



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora

**Summary Report:
Evaluation of
Migrant Pilot
Projects in
Auckland North,
Auckland Central,
Waikato and Central
Regions 2002**

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Executive summary

As part of the 2000 Budget package, Cabinet agreed to an operational response by the then Department of Work and Income (now Work and Income, a service of the Ministry of Social Development) to meet the needs of recent migrants to New Zealand. This was to address the needs of the small but significant number of recent migrants who, despite having overseas work experience and qualifications, are unemployed and are receiving income support assistance. Many of the clients come from a non-English-speaking background (NESB), and a number have overseas tertiary qualifications. There were four pilot programmes:

- Auckland Central, Migrant Work Track Pilot September to December 2000
- Auckland North, Migrant Engineers Pilot July to December 2000
- Waikato, Thrive Pilot (extension of the Focis project) February to December 2000
- Central Region Migrants Pilot (extension of an earlier pilot). September 2000 to March 2001

The groups concerned, the objectives, methods, and outcomes are summarised below. The last chapter of this report presents conclusions reached and various recommendations made as a result of evaluating the individual programmes. The report was completed in 2002 and has formed the basis for new policy initiatives.

Auckland Central Migrant Work Track Pilot

Two groups of 19 migrant clients with SGI¹ of 3 or 4, enrolled 0-26 weeks, clear English, qualifications of work experience, recent immigrant

Objectives

- To provide early intervention by case managers.
- To increase employment outcomes.
- To increase part-time earnings.
- To provide job search skills and build networks between migrants and employers.
- To strengthen relationships between Work and Income and Local Employment Co-ordination Group (LEC).

Methods

Two 3-week courses were facilitated by a tutor, covering job search and retention skills and behaviour-based interviews. There were guest speakers including employers, guidance in contacting employers to arrange work, CV preparation, client plan review and post-placement support. A travel allowance was provided for participants.

Outcomes

- Initial programme was not well targeted – only half being well qualified.
- Qualitative information rated the course highly.
- Quantitative results were similar to those from non-pilot group – with 66 percent of participants unemployed two months after course, and equal numbers having left the labour

¹ Service group indicators is a 0-5 point scale indicating job readiness

market. A higher proportion of the non-pilot group had obtained part-time work. (13.3 percent compared to none of the pilot group. Results five months later showed 18 percent of the pilot were unemployed compared to 52 percent of the non-pilot, but a far greater proportion had left the labour market (18.2 percent compared to 9.5 percent) or moved into retraining (6.4 compared to 19 percent non-pilot).

- Participants had confidence that the course would provide employment benefits in the long term and had modified their expectations as a result of the course.
- LEC and participants cited employer attitudes as the major barrier to employment.

Auckland North Migrant Engineers Pilot

Twenty-six qualified and experienced engineers, reasonable standard of English

Objectives

- To develop a tailored programme to meet the needs of professional migrant clients in accessing work experience and employment.
- To improve opportunity for work experience, improve employment outcomes, and improve access to appropriate employers.
- To enhance client self-esteem.
- To assess potential for joint-venture programmes between Work and Income and recruitment agencies.

Methods

A recruitment agency assessed client's skills and qualifications. They approached potential employers to offer free placements for up to six months and offered post-placement support.

Outcomes

- Psychometric tests are not suitable for NESB clients.
- Agencies are useful to access employers outside Work and Income's normal contacts.
- Employment outcomes are minimal – full (7.7 percent) or part time (3.8 percent) employment/work experience for only two clients – less than for non-pilot group (10.5 percent and 5.3 percent).
- Poor English language status of clients and significant negative attitudes of employers are major factors.
- Specialist WINZ staff may provide a similar outcome to that of the recruitment agency.

Waikato Thrive Pilot – Extension of Focis project

All new migrant applicants in area and families (540), including Indo-Fijians but no Pacific clients

Objectives

- To develop successful case management and service delivery targeted to migrant client needs.
- To lift stakeholder confidence in Work and Income service delivery, including; provision of emergency assistance and access to employment and training services.

- To work by principles including assistance to clients within family and cultural context, and carried out in a collaborative and open relationship with key stakeholders.

Methods

Services were co-ordinated through a network of *Thrive* specialists at appropriate geographic locations who made a full assessment of all migrant clients and networked with community organisations working with migrant families. *Thrive* case managers were regularly trained and supported through this pilot.

Outcomes

- Significant improvements in the level of migrant client satisfaction.
- Effective informal working relationships established with other community support organisations.
- Problems with integration of *Thrive* service delivery concept and processes within Work and Income standard case management practice.
- High commitment of time to achieve this outcome with low levels of referrals and placement in work experience and employment although this was not a *Thrive* objective.
- Clients considered generally not work-ready.

Central Region Migrants Pilot – Extension of earlier project

Two courses, 20 clients in each course. Tertiary-qualified NESB migrants and non-English-speaking Pacific clients

Objectives

- To provide tailored training and work experience.
- To improve the achievement of acceptable employment outcomes.
- To identify and reduce barriers to employment.
- To establish relationships with outside agencies, communities and local employers.

Methods

An ESOL provider developed a targeted 15-week training programme, including CV preparation and work experience and individual client plans.

Outcomes

- Eighteen clients completed the second course of two weeks work experience.
- Qualitative data indicated satisfaction with the course and improved confidence, understanding of Work and Income role and improve understanding of the job market.
- Labour market outcomes included five having secured more than 20 hours/ week of employment, and three still in work experience.
- Outcomes compared with the non-pilot group were disappointing – only 17.6 percent in work compared with 19.2 percent, none in subsidised work compared with 11.5 percent in non-pilot and 36.3 percent in training compared with 11.5 percent in non-pilot.
- Poor timing of courses during the non-employment period over Christmas and employer attitudes were considered the major obstacles.

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1 Introduction

As part of the 2000 Budget, Cabinet agreed to the development of operational responses by the then Department of Work and Income (now Work and Income, a service of the Ministry of Social Development), to meet the needs of recent migrants to New Zealand who are unemployed. This response was intended to address the issue of the small but significant number of recent migrants to New Zealand who, despite having overseas work experience and qualifications, are unemployed and receiving income support assistance.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Immigration to New Zealand

In September 1999 the NZ Immigration Service (NZIS) identified two intersecting migration trends affecting the numbers of migrants to New Zealand with a non-English speaking background (NESB). Firstly, the 1991 changes in selection policies shifted emphasis to migrants' skills and qualifications rather than an immediate New Zealand job offer. This resulted in considerably higher NESB migration numbers. And, secondly, the globalisation of trade, telecommunications and labour markets has created a greater pool of people immigrating more often and not necessarily permanently. Increasingly, migrant-receiving countries like New Zealand are competing for skilled migrants.

1.2 Barriers facing migrants

General barriers specific to NESB migrants

Anecdotal evidence indicates that over the past decade, the proportion of NESB migrants among Work and Income's clients has increased. A substantial body of research suggests that migrants face difficulties additional to those encountered by most of Work and Income's client base.

A number of these are of a practical nature. For example, several studies (Childs and Hill, 1997; Abdi and Sako, 1998; Woodward et al, Dec 1999 and March 2000; NZIS, 2000; Ho et al, March 2000; Benson-Rea et al, 2000) identify the following as major barriers to migrants gaining employment:

- inadequate level of English language skills and access to ESOL training
- lack of qualification recognition and the ability to gain New Zealand registration
- lack of access to New Zealand employment networks
- lack of New Zealand work experience
- lack of interview skills and inappropriate CVs.

Barriers resulting from employer attitude

Other issues facing NESB job seekers include employer resistance to hiring migrants. A recent study commissioned by the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust (EEO, 2000) reported that more than 95 percent of the human resource professionals and recruitment consultants surveyed considered that some groups of people face unfair barriers to employment.

Among those considered most likely to face such barriers were people with a different accent and culture. More than 80 percent of the respondents had first-hand experience of talented and appropriately qualified people being discriminated against in the job market. This study followed

from an earlier survey (Basnayake Nov 1999) of Sri Lankan migrants, the vast majority of whom had tertiary qualifications and had held professional jobs prior to migration. Almost half reported they had faced discrimination while trying to find employment in New Zealand.

A study carried out among Work and Income's migrant clients in Auckland North and Auckland Central regions (Oliver, 2000) highlights the multiple barriers to employment faced by migrants. These barriers are identified as personal, cultural, economic, societal and systemic. The latter, particularly employers' attitudes, race discrimination, and government policies and systems, were identified by all respondents as the main barriers to finding work for professional migrants. The report suggests that many factors labeled as deficits in the migrants (eg lack of New Zealand experience, being overqualified, lack of English fluency) were in fact problems of attitude and discrimination amongst employers.

There has been less research looking at recent migrants' experience of the New Zealand labour market from the business perspective, ie the demand side. The New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) commissioned three discrete projects to address this issue (NZIS, 1998). All three studies highlight the paradox of a labour market displaying significant unfilled demand for skilled labour, and numerous highly qualified and experienced immigrants who remain unemployed or under-employed. As reported elsewhere, supply-side factors such as English language skills, local work experience and qualification recognition were seen by business to be important potential barriers to entry into the job market for recent, highly skilled immigrants. On the demand side, the attitudes and recruitment practices of potential employers are emphasised. There is evidence of bias, or potential bias, in terms of recruitment by employers. It is also clear that there is under-utilisation of skilled migrants, which extends across numerous professions. For example, significant numbers of highly qualified immigrants remain unemployed while employers, particularly in the IT industry, note a shortage of skilled workers (Morgan and Banks 2000).

Two studies took place to examine the demand side of NESB migrant employment as part of Massey University's New Settlers Programme. These studies examined the employment and deployment in New Zealand companies and government organisations of migrants from countries in which English is not the official language (Watts and Trlin, 2000). Immigrant response to the survey drew attention to a range of problems that impede the utilisation of their skills, including an apparent reluctance by many New Zealanders to adjust to the new immigration environment, and widespread negative attitudes towards people from different cultures. Current immigration policy emphasises the importance of increasing the nation's human capital by attracting skilled, well-qualified people (NZIS 1995a and b). However, the results of these studies suggest that there are barriers to the participation of NESB immigrants that limit their ability to contribute productively.

There are obvious consequences of such under-utilisation for both migrants and employers. The Auckland Central initiative focused on the issues impacting on the NESB client, ie the supply side, by addressing the job search skills and motivation required by Work and Income's clients in order to enhance their employment prospects.

2 The migrant pilot programmes

In response to the recognition of the needs of the growing number of NESB migrant clients, a number of regions have established specifically focused programmes. Four of these have been extended or established as pilots:

- Auckland Central: Migrant Work Track programme (MWT).
- North Auckland: Migrant Engineers programme (ME).
- Waikato Thrive project.
- Central Region Migrants programme.

2.1 Comparison of the migrant pilot projects

The pilots have a range of objectives, but all are focused on the identification and response to the employment needs of recent NESB clients. Three, (Auckland Central, Auckland North and Central) have focused on the provision of support to get highly qualified NESB clients into work experience or permanent employment. The Auckland North programme worked with a participant group of 16 experienced engineers, the Auckland Central programme worked with two groups of 19 experienced and qualified participants, and the Central programme worked with two groups of 17 participants. The *Waikato Thrive* differed in size, providing support to over 540 participants and their families. Although the focus was on the delivery of improved culturally-appropriate service to clients within their relevant community and family context, the underlying objective was to place clients in work opportunities. Auckland North used external providers for recruitment, placement and training and Central used external providers for ESOL and other training.

2.2 Design of pilot programmes

2.2.1 Auckland Central MWT pilot

Auckland Central initiated the Migrants Work Track (MWT) pilot designed specifically for migrants. It places clients who at risk of long-term unemployment into a managed job search environment. The Work Track programme carries a strong work-first message and is at the forefront of a move to intervene early in the unemployment cycle in order to reduce long-term dependency.

Selection criteria

MWT was an early intervention targeted at new enrolments. Selection criteria included those who were:

- enrolled between 0 -26 weeks
- in receipt of income support (preferably a work-tested benefit)
- Work and Income SOLO database Service Group Indicator SGI 3 or 4 (a five point work-ready rating)
- clear English (speaking and understanding)
- qualifications or work experience (either New Zealand or overseas)
- recent immigrant (no longer than five years in New Zealand).

Objectives

MWT assists clients to make realistic job choices, create an effective action plan and access to job-related networks, particularly industry contacts to maximise employment outcomes. MWT pilot objectives were to:

- optimise the use of case manager resources by utilising early intervention in order to assist the movement of migrant clients into work
- improve job search skills of migrants
- produce an updated CV
- build networks between migrants and employers
- increase the employment outcomes for participants
- increase the part-time earnings of those participants who remain in receipt of benefit
- strengthen the relationship between Work and Income and the Local Employment Co-ordination (LEC) group.

MWT activities

The MWT programme ran for three weeks in September 2000 with places for 19 participants and one tutor. A second programme was held in November 2000. The course content included:

- job search and retention skills
- guidance in contacting employers to obtain work
- CV preparation
- behavioural-based interviews
- guest speakers (migrants who have been successful in the labour market).

2.2.2 Auckland North Migrant Engineers project

The Auckland North Migrant Engineers (ME) project aimed to address the issues of professionally qualified engineers by utilising intensive case management, a collaborative partnership with a commercial recruitment organisation and piloting the use of targeted job subsidies. The pilot addressed issues including the limited ability of ME to network with appropriate employers and professional bodies, difficulty for employers in verifying qualifications and references and an absence of a working relationship between employers of professionally qualified staff and Work and Income.

Selection criteria

In August 2000, 45 Auckland North clients who met the following selection criteria were identified:

- qualifications to a professional standard in a variety of engineering fields
- a reasonable to high level of both spoken and written English
- eligibility for Job Plus Wage subsidy

From this group, 16 participants were selected for the programme. The breakdown of engineering types reflected the composition of the current register: 60 percent were

environmental, water, wastewater, road/traffic, civil/structural engineers, and the remaining 40 percent were mechanical, electrical, electronic and other.

Objectives

The Auckland North ME pilot had the following objectives:

- implement a tailored and individualised programme to meet the needs of professional migrant clients
- establish ongoing working relationships with commercial recruitment agencies
- improve access to appropriate employers and employment opportunities for migrant clients who are professionally qualified engineers
- improve the opportunity for migrant clients who are professionally qualified engineers to undertake credible work experience within their professions in a New Zealand working environment
- increase the self-esteem and motivation of migrant clients who are professionally qualified engineers
- improve employment outcomes for migrant engineers
- assess the effectiveness of this type of collaborative intervention.

ME pilot activities

The ME pilot used an engineering sector recruitment agency to interview participants, assess their English and skill levels, prepare CVs, clarify expectations about job, salary, and prepare a presentation package for employers. The agency identified work experience placements with employers prepared to utilise participants at no financial cost to their company. Where possible the agency staff attended interviews. When a placement was made, Work and Income paid a placement fee. The agency reported on interview outcomes, provided post-placement support to successful participants and reviewed the client strategy for unsuccessful participants.

2.2.3 Waikato Thrive project

The *Thrive* pilot built on the earlier *Focis* project, which aimed to provide specialist case management services for migrant clients who had English as a second language. It was guided by two general principles:

- procedures and initiatives will be carried out through a collaborative and open relationship with key stakeholders other than Work and Income, working with migrant families in the Hamilton area, and work will be informed by their advice
- clients will be considered as members of a family and a cultural group, rather than being treated solely as individual job seekers.

Selection criteria

The size of the client group was slightly less than two standard caseloads. Approximately 330 primary benefits referred from within the target group of job seekers and their families with the following characteristics:

- immigrant status was a barrier to employment
- have English as a second language
- long-term unemployed (over 26 weeks duration)

- Clients from the Pacific Islands, other than Indo- Fijians, were not included, as these were covered under different programmes. No distinction was made between migrants and official refugees.

Objectives

The *Thrive* project had the following objectives:

- introduce intensive and successful case management practices targeted and tailored to the unique needs of this group
- lift stakeholder confidence in Work and Income capacity to deliver services appropriate to migrants
- improve the quality of Work and Income services (eg the correct payment of income support, the provision of emergency assistance and access to employment and training services)
- improve Work and Income staff knowledge of the complex qualifications for benefit entitlement that relate to residence
- assist more migrant job seekers to achieve stable employment, work experience and training opportunities.

Thrive activities

Thrive focused on implementation of systems and case management practices into operations that acknowledged and responded to the special needs of this customer group. It developed productive relationships with the customer group and their community through extending the network and brokerage role of case managers. *Thrive* activities were co-ordinated through a central team, with liaison people in each contributing service centre. This network received ongoing training intended to develop heightened knowledge of the needs and the opportunities for migrant clients. The network was also used to monitor the quality of service provided under the model. The liaison group was intended to act as experts within service centres. Regular meetings ensured that provision of services were as effective as possible. *Thrive* management consulted widely in the initial stages of the project to establish protocols for programme activities, and strengthened this relationship through formal and informal contact over the programme duration.

2.2.4 Central Region Migrants pilot (CRM)

The Central Region Migrants (CRM) pilot aimed to address the concerns expressed by the Ethnic Council of Manawatu (ECM) and other community groups about migrants job-finding difficulties. The issues identified were:

- problems with work-related English
- lack of practical knowledge about the New Zealand work environment and the expectations of employers.

Selection criteria

Participants with the following characteristics were selected:

- long-term unemployed (over 26 weeks duration)
- tertiary qualifications
- a reasonable standard of spoken English.

CRM objectives

The CRM pilot had the following objectives:

- pro-actively assist the provider in obtaining acceptable employment outcomes for client trainees
- provide an intensive training programme for tertiary qualified migrants, specifically tailored to identify and respond to their particular employment needs
- provide work experience opportunities with employers, relevant to a migrant clients' qualifications
- identify and reduce barriers preventing qualified migrants from entering the New Zealand workforce
- establish ongoing working relationships with outside agencies, which have an interest in migrant matters, with the intention of utilising resources in a selective and productive manner
- improve the understanding of Work and Income staff about the particular issues faced by migrant clients in accessing labour market opportunities
- enhance Work and Income's relationship with the local migrant community
- expand the network of employers who may be prepared to provide work experience or paid work for migrants
- assist in building the capacity and training expertise of the provider by providing informed feedback on courses
- assist the provider to access relevant Work and Income local employer networks
- increase clients' self-esteem, confidence, motivation and job search skills
- provide migrants with an updated CV relevant to the New Zealand labour market.

CRM activities

The CRM pilot used Education Training Consultants (ETC), who had successfully carried out training for the initial course and had since developed extensive contacts with local Manawatu employers. ETC were contracted to run a pilot migrants ESOL programme based around elements of the ESOL model. This covered:

- job search skills
- interview techniques
- employee rights
- cross-cultural communication.

Training incorporated considerably reduced unit standard requirements with more emphasis on spoken English in the workplace. A crucial component was the two to three weeks work experience.

3 Findings

3.1 Findings specific to the regional projects

3.1.1 Auckland Central

The Migrant Work Track (MWT) pilot succeeded in some of its objectives. In particular, according to the participants, it has:

- improved their job search skills in the New Zealand environment
- promoted a positive attitude towards obtaining work
- assisted in focusing on realistic job choices, for example to look for entry level work in order to get work experience rather than wait for a job at the top end of their profession
- assisted participants in creating an effective action plan for seeking work; including being supported in cold-calling, looking in newspapers and learning about networking.

All participants considered the course worthwhile. Several indicated that the skills they had learned, particularly during the mock interviews, had assisted them in subsequent real interviews.

Participants reported that the facilitators promoted a positive attitude to job searching and also promoted more realistic expectations among participants about current job choices. To that extent the MWT has improved the quality of service delivery to clients who may otherwise be put in the 'too hard' category for already overloaded case managers.

Current resources for the MWT may not be sufficient if it is to be run on a more regular basis. For example, case managers have stated:

- two-monthly courses could be filled given the number of migrant job seekers who fit the current criteria
- a continuing need of CV services and access to a career adviser will require further resources
- travel costs of participants will be an ongoing cost
- more realistic time frames to achieve the pilot goals.

If the MWT is to result in improved employment and training outcomes for migrant's additional resources are essential. Facilitators, case managers and work brokers are needed on an ongoing basis. From the current pilot there is no evidence that an increase in employment outcomes for most participants was met. Few of the participants managed to establish contacts to gain work. Cultivating several medium-sized to large employers, could establish networks for migrants and having some of them participate in the MWT would be a useful first step. The MWT has served to strengthen the relationship between Work and Income and the Local Employment Committee LEC. They were supportive of Work and Income's initiative but they were cautious about its outcome if it were not run as part of a wider inter-agency initiative. Overall, the MWT has provided a very good service to the participants of the course. While the participants themselves felt they would prefer a course participating with general Work and Income clients there appears to be justification for the continuation of a specially targeted course for migrants.

3.1.2 *Auckland North*

As the majority of Work and Income's client base is made up of lower-skilled workers, there was a sound rationale for involving TAD, a commercial agency that specialised in engineers and had access to companies who employ this client group.

It is important that there is a clear understanding of the process by all parties. The first two months of the project may have been less effective because TAD did not understand or adhere to the work-experience focus. For example, one participant refused work experience, indicating that he had not understood what the programme entailed and some participants were unhappy with the idea of their professional services being offered free of charge.

The timeframe may have been too short as there was an indication that the programme was just beginning to work after six months. The first few months appear to have been spent advertising the programme through the engineering unions. It may have been more efficient to do this preliminary work before beginning the TAD component of approaching potential employers. An assessment and understanding of the local labour market is necessary.

There also needs to be recognition that, although these are subsidised work experience placements, it is not a no-cost option for the companies involved. Time and resources must be invested in training. While these are normally provided by companies as part of staff development plans, the opportunities for the placement of migrant clients may be improved by OSH training, introduction to relevant legislation, project management processes.

It is important to recognise the way in which companies work: the hiring structure of big companies may not be conducive to offering work experience; the 'lean mean' attitude whereby companies hire fewer staff working longer hours; and seasonal cycles.

There are indications clients may never get jobs in their profession in the region because of few opportunities and enough local engineers. New Zealand Immigration Service promotional material needs careful review to modify employment expectations of prospective business migrants. Only a few of the participants had work experience, and fewer still obtained employment. This is particularly disappointing given the enthusiasm of participants and their high expectation of work experience and subsequent employment.

Despite the initial support expressed by employers, no work opportunities were forthcoming from the Institute for Professional Engineers in New Zealand (IPENZ) members or major engineering firms. Eventually there was some response from smaller firms, notably some run by migrants. Employers who provided work experience reported that they were supportive of the scheme and would employ participants if jobs were available. The consensus from the interviews and the TAD reports is that the project's lack of success had more to do with the reluctance of employers to actively participate in the project than with any major shortcomings of the project. In other words, employer resistance to employing migrants appears to be the real issue. Excuses offered by employers for not employing migrants centre around their perceived unsuitability

The effective use of Work and Income's database is another crucial finding. The Work and Income database SOLO is not a research tool. It is designed to record accurate individual data but has limitations in presenting summary information about groups. There is also an inconsistency in the recording and upkeep of data. For example, frontline staff may record a person with an accent as being non-fluent in English or not be aware of considerable gains in fluency over time. Double-checking of information is essential.

3.1.3 *Waikato Thrive project*

This project did not consider labour market outcomes and there was no control group. Prime emphasis was placed on improving service delivery.

Thrive staff received consistent feedback from stakeholders that they were pleased with the changes made in service delivery. Frequent comments suggest that Work and Income and *Thrive* staff specifically were

- more flexible
- understood the situation of migrant clients better
- more accessible than previously.

The formal relationship established with the Multicultural Services Trust for the provision of interpreter services was seen as a real commitment by Work and Income to the migrant community. Relationships were maintained with other community groups on a more informal basis. Two other factors enhancing this relationship were the selection of case managers for the project who had an existing interest in this client group and valued cultural difference, and the provision of additional case manager training to heighten ability to deliver culturally appropriate services to clients.

The nature of the *Thrive* client base meant that a variety of general client needs were met by the team. Consideration of the needs of migrant job seekers in isolation from their families and communities was counter-productive, contributing to short-term, insecure employment, poor relationships in the workplace and strained relations in the home. This increased allocation of time and energy may have reduced the number of referrals but it is unclear whether this extra time allocation translated into better outcomes. The *Thrive* core team suggested that the labour market issues and the very poor success rate for employment vacancy referrals through SOLO had a greater affect on employment outcomes.

The project has enabled Work and Income to describe the makeup of this client group. In particular the numbers and qualifications of job seekers in each cultural group can now be described with confidence. This data has helped *Thrive* to plan delivery of employment products, and to make sure that they are dealing with appropriate groups in the wider community.

A combination of internal communication and standard case management practices reduced the potential benefits from the *Thrive* programme

Internal Communication

Despite programme manager briefing of service centre personnel, and the identification of a *Thrive* co-ordinator in each location, there were a number of instances of transfer of *Thrive* participants to different geographical areas, with a consequent reduction in the continuity and quality of service delivery. High staff turnover and the need for continual rebriefing and training of new staff aggravated these problems.

Standard Case Management

Thrive team members made a substantial argument for increased flexibility of standard case management practices: flexibility in scheduling, less emphasis on client plans and less emphasis on referral rates as a key performance indicator of case manager success. Their concerns and the lack of client labour market outcomes are not seen by the *Thrive* team as a failure of the programme. They see them rather as a result of constraints of time and process which can be improved by increased case management flexibility.

3.1.4 Central Region migrants pilot

Participants on both courses were very positive. They mentioned the value of the practical aspects of the programme such as CV preparation, writing a covering letter and interview skills. Modules on New Zealand and Maori culture, the New Zealand workplace environment and basic computing were also worthwhile. Participants valued the work experience component although some felt it should be extended to four weeks. The participants praised the quality and calibre of the tutors, and they were particularly pleased that one of the tutors was also a migrant.

Running a two-phased approach allowed for improvements from the February course to be tested in October. Further refinements were suggested as a result of the second course. The timing of the CV and the work experience components is important, as are the promotional seminar to targeted clients and the employers evening to showcase participants. The importance of work experience and the crucial role of a strong programme co-ordinator were emphasised. The enthusiasm for promotion seemed to have diminished after the first course, as there was no further media promotion by Work and Income although the provider did continue.

Keeping the case managers and work brokers informed on the progress of the courses was another area where communication was less than optimal. Frontline staff buy-in is essential for the careful selection of participants and a well-managed follow-up plan. Employment outcomes for participants were not as strong as anticipated. Possibly it takes longer for qualified migrants than other clients to obtain employment. Employer resistance to migrants is also an issue and needs further study and resolution.

This course could work as a model to be used in other areas of New Zealand with similar migrant populations. It provides migrants with new skills and a level of confidence to job search, which is very positive. The work experience component was valuable for both the participants and employers who may not so readily turn away migrant job seekers in the future.

3.2 Generalised findings

The findings from the four projects have highlighted several issues common to all. These are grouped in the following areas: the migrants, the employers and the role of the Ministry.

3.2.1 Migrants

The general profile of the migrants who participated in this project suggests that they are well educated, come from professional background, want to work and are frustrated at their inability to obtain employment. Some are depressed by their situation and this impacts on their level of confidence and self-esteem. Some of the issues for migrants are:

- The English skills of many of the migrants are not at a level where they have clear understanding of the spoken and written language. This was illustrated by the psychometric testing in the Auckland North project, which the majority of participants. It is further illustrated by the Waikato Thrive project, where many of the migrants had to enrol in basic English skills courses.
- Some migrants have difficulty envisioning or entertaining a different career choice if their current one is not going to result in obtaining employment. This was particularly the case with some participants in the Auckland North Engineers project, where the sentiment "I am an engineer and have been for...years" was repeated by several of them. They were also reluctant to consider a lower entry position even to obtain valuable work experience. In both

the Auckland Central and Central Region projects the training given to participants considerably reduced this attitude with participants in both projects reporting that they were looking at different career options, including extensive retraining, or else being prepared to take either a lower entry, or sideways moving position to enhance their potential for obtaining permanent work in their chosen profession.

- Migrants' qualifications presented difficulty particularly in some professions. For example in the Auckland North project one of the reasons given by IPENZ for the reluctance of employers to employ migrants was that their qualifications did not meet the same level as those of New Zealand trained engineers. However, before migrants are granted immigration status their qualifications have been approved by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).
- The level of depression experienced by some of the migrants has a big impact on their ability to confidently look for work. In the Central Regions project the course provider reported that many of the participants were suffering from depression, particularly those who were long-term unemployed.

3.2.2 Employers

One of the issues is the role of employers in the difficulties faced by migrants in obtaining employment. Some of the ways in which employers influence the ability of migrants to find work are:

- Employer attitudes were, on the whole, very negative towards migrants. For example, in the Auckland North engineer's project only seven of 25 participants were able to find work experience. Two of the four employers who offered work experience were themselves migrants and of the five engineers who subsequently found permanent employment, three were employed by former migrants. The provider in the Central Region project reported difficulties in finding employers willing to provide work experience for migrants. There were various reasons given for this negative attitude: a decided reluctance on the part of employers to 'risk' taking on a migrant engineer or other professional who has educational level and previous overseas experience with which they may not be familiar.
- Issues regarding English skills and ability of migrants to understand instructions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that employers who have taken on migrants in the past have not always been pleased with these appointments. New Zealand is a small country and because professional groups have close networks, knowledge of these supposed 'failures' spreads quickly.
- Cultural differences were often cited as reasons for not employing migrants. Some reasons were gender roles that may cause friction in a New Zealand climate or the perceived greater experience a migrant.
- Financial considerations for employers made them reluctant to take on migrants if they felt they would have to expend a lot of time and effort in training. One of reasons some employers were reluctant to take on engineers for work experience in the Auckland North project was that even though they would not have to pay a salary to the migrants, in other ways the experience would be costly for them. This manifested in terms of training and mentoring. Many companies in New Zealand survive on very low margins and do not see any positive aspects in taking on an individual whom they see as a liability.

The above attitudes of some employers would appear to arise from an unjustifiable stereotyping of all migrants seeking employment regardless of ability and qualifications. While men experience some prejudice, women migrants also face similar stereotyping.

3.2.3 *Issues for the Ministry*

Some issues relating to the operations of Work and Income have been identified as a result of the four projects. These include the positive aspects of involvement with community organisations, the limitations of Work and Income staff to address the specific needs of migrants who are professionals, and the commitment of some Work and Income staff to support migrants into employment.

The involvement of community groups in all of the projects except the Auckland North Engineers project reflects Work and Income's positive shift in recognising the value of working with the community in addressing difficult issues. The Auckland Work Track Project, which was involved with the Local Employment Co-ordination (LEC) group proved to be a positive relationship. In the Waikato *Thrive* project the relationship with community stakeholder groups was seen as fundamental to its success. Consistent feedback from stakeholders shows they are pleased with the changes made in service delivery to migrants. The most frequently made comments suggest that Work and Income is more flexible with migrants and understands their situation better. The formal relationship established with the Multicultural Services Trust for the provision of interpreter services was seen as a real commitment by Work and Income to the migrant community.

In the Central Region project the relationship, from the perspective of the Manawatu Ethnic Council, was not so successful, as they did not feel they had been kept well informed of the progress of the project. However, they were involved in the selection process of the provider and were informed of project outcomes. The migrants in the projects were generally well educated and highly skilled professionals who do not fit the normal profile of Work and Income clients. While that in itself is unusual it is compounded by the poor English skills of the migrants. This becomes very time consuming for Work and Income staff. The *Thrive* project utilised specialist case managers whose caseloads were substantially lower than those of other staff.

Expectations of work placement for participants in the projects may have been too high given the needs of the participants. In all projects, except for the Waikato *Thrive* one, substantially fewer participants had found permanent work in the designated post project time span than was anticipated. An acknowledgement that migrants clients will likely take longer to find work needs to be made and clients need to be managed with that in mind .

One area of operations which was thus identified is the need for more intensive follow up by case managers with such clients, particularly those who have been on Work Track or other courses, so that the increased confidence reported by participants does not diminish.

The importance of good communication between different staff has also been highlighted. Case managers and work brokers need to work together actively to promote and support migrant job seekers. Work brokers involved in both the Auckland Central and Central Region projects also acknowledged the importance of meeting the participants in order to promote them effectively.

The majority of clients involved in all projects would have benefited from more intensive English lessons. However resources are not available for this to happen or many migrants are excluded from TOPS courses (English skills) because of their previous qualifications. In specific professions it may be necessary to provide additional training. The Auckland North Engineers project identified that one area prospective employers used as a reason for not employing

migrants was that they were not familiar with New Zealand legislation, for example the Resource Management Act 1991 and health and safety laws. This may be a justification for the provision of such a training course for engineers

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

The four projects have provided valuable information about how to assist migrant clients into work. The Auckland Central Migrant Work Track and the Central Region training course have demonstrated ways in which migrant clients can be assisted into work through targeted training. The Waikato *Thrive* project has shown how to successfully provide specialised case management for migrant clients, while the Auckland North project has provided information about how to provide employment assistance through work experience for clients. The projects, which involved training for migrant clients, were deemed very successful in that the clients felt they benefited from the course content.

In both the Central Auckland and Central Region projects participants spoke about how the course had improved their job search skills in the New Zealand environment, had given them the opportunity to update their CVs. They also had the opportunity to practise interviews. Most found the course helped them focus on realistic job options and what they would need to do to achieve this, for example look for work at entry level in order to get work experience rather than wait for a job at the top end of their profession, or to look for other options including retraining. Participants in both these courses spoke highly of the facilitators and trainers.

In the Central Auckland case this involved Work and Income-trained facilitators with an outside provider to assist with the CVs. In the Central Region an outside provider ran the 16-week course. One of the major differences between these courses was their duration. The Auckland Central course was for three weeks, while the Central Region was 16 weeks.

The advantage of the longer course was the ability to include work experience, although this was not without difficulties in finding willing employers. However, having this component for the course was important. It may be possible to look at running a slightly shorter course, which still included the work experience component.

It was clear that the participants were in need of the support offered during the courses, as their confidence was low. All reported a raised level of confidence after the course and they would therefore benefit from some more intensive support from case managers after the course in order to maintain their confidence for job searching. The fact that a minority of participants found work within six months after the course suggests a need for that support to be ongoing.

It appears from all projects that migrants are more likely to experience difficulty in finding employment quickly. This is in part due to the reluctance of employers. This was highlighted by all four projects, even the Waikato one, which did not have job placement as its main objective. The Auckland North project perhaps illustrates this dilemma the best. Despite interest from over 200 companies only four were prepared to offer work experience to migrant engineers. During this project interviews with employers and an engineers' professional group reinforced the negative attitudes held by employers towards migrants. While some of their concerns may be justified most of them fall into the area of 'myth' or stereotyping and as such are considered excuses rather than legitimate reasons. Those employers who did provide employment for participants showed a more enlightened attitude. It is interesting, and important, to note that two of the four employers who employed participants of the Auckland North project were themselves migrants, as were two of the four employers who subsequently offered permanent employment to five of the participants. It is clear that some form of education for employers is very necessary in order to debunk some of the 'myths' about migrant workers.

The projects have raised some operational issues for Work and Income. One is that Work and Income staff are not well equipped to provide a good service for migrant clients (that is not to say they do not try their best). Migrants do not fit the normal profile of Work and Income clients, as they are generally well-educated, highly skilled professionals – a group who would not normally utilise the services of Work and Income. Work and Income needs to examine how best to serve this group. It needs to include the assumption that it will be resource intensive – both in human and financial terms. However, short-term intensive input of may result in less long-term input as ideally this group of clients who should be very marketable.

The Waikato Thrive project has taken this route already as its project has focused on providing specialist case managers to work intensively with migrant clients to make them work-ready. It is a long-term issue which requires the use of varied resources to achieve this, in particular intensive English skills courses for clients. Their work with community organisations has been of great benefit to both the migrants and Work and Income because of the community perception of Work and Income's willingness to work with them.

Overall the projects have provided valuable information for Work and Income to work with in order to best assist migrant clients. The fact that they were not so successful in work placement outcomes should not be seen as a failure of the projects but rather an indication of the setting in which they operated – one where there is a lot of employer resistance and reluctance to employ migrants. From the perspective of the migrants the projects have been most successful in that they feel more confident in their ability to job search or retrain in a different profession.

4.2 Further research

Over recent years Work and Income has introduced programmes to address the practical barriers facing its migrant clients, for example English language ability. An important issue not yet addressed is that of employer resistance to hiring NESB job seekers. There appears to be reluctance on the part of some employers to take on migrant workers. The lack of employment outcomes from these projects would indicate that participants have come up against this barrier. Yet reports such as the EEO Trust (2000) and Watts and Trlin (2000) have highlighted the benefits for employers of non-discriminatory hiring practices: "Diversity brings opportunities for expanding markets, increased customer satisfaction, higher productivity and reduced staff turnover, as well as the satisfaction of being sure that your business has the optimum staff for its needs. . . . Ensuring your employment practices guarantee a diverse workforce is also just a step in facing the reality of the changing demographics in the 21st century. .." (EEO Trust, 2000). "A strong, knowledge-based economy depends on a citizenship that is well educated, skilled, hard-working and creative. All available human resources, imported as well as native, must be recognised, developed and utilised to their full potential.

This cannot occur if skilled immigrants have limited opportunities to participate. Here, economic considerations link with issues of social justice and equity." (Watts and Trlin, 2000). It is unfortunate that the skills of this highly motivated group of job seekers are being under-utilised by an economy that needs them. If one of the main stumbling blocks to placing migrants in jobs is employer attitude, work is required to discover a means of overcoming their reluctance to hire NESB migrants. Work and Income will need to be more pro-active in its approach to this situation if it intends to place more migrants in work.

4.3 Recommendations

While acknowledging that Work and Income cannot solve all the issues facing migrants alone there are valuable lessons learned from the pilots. They have demonstrated how to tailor an employment programme to suit the specific needs of migrant clients. By addressing these issues migrant clients can be more work-ready and offset some of the arguments presented by employers for not hiring them. The recommendations are as follows:

- The Work and Income database SOLO is not a research tool. It is designed to record accurate individual data but has limitations in presenting summary information about groups. There is also an inconsistency in the recording of data and upkeep of data. For example, frontline staff may record a person with an accent as being non-fluent in English or not be aware of considerable gains in fluency over time. Double-checking of information is essential.
- Joint ventures must have a clear understanding of the process by all parties. When offering subsidised work experience placements, we need to acknowledge it is not a no-cost option for the companies involved. If training is to be provided by them appropriate compensation should be offered. Alternatively Work and Income could offer profession-specific training to targeted clients in order to make them more attractive employment prospects. We should be aware of external constraints on the successful running of courses and job experience. For example, looking for work experience for clients while there is not much work around Christmas or at times when students are looking for work may be counterproductive.
- An assessment of the demand side of the local labour market is necessary. There are indications that some clients may never get jobs in their profession in some region because there are few opportunities especially if clients are unwilling to move.
- New Zealand Immigration Service promotional material may need review to modify employment expectations of prospective business migrants. A task force group could be formed, involving Work and Income and other community groups. This would give support to Work and Income's desire to support migrants into the workforce and would involve the resources of the community groups whose focus is on migrants. This group would also need to work closely with employers to ensure their needs can be accommodated.
- A core group could be set up within Work and Income to establish or support extensive testing of migrants to assess their English skills levels; a purpose-specific English skills course for those who do not meet the standards required, with a special emphasis on the technical aspects of the particular profession; the provision of more places on dedicated Work Track courses. These could be of longer duration than normal and involve a work experience component.
- Specialised case managers who work primarily with migrant professionals and work brokers to actively promote migrants to employers. This may require some training of staff to understand the different needs of professionals and the particular needs of migrants. The case managers would need more flexibility in scheduling and a lesser emphasis on referral rates as a key performance indicator of success.
- There is a need for Work and Income to investigate the best way of ensuring that the assessment of migrants' qualifications by NZQA meets New Zealand standards. If there is a discrepancy between the qualification standards of NZQA and those of professional groups such as IPENZ, Work and Income needs to investigate the most appropriate way to provide the training needed to up skill migrants to New Zealand standard. Employer attitude is frequently cited as a major issue. It may be useful for Work and Income to conduct future

research into employer attitudes. There is also a need for Work and Income to investigate the feasibility of carrying out a campaign aimed at changing employer attitudes and subsequent hiring behaviour, similar to that run by the Victorian state government. A similar initiative is being undertaken in Christchurch for mature job seekers.

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