



CONFERENCE EVALUATION

10th Anniversary

“CELEBRATION – COLLABORATION – CONSOLIDATION”

A Joint Two-Day Conference on Supported Employment

Organised by

**The Irish Association of Supported Employment
&
The Northern Ireland Union of Supported
Employment**

18 & 19 November 2004

Holiday Inn Hotel, Letterkenny, Co Donegal



INTRODUCTION

In 2004 both the Irish Association of Supported Employment and the Northern Irish Union of Supported Employment celebrated their 10th Anniversary of promoting Supported Employment for people with disabilities throughout the island of Ireland. To mark this occasion it was decided to host a joint conference.

Planning for the Conference began in March 2004 and an organising committee was set up comprising of members from both National Associations and IASE North Western Branch (see members of the organising committee below). Anne Marie Ward was nominated as Chairperson and Susan Harkin agreed to provide Secretariat for the organising committee.

The organising committee was divided into sub-groups to focus on particular areas (Presentation and Design, Communication and Financial) and reported back to the main conference committee.

The title of the conference encapsulated the significances of the event in celebrating the past, present and future of Supported Employment in the Island of Ireland – “**Celebration, Collaboration, Consolidation**”. The conference was held in the Holiday Inn, Letterkenny and was an ideal location to hold a cross-border conference with easy access both North and South.

The format of the conference consisted of 4 Key Note Presentations and 3 Parallel Session comprising of 6 presentations and 9 workshops.
(See Appendix I for Conference Brochure)

A Civic Reception was hosted by the Mayor of Derry on Wednesday 17 November 2004 in the Derry City Council Offices and a Conference Dinner was held on the 18 November 2004.

An Evaluation was carried out on the conference and the main outcomes have been collated in this Report.

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

IASE

Irene Durkin
Michael Fleming
Anne Gill
Teresa Haughey
John James McBride
Sarah Togher
Anne Marie Ward (Chair)

NIUSE

Garth Anderson
Desy Carton
Edyth Dunlop
Margaret Dunlea
Margaret Haddock
Susan Harkin (Secretariat)
Teresa Hazzard
Maeve McRory

ATTENDANCE

Delegates	278	*Organisations:	100
Speakers/Guests	40	Delegates - North	104
Joint Committee	17	Delegates - South	174
Total:	335		

**(See Appendix II:List of Organisations)*

Delegates attended from N Ireland, Ireland, USA, England, Scotland, Spain and Sweden.

Evaluation Report

Total Evaluations Returned: 131 (36.42%)

Practical Arrangements of Conference

	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Benefit of Conference to you	64%	33%	3%	0	0
Layout of Programme	59%	38%	3%	0	0
Content	45%	44%	11%	0	0
Venue	54%	33%	8%	5%	0
Catering	58%	18%	20%	3%	1%
Conference Pack	80%	12%	8%	0	0
Audio Visuals	64%	28%	8%	0	0
Organisation of Conference	77%	20%	3%	0	0

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

(See Appendix III for Speakers Biographies)

How would you rate the content of the following keynote presentations:-

	Very Useful	Useful	Average	Not Useful
<i>“Going Back to my Roots”</i> Dr David Mank	62%	32%	4%	2%
<i>“Celebration”</i> Monica Wilson & Christy Lynch	60%	34%	4%	2%
<i>“All Together Now”</i> Angela Kerins	19%	47%	30%	4%
<i>“The Best is Yet to Come”</i> Monica Wilson	51%	38%	11%	0%

**Workshop C
Speakers**

**“No Frontiers”
Peter Shields, John James McBride,
Maria Heffron & Frances Ferry**

**Chairperson
Notetaker**

**Peter Shields
Anne Duffy**

Number of Attendees

42 Attendees (21 Evaluations Returned)

Theme

Employment opportunities for people with Mental Health Needs – A Cross Border Partnership

Noted Outcomes: *Not available*

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
What was your overall impression of the presentation/workshop?	38%	33%	28%	1%
How well did the presentation/workshop content meet your expectations?	19%	42%	14%	25%
How well do you think you can apply the information from the presentation/workshop?	15%	25%	40%	20%

Delegate Comments:-

- It was a starter session for me.
- Very sincere presentation but I felt the surface was barely scratched! Would have appreciated more practical information and more helpful direction on availing of course and training.
- No expectations – fuelled my imagination no end!
- Room made it difficult to concentrate – too small and stuffy – packed in like sardines!
- Would like to have heard more from certain presenters – they both held my attention.
- Useful techniques for people with mental health difficulties and people in general.
- Very good – got outcomes from the trainer’s point of view.
- A little disappointed – assumed there would be examples of situations and problem solving and dealing with people with mental health difficulties – more a marketing presentation.
- No materials to ‘handout’ when requested.
- Very good to hear how programmes have developed in other areas.
- Would be interested in training to be a Trainer on such a programme, as I think that this type of skills training would be of great benefit to many of the participants of our Supported Employment scheme.

Workshop D	“The Only Way is Up”
Speakers	Teresa Hazzard & Stella Maguire
Chairperson	Louise McQuillan
Notetaker	Kieran Molloy
Number of Attendees	45 Attendees (23 Evaluations Returned)

Theme

Raising the standards. A look at implementing Quality Standards across Supported Employment.

Noted Outcomes: *Delegates asked if there was a danger that use of the quality standards could result in people with significant disabilities being excluded from SE and/or result in a lack of imagination in the SE field. Teresa pointed out that the standards are an aspiration of excellent practice and should be used as a means of improving SE service rather than as a rigid set of guidelines.*

A delegate made the point that SE agencies should not allow funders to dictate funding based on the SE quality standards as SE can only be improved by being adequately resourced. In response to a number of points from delegates, Teresa emphasized that the standards were based on working with all disability areas as well as all other disadvantaged groups and that the standards are completely voluntary. Organisations will be encouraged to self assess against the standards with a possible next step being a form of co-auditing by groups of organisations. At the close of the workshop a discussion took place on the issue of the right not to work which had been raised in the opening keynote address of the conference.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
What was your overall impression of the presentation/workshop?	33%	58%	9%	0%
How well did the presentation/workshop content meet your expectations?	39%	44%	13%	4%
How well do you think you can apply the information from the presentation/workshop?	22%	48%	21%	9%

Delegate Comments:-

- Particularly enjoyed the presentation on Quality Standards and Continuous Improvement.
- Interesting hearing about MENCAP and Cedar Foundation, but quality standards information was not particularly relevant to myself and my organisation.
- Very informative – plenty of time for questions at the end.
- Easy to understand and well explained.
- Interesting – a lot of information so may need less detailed slides.
- Very keen to implement these EU quality standards into my service in Somerset.
- Room unsuitable for the number of people present – too hot and stuffy.

- It was very welcome to see some standardisation of Supported Employment practice.
- Handouts of slides may have been useful – content of presentations very good and would be nice to reflect.
- Felt that it was difficult to put this into practice – lots of good information but need to wait until booklet is out to put it to use.

Workshop E **“We Can Work it Out”**
Speakers **Martin Howell & Mike Rossbothan**
Chairperson **Dermot Cunningham**
Notetaker **Sarah Togher**
Number of Attendees **39 Attendees (15 Evaluations Returned)**

Theme

Bringing employers together to discuss the impact of Supported Employment within businesses. The workshop highlighted issues regarding employing people with disabilities from an employer’s perspective. The workshop also highlighted examples of Good Practice in employing disabled people through the Supported Employment model. Delegates had an opportunity to discuss issues and put forward solutions.

Noted Outcomes: *Supported Employment services need to become proactive in terms of engaging employers. Employers need Supported Employment presented as a Business Opportunity. A national “Supported Employment” marketing strategy is needed incorporating, National Targeting of Employers, National Agencies and National Awareness.*

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
What was your overall impression of the presentation/workshop?	28%	58%	14%	0%
How well did the presentation/workshop content meet your expectations?	23%	30%	38%	9%
How well do you think you can apply the information from the presentation/workshop?	22%	42%	22%	14%

Delegate Comments:-

- More employers need to be invited.
- Handouts would be very useful.
- We need employers to say what they need. Not going to get employers attending in numbers – need short informative session for employers.
- Good ideas put forward from the floor, eg TV slots – not just adverts but as guests on chat shows, eg Late Late Shows etc.
- Link on to other events that employers attend, ie Job Fairs, Camber of Commerce events.
- Discussion re contacting employers – need a better focus, perhaps a working group to bring this further.
- Would like to have a copy of this presentation.
- Good workshop.
- Good to get an insight on issues faced in the Republic on an employers view on taking on an individual with a disability.
- This was a workshop - people should have been broken into groups and discussion facilitated at group level.
- More employers should have been present.
- Very informative.

**Presentation B
Speakers**

**“My Way”
Donal Kavanagh (Interviewer), Laurena Deery,
Sile McNicholl, Barry Callaghan, David McAuley,
Gabriel Murray, Rodney Harris, Stephen Hegarty
& Tracey Ann McCluskey**

Chairperson

Garth Anderson & John James McBride

Notetaker

John Heskins

Number of Attendees

72 Attendees (30 Evaluations Returned)

Theme

This was an interview with people with disabilities, representing all disabilities, outlining their experiences of getting a job through Supported Employment.

Noted Outcomes: *Each member on the panel highlighted that without the support they would never have got a job and gained confidence. Some had encountered barriers of communication, family, meeting new people and change of routine. All felt that it was important to try different choices.*

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
What was your overall impression of the presentation/workshop?	78%	22%	0%	0%
How well did the presentation/workshop content meet your expectations?	75%	18%	7%	0%
How well do you think you can apply the information from the presentation/workshop?	64%	20%	12%	4%

Delegate Comments:-

- Feedback from clients excellent – giving us the sense that we were doing a worthwhile job.
- Excellent – panel was informative.
- Very targeted on the key issues.
- Would like to have heard from someone with more complex needs in Supported Employment.
- Always good to take time out and listen. Barry should be appointed to NIUSE Committee!
- Should be more of this workshop with comments and interaction from people who are actually involved in Supported Employment currently.
- Excellent, excellent, excellent! Totally humbled.
- Nice to hear opinions from service users.

- Very informative – very personal and touching – will remember to take home more as a result of this.
- Session could have been longer as were just getting into session questions and interesting bits when time was up.
- Panel was very candid and honest with their answers to questions. To hear their perspective was very enlightening.
- The panel were excellent in detailing their experiences, especially about the barriers they face not only at work but at home also.
- Was informative in regards to hearing the other side of the storey from a disabled person's point of view – very informative.
- Excellent panel – gave a range of stages of development and access to work achievable – very worthwhile.
- Absolutely excellent!" Maybe next year the group should be invited as keynote speakers – it would have been wonderful for us all to have that experience – extremely motivational.
- Session may have been better scheduled in the morning. People would have more time to chat afterwards with the young people over lunch etc; rather than sitting in long line, might have been better in a semi-circle. But overall, very informative and moving workshop.
- Excellent comments from the service users – maybe could use more service users for the presentation.

Workshop C
Speakers Kathryn Stiles & Alan Pierce
Chairperson Clare McCaughey
Notetaker Heather Poston
Number of Attendees 47 Attendees (24 Evaluations Returned)

Theme

Good practice in Person Centred Planning. This workshop outlined Good Practice methods in delivering Person Centred Planning, ensuring that the individual plays a key role in the process.

Noted Outcomes: *Delegates enquired as to how to encourage young people to be realistic about their careers. Kathryn Stiles stressed never to knock a persons dreams but to let them find out themselves the barriers and difficulties.*

If a person does not want to go through “Person Centred Planning”, the Practitioner should go with what the person wants but not to be the sole support, you are a Facilitator.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
What was your overall impression of the presentation/workshop?	63%	33%	4%	0%
How well did the presentation/workshop content meet your expectations?	50%	37%	8%	5%
How well do you think you can apply the information from the presentation/workshop?	50%	37%	13%	0%

Delegate Comments:-

- Person Centred Planning is excellent tool but focuses on what they can do and work from there.
- Excellent – would love to do some further training with the two presenters.
- Very interesting and interactive – helps give a really understanding of what person centred planning is all about.
- Because I have been a Job Coach for 3+ years, I felt it was very basic. If I was starting off, maybe I could have benefited more.
- Excellent presentation – showed different angles to take to deliver what you already are doing – refreshing.
- More time required – especially as it was a workshop and people needed to discuss and try out techniques discussed.
- Relevant for my work.
- Very practical and gave cause for thought.
- Very informative and well delivered workshop, giving good ideas for a more person centred approach to career guidance with participants.

- It was a bit confusing as we were asked to do exercises and then did not have time to finish them - maybe more time required or else just provide exercise sheets as examples to take away. However, speakers and content both interesting.
- Very informative and picked up some very useful information.
- Good speakers.

Workshop E**Speakers****“Don’t Stop me Now”****Martin O’ Kane, Dianne Thomas, Gerard Holmes, Danny Cahill & Stewart Lawler****Chairperson****Alan McClure****Notetaker****Bernadette McCormick****Number of Attendees****19 Attendees (13 Evaluations Returned)****Theme**

Issues on Supported Employment for people with sensory impairment. The Workshop highlighted key issues affecting people with sensory impairments i.e. barriers to accessing employment. This was a joint workshop between Sensory Impairment Organisations both North and South, and gave an overview of the key issues and Good Practice.

Noted Outcomes: *It was concluded that assistive technology, support and training to encourage people with disabilities to ‘help themselves’ is vital. Also this should be reflected in a person centred approach.*

Information on disabilities should be sent to employers prior to applications and Awareness training must be delivered to employers to cover recruitment procedures and also market the skills (positives) of employing someone with a disability.

In the south there is much more financial benefit to an employer than in the north.

The voluntary sector needs to engage to a greater extent with employers and to ‘market’ their services and Best practice stories from employer to employer should be shared.

Voluntary sector and people with disabilities should use DDA and Human Rights legislation to support their skills - sometimes an applicant with a disability is reluctant to include information on their disability as it might jeopardise their opportunity.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
What was your overall impression of the presentation/workshop?	46%	46%	0%	8%
How well did the presentation/workshop content meet your expectations?	46%	30%	24%	0%
How well do you think you can apply the information from the presentation/workshop?	25%	50%	16%	9%

Delegate Comments:-

- Two gentlemen with disability did an excellent job with real examples and real people – the message was very strong, forcing me to examine my own practice.
- Would have liked the presentation split into two,
- Room too small to facilitate group work – not enough time.
- Enjoyed listening to the views of people who have sensory impairments.
- Workshop ran over by 20 mins due to excellent content.
- Useful information and good speakers.
- Room was very cramped and hot – it was difficult to hear speakers.

- Some interesting research in this project.
- Excellent speaker – clear and concise.
- Good opportunity for questions – very knowledgeable man.
- Considerable amount of work to do now with our policy makers/ managers on best practice.
- Content severely hit by time – this is a massive area so would need at least a day.
- Very, very good – excellent presentation – questioned a lot of presumptions.
- Very good – thought provoking and good reminder of what Supported Employment services should practice.
- Very beneficial – feel I can take the information back to my own organisation and address/improve certain areas.
- Very good and useful – enjoyed both of David's talks.

General Comments

Overall, what do you feel went well at the Conference?

- Workshops/presentations all good length of time for each one.
- Good workshop variety.
- Conference had great energy and inspirational to working in the Supported Employment field.
- Good insights into the culture of the organization.
- Good balance between social field and learning field.
- Excellent opportunity to network and made me realize that as I work along in a rural community, that I am part of a bigger team.
- Time-keeping and good directions for each presentation made sure everything flowed well.
- Facilities and catering excellent.
- Complete package was excellent.
- The diversity of the parallel sessions.
- Excellent co-operation between the two organizations.
- Smooth running of all presentations – content was excellent.
- Very interesting speakers – knowledgeable, motivated and articulated.
- North/South collaboration – very commendable.
- Very informative, excellent for relationship building.
- Great motivation for new staff.
- Very professional.
- First day being a full day was excellent.
- Reminded of important factors association with service provision, ie people with disabilities.
- Good entertainment provided.
- Great attendance, good organisation and very meaningful.
- Congratulations – excellent conference and well run.
- The keynote speakers useful and interesting to hear the changes through the years and the future to come.
- Real sense of celebration.
- Great video.
- Mixture of ‘old’ and ‘new’ people in the field.
- Yes, very informative and thought provoking.
- Very well planned and organised in all aspects – well done to those involved – thank you.
- Impressed by the level of attendance – so many people came from so far across the country and to see the amount of work going on and the common enthusiasm and motivation from those attending.
- I got my choice of sessions so very pleased.
- Majority of speakers were very passionate about their subject – encouraging to us new people!
- Conference great – 10th Birthday party great.

What could have been improved at the Conference?

- More handouts from each presentation/workshop.
- Possibly more variety on workshops – interactive group activity if at all possible.
- I would enjoy smaller group conferences to discuss scenarios related to Supported Employment and more information sharing.
- Timing – start on time on Friday morning, ie 9.30 am sharp – why should we wait for others to appear?
- Really enjoyed all aspects of the conference – thank you and “Happy Birthday”.
- More details on the actual Supported Employment model and perhaps pre-employment training.
- Needed handouts after each presentation.
- More input from Service Users involved in Supported Employment.
- Audio visual – podium in main hall acted as an obstruction for the powerpoint presentation.
- A more geographical/accessible venue.
- Attendance on the Friday morning.
- Room 133 too small for the numbers attending.
- Would like to have heard more about Republic of Ireland Supported Employment strategy and how this is going.
- Need more employers present.
- Involvement from Chamber of Commerce would be good.
- Presentations from employees also should have been included.
- More interaction from the floor, ie the real story!
- Content change – everything too rosy!
- Question and answer session would be good.
- Description of content of parallel sessions at time of application could have been clearer.
- Recommend putting handouts for parallel session on website.
- Tea/coffee breaks hectic – not enough space.
- Hotel too hot and stuffy for conference.
- Location – could be more central in the country.
- Maybe need to look at further developing – some workshops for people who have attended previous conferences, tends to be more for new people.
- Question time following the keynote speakers would have been useful – thought it was unfinished not to have this
- Maybe more parents who have disabilities could have been encouraged to attend, but I found the conference excellent.
- Scones on arrival on the Thursday morning for everyone who travelled!

Further Comments:-

- Thank you to everyone who organized such a professional high quality event.
- Thank you for a great conference – well organized and map of the hotel was very helpful.
- Very well structured and gained a lot from it.
- The difficulty in having a joint conference is that only half of the information is relevant to our respective areas – however, it is good to compare contrast and learn from each other.
- Would be good if FAS presented.
- Would be helpful to include names of presenters of parallel workshops in the conference brochure to aid delegates in making informed choice re which session they will attend.
- Surprised not to see more input from people with disabilities and from employers.
- A number of workshops I would like to have attended but there was not enough hours in the days.
- Speakers were very good and motivating.
- Conference was extremely well organised and orchestrated – thanks to the organisers – very professional.
- Very enjoyable evening and the hotel was a good venue – very accessible location and easy to find.
- Need more service user and family involvement – it is about them after all!
- Disappointed that I did not receive my choice of parallel sessions.
- Parallel sessions should have included more workshops.
- Given the lack of funds available, it would have been nice to acknowledge the difficulties and any news in the pipeline would have been useful.
- Long queues in small area for tea/coffee breaks.
- Came away with valuable information that I can use in future to improve the individuals experience and goals in regards to Supported Employment.
- I thoroughly enjoyed not only the presentations and workshops, but the time spent with people from other organisations throughout Ireland.
- It was good to celebrate success. There are so many negatives and little support for Job Coaches on a daily basis so meeting other Job Coaching with similar problems was very helpful.

CONCLUSION

Overall the Joint two-day conference was a great success. Feedback from the Evaluations was very positive from all aspects of the conference from organising the conference, conference programme and content, speakers and practical issues (location, accessibility, catering, entertainment, etc).

The Evaluations also noted the collaboration between the Irish Association of Supported Employment and the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment, which should be maximized, and similar joint activities planned.

One of the key benefits and outcomes from the conference was Networking. The conference provided Supported Employment Practitioners and Managers the opportunity to meet, discuss and exchange information with Practitioners from other organisations as well as from North and South of Ireland and even wider a field.

The Evaluations also highlighted a number of points which can be used constructively for improvement for future conferences ie:

- Pitch/level of the conference (new or old, practitioners and managers etc)
- More information should be provided on Conference Brochures so that delegates can make a more informed choice when selecting workshops.
- More time for discussions at workshops
- An opportunity to ask Key Note Speakers questions
- More variety of workshops and an opportunity to run the same workshop twice
- Handouts given out in workshops.

These points should be taken on board when planning any future conferences.