The programme works in association with homeless service providers and the Homeless Agency.

The Minister for Labour Affairs, Mr. Billy Kelleher T.D., has welcomed the review and acknowledged the significant contribution of the Ready for Work programme in tackling recurring homelessness. *“I believe our very success in reducing unemployment over the recent past has also increasingly brought into focus those who continue to experience difficulties in accessing employment particularly those affected by the problem of homelessness. The Ready for Work programme, which is wholly dependant on the collaboration and co-operation of both Government and Irish business, offers individuals hope and the prospect of a job”*, the Minister said.

Ready for Work is a Dublin only initiative and since it commenced in 2002, 239 potential candidates were assessed, 115 men and women completed it and 80 (or 69%) have commenced employment.

Speaking at the review launch, Mr. Sean FitzPatrick, Chair, Ready for Work Steering Group, said *“Ready for Work is indebted to Irish business; without their support, it could not and would not make the impacts it does. We have a strong track record in enabling people to access employment. The numbers of people staying in long term employment are lower than this, however. Homeless people often have the skills and the capacities to be valued members of a workforce, yet they may be dealing with issues such as mental health issues or unsuitable accommodation. There are challenges in bringing people back into the workforce but the rewards are great - for businesses and individuals - and I would urge companies to get involved”*

The Ready for Work review documents some stories from candidates who participated in the programme. One such story detailed in the publication is about ‘Eugene’. Originally from Mayo, ‘Eugene’ moved to London with his mother when he was a boy. At 16 he left school and got a lucrative job in construction, and began drinking heavily. This took its toll on his home life to the extent that at the age of 17 he was homeless. His lifestyle fostered continued alcohol abuse, introduced him to drugs and kept him in a cycle of homelessness until three years ago when he returned to Ireland.

In talking about his life now after completing Ready for Work, ‘Eugene’ comments *“In 2004, I had no money, no housing, no nothing. Now in 2007, I’ve got my own flat and everything is going really well for me, and that’s because of my own willpower - I want to succeed for myself - and secondly, because of people like Ready for Work – they really did help me.”*

-ENDS-

Photos will be issued to picture desks by McInnes Photography

For further information or a copy of the Annual Review, please contact:
Moirá Horgan, Marketing Communications Manager, Business in the Community Ireland
Tel: 086 172 2105
Email: mhorgan@bitc.ie

Editor's Notes

- Ready for Work is funded under the Social Inclusion Priority of the National Development Plan 2007-2013. Part of a coherent strategy for social inclusion based on the life cycle approach set out in *Towards 2016 and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*, the NDP Social Inclusion Priority includes funding to support people on long term social welfare into education, training and employment.
- Since its inception in 2000, the mission of Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI) is to harness the power of Irish business to maximise its positive impact on all its stakeholders. It is a non-profit organisation specialising in advice and guidance to leading companies on corporate responsibility and corporate community involvement.
- BITCI also works with hundreds of companies nationwide through its innovative social inclusion programmes. These are: **Ready For Work** (employment and training for homeless people), **The Linkage Programme** (employment and training for former offenders) **EPIC** (employment and training programme for foreign national parents of Irish born children) and **Schools' Business Partnership** (aligns schools and businesses nationwide)
- Ready for Work is one of Ireland's most innovative social programmes offering work placements to people affected by homelessness. The programme commenced in 2002 in an effort to tackle the direct causes and consequences of homelessness in a dynamic way. This is carried out by working with service providers and businesses to provide homeless people with two days of training and a two-week placement within a company, follow up support is provided by Training and Employment Officers. The training was devised specifically for marginalised groups and centres on visualisation, motivation, plans and change.
- The benefits to those moving on from homelessness include improved self esteem, work experience and a route to full time employment. The benefits to participating businesses include team building, company profile development, reputation enhancement and enhanced goodwill among existing and potential customers.
- Research has concluded that access to education, training and employment can reduce the likelihood of debt, social isolation and end the cycle of homelessness. Education, training and employment can increase self-esteem, provide longer-term more sustainable employment, help people to develop a sense of importance and belonging, increase skills, reduce reliance on state supports and provide a route to independent living.