



**An Investigation into the Department of Social Protection's
current Activation Service and Supports in its Edenderry
Intreo office for assisting clients to return to paid
employment including an examination of the perception of
Government Policy in relation to a pathway to work.**

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Abstract

The Activation service which is currently being delivered by the Department of Social Protection in Ireland is a tool for the delivery of labour market government policy in Ireland.

Academic researchers are now starting to focus on the delivery of this service. However, because the Activation service is a relatively new concept in Ireland, research has been limited and the effectiveness and value to clients of the Department of Social Protection remain insufficiently explored. This dissertation examines customer service research which has recently concluded regarding the Activation service which is being delivered by the Intreo Office in the Department of Social Protection in Edenderry, Co Offaly.

This Intreo office paradigm was setup in December 2015 and the researcher unveils various findings regarding the current Activation supports that clients are receiving to assist them to return to paid employment. In addition, the survey has been extended to include other clients who provide training supports. The researcher also delivers findings regarding feedback from clients in relation to Government policy regarding the pathway to work programme.

The research methodology undertaken with the clients of the Activation service is underpinned by a mixed method research design which entailed a multiple choice survey and an opportunity to give an open response regarding the pathway to work programme. However, in-depth interviews with clients who provide training supports are more focused on a qualitative data response so that any referral gaps can be identified. The researcher also delivers findings regarding the expectations of clients regarding competencies of a Case Officer who delivers the Activation service to the clients. The outcome of the researchers endeavour is to present to policy makers with recommended improvements for the delivery of the Activation service and act as a reference point for future research which will be of assistance to academics and practitioners.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The researcher of this document will answer the question whether the Department of Social Protection's current Activation Service and Supports assists clients of the Edenderry Intreo office in attempting to return to paid employment and also examine how clients perceive Government Policy in relation to a pathway to work.

Background

In 2012, the Department of Social Protection created a new Intreo model and rolled it out nationwide to provide income support for clients and also provide Activation services to help clients to position themselves to be as job ready as possible to take up employment. The Intreo Model is described as a one stop shop (Boland et al, 2015) which delivers services to clients on an individual basis regarding employment, training and welfare entitlements.

On the 1st July 2013, in conjunction with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the Irish Government implemented a collective agreement called the Haddington Road Agreement (Haddington Road Agreement, Website). It was generally accepted that it was very important that the Government bridged the gap between overall expenditure and revenue received. The agreement created a vision to save 1 billion euro over a 3 year period pertaining to costs associated with Public Service Pay and Pensions. Also, it was recognised and agreed that improvements in productivity and quality of service would need to be achieved for clients of Government Departments.

Enshrined within the Haddington Road agreement was reform in relation to redeployment and workforce restructuring in the public service. As a consequence during 2012, a total of 300 staff and functions from the Community Welfare Service of the Health Service Executive and staff from the National Training and Employment Authority FAS were redeployed into the Department of Social Protection. Work functions were re-assigned to Higher Executive Officers that formed the Case Officer role which now provides Activation services throughout Ireland. In July 2015, the Department of Social protection commenced a pilot Activation service in the Intreo centre in Edenderry, Co Offaly. After the refurbishment of the departments building in Edenderry a full rollout of Activation services commenced in December 2015. There is now a dedicated Case Officer carrying out a full range of Activation services to clients in Edenderry.

Role of the Case Officer

The function of a Case Officer in the Activation service is to provide advice to clients regarding training and assist the client to have the ability to take up employment when the opportunity arises. Clients who are on a social welfare payment and are fit from a medical perspective to take up employment are referred to a group information session where the Case Officer gives a presentation explaining a general overview of the Department of Social Protections services which eligible clients can avail of. *(The researcher explains these services in detail later in this document.)*

Attendances at the group information session are mandatory and following on from the initial group meeting each client is issued with a 1-1 meeting with the Case Officer. At this meeting the Case Officer and client agree an initial progression plan containing training and skills objectives that need to be achieved. The Case Officer arranges regular activation review meetings with the clients to ensure that the objectives of these progression plans are being achieved. Failure to engage with meetings with the Case Officer and items agreed within the progression plan can result in the client having their social welfare payment reduced or if necessary cut off altogether.

Competency attributes and culture change for a Case Officer

The Case Officer meets with many clients on a daily basis and these clients have varied and different backgrounds. Therefore, it is very important that the Case Officer has the necessary skills to be able to deal with the client in an efficient and effective manner. The researcher will explore in this document some necessary competencies that a Case Officer must have to carry out the role. Also, with the introduction of the Activation service the researcher will discuss the complete culture change that has occurred not only for the client but also for the Department of Social Protection.

Justification for research

Senior Management in the Department of Social Protection recognise that it is very important to deliver a quality Activation service that puts the client first and complies with the Department of Social Protections current statement of strategy.

The Department of Social Protections Statement of Strategy 2016-2019 has the following objectives:

- 1. Put the client at the centre of its services and policies.*
- 2. Drive cost efficiency and effectiveness.*
- 3. Develop Staff, Structures and Processes.*

(Social Protection Strategy Statement, Website, 2017)

With the inception of the Activation service in Edenderry, the researcher and senior management in the Department of Social Protection felt that it would be worthwhile to carry out a Customer Survey in order to identify if there were any gaps that need to be identified regarding the provision of a quality customer service. If these gaps were not identified it would lead to problems or issues not being addressed.

Obtaining the information from the survey is worthy of study and would assist in making informed decisions to improve the delivery of service. The idea of a survey is supported by (Gonzalez et al, 2015) who agree that customer satisfaction tools are very essential in order to hear what a customer has to say. The researcher obtained written approval for the survey to be carried out as early as possible in 2017 with current Department of Social Protection Intreo activation clients in Edenderry, Co Offaly.

Currently there is minimal literature that exists regarding the provision of a customer's perceived view of the efficient and effective Activation service provided in the Intreo Office in Edenderry. However, using the literature that is available, it will assist the researcher to explain important foundations regarding alternative activation measures, culture and leadership traits required by a Case Officer.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review will describe key leadership styles supported by academic theory that is required by Case Officer's to deliver an Activation service to clients of the Department of Social Protection. A background to the Activation Service and details of the services that it provides will be explored. The review will also take into account the culture change that has occurred in Ireland due to the provision of the Activation service which is a recent concept for the delivery of labour market supports.

A background review of four types of Stakeholders whom the Activation service refer clients to for training purposes will be considered with appropriate academic theory where applicable. Other Activation services provided in Ireland, the UK and Australia will be acknowledged along with similar research carried out by the Equality Tribunal.

(Bearman, 2016) highlights that a Literature Review is the most influential type of academic work. This view will support what the researcher hopes to achieve with the data obtained from the customer survey.

Leadership traits of a Case Officer

Leadership trait theory evolved in the 1930s and the term trait is described by (Yukl, 2006) as a combination of individual attributes that include aspects of personality, motives, needs, values and temperament.

A Case Officer in the course of their duties works with clients who are at a vulnerable time of their lives because they are unemployed or if they are young and just finished school are at a stage where they do not know what to do regarding a career direction. Every client's story is different and it is important that the Case Officer has proper leadership traits to advice clients. As part of this research, it will highlight three traits: Relationship, Influence and Collaborative Leadership supported by academic theory. The researcher believes that they are essential for a Case Officer to have in order to efficiently and effectively carryout their duties.

Relationship

Relationship theory can be defined as a process of people coming together to accomplish change which will benefit the common good. Leaders can transform followers with their inspirational and charismatic personality.

“Charismatic leadership is assumed to have three core components: envisioning, empathy, and empowerment.” (Choi, 2006, pp 24-43)

A Case Officer can transform the follower if they have an inspiration and charismatic personality. The researcher agrees with Choi's assumption because a Case Officer would have to have all three charismatic components when dealing with a client. A Case officer would have to be able to assist the client helping them to envision what they want to do in the future, have empathy regarding their past and current situation and most certainly be an inspiration to empower the client. The common good served will be a placement of the client in a job which will result in the live register being reduced and provide savings to the Irish exchequer.

Influence

Influence also called transaction theory evolved in the 1970's and can be defined as transactions that are made between the leader and follower which is mutually positive. The theory is dependent on the leader having the resources to reward or punish the follower when key tasks are assigned. (Haslam et al, 2011) states that effective leadership requires influencing others so that they are motivated to contribute to a team's goal.

Although this theory is more focused to a working environment, it is well suited to the influence that a Case Officer must have on a client. A Case Officer does have the resources to sanction a client if they do not carry out the tasks agreed as part of a progression plan by imposing penalty rates to their social welfare payment. However, a Case Officer can also influence a client so that they are motivated to engage and take up employment.

Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership (O'Brien et al, 2013) is described as a type of leadership which can build strategic relationships using honest and open dialogue that can lead to a deeper understanding and significant results and efforts across agencies and sectors. The researcher has identified that this theory supports the collaborative leadership approach that the Case Officer in Edenderry has used to bring all the stakeholders together in order to provide a joined thinking approach for the delivery of training services in Edenderry.

Pathway to Work

As part of the process of progressing towards economic recovery, Ireland exited from the EU/IMF/ECB programme in 2014. A key strategy that the Irish Government introduced to assist the economic recovery was the introduction of the Activation service in 2012.

The Irish Government launched its first Pathways to Work strategy in 2012. This four year strategy was designed to reduce the numbers of people who were unemployed due to the recent downturn in the economy. It was from this strategy that the Department of Social Protection Activation service was founded. The strategy focused upon making as many new jobs and vacancies that arose to be filled from people unemployed on the live register in the Department of Social Protection. The strategy continues to be under review and the latest Pathways to Work Programme 2016 to 2020 changes its focus to not just providing activation measures during a time of recession but rather upon providing the services in a time of recovery and growth. Contained within the current strategy are two main objectives.

- a. *“To continue and consolidate the progress made to date with an initial focus on working with unemployed jobseekers, in particular people who are long term unemployed.*
- b. *To extend the approach of activation to other people who, although not classified as unemployed jobseekers, have the potential and the desire to play a more active role in the labour force. “*

(Pathways to Work, 2016, P4)

The Irish Government seeks to ensure that Ireland’s workforce are not just employed but also equipped to respond in a flexible manner as the economy continues to grow.

Success of the provision of the Activation service

The Activation service has been essential to the reduction of numbers of unemployed people in Ireland. This is demonstrated by the Central Statistics Office (Figure 1) who state that the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in June 2017 is 6.3% which came down from 8.3% in June 2016 and from a staggering 14% which existed in 2013.

Figure 1. (CSO, Website, 2017)





Figure 2. (Trading Economics, Website, 2017)

The rapid reduction in the amount of people unemployed in Ireland (Figure 2) clearly prove that the government decision to introduce the Activation service is a success and it is important that the service is continually improved upon.

Functions of the Activation Service

The Activation service provides clients of the Department of Social Protection with support in relation to training and career advice for unemployed persons in receipt of a social welfare payment. Mandatory engagement with the service only applies to clients who are in receipt of a jobseekers allowance or benefit payment. A person who is receipt of these financial supports has indicated to the Department that they are looking for employment. However, clients on other types of payments e.g. Disability allowance can also make an appointment with a Case Officer to receive assistance using a walk in help clinic.

For clients who have to engage on a mandatory basis, the first contact is in the form of a group information session (GIS). At this meeting the clients are informed of the services that are provided and assigned to a Case Officer. Following on from the group information session, the client will meet with the Case Officer on an individual basis where a progression plan is agreed between the client and the case officer. The progression plan contains specific sets of goals and tasks which include training to assist the client to be job ready. Attendance at meetings and items agreed in the progression plan has to be adhered to by the client or it may affect their payment

The following (Figure 3) is an overall caption of the key elements of the model of the role of the Activation service.

The columns with High, Medium, and Low indicate the clients PEX rating for gaining employment. This rating indicates whether the client has a High, Medium or Low possibility of gaining employment depending on their educational attainment or work experience to date.

Key Elements of the Model	High	Medium	Low
When does first intervention occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate Group Engagement Session (within 2 weeks of claim awarded) • Different to Low and Medium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate Group Engagement Session (within 2 weeks of claim awarded) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate Group Engagement Session (within 2 weeks of claim awarded)
When does second intervention occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 months - GSW and other Activation Review • 6 months - 1:2:1 session with Case Officer to agree PPP (if still on LR) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately after GE - 1:2:1 session with Case Officer to agree PPP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately after GE- 1:2:1 session with Case Officer to agree PPP
Intervention Follow Ups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activation Review Meetings • Systematic follow-up based on Personal Progression Plan agreed steps – phone calls, emails, texts, etc. Activation Reviews criteria: still on LR and not participating on a programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activation review meeting - every 3 months after first 1-to-1 (6 months) • Activation Review - as required according to PPP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activation review meeting - every 3 months after first 1-to-1 • Activation Review - as required according to PPP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activation review meeting - every 2 months after first 1-to-1 • Activation Review - as required according to PPP
Information pack supplied at decision stage			
Interview immediately following GE Session			
Self service options available			

Figure 3. (Department of Social Protection Intranet, 2017)

Services and Supports for a client

In Table 1 below, it displays a list of the main services and supports that a client can avail of from the Activation service. All these services are referred through a Case Officer but advice is also given regarding broader services provided by the Department of Social Protection.

Work Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Employment.• Tús – Community Work Placement Scheme.
Internships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Steps – Youth Development Internship.• Eures.
Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Back to Education Allowance.• Part-Time Education Option.• Education Training and Development.• Training Support Grant.
Self-Employment Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Back to Work and Short Term Allowance Scheme.• Enterprise Support Grant.

Table 1 (Created by Researcher, 2017)

Work Programmes

Community Employment

Community Employment schemes are designed to assist long term unemployed people to get back to work by offering part-time jobs within a local community. With the new skills obtained during the scheme, people are encouraged to seek permanent employment. Generally a person must be at least 21 years of age and a minimum of 12 months on a social welfare payment in order to qualify to apply for the scheme. However, there are other eligibility criteria for members of the Travelling Community, people in receipt of One-Parent Family payment, Authenticated Refugees, Ex-Offenders and people with Disabilities if they are over 18 years of age.

Tús Programmes

Similar to the Community Employment scheme, The Tús initiative is a community work placement scheme which provides short term working opportunities for unemployed people. The work opportunities of this scheme are provided by community and voluntary organisations in urban and rural areas. Tús opportunities for the Edenderry area are referred by the Department of Social Protection and are managed by Offaly Local Development Company. To be eligible to apply for the Tús initiative a person must be unemployed for at least 12 months and in receipt of a jobseeker payment from the Department of Social Protection.

Internships

First Steps – Youth Development Internship.

As part of a European Union Council recommendation, member states are to introduce a development internship for young people who are under the age of 25. This policy follows from a European Youth Guarantee as discussed by member states which must ensure that all young people receive opportunities regarding training, apprenticeship, continued education or employment (Escudero et al, 2015) within a four month period of leaving education or becoming unemployed.

The European Youth Guarantee is also backed up by the sustainable development goals of the United Nations (Raikes et al, 2017) to increase the number of youth and adults to obtain vocational skills, technical skills and entrepreneurial skills so that they can acquire decent jobs. The first steps program offers a young person between the age of 18 and 24 whom have very little work experience the opportunity to acquire basic work and social skills while working in a real working environment. While participating on the program with a host organisation a participant will be appointed a mentor to oversee agreed activities and skills that should be obtained during the programme.

The Case Officer in the Department of Social Protection will monitor progress that is achieved during the course of the programme. The financial reward for the participant is a top-up of 52.50 euro in their social welfare payment. The length of time for the programme is a minimum of three months which can be extended up to 6 and 9 months. Candidates for the programme are carefully selected. They must have completed preparation courses and are ready for transition to supported placement but are still not at a stage where they are ready to take up full time employment. The participant will originally start on a four day working week which can be graduated to a full working week. Placement for the programme are not advertised in the public domain but instead suitable candidates are selected by staff in the Department of Social Protection and referred for an interview with the host organisation. A minimum of three candidates are put forward for interview for each placement identified.

Eures

Eures is a European Union job mobility scheme which assists people to find work and also employers to find workers in Europe. Supported by the Activation service people between the age of 18 and 35 years of age can receive information regarding job searching and funding outside of their own country. As part of the Eures project, jobseekers can receive support for taking up employment across the European Union which also includes Norway and Iceland. The types of supports include; financial support to assist the jobseeker travel for an interview, relocation to the other country and assistance regarding recognition of their qualifications. Support for language training is also provided if required and an induction programme to assist with living and working abroad is provided. Before leaving Ireland to take up their new job a person must apply for financial support because an application will not be accepted if the person has already moved to the new country to take up work.

Education and Training

Back to Education Allowance

A person that is unemployed, has a disability or parenting alone or is in receipt of other type of payments from the Department of Social Protection may avail of participating in a second or third level education course by applying for the Back to Education Allowance scheme.

All courses applied for under the Back to Education Allowance scheme must lead to an accredited course recognised by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The QQI is an independent state agency in Ireland which promotes quality and accountability for the provision of education and training. They promote, develop and maintain the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (Figure 4) which has a 10 level framework for recognising and awarding qualifications in Ireland.

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS

Údarás Náisiúnta
Cáilíochtaí na hÉireann
National Qualifications
Authority of Ireland

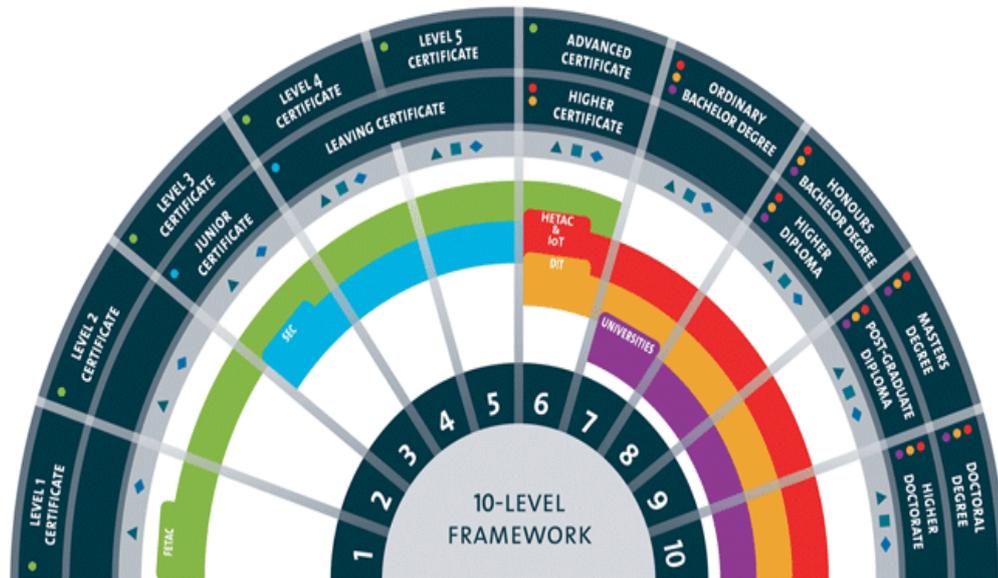


Figure 4. (National Framework of Qualifications, Website, 2017)

The Case Officer in the Activation service will provide advice and make recommendations regarding the suitability of a jobseeker to be awarded the Back to Education Allowance for courses on the framework above level 5 up to a maximum of level 8 in certain cases. An award of the Back to Education Allowance can be made for any discipline leading to a Profession Masters in Education or where a person has been accepted to a college to do a Master's course based on relevant life experience.

It is essential that a course whether it is at second or third level, is a progression course for the jobseeker. Only in certain cases can a progression rule be relaxed where they can do another course at the same level. E.g. if the area of study for the jobseeker is no longer a growing career path for them to be able to obtain employment. Participation on the Back to Education Allowance scheme must be a fulltime education day course.

Part-Time Education Option

The Part-Time Education Option is available for a client who is fit to take up employment and in receipt of a social welfare payment. The client can participate in part-time day or evening education and training. A client must be still actively seeking employment while participating on the part-time course. Sometimes the course that the client is participating in will increase their prospects of gaining employment. The Department of Social Protection will expect the client to accept a job-offer if the opportunity arises.

Education Training and Development

Clients who meet with a Case Officer through the Activation service will in most cases be referred to a third party training provider (Stakeholder) in order to improve their education and training development as part of their progression plan.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are a vital instrument for the continued success of the Activation service. Stakeholders described in this document by the researcher refer to organisations that provide training to clients after a referral by a Case Officer.

The following is a description of four stakeholders who deliver their services to clients who attend the activation service in Edenderry and of which a qualitative customer service survey has been carried out by the researcher as part of this dissertation.

Offaly Local Development Company

Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC) delivers a variety of programmes and supports for individuals, communities and businesses throughout Co. Offaly.

One of the key programmes that is delivered in Edenderry for clients of the Activation service is called “*The Way Forward Programme*”. This programme is a short two week programme which assists clients who are unemployed and would like to know what their options are and how to make the most of them. The focus of the programme is to assist a client to get access to:

- Career Information. Identifying jobs, courses, incentives and schemes
- Career Coaching. Identify client’s strengths, skills, interests and options for the future
- Effective job searching
- Further education. Identify new opportunities for educational, training and development
- Information Technology. Access to basic I.T. skills
- Life Skills. Managing Time, Stress and goals

The type of client that a Case Officer in Edenderry refers to ‘the Way Forward Programme’ is usually clients who have no idea or motivation to reach better goals. The Life Skills element of this course helps the client to have a better understanding of what they want to do and where they want to be when they come back to their review meeting with a Case Officer.

The Life Skills element supports (Jarosz,2016) view that Life Coaching is recognised as a behavioural and motivational change approach that assists people to reach better goals which in turn leads to enhanced well-being.

Solas

Solas is the Further Education and Skills Authority which operates under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills. It co-ordinates and provides funding for a vast range of training and education programmes throughout Ireland. It was established to provide strategic direction for the further education and training sector in Ireland and the delivery of this training is the responsibility of 16 Education and Training Boards.

Education and Training Boards

Education and Training Boards (previously called Vocational Education Committees) also provide training for people who are unemployed.

“ETBI is the national representative association for Ireland, sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETBs). ETBs and ETBI were established 1 July 2013 and were formerly known as VECs and IVEA respective”. (ETBi Website, 2017)

They provide FETAC accredited courses which can act as a gateway for a person to progress to third level education. They also provide courses in relation to Carers, Health and Beauty and also provide specialised courses which help people who have literacy and numeracy difficulties.

Solas co-ordinates and plans a vast arrangement of high quality training and further education programmes for both jobseekers and learners. Their focus is to ensure that every learner has the best possible access to Further Education and Training that is designed and fit for purpose in Ireland. Solas works with a network of stakeholders that include Employers, Education and Training Boards, Government Departments, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, the Higher Education Authority, Institutes of Technology and other state bodies and representative organisations. They have a common focus which is similar to the Department of Social protection by aiming to create an integrated pathway to work through Further Education Training.

Solas Training Centers are located throughout Ireland and provide in house training and are supported by Education Training Boards. Their aim is to provide Further Education and training to all citizens to develop their skills.

“We also aim to ensure that Further Education and Training is inclusive and recognizes that all citizens have the potential to develop their skill sets if afforded the opportunity and support to do so.” (Solas, Website, 2017)

Solas oversee apprenticeship schemes and referral can be made through the Activation service. Solas have a vision (Solas, 2014a) that Ireland should have a further education system which is world class and is highly valued by learners and employers. Their vision supports a higher integration of people who have barriers of participation such as persons with a disability, long term unemployed, and priority clients identified by the Department of Social Protection and that they should stay engaged and complete their qualifications, transition into employment or progress to appropriate further or higher education.

National Construction Training Centre

A major advantage for the Activation service in Edenderry is that it is very close to the National Construction Training Centre. The centre is based in Mount Lucas, Co Offaly which is very close to Edenderry, Co Offaly. This centre is managed by the Laois, Offaly Education and Training Board. Its primary focus is to provide training in the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS). The CSCS provides registration, assessment and certification for non-craft workers in the construction sector. Typical types of courses provided include, Safepass, Dumper and Digger tickets and Formwork courses which provide City and Guilds certification. These courses help to satisfy the requirements of the Irish Construction Industry Federation to ensure that clients are job ready to take up current and future employment opportunities in the construction sector. Clients are referred to these courses by a Case Officer in the Department of Social Protection.

Acorn Midlands Education and Training Service (AMYETS)

The Acorn Midlands Education and Training Service (AMYETS) in Edenderry, Co Offaly provides accredited practice led and experiential training to people between the age of 18 and 25 who have experienced negative learning in the past. The training that is provided is learner centred which focuses upon the learner not just receiving accreditation but also gain real time work experience in their chosen training area. Facilities are provided in Edenderry which accommodates small group work situations, the development of individual learning plans, literacy and numeracy supports and vocational planning supports to help client's development to progress to further training in their chosen field.

The Acorn project in Edenderry also provides a Youth Café where young people can gather together to take part in a wide range of fun related activities. The café is mainly run by young people to cater for young people with the aim of helping to develop quality relationships between young people, adults and their peers.

In 2015, when the Department of Social Protection commenced the Intreo service in Edenderry it worked with the Acorn project in Edenderry to provide training options for young people who were called into the Activation service. Following discussions, in 2016 the Acorn project commenced an accredited Beauty Therapy course in Edenderry which is a two year programme. Clients of the Activation service received financial assistance under the Department of Social Protections training support grant to partake on the course. The first graduation of qualified beauty therapists will take place in 2018.

Employability

Employability is a service which provides supports for people with a disability to get employment and provides follow on support while they are in employment. Referrals to employability are made through a Case Officer of the Department of Social Protection Activation service. Employers can avail of the Wage Subsidy scheme to employ a person with a disability. Approvals and monitoring of this scheme is carried out by the Case Officer.

The Wage Subsidy scheme provides financial incentives for businesses to employ persons who have a disability. The term disability is defined as:

“disability”, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.” (Disability Act, 2005, P6)

A person with a disability may with appropriate supports such as assistive technology be capable of carrying out full time work which is of the same standard as a person who does not have a disability. However, sometimes the nature of a disability can reduce an employee’s productivity. If the productivity of an employee is deemed as 20% or more loss of productivity to the employer the Wage Subsidy Scheme provides grants assistance to make up the shortfall.

Training Support Grant

Every client that attends at an Activation meeting or through the walk in clinic with a Case Officer has different Education and Training requirements. While the majority of their needs can be met by referral to the various local stakeholders, from time to time there may be clients who have very specific training requirements which the stakeholders do not provide or the client needs to obtain quickly because they have a job offer. When a client is referred to a stakeholder they are usually put on a waitlist for a particular course and it may take some time for the client to be called to commence the course. Examples of the type of specific training are tickets for the Construction Sector, Carers course, Driving courses etc. In order to meet the immediate training requirement for a client, a Case Officer can offer the client access to the Training Support Grant. This grant allows the client to arrange their own training with a provider. A client can avail of funding up to maximum of 500 euro in a 12 month calendar period if they are on a social welfare payment for a minimum of 3 months. The training course must be an accredited training course which is recognised by Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

Jobseekers Allowance Payment

A Jobseekers allowance payment is a means-tested payment carried out by the Department of Social Protection and if awarded to the client is paid on a weekly basis. A jobseekers allowance payment will be determined based upon the overall income coming into a client's household and any other income assets or savings that they may have. A client can make an individual claim on their own or they can claim for their spouse (Which is classified as an adult dependant) and any children they have. Clients would normally make an application for this payment if they are not entitled to a Jobseekers benefit payment.

Jobseekers Benefit Payment

A Jobseekers benefit payment is a non means-tested payment which is paid on a weekly basis to a client by the Department of Social Protection if they have just finished employment. In order to qualify for the payment a client must have paid appropriate social insurance (known as PRSI) contributions while in employment. If a client has the maximum amount of social insurance contribution accrued they will qualify to receive the payment for a maximum of a nine month period. After this period if the client is not in employment they may apply for the jobseekers allowance payment.

Self-Employment Supports

Back to Work and Short Term Allowance Scheme

Many clients that attend with a Case Officer have an entrepreneurial mind-set and are very enthusiastic to start up their own business. These types of clients can sometimes identify golden opportunities in a start-up business which can sometimes have more value than the actual cost of the required resources to start the business (Sull, 2010). The Department of Social Protection is very supportive to assist clients to start up their own business because it can provide not only the benefit of moving the client on from social welfare but also the positive impacts it can have for the Irish economic environment. If a business is successful it can expand to employing other unemployed people and potentially removing them from the social welfare system. Obviously if people are in employment, they will have more disposable income which will lead to increased revenue for the state.

There are two schemes which are available for a client to avail through the Department of Social Protection to start their own business. These schemes are called the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) and the Short Term Enterprise Allowance (STEA).

Shane (2009) has challenged self-employment policies that provide incentives for starting low growth companies and feels these policies should be eliminated because they attract the worst type of entrepreneurs. The researcher of this document disputes (Shane, 2009) findings and would agree with (Dvoulety et al, 2016) who state that self-employment policies such as the Back to Work and Short Term Enterprise allowance schemes fit well into labour market policies

Back to work enterprise allowance scheme

The back to work enterprise allowance scheme is aimed at more long term jobseekers in receipt of jobseekers allowance. A client who wishes to start their own business can continue to receive a social welfare payment for a two year period after the business has started. The business must be a new business innovation and cannot be an existing business. If recommended for approval by a Case Officer, the client will receive 100% of their existing jobseekers allowance during the first year and 75% in the second year. It is generally expected that if a business idea is to be successful it will become clear after the two year period.

The receipt of the social welfare payment gives certainty to the client that they have an income particularly at the early stages of the business venture when they are trying to get established. A client must participate on a business course or engage with an external facilitator recommended by the Case Officer before their application for the back to work enterprise allowance scheme can be considered. As part of the business course or engagement with the external facilitator the client will create a business plan.

After the two year period if the business is the type of business that is dependent on seasonal factors to survive they can apply for a social welfare payment called Jobseekers allowance self-employed. This payment is paid to client after an examination of the client's business accounts by the Department of Social Protection to examine if the client had received an appropriate income. If there is a shortfall in income from the business due to seasonal factors, the client will receive a top up payment. If the business fails, the client can re-apply for Jobseekers allowance payment but will not be able to apply for the back to work enterprise allowance scheme again for a minimum of five years.

Short term enterprise allowance scheme

The short term enterprise allowance scheme allows a client who is receipt of a Jobseekers Benefit payment to start their business venture and continue to receive their payment until it expires which in most cases is a nine month period. The short term enterprise allowance scheme is most suitable for clients who have just finished employment and are immediately ready to start up their business venture. Similar to conditions attached to the back to work enterprise allowance scheme, a client must participate on a business course or engage with an external facilitator recommended by the Case Officer before their application for the short term enterprise allowance scheme can be considered. Generally in most cases, clients will already have obtained business training and have created a business plan.

Enterprise Support Grant

In addition to the income supports received from the back to work and short term enterprise allowance schemes, a client can get some financial supports to assist with costs in operating their business. A grant of €2,500 is available if a client is successful in their application for the back to work enterprise allowance scheme. Normally a Case Officer will split this payment over the two year duration of the scheme. The enterprise support grant paid to clients who are approved under the short term enterprise allowance scheme is paid at a maximum of €937 for a client who is in payment for a nine month period. However, it is determined on a pro-rata basis depending on the date the client started their business and how long they have left to receive the jobseekers allowance entitlement.

When a client is making a claim under the enterprise support grant they must in the first instance pay 20% of the initial cost to the supplier. Some examples of services that can be acquired under the grant are business equipment, tools, accountancy and advertising costs, public liability insurance costs and certain training courses which are related to the start-up business venture.

Other Activation services

Jobpath

Initially, when the Department of Social Protection Activation service was setup in 2012, 300 Case Officers were assigned to service all the Intreo offices throughout Ireland. In order to ensure that clients could get access to Activation services, the Department of Social Protection commenced a public procurement process to engage outside companies to provide a service called Jobpath. Jobpath is an employment activation approach which caters mainly for clients who are long term unemployed. Long term unemployed people are classified as people who are more than 12 months on the live register. The focus of Jobpath is to assist clients in securing access to fulltime paid employment or in certain cases become self-employed.

The contracts were awarded to two companies to provide Activation services for the long term unemployed called Seetec and Turas Nua. Seetec provide Activation services in the West, Midlands North, North East, North West, Dublin Central Dublin North, Dublin South areas of Ireland and Turas Nua look after Cork Central, South East, Mid-Leinster, Mid-West, South West, and the Midlands south. The Activation services are delivered through a network of offices. Seetec provide activation services in the Edenderry area.

The Department of Social Protection assists Jobpath by referring clients who must engage with the service. The failure of a client to engage with the Jobpath service failure can result in a client's social welfare payment being reduced or cut off in extreme cases. The decision of the Irish Government to introduce Jobpath was influenced by a work programmes model operated in the United Kingdom and Australia's Job Services where companies get paid based on performance. (Martin, 2015) recognises that the development of a performance oriented culture as part of the Intreo service in Ireland is likely to be a long haul task.

Provision of Activation services in the United Kingdom

The Irish Activation service is based on a similar model which was devised in the UK. In 1997, the labour party while in Government introduced a policy to tackle social exclusion and poverty. Two large activation schemes were introduced to assist unemployed people above and below the age of twenty five. Similar to the role of the Irish Case Officer, Personal Advisers engaged with clients to assist with training requirements and also to seek employment. In 2002, Employment Services and the Benefits Agency amalgamated to form a new model called Jobcentre Plus.

“On the 1 April 2002 the Employment Service and parts of the Benefits Agency was merged to form Jobcentre Plus, which delivers employment and benefit services to people of working age”.

(Core, Website, 2017)

Provision of Activation services in Australia

Australia abolished its public employment service (in Ireland was called FAS) in the mid-nineties. These services are now provided by private contractors. They consist of profit and non-profit providers. There are approximately 90 contracted providers of employment services competing with each other across 1600 sites across Australia. In addition there are employment providers who compete on a basis of pay for performance contract and monitored by the Australian Department of Employment. The Jobpath providers in Ireland also work on a pay for performance contract basis. The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) reports that the Australian experience regarding activation policies should contain valuable lessons for other countries so that efficiencies of employment services and expenditure can be improved. (*OECD, Website, 2017*)

They also report that Australia has one of the highest employment rates in the OECD area and gives credit to the good performance of its recent activation model (Job Services) which was introduced in 2009 to focus upon employment prospects for highly disadvantaged people.

New Culture requires Total Quality Management

With the implementation of the new Activation service in the Department of Social Protection there has been a clear emphasis by senior management to ensure that staff adapt to a new culture of continuous improvement using a Total Quality Management (TQM) approach. (Marshall et al, 1993) definition of TQM supports the process of constant attainment of customer satisfaction and continuous improvement and justifies the research which is proposed by the researcher of this document.

Related Research in the Equality Tribunal

In 2009, the Equality Tribunal carried out a survey to establish if their customers were happy with the service that they provide. With the establishment of the Employment Equality Act in 1998 the Equality Tribunal was created. It now comes under the remit of the Workplace Relations Commission. The Equality Tribunal provides a quasi-judicial service adjudicating on alleged discrimination cases under the Equal Status, Employment Equality and Pensions Acts and it is essential that clients are provided with a very high standard of customer service.

After researching the Equality Tribunal customer service model, the researcher in conjunction with management in the Department of Social protection decided to seek satisfaction ratings regarding a client's experiences in relation to the following services provided by the Activation service in Edenderry.

Experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation Service.

Experience with procedures and forms.

Experience at the review meetings.

Experience of the Interview Room.

Client's overall impression.

Comments from client in relation to Pathway to Work programme.

Clients will explain their experience by using the following marking matrix.

Very Good - Good - Adequate - Poor - Very Poor

A sample of the customer survey carried out by the Equality Tribunal in 2009 can be obtained in Appendix 1 'Customer Service Survey 2009' of this document and is also included in the 2009 Annual Report of the Equality Tribunal which is published on the Workplace Relations Website. (Workplace Relations, Website, 2017)

Critique

The researcher has explained the services and stakeholders associated with the Activation service. However, the majority of clients called into the activation process are clients who are usually available and fit to take up employment. While there are services provided for other clients such as people with a disability and lone parents etc., The researcher agrees with (Murphy, 2008) whom while examining the possible impact of the introduction of lone parents into the activation service states that there would need to be fiscal and institutional reforms made which delivers social inclusion before the compulsion of lone parents and others into the activation process.

The researcher is very critical of recent noises of the possible mandatory activation of clients with a disability. (Murphy, 2008, P 28) states that:

“It is reasonable to assume that policy-makers are concerned to reduce the growth in numbers claiming lone parents and disability payments.”

The researcher agrees that it is always beneficial to reduce the numbers of people receiving a social welfare payment. However, fiscal and institutional reforms would need to be in place before the mandatory requirement of a person with a disability to attend the activation service and would need to take into consideration that people with a disability are not at risk of social isolation (Viachou et al, 2016) and that any future training programmes assist to develop social competence and self-determination.

Conclusion

In this Literature Review, the researcher has provided a background in relation to the Activation service of the Department of Social Protection and details the services that are provided to its clients. A background and services provided by stakeholders to the Activation service in Edenderry has been explained, also the researcher has explored the importance of Top Quality Management supported by academic theory justifying why the survey mentioned in this document should be carried out. The provision of an alternative Activation service focusing upon long-term unemployed provided in Ireland “Jobpath” has been reviewed. In addition, a description of activation services provided in the UK and Australia has been explained and a related customer service model in the Equality Tribunal has been shown. A critique has been provided, supported by academic theory demonstrating that it would not be appropriate to bring clients who have a disability into the activation process on a compulsory basis unless appropriate fiscal and institutional reforms are in place.

The researcher recognises that he has been limited due to the lack of empirical research previously carried out in relation to the provision of Activation services in Ireland. However, it is a new concept and the researcher has been able to provide academic and referencing material where appropriate. The researcher hopes that the research carried out in this document will set precedence for future academic research and that content within this document will assist other academics in the future while carrying out research in relation to Activation services and measures.

Chapter 3 – Research Question

This research demonstrates if the Department of Social Protection's current Activation Service and Supports assists clients of the Edenderry Intreo office in attempting to return to paid employment and also examine how clients perceive Government Policy in relation to a pathway to work.

Why is it important to research if the Activation service assists people to return to paid employment in Edenderry?

According to the Offaly Express newspaper the census carried out in 2016 showed the population of the Edenderry Urban area grew from 6,490 to 7,003 (an increase of 7.9%) compared to the previous census which was carried out in 2011. Also, the Edenderry rural area increased from 13,481 to 14,104 which represented a 4.6% increase. (Offaly Express, Website, 2017)

In February 2017 there were 5,951 people (Offaly Express, Website, 2017) registered as unemployed in Offaly of which 1,630 were registered in the Edenderry area. The total number of people unemployed in Edenderry represents 27.5% of the total amount of people registered as unemployed throughout Offaly.

With over a quarter of the workforce unemployed in the Edenderry area it is essential that the delivery of the Activation Service assists clients to progress to employment not only to improve the economic benefit to the town and surrounding areas but also to generate revenue for the Irish Exchequer. Any shortfalls in the delivery of the Activation services will need to be rectified as quickly as possible.

Why is it important to research how Government Policy regarding a Pathways to Work is perceived?

During the period 2008 to 2012, Ireland suffered a severe recession where unemployment peaked at over 15%. The researcher has already demonstrated in this document that the current seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in June 2017 is 6.3%. Ireland is now in a period of job growth. As part of its 2016-2020 Pathway to Work Policy the Irish Government is determined to ensure that as many of the new jobs that are created are taken off the live unemployment register in accordance with activation policies. (Pathways to Work, 2016)

It is therefore essential to research in a qualitative fashion comments received from activation clients regarding the Pathways to Work programme. All comments as part of this research will be examined to see if there are common issues which can be improved upon at local Activation level and if necessary made available to policy decision makers for inclusion in future Pathway to Work strategies at a national level.

Aim

The aim of this research is to explore if current activation policy is effective in assisting the long term unemployed returning to work. Findings obtained as part of this research will be examined to see if appropriate measures can be put in place to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Activation service that is delivered in Edenderry.

Objective

In June 2017, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Ireland was 6.3%. The unemployment rate peaked in 2013 at over 14.5% (CSO, Website, 2016). It is recognised that long term unemployment is of particular importance in Ireland. Even though unemployment has fallen since 2013, the rate of long term unemployed in Ireland is amongst the highest in the EU (Irish Times, Website, 2016).

The Department of Social Protection budget for 2017 is 19.85 billion for beneficiaries (Social Protection, Website, 2016). It is a priority objective for the Irish Government to ensure that unemployment rates fall to ensure that the economy grows and the mechanism that is used is the pathway to work scheme which was introduced in 2012.

The logic of Activation, although new to Ireland is not a new concept but since the 1990's has changed European welfare states from passive to active benefit systems. (Serrano Pascual, 2004); (Kluve et al, 2007); (Eichhorst et al, 2008); (Weishaupt, 2011).

Prior to the introduction of the activation process in 2012, Irelands Labour Market Programmes were very passive and sanctions for non-attendance were rarely enforced. (Weishaupt, 2009). Non engagement with the new activation process provide for a penalty or disallowances of a client's payment.

Conclusion

The researcher obtained approval for a survey to be carried out in 2017 with clients who are currently engaged with the process.

The researcher in this document demonstrates using a mixed method survey with the clients and a qualitative interview with stakeholders if current activation policy and customer service supports clients in attempting to return to paid employment and examine how clients perceive Government Policy in relation to a pathway to work. The researcher has also provided advice regarding some key leadership traits that will assist the Department of Social Protection to provide good governance by improving the leadership qualities of Case Officers and also provide services to the highest standards

“Good governance is central to the effective operation of the Department of Social Protection”

(Corporate Governance Framework, 2016)

Chapter 4 - Methodology

Primary Research

Quantitative Research

(Rasinger, 2013) describes quantitative research as much data and qualitative research as good data. The proposed primary research survey mentioned in this document will be predominantly quantitative because of time constraints and resources. The researchers target for the survey was a minimum of 50 clients. The researcher managed to deliver the survey to a total of 53 clients. The researcher will deliver findings of this research as part of the data analysis element of this document. The survey findings contained in this document is a **mixed method research methodology**. Mixed method research combines quantitative and qualitative research methods as part of an inquiry (Venkatesh et al, 2013) into the same piece of research. A mixed method research approach helps to obtain various insights from participants that would not be possible using quantitative or qualitative research methods on their own.

Secondary Research

Qualitative Research

(Hennink et al, 2011) describes qualitative research as a specific set of research methods that examines peoples experience in detail.

The survey carried out with clients of the Activation service in this document provides a mixed method research methodology approach. (Barnham, 2015) states that qualitative research is seen as a collection of factual data contrasted to quantitative research which can be seen as a collection of softer data and can be seen as a more interpretivist and subjective data collection method.

While initial questions were designed in a quantitative methodology fashion which allowed clients to give an answer through a multiple choice rating system, there was also an element of qualitative research because the researcher made provision for an open question regarding the clients view in relation to the pathway to work programme. While there were many views, the research will deliver by identifying common problems for Activation clients which will be described as part of the data analysis element of this document. Also, additional recommendations for policy improvements will also be provided by the researcher.

In addition, the researcher also carried out secondary research with four of the local stakeholders using a qualitative methodology approach by having an interview. The researcher will also explore key issues that were identified as part of the interview process which are described with appropriate recommendations for improvement in the data analysis element of this document.

Previous research model

The researcher carried out a customer survey which was similarly carried out by the Equality Tribunal in 2009. After examining the Equality Tribunal survey the researcher decided that a survey using some of the characteristics of the Equality Tribunal Study is the most appropriate because it allows clients to rate their experiences in relation to services provided by the Activation service from being either very poor or very good. While the Equality Tribunal is very detailed regarding the various types of multiple choice answers, the researcher made a rational decision to make it easier for clients to be able to make a response taking into account the needs, requirements and abilities of clients that attend the Activation service. A sample of the survey carried out by the Equality Tribunal is contained in Appendix 1 of this document.

Rationale for survey

Discussions took place with senior management in the Department of Social Protection and they identified that the following key areas and rationale why these issues should be researched and included in the survey. If there are any issues in relation to the quality of the provision of these services, recommendations should be made so that appropriate solutions can be put in place.

- Experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation Service.

Communication with the Activation service is seen as a vital service. It is essential that clients have access to their Case Officer to provide information and updates. It is also essential that clients have access to the Activation support team so that they can make appointments with the Case Officer if necessary.

- Experience with procedures and forms.

The filling understanding of procedures and filling out of forms can sometimes be a very difficult task for a client depending on their own background. It is considered necessary to ensure that procedures are explained and understood by the client and that the complexity of filling out forms is minimised as much as possible.

- Experience at the review meetings.

The clients experience at the review meetings should always be very positive so that they are provided with the necessary positive motivation to pursue a career direction and take up full time employment.

- Experience of the Interview Room.

Appropriate accommodation for an interview to take place is essential to providing an efficient and effective service, particularly for clients who may have a disability or may require wheelchair access. It is very important that the Department of Social Protection provide reasonable accommodation as required under the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission describe reasonable accommodation as:

“Reasonable accommodations are practical changes which service providers have to make so that people with disabilities can get and use all kinds of services on an equal basis with others. This includes services which are free of cost (for example, a public playground, or social welfare services), as well as services which you pay for.”

(Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Website, 2017).

- Client's overall impression.

By receiving a response from clients by using a quantitative research methodology it will assist the Department of Social Protection to identify if there are any common denominator's in relation to the client's impression of the Activation service that is being provided.

- Comments from client in relation to Pathway to Work programme.

The Pathway to Work programme is a relative new concept not only for the Department of Social Protection but also the client. It is very important that the views of the client in relation to the programme are listened to so that policy changes can be made if necessary.

Next step after data collection

Upon completion of the survey with both the clients and the stakeholders the data was given to the researcher's manager in the Department of Social Protection to verify that the data collected was accurately recorded. After examining the data the researcher's manager had no hesitation in stating that the results that were calculated were accurate and in order. A copy of the survey form used in the research is contained in appendix 2 'Customer Service Survey' and a copy of correspondence from the researcher's manager confirming the accuracy is contained in appendix 3 of this document.

Process and Limitations of Survey

Subject to the client's written consent, the survey was carried out by the Case Officer to a total of 53 clients at the end of their individual review meeting in the Activation service in Edenderry. The surveys were carried out between February and May 2017. It was explained to the client that the survey is totally confidential and they are not obliged to partake in the survey if they do not wish to do so.

The survey was limited to clients who were on the Case Officers caseload and did not include clients who attended walk in clinics on a voluntary basis. Clients assigned to the Case Officer through the Activation service were better positioned to be able to respond to the survey because they would have experience in all areas identified for inclusion in the survey.

The same survey was used by the researcher while carrying out qualitative research with the four local stakeholders. Additional information obtained as part of the interview process is identified by the researcher in the data analysis element of this document.

Critique

(Borle et al, 2007) identified in research studies that survey participation leads to increased purchase behaviour. Their conclusion was based upon a longitudinal field study of customer satisfaction conducted by a US automotive service firm. Although the survey referred to in this document is a mixed method in relation to the Activation clients and qualitative regarding the stakeholders, the researcher agrees that the survey will similarly lead to important changes where clients of the Activation service in Edenderry will increase participation behaviour. Also, the researcher has no criticism of the research that was carried out and contained in this document.

Ethics

It should be noted that the researcher has carried out the research contained in this document in accordance with the three core guiding principles (Respect of persons, Beneficence and non-maleficence, Justice) governing ethical conduct where research involves human participants as advised by the National College of Ireland. The researcher has signed the ethical review form.

It should also be noted that that the researcher is bound by the Ethics in Public (Designated Positions in Public Bodies) (Amendment) Regulations Act 2015. (Irish statute book, Website, 2017)

Conclusion

The researcher has described the methodology that was used in this survey. It is a mixed method research customer survey which has been created with particular reference to a previous research model survey that was carried out in the Equality Tribunal in 2009. The Agreed rationale and content for the survey has been described and the researcher has provided limitations and critique. Full consideration has been given in relation to obligations of core ethical guidelines. The researcher is confident that the information that has been provided with the research contained in this document has identified improvements that can be made in the provision of the Activation services provided in Edenderry. The researcher also envisages that this survey may also be used as a model for future surveys across the Department of Social Protection and future academic research

Chapter 5 – Data Analysis

Introduction.

After the completion of the survey, the researcher collected all the manual surveys and imputed the data from each survey to a Microsoft excel spreadsheet. Graphs were created and then exported to a Microsoft word document. The researcher practiced the input and export of data using mock data prior to using real data.

The following are graphs containing findings and a commentary provided by the researcher which relate to each question used on the mixed method survey form. The survey was completed by 53 clients of the Activation service and 4 stakeholder clients. The graphs will assist readers of this document to get a quick visual view of the findings.

The researcher also provides a commentary regarding the findings of qualitative interviews which took place with 4 stakeholders.

After a detailed data analysis of all the mixed method and qualitative responses, the researcher provides a recommendation for improvements in the Activation service in Edenderry. It should be noted by the viewer that all questions were not completed by participants and the percentage outcome provided by the researcher is only a percentage of the total number of people who replied to the particular question.

Primary Research Findings

A total of 46 clients commented on their experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation Service.

Very Good



A total of 32 responses (which represents 70% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation service has been very good. (Figure 5)

Good



A total of 11 responses (which represents 24% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation service has been good. (Figure 6)

Adequate



A total of 2 responses (which represents 4% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation service has been adequate. (Figure 7)

Poor

Number Of Responses:
(1) Percentage Of Responses: (2%)



1 response was received (which represents 2% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders which states that the experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation service has been poor. (*Figure 8*)

Very Poor

Number Of Responses:
(0) Percentage Of Responses: (0%)



No clients that are currently engaged in the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation service has been very poor. (*Figure 9*)

Not applicable

Number Of Responses:
(0) Percentage Of Responses: (0%)



No clients that are currently engaged in the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation service is not applicable to them. (*Figure 10*)

Recommendation

Although 70% (*Figure 5*) of the clients who responded regarding their experience regarding telephone contact with the activation service is very good, it is very clear that there is more room for improvement. A comment from one of the clients who responded to this question stated:

“Telephone. Found it difficult to speak to reception when called to reschedule appointment. Automated service was difficult to navigate at times. Did not want to interrupt Case Officer but could not leave a message at reception. Easier option to leave message for Case Officer would be preferred. Had to call Tullamore to leave a message.

The researcher recommends that there should be further investigations to establish if there is a mechanism to improve the telephone contact for clients. At present there is a telephone number that clients can call but this number also deals with general Department of Social Protection issues through the use of an automated touch tone service. The researcher envisages that if there was a staffing resource in place which could take direct calls for the Activation service in Edenderry it would lead to more immediate responses for clients. A dedicated resource would also provide more immediate information to clients regarding broader activation issues.

A total of 55 clients commented on their experience regarding procedures and forms while dealing with the Activation service.

Very Good



A total of 36 responses (which represents 65% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience regarding procedures and forms while dealing with the Activation service has been very good. (Figure 11)

Good



A total of 16 responses (which represents 29% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience regarding procedures and forms while dealing with the Activation service has been good. (Figure 12)

Adequate



A total of 1 response (which represents 2% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from a current client of the Activation service has expressed that their experience regarding procedures and forms while dealing with the Activation service was adequate. (Figure 13)

Poor

Number Of
Responses:
(1) Percentage Of
Responses: (2%)



1 response was received (which represents 2% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders which states that the experience regarding procedures and forms while dealing with the Activation service has been poor. (*Figure 14*)

Very Poor

Number Of
Responses:
(0) Percentage Of
Responses: (0%)



No clients that are currently engaged in the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience regarding procedures and forms while dealing with the Activation service is very poor. (*Figure 15*)

Not applicable

Number Of
Responses:
(1) Percentage Of
Responses: (2%)



1 response was received (which represents 2% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders which states that the experience regarding procedures and forms while dealing with the Activation service is not applicable. (*Figure 16*)

Recommendation

Although 65% (*Figure 11*) of the clients who responded regarding their experience regarding procedures and forms while dealing with the activation service is very good, it is very clear that improvements in this area need to be addressed. Although there are many schemes which are provided by the activation service, the researcher recommends that all forms and procedures for these schemes should be re-evaluated and re-designed to make it easier for clients to complete and avoid any duplication of the same information being asked for which a client may have already provided. A simple example of this type of duplication occurs when a person has been approved for the Back to Work Enterprise allowance scheme. A client approved for Back to Work Enterprise allowance scheme can apply for the Enterprise support grant. However, on the application form for the Enterprise support grant it asks the client if they submitted a business plan. This question is not necessary because the client would not be approved for the Back to Work Enterprise allowance scheme unless they had submitted a business plan in the first instance. Although this is just a brief example of duplication the researcher envisages that there are many forms and procedures which could be improved upon in order to deliver an improved Activation service in Edenderry.

A total of 57 clients commented on their Experience at the Review meetings (which includes attendance at group information sessions by stakeholders) while dealing with the Activation service.

Very Good

Number Of Responses: (43) Percentage Of Responses: (75%)



A total of 43 responses (which represents 75% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience at the review meetings while dealing with the Activation service has been very good. (Figure 17)

Good

Number Of Responses: (10) Percentage Of Responses: (18%)



A total of 10 responses (which represents 18% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience at the review meetings while dealing with the Activation service has been good. (Figure 18)

Adequate

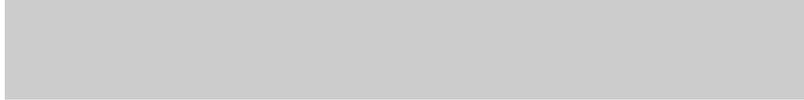
Number Of Responses: (1) Percentage Of Responses: (2%)



1 response was received (which represents 2% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders which states that the experience at the review meeting while dealing with the Activation service is adequate. (Figure 19)

Poor

Number Of
Responses:
(0) Percentage Of
Responses: (0%)



No clients that are currently engaged in the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience at the review meeting with the Activation service is poor. (*Figure 20*)

Very Poor

Number Of
Responses:
(0) Percentage Of
Responses: (0%)



No clients that are currently engaged in the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience at the review meeting with the Activation service is very poor. (*Figure 21*)

Not applicable

Number Of
Responses:
(3) Percentage Of
Responses: (5%)



A total of 3 responses (which represents 5% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from stakeholders which states that their experience at the review meetings while dealing with the Activation service is not applicable. (*Figure 22*)

Recommendation

Although 75% (Figure 17) of the clients who responded regarding their experience at the review meetings while dealing with the Activation service is very good, the researcher recognises that this an excellent outcome for the experience that is being provided by the Case Officer but recommends that future qualitative research should be carried with clients to isolate areas that could still be improved upon. The research carried out for this question in this document is quantitative and is limited because it does not provide good data which would provide a better view for future improvement.

A total of 57 clients commented on their experience of the Interview Room while dealing with the Activation service.

Very Good

Number Of
Responses:
(39) Percentage Of
Responses: (68%)



A total of 39 responses (which represents 68% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience of the Interview Room while dealing with the Activation service has been very good. (Figure 23)

Good

Number Of
Responses:
(15) Percentage Of
Responses: (26%)



A total of 15 responses (which represents 26% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience of the Interview Room while dealing with the Activation service has been good. *(Figure 24)*

Adequate

Number Of
Responses:
(0) Percentage Of
Responses: (0%)



No clients that are currently engaged in the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience of the Interview Room is adequate. *(Figure 25)*

Poor

Number Of
Responses:
(1) Percentage Of
Responses: (2%)



1 response was received (which represents 2% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders which states that their experience of the Interview Room while dealing with the Activation was poor. *(Figure 26)*

Very Poor

Number Of
Responses:
(0) Percentage Of
Responses: (0%)



No clients that are currently engaged in the Activation service including stakeholders state that their experience of the Interview Room is very poor.

(Figure 27)

Not applicable

Number Of
Responses:
(2) Percentage Of
Responses: (4%)



A total of 2 responses (which represents 4% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that experience of the Interview Room while dealing with the Activation service is not applicable. (Figure 28)

Recommendation

Although 68% (Figure 23) of the clients who responded regarding their experience of the Interview Room while dealing with the Activation service is very good, the researcher recommends that an alternative interview room should be provided.

Although , the Intreo centre in Edenderry was refurbished in 2015 the room that was provided for out carrying activation meetings is very small and has no windows which the researcher feels may be very intimidating for clients particularly if they have a disability or a fear of closed spaces. The researcher's recommendation is consistent regarding the provision of reasonable accommodation explained in the rationale for survey section of this document

A total of 57 clients commented on the Overall Impression of service provided by the Activation Service.

Very Good

Number Of Responses: (42) Percentage Of Responses: (74%)



A total of 42 responses (which represents 74% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that their overall impression of the services provided by the Activation service is very good. (Figure 29)

Good

Number Of Responses: (13) Percentage Of Responses: (23%)



A total of 13 responses (which represents 23% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that their overall impression of the services provided by the Activation service is good. (Figure 30)

Adequate

Number Of Responses: (2) Percentage Of Responses: (4%)



A total of 2 responses (which represents 4% of the total number of clients who replied to this question) from current clients of the Activation service including stakeholders state that their overall impression of the services provided by the Activation service is adequate. (Figure 31)

Poor

Number Of
ResponsesL
(0) Percentage Of
Responses: (0%)



No clients that are currently engaged in the Activation service including stakeholders state that their overall impression of the services provided by the Activation service is poor. (*Figure 32*)

Very Poor

Number Of
Responses:
(0) Percentage Of
Responses: (0%)



No clients that are currently engaged in the Activation service including stakeholders state that their overall impression of the services provided by the Activation service is very poor. (*Figure 33*)

Not applicable

Number Of
Responses:
(0) Percentage Of
Responses: (0%)



No clients that are currently engaged in the Activation service including stakeholders state that their overall impression of the services provided by the Activation service is not applicable. (*Figure 34*)

Recommendation

74% (*Figure 29*) of the clients including stakeholders responded regarding their overall impression of the services provided by the Activation service and indicated it is very good. The researcher recognises that is a very good result and even though there is room for improvement as recommended by the researcher in the questions asked about individual services, it demonstrates that the Department of Social Protection in the short length of time that the service is available through the Intreo service in Edenderry is delivering upon providing an efficient and effective service as demanded through its statement of strategy as described in the justification for the research contained in this document.

Although, an efficient and effective service is being delivered, the researcher recommends that a continuous improvement approach using Total Quality Management continues to be used as described in the literature review contained in this document.

List of comments received by clients of the Activation service regarding Pathway to Work Programme

The following is a list of comments received by clients of the activation service in relation to the pathway to work programme which is delivered by the Activation service.

Telephone. Found it difficult to speak to reception when called to reschedule appointment. Automated service was difficult to navigate at times. Did not want to interrupt Case Officer but could not leave a message at reception. Easier option to leave message for Case Officer would be preferred. Had to call Tullamore to leave a message.

I found all the staff very helpful and they guided me through everything I needed to know with great ease.

The services in Edenderry are set up for the betterment of the client (Me). To date, I have felt very relaxed and overall impressed with the system to help me get back to employment and also to give me advice on further education. Very happy with Edenderry Intreo.

Great at helping people back to work.

Very Good

Very good help.

Very helpful.

Very good programme, very helpful.

Case Officer was very helpful with my case and was very knowledgeable and courteous towards me and gave me some very useful advice in helping me get back to work.

Case Officer has helped me in succeeding Junior Trade Hairdressing and is helpful in me getting on the way to complete Senior Trade. Case Officer has gone above and beyond to help me to succeed.

Excellent it will help me big time.

Case Officer has always been very helpful and professional regarding showing me options and ways forward. I found the whole programme a great help with finding work.

Enjoyable, and interesting and respectful way to progress into something new.

I have found the programme to be helpful and has offered me a fantastic and refreshing opportunity to get my business off the ground.

The programme is very good and easy to understand. Highly recommended.

Very helpful service. Any questions asked are answered.

Meeting someone on a one to one basis is a good way to get information about what you want to do.

Very helpful in many ways.

I found Case Officer very helpful with all questions and forms I had to have.
Very approachable Case Officer. Very informative meeting.
My experience of the programme thus far is extremely positive. My feeling is that the programme encompasses many elements beneficial to short/long term unemployed.
Very Helpful.
I would be in favour of this programme. Anything that can help getting back in the workplace is excellent. Also, I was very impressed with the options given. It opened up new horizons.
Every avenue checked and helpful guidance towards achieving possible work.
Very helpful and accommodating.
Very good getting people back to work. Creating more skills.
Very grateful for the 2 years help with starting a business but would have been better helped if it was a 3 year service.

Recommendation

As can be seen by the above comments, clients in general are very satisfied about the whole pathway to work programme delivered through the Activation service in Edenderry and are very happy with the professional service that is being delivered by the Case Officer. The researcher recognises that this feedback is very important and recommends that feedback should be obtained on a period basis in future surveys to ensure that there is continued satisfaction with the delivery of service.

Secondary Research Findings

Qualitative interviews with Stakeholders of the Activation service regarding Pathway to Work Programme

On the 20th July 2017, the researcher visited and carried out qualitative interviews with the following stakeholders regarding the pathway to work programme which is delivered through the Activation service in Edenderry. It should be noted that individual names of the persons interviewed are not mentioned in this document as agreed with the researcher in advance.

Employability:

The researcher met with a representative of Employability Midlands (Details are provided in the Literature review contained in this document) who provide supports for people with a disability in getting employment in the midlands. The comments that were received regarding the pathway to work are:

“Personally I have found it professional, prompt and very accessible. Appointments are on time and have been very effective for myself and my clients.”

The representative stated that their experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation service and their overall impression of the Activation service that is being delivered is very good. The representative was keen to point out that the service was delivered in a professional manner and that outcomes were very effective for her clients.

Offaly Local Development Company

The researcher met with a representative of Offaly Local Development Company (Details are provided in the Literature review contained in this document) who provide supports for clients of the Activation service in Edenderry which include the Way Forward Programme and access to Jobs club facilities. The following is a comment that was received regarding the pathway to work programme:

“Interview room private, uncluttered but a little small. From a contact and procedures/forms point of view - very clear and efficient, but the real strength lies in the approach of staff, human, open with authority regarding knowledge. In short: approachable”

The representative stated that their experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation service and their overall impression of the Activation service that is being delivered is very good. The representative really emphasised at the meeting the strengths of staff in the Activation service and stated that they were very approachable and dealt with clients at a human level. The representative also emphasised that since the creation of the Intreo centre in Edenderry, the Case Officer has managed to get all the stakeholders in the Edenderry area to communicate with each other to that they can work together using a joined thinking approach to deliver the necessary training programmes for clients of the Activation service.

Education and Training Board

The researcher met with a representative of the Education Training Board (Details are provided in the Literature review contained in this document) in Tullamore, Co Offaly who provide progression training supports for clients of the Activation service in Edenderry.

The representative stated that their experience of the telephone contact, working with procedures and forms, and overall impression of the Activation service that is being delivered is very good. However, the representative did state although they provide training to clients of the Activation service on a continued basis they lacked in knowledge regarding the experience of outcomes for clients outside of their educational options. The following is a comment that was received regarding the pathway to work programme:

“Limited experience of outcomes related to Department of Social Protection clients outside of educational options”

Acorn Project in Edenderry

The researcher met with a representative of the Acorn Project in Edenderry (Details are provided in the Literature review contained in this document) who provide training supports for clients of the Activation service in Edenderry. The following is a comment that was received regarding the pathway to work programme:

“I found the pathway to work programme hugely beneficial to all who avail of the service. I find that the Case Officer is a huge asset to the programme. The Case Officer deals with all who come in as individuals and meets them at their level. The Case Officer offers supports and guidance throughout. All our learners would agree that the Case Officer is for the people and not a system”

Although the representative was very keen to point out the excellent qualities of the Case Officer, it was also indicated that their experience with telephone contact, procedures and forms and overall impression of the service provided by the Activation service is very good. The representative was also keen to point out that the communication and bringing together of all the stakeholders to have a joined approach for delivering training in Edenderry is a huge asset.

Recommendation

The qualitative interviews carried out with the stakeholders by the researcher were very informative. Although, all the stakeholders were very happy with the service that was delivered by the Activation service, the findings showed that a big issue for the stakeholders was that they all worked together in a collaborative way to provide training services in the Edenderry area. This finding supports the necessary collaborative leadership trait that a Case Officer requires as mentioned in the Literature review contained in this document.

The researcher as part of the qualitative research contained in this document has delivered findings that the stakeholders in Edenderry are all working together and recommends that this approach should be used in all Intreo Centres by Case Officers.

Findings/Recommendations

The research contained in this document was directed at current mandatory clients of the Activation service including stakeholders in Edenderry. The researcher also recommends that further research should be carried out to include clients who attend appointments on a voluntary basis to the walk in clinic of the activation service in Edenderry and in other Intreo centres if the research model contained in this document is to be adopted.

While these clients may include people with a disability or who are lone parents or not even on a social welfare payment, it is important to hear their voice. Also the researcher recommends that as part of any future research it should be considered to extend the survey to a larger audience which would include clients who have used the system in the past in the format of an online survey which would lead to a more quantitative research approach.

Extending the survey to the recommended client base supports the findings that satisfaction tools are essential tools to hear what a customer has to say as mentioned in the Justification for Research contained in this document

Conclusion

The researcher has explored in this document the question whether the Department of Social Protection's current Activation Service and Supports assists clients of the Edenderry Intreo office in attempting to return to paid employment and also explored how clients perceive Government Policy in relation to a pathway to work.

The exploration has been demonstrated by the researcher by providing a background regarding the provision of the Activation service. The role of the Case Officer has been explained in conjunction with competency attributes that are required. A justification for the research provided in the customer survey has been delivered followed by a literacy review which looks at the background and functions of the Activation service and a description of services that are available to clients including a background of local training providers (Stakeholders).

The aim and objectives of the Research Question has been provided followed by a methodology which details the primary and secondary research carried out in the customer survey. The researcher has provided a rationale supporting why the survey was carried out. A data analysis containing the findings obtained from the customer survey is provided which includes appropriate recommendations. These findings include responses from Activation clients using a mixed method research approach and also findings using a qualitative research approach with stakeholders.

A list of appropriate academic referencing and websites has been provided by the researcher followed by a list of appendices to support subject matter contained in the dissertation.

Finally, like any good mystery novel which usually ends up with a twist in the storyline, the researcher can confirm that the Case Officer who works in Edenderry is actually himself. The researcher has totally enjoyed working on this dissertation and hopes that it can be used as a referencing point for future academic and activation research and that the customer survey will be made available to assist other Activation service areas throughout the Department of Social Protection.

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<http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/mue/monthlyunemploymentjune2017/>

[Accessed 20/07/17]

CSO Website is available form:

<http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/mue/monthlyunemploymentjune2016/>

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Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is available from:

<https://www.ihrec.ie/your-rights/i-have-an-issue-with-a-service/discrimination-in-relation-to-services/what-is-disability-in-relation-to-services/what-is-reasonable-accommodation/>

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<http://www.irishtimes.com/business/work/eu-adopts-bloc-wide-approach-to-long-term-unemployment-1.2383767>

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<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/si/35/made/en/print>

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<http://www.itb.ie/files/national-framework-of-qualifications.gif>

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Trading Economics (*Figure 2*) Website is Available from:

<http://cdn.tradingeconomics.com/charts/ireland-unemployment-rate.png?s=ieuert&v=201701060823s>

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<http://www.solas.ie/Pages/WhatWeDo.aspx>

[Accessed on the 21/01/17]

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[Accessed on the 26/01/17]

List of Appendices

Appendix 1

Appendix 4: Customer Service Survey 2009



If you wish to give your name, county and/or that of your organisation you may do so. Any information given will be confidential.

Name:

County:

Organisation:

Please tick ✓ a quality rating for each area of service which you experienced. If, for example you have not telephoned the Tribunal then leave that section blank.

	Very Good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor
1. When telephoning the Tribunal how would you rate					
<input type="checkbox"/> The speed of reply	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> The information given	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> The politeness shown to you	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. When writing to the Tribunal how would you rate					
<input type="checkbox"/> The speed of reply	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> The information given	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> The politeness shown to you	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. Did you find the procedures and forms used					
<input type="checkbox"/> Easy to understand	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Easy to read and fill out	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. At the hearing did the Equality Officer					
<input type="checkbox"/> Cover all the details of the case	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Show fairness to both sides	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Create a calm atmosphere	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. Was the written decision					
<input type="checkbox"/> Clear in explaining the case	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Issued within a reasonable time	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Easy to read	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. Was the Hearing room					
<i>At the Tribunal Offices in Dublin</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> Suitable for you	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Easy to get to	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<i>Other Locations</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> Suitable for you	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Easy to get to	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7. Your overall impression					
<input type="checkbox"/> Did you think the Service provided by the Tribunal was	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. It would help the Tribunal to know whether you					
<input type="checkbox"/> Made a claim yourself	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Had a claim made against you	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Are a legal representative who has represented either side	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Otherwise represented a claimant	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Otherwise represented a respondent	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify _____					
9. Any comments you would like to make					

If you wish to give more information you are welcome to write on the space provided on the reverse of this page.
Thank you for your co-operation

Appendix 2

Department of Social Protection
Intreo Activation Service
Carrick Road
Edenderry
Co Offaly

Date of Interview: _____

Customer Service Survey

- ✓ Please tick a quality rating for each area of service which you experienced. If, for example you have not telephoned or received a telephone call from the activation unit then leave that section blank.

Satisfaction of	Very Good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor
<i>Experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation Service.</i>					
<i>Experience with procedures and forms.</i>					
<i>Experience at the review meetings.</i>					
<i>Experience of the Interview Room.</i>					
<i>Overall impression of service provided by the Activation Service.</i>					

Comment regarding Pathway to Work Programme.

I agree to take part in this survey of my own consent and understand that any individual information provided by me will be held in confidence and will only be used for the purposes of statistical analysis to assist with improving services provided by the Activation Service in the Department of Social Protection in Edenderry.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3

-----Original Message-----

From: Declan Tuomey

Sent: 10 August 2017 17:22

To: Martin Kehoe

Subject: Survey

Martin

I have examined the responses to your Customer Service Survey and have no hesitation in stating that the results, as calculated in the summary sheet detailing the various categories listed below

- 1) Experience regarding telephone contact with the Activation Service
- 2) Experience with procedures & forms
- 3) Experience at the review meetings
- 4) Experience of the Interview Room
- 5) Overall impression of service provided by the Activation Service
- 6) Comments regarding the pathway to Work Programme

Are accurate and in order

Kind Regards

Declan Tuomey Assistant Principal Officer Dept. of Social Protection Tullamore

Appendix 4

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library, National College of Ireland

Student Name: Martin Kehoe Jnr.

Student Number: 10209387

School: Business

Course: MBA in Business Administration

Degree to be awarded: MBA in Business Administration

Title of Thesis: An Investigation into the Department of Social Protection's current Activation Service and Supports in its Edenderry Intreo office for assisting clients to return to paid employment and an examination of the perception of Government Policy in relation to a pathway to work.

One hard bound copy of your thesis will be lodged in the Norma Smurfit Library and will be available for consultation. The electronic copy will be accessible in TRAP (<http://trap.ncirl.ie/>), the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository. In accordance with normal academic library practice all theses lodged in the National College of Ireland Institutional Repository (TRAP) are made available on open access. I agree to a hard bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library. I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of Candidate: Martin Kehoe Jnr.

For completion by the School:
The aforementioned thesis was received by _____

Date: _____

This signed form must be appended to all hard bound and electronic copies of your thesis submitted to your school