

Employment

Enabling inclusion through employment for 20 years

Through our established in-house programmes, jointly funded by government and business, companies gain direct access to jobseekers from a wide range of backgrounds.

BITCI's first Employment Programmes began in 2002 as joint ventures with founding member companies that wanted to boost social inclusion. Designed to help people re-join mainstream society through employment, they included:

- the Linkage service for ex-offenders
- the Ready for Work programme for people affected by homelessness.

Since then, we've worked with and supported numerous other jobseekers experiencing barriers, including:

- migrants and asylum seekers, through the EPIC programme set up in 2008
- migrant parents of Irish-born children
- young people in Ballymun and the North East Inner City
- people with enduring mental illness
- people with disabilities and health issues
- residents of Salvation Army hostels
- members of the Traveller community
- women returners.

We have always designed and tailored these programmes to meet the needs of the groups and people concerned. Business engagement is also critical to their success, as our members support with:

- group training
- one-to-one guidance from job coaches or career counsellors
- workshops
- mentoring
- mock interviews
- work placements
- jobs.

How BITCI supports inclusive employers

How BITCI supports inclusive employers

We enable employers to show their commitment to building inclusive workplaces in two ways:

1. Partnering with companies to deliver **inclusive employment programmes**, involving a partnership approach for the recruitment process and in-work supports.
2. We provide **volunteering opportunities for employees** (primarily, but not exclusively, of businesses engaged in our inclusive employment programmes).

Our current employment programmes

EPIC supports refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants to find employment through:

- group pre-employment and integration training
- one-to-one career guidance
- access to multiple business supports
 - IT skills training
 - mentoring
 - business workshops
 - mock interviews.

EmployAbility supports people with disabilities and health challenges to find employment through:

- one-to-one career guidance
- business workshops
- opportunities for work experience
- in-work supports.

The **Women@Work** programme supports women returning to the workplace. It offers:

- individual career coaching
- group training
- access to business supports
- in-work supports.

The **Traveller Employment Programme** responds to the significant discrimination faced by this community – unemployment rates for Travellers are around 80% (compared with under 6% for the general population). We provide:

- jobseeker training within Traveller organisations
- job coaching
- supported employment opportunities.

The extensive impact of our programmes

Each year, BITCI’s Employment Programmes support about 350 jobseekers with diverse backgrounds. Most have third-level and postgraduate qualifications, and all have skills, experience and talents that can benefit businesses.

2022

369 participants

55% hired

22% moved onto training or internships

2002-2022

5,058 participants

47% hired

25% moved on training or internships

Our team, and participating business team members, have been privileged to meet inspiring individuals, who have shown incredible strength and endurance to stay on their path to employment.

During their time with us, our programme participants frequently need to prioritise other basic needs such as health, housing, childcare and their immigration status. That means progress can be slow and non-linear.

When our job coaches and career counsellors can match our participants’ commitment, creating an empathetic and motivating relationship, our participants can secure work. Not only that, but they can also find a job that suits their skillsets and interests. Furthermore, they can leave our programme equipped with the know-how to find jobs in the future.

The ripple effects of these job outcomes are inspiring. We know migrants who have finally been able to save and put their children through college, along with people who have secured jobs in HR and reach out to subsequent programme participants to fill vacancies in their company.

For Traveller communities, a positive experience of employers and employment is rare, so one good outcome in our Traveller programme can encourage others to try, despite the real ongoing threat of discrimination.

How businesses benefit from our programmes

The businesses that work with our programmes source motivated, skilled, experienced, and loyal employees. At every stage of our programmes, we see some attrition. This means that by the time we put forward candidates, we're confident they are able and willing to do the job.

In recent years, as diversity, equity and inclusion have been recognised as core to good business, and as the jobs market has tightened, our programmes have become perfectly positioned as a business solution.

In recent years, we have focused our energies on developing strategic, structured employment drives, in partnership with our member companies.

These strategic programmes work because recruiting our programme participants is their central objective. Senior management buys in because the work is aligned with their sustainability strategy. Meanwhile, our BITCI team members act as advocates, conveners and intermediaries between the business and the job candidate.

How businesses can engage effectively

By working with our employment team, businesses can get closer to marginalised jobseekers than they would otherwise. They can understand the challenges jobseekers face and how to address them. Find out how to support jobseekers effectively in this table.

Table 1

Challenges for our participants	How these affect jobseekers	How businesses can respond
Significant life changes in a short period, along with frequent appointments with government, accommodation and health services	<p>Disengagement and sense of overwhelm.</p> <p>Difficulty remembering appointments.</p> <p>No shows for meetings and events.</p>	<p>Share anecdotes of previous participants who got a job in your company to incentivise attendance.</p> <p>Consider simplifying the name of an event. Terms such as 'job shadowing' may be confusing, for example.</p> <p>Ensure the BITCI team make phone call reminders the morning of an event.</p> <p>Give easy access to online events. For example, share one hyperlink in an email.</p>
Insecure accommodation such as living in hotel rooms with their children or sharing rooms with strangers	<p>Hard to find the space and quiet required for online meetings or training.</p>	<p>Know workshop participation and having camera turned on is often not an option.</p>
Financial distress – asylum seekers get €38 per week, if they qualify. Some sell important possessions to pay for necessities.	<p>Lack of childcare options so can't commit to training/ events.</p> <p>Can't afford transport to training, events or interviews.</p> <p>Inadequate IT, such as poor internet connection or having no laptop and using a phone instead.</p>	<p>Find ways to offer part-time and hybrid roles.</p> <p>Donate old laptops to our programmes.</p>

Language barrier – especially prevalent in new asylum seekers from Ukraine, also an issue for neuro-diverse candidates

Low levels of English prevent qualified workers from breaking into their chosen sector.

Low confidence about applying for jobs and networking. This creates a vicious circle and a larger gap on the CV.

Talk slowly and avoid metaphors, Irish phrases, and business speak that is hard to translate. These could include:

- down the rabbit hole
- red flags
- up to ninety
- chance your arm
- pivot
- many more!

Remove acronyms and jargon from presentation slides, and use a larger font.

Design content of workshops so they're accessible to people brand new to the industry. In other words, offer a total beginner's guide.

**BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY
IRELAND**

Business in the Community Ireland
3rd Floor Phibsborough Tower
Phibsborough Road
Dublin 7

bitc.ie

info@bitc.ie

+353 1 874 7232

CHY No. 13968

Business in the Community is a company limited by guarantee.