



Westmeath Community Development (WCD) is the Programme Implementer for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP 2018-2022) in Co Westmeath. A key goal of SICAP is to support disadvantaged individuals improve the quality of their lives through the provision of lifelong learning and labour market supports. As part of our labour market supports we work with employers and jobseekers to try and match the needs of the employer with suitable clients.

SICAP 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and co-funded by the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020

**Case study on Employment Supports  
provided by  
Westmeath Community Development  
under SICAP in 2018;  
*Cloud Nine Café,  
Athlone, Co Westmeath***

## Aim

To provide bespoke training support for a local employer, supporting him prepare his potential staff for roles in his new business.

## Background

The owner of the now established 'Cloud Nine' café contacted Westmeath Community Development at the latter stage of setting up his business. He had located premises, identified and invested in the equipment, renovated and designed the café, created menus, set up his suppliers locally, researched the market and was at the final stage of setting up his business - recruitment and training.

The employer, motivated first and foremost by a desire to hire reliable, skilled people to work in his new café, has a background in healthcare and first-hand knowledge and evidence of the value, skills and productivity people with disabilities can offer the workplace. He recognised the multiple benefits employment can provide people - increased wellbeing, a sense of pride, social inclusion and networks - and was determined to offer these benefits to all his staff.

## Key Stages of Developing the Bespoke Course

- WCD met with the employer to identify the nature of his business, the roles he required and the training his potential staff should undertake.
- WCD suggested the following training:
  - HACCP
  - Food & Nutrition
  - Health and Safety
  - Manual Handling
- WCD worked closely with the employer to develop a training program that suited a diverse range of learning styles and prior educational/training experience and linked the training to the skills needed for the roles.
- Discussion took place regarding the participants training needs and the possible training methods that would ensure all participants' needs were met through one single inclusive training course.
- Key to delivering this training was ensuring a suitable qualified and experienced Trainer was secured, someone with experience working with people with disabilities. Employer quote: ***"The entire project at its root is for the benefit of people who need that little bit of extra support in achieving their goals in life. Hopefully we can affect that positive change by delivering the appropriate training from the outset"***.
- WCD had the perfect Trainer in mind, someone who had worked with WCD in the past and had extensive experience of delivering training to a diverse range of abilities.
- WCD met with the employer and more importantly his potential staff on a one to one basis to assess the learning needs and goals of each participant.

**The Employer Engagement process was crucial in understanding the needs and goals of the business and in turn creating a bespoke training experience that catered to a wide range of individuals learning abilities.**

### **Designing the Training**

Time and planning took place with the trainer to prepare the course material, training methods and options for delivery. The following aspects were included in the training to ensure it was a meaningful and successful experience for all trainees:

- The training methods would include as much visual and participatory activities as possible.
- Accreditation would be awarded to all regardless of literacy levels. For the few who had difficulties with literacy scribes were offered.
- Certificates of participation were given to a couple of participants who did not achieve the HACCP certificate.
- The training would be continuously linked to the duties of their role in their new workplace, helping each participant better understand the training and how it would be applied in the near future.
- The employer and WCD would be kept informed of all participants' progress on a daily basis and any challenges addressed and overcome as and when they arose.
- Training took place 2 days a week over a 2 week period, a total of 24 contact delivery hours.

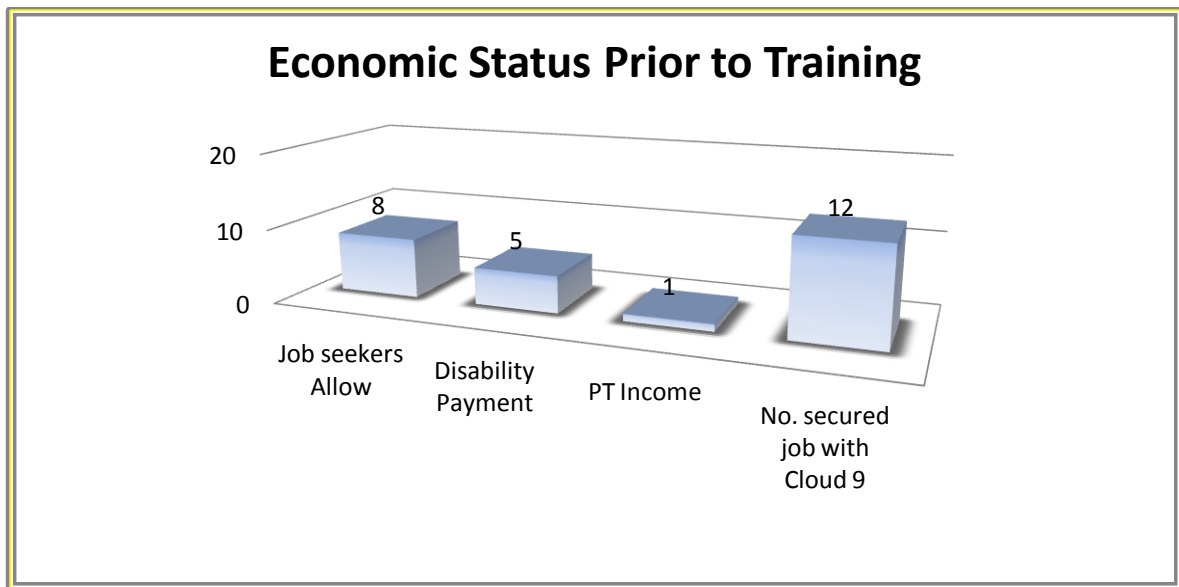
### **Course modules**

- Manual Handling
- HACCP
- Health & Safety in the workplace
- Food & Nutrition

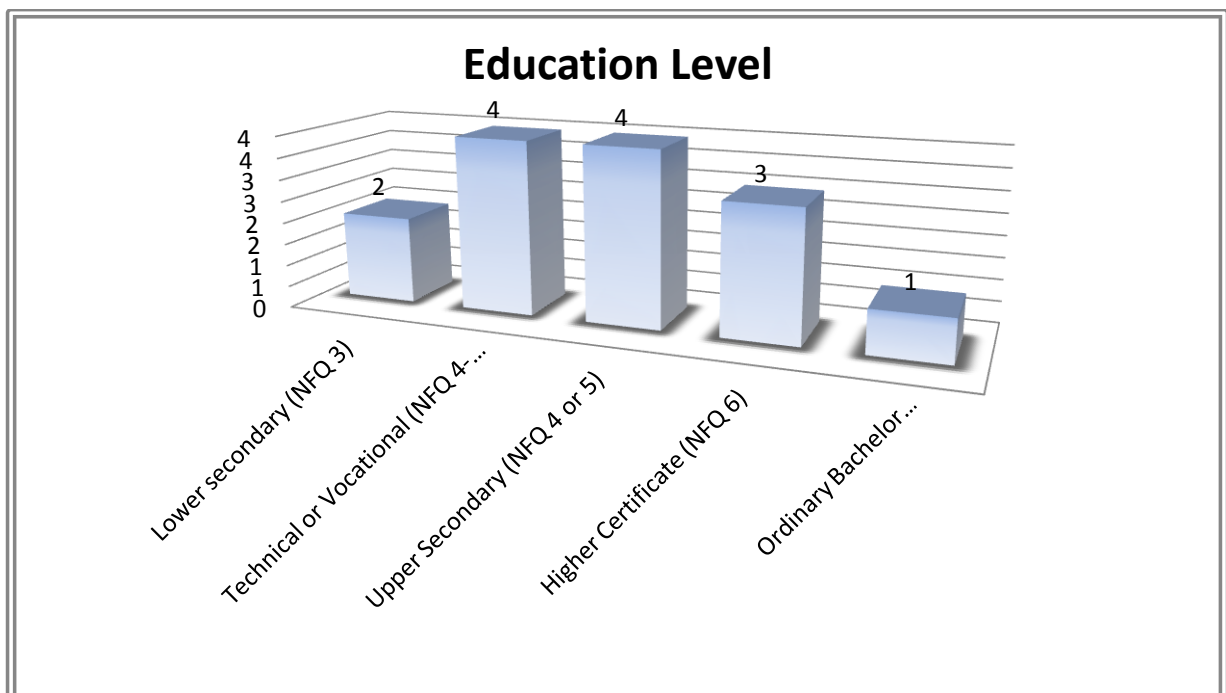
### **Profile of Course Participants**

Of the 14 participants 8 were long term unemployed, 5 on a disability payment and 1 working part time. There were 8 males and 6 female. All were over 12 months job seeking. The educational levels varied from QQI level 3 to QQI level 7.

**Table 1: Participants Labour Market Status**



**Table 2: Prior Educational Levels of Participants**



#### Course Aims

- To improve participants prepare for the workplace.
- To provide participants with practical skills and knowledge relevant to the job they would perform in the workplace.

- To provide a local employer with trained skilled staff capable of helping him develop and maintain his business.
- To improve the participants employability skills.
- To offer opportunities to help individuals with disabilities achieve their employment goals.
- To support the participants form a connection and rapport with their new colleagues prior to the café opening.

### **Course Outcomes**

A total of 14 participants took part in the training, of which 13 successfully completed all modules. Twelve secured employment with 'Cloud Nine' and 6 months later are still in employment with the employer.

### **Removing Barriers to Training and Employment**

The employer, with the support of WCD, not only removed barriers for people with disabilities but also for long term unemployed individuals wishing to return to or enter the workplace for the first time. WCD, under the SICAP Programme 2018-2022, played a small part in supporting the employer achieve this goal.

### **A little really does go a long way**

SICAP staff members spent approximately 50 hours working with the employer and the participants. For less than €5,000 of SICAP funding, 14 people received tailor made quality training that helped them:

- Successfully gain labour market training and accreditation
- Gain knowledge and skills for the roles they would perform in the workplace
- Provided them with an opportunity to meet their future colleagues, form friendly bonds with each other and become a team
- Increased confidence in their abilities - recognising their unique skills and talents were greatly sought after and valued by their new employer.

### **Something to Think About**

- In Westmeath 13.4% of the population have a disability, in line with 13.5% nationally (Census 2016).
- Of those that are employed, people with a disability make up 6.5% of those working nationally (Census 2016).
- Through its inclusive recruitment and training policy, 35% of Cloud Nine Café's workforce are now people with disabilities.

### **Employer Feedback**

I first made contact with WCD 12 months prior to opening Cloud Nine Café, and was fortunate enough to be given guidance from the outset. As we solidified our location and realised how much training was required, the benefits to training, and the type of bespoke training needed WCD helped us in every way.

From the modules set forth, to how they would be tailored, communication was constant throughout and this level of professionalism assured me from the outset that this was correct for our staff and team going forward.

Overall the experience I had with WCD and what our team have said and done since the training, I would recommend any start up to seek out such training.

Adam

### **Participant Quotes**

I found the training provided to be very interesting and accessible. The whole group participated in each module and this helped us to learn about each other and work as part of a team. It was good for us to meet before starting work as we didn't have first day jitters as you usually would walking into new employment.

Sarah – Waiter

### **Customer Reviews**

*Went yesterday in the cloud nine cafe and the only word I can find to describe this experience was AMAZING. Staff friendly, lovely and cozy decoration you feel like home and the food delicious. I'll come back for sure in a short time.*

*On Cloud Nine after Eating Here: Finally got to see/taste what everyone else in Athlone is raving about and it did not disappoint!! From the fantastic decor to the very friendly and efficient staff and the wonderfully presented and very tasty food (shrimp tacos are unreal!!) I can highly recommend Cloud Nine to everyone. So if you're visiting Athlone or are living in or around the town try your best to get a seat in here and enjoy, you will not regret it. Fact*

*Brisket sandwich is the best sandwich I've ever had. Staff are very friendly and the coffee is delish. Highly recommend, in my opinion the best food in Athlone*

Pictures Cloud Nine





Patricia McKenna  
 Coordinator Services to the Unemployed  
 Westmeath Community Development

 <p>Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020      Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union</p>	 <p>EUROPEAN UNION      Investing in your future      European Social Fund</p>	 <p>Rialtas na hÉireann      Government of Ireland</p>	 <p>pobal      government supporting communities</p>	 <p>WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL      COMRADE FÉIDEALAGH</p>	 <p>SICAP      Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme</p>	 <p>WESTMEATH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</p>
<p><i>The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and co-funded by the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020</i></p>						