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**University College Cork, Ireland**  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

# **Comhionannas Saoránachta do Shochaí Úr?**

# **Equal Citizenship for a New Society?**

**By Féilim Ó hÁdhmaill**



**Coiste na n-larchimí**

# Comhionannas Saoránachta do Shochaí Úr ?

## *Equal Citizenship for a New Society?*

Anailís ar Dhéiseanna Traenála agus  
Fostaíochta do IarChimí Poblachtacha i mBéal  
Feirste

*An Analysis of Training and Employment  
Opportunities for Republican Ex-Prisoners in  
Belfast*

by Féilim Ó hAdhmaill

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## Réamhrá

A few years ago, I listened to a member of a training organisation comment that in the context of the accelerated release programme under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement republican ex-prisoners of war (POWs) would surely be experiencing low self esteem, having difficulty reintegrating within their communities, exhibiting a lack of elementary employment skills, and an inability in securing and maintaining employment, or becoming self employed. He in turn proposed to prescribe training measures to redress this perceived malaise.

At its most benign, this attitude amounted to wishful ambulance chasing. On the other hand it is consistent with an ideological mindset, which has yet to come to terms with the political implications of conflict resolution in Ireland. Whatever the exact inspiration for these remarks they betray a fundamental misconception shared by those who do not, or choose not to understand, the dynamics of political struggle and culture of resistance, which permeate the nationalist community. Life did not somehow stop for republicans with incarceration in jails in Ireland, Britain, Europe and the USA. For Irish republicans jail became another site of struggle, an incubator of new, more powerfully honed organisational, political, educational, and community skills.

This research provides a brief snapshot of the diverse abilities and skills which exist among republican ex-POWs. It dispels the misconception that they were anything but highly motivated and industrious before jail and while in jail. Moreover, the statistics relating to their experience since release from jail reveals the respondents to be people wishing to make a full and meaningful contribution to the development of their communities. The crux of this research questions whether the will and resources exist to allow them to do so. In this respect the analysis explores whether our society passes one crucial litmus test at the heart of the peace process: whether republican ex-POWs are being afforded their rights as equal citizens. In universal terms, this test has still to be passed as many barriers continue to deny republican ex-POW's economic, social and political equality.

Our ex-POWs may well be accepted as equal and valuable citizens at home within their communities, but much more remains to be done to ensure equality is afforded them in Irish society, north and south. One crucial sector where this remains particularly acute is that of training for employment and access to the labour market itself. The report challenges the nature of training policy generally and especially its relevance for republican ex-POWs. It disputes the overarching role of British macro-economic policy in setting the terms for training policy and its practice. Training in any context should be a tool for development, transformation and progress, and no more especially so than in a conflict resolution situation. The lessons of this report are two-fold. Developmentally, training should be process-led with the participants at the centre of that process. Politically and concurrently, training programmes should accept the responsibility to serve the reintegration of ex-prisoners and empower them to secure and build equality in this society.

It is our hope that the substance of this document will strategically engage with the debate around training generally and specifically the republican ex-POW community. We believe it

reveals issues about which non-government organisations, government agencies, and intermediary funding bodies must become sensitised. It presents principles and operational models of best practice, which should influence future funding opportunities particularly under the auspices of the Community Support Framework. Importantly, it makes a compelling case for more comprehensive research on training, employment and related issues for ex-prisoners and their families.

As our society proceeds along its journey of conflict resolution we hope **'Equal Citizens For a New Society'** will help develop one route which links viable training to coherent employment strategies and the eventual foundation of economic equality in Ireland.

Molaim an taighde seo.

Declan Kearney

## Executive Summary

Previous research evidence appears to suggest that while they suffer from similar socio-economic problems to the wider nationalist community, the problems for republican ex-prisoners seem to be on a greater scale. The primary objective of this research was to investigate the current obstacles facing republican ex-prisoners in training and employment and to make proposals for change.

In total, 102 ex-prisoners were involved in the formal research, which involved both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Most of the ex-prisoners in the research never experienced formal employment before going to jail for the first time. Of those who had been employed, the majority were involved in construction or in low paid low skilled service industry type jobs. However, there were some who worked as public sector professionals.

### Of the survey sample

- 89% had experienced periods of unemployment since their release;
- 25% of respondents had experienced more than 10 years unemployment;
- 59% who had experienced unemployment for more than 2 years.

Employment sectors for ex-prisoners are significantly different from those occupied prior to imprisonment. There has been a shift away from traditional employment such as construction, towards newer sectors such as community development, where 54% of those currently employed were located.

Many factors inform the experience of ex-prisoners in training and employment after release. They remain confined to areas where the availability of work is low and where that work tends to be low paid and low skilled. Respondents believe that impediments getting a job/better job include:

- security concerns (89%);
- discrimination by employers (64%);
- lack of jobs in the area (51%);
- lack of previous job experience (49%);
- lack of a decent wage (35%);
- lack of relevant qualifications (32%);
- lack of confidence (27%).

Despite the fact that nearly two fifths of respondents (38%) were currently unemployed, only 14% stated that they had been on a training scheme since release. The main factors militating against ex-prisoners obtaining training or qualifications after prison include:

- Security concerns; mentioned by well over two thirds (71%);
- Discrimination (45%);
- Lack of sensitivity to their needs by training agencies (40%);
- Lack of appropriate courses (36%);
- Lack of past job experience (33%);
- Lack of confidence (33%).

The research also shows the inadequacy of the media inspired notion of a stereotypical prisoner/victim dichotomy.

- More than one quarter of respondents (26%) had experienced the death of a family member as a result of the conflict;
- Nearly two fifths (36%) had experienced the death of a relative;
- Approximately three-quarters (74%) had experienced the death of a friend;
- Twenty three percent had experienced serious personal injury themselves, from gunshot wounds, to bomb injuries, to injuries due to beatings;
- Nearly half (46%) had experienced being intimidated out of their home, while 43% had had a family member, 57% a relative and 46% a friend, intimidated out of their home.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

If republican ex-prisoners are to play a full part in the building of a new society, it is essential that they be enabled to become equal citizens. There should be an active lateral deployment policy which positively takes into account the experience such ex-prisoners gained via their involvement in the political struggle. This would remove a great deal of the barriers to training and employment as well. This necessitates:

- The removal of legislative barriers placed against political ex-prisoners and the establishment of legislative safeguards under Fair Employment and Equality legislation and the Bill of Rights;
- Positive affirmative action which could be taken along the lines of the lateral deployment policy in post-Apartheid South Africa;
- The removal of barriers disbarring the employment of political ex-prisoners in the public services and any new policing service;
- The removal of 'criminal' records for those jailed as a result of the conflict to enable their full participation in social, public and political life.

While the dangers of attack, persecution and discrimination remain, ex-prisoners and other nationalists are unable to benefit from employment opportunities available in areas outside their own. As a result, nationalist areas of Belfast (and other areas) where there are high concentrations of unemployment and low concentrations of available jobs need to be targeted for special investment. Consequently what is needed is:

- A strategy for attracting long-term, high paid, high skilled jobs into nationalist areas of North and West Belfast, designed specifically for the residents of those areas;
- The creation of jobs and employment opportunities to be assisted with the provision of career paths that will enable linear progression;
- An emphasis on employers in receipt of government funding to employ locally.

Though this recommendation for the promotion of local labour clauses may require legislative changes in Fair Employment Legislation it should nonetheless stand as a requirement for employers benefiting from the plight of the people of these areas to employ

those people. Besides a clear need to create high skilled, high paid jobs locally there is also a need to link training provision to the needs of political ex-prisoners. Training proposals should:

- be linked directly to specific agreed outcomes such as the provision of a real job on completion;
- be linked to the acquisition of specific skills, which can be used to help the community or a specific project in the community or to the development of confidence, self-esteem, etc;
- take account of the skills ex-prisoners already have and attempt to improve upon these.

It is also clear from this research that the type of training provision which is likely to be successful for ex-prisoners is that which is participant-led, which addresses the real needs and wants of the trainees, which takes into account the security concerns and ethos issues, which addresses the income issues (and is thus wage-based), and which is aimed at some specific end goal—the acquisition of a real job or of skills of use in work in the community, etc. From this has emerged the proposal that what is needed is a dedicated training agency which caters for the specific needs of republican ex-prisoners. This in turn would require the release of adequate resources to cater for this need.

## Chapter One - Background

### Introduction

It is widely acknowledged within the nationalist community in Belfast that republican ex-prisoners tend to experience high levels of unemployment—estimates from other research projects have included figures such as 87.5% (Upper Springfield), 65% (New Lodge) and 82.5% (Monaghan). Research has also shown that ex-prisoners have a tendency not to participate in mainstream training provision aimed at improving chances of employment.(1) One major research survey conducted by the Andersonstown based ex-prisoner organisation, Tar Anall, published in 2000, stated that only 27.7% of Republican ex-prisoners released before 1990 were in employment yet only 27% had participated in mainstream training provision.(2) At the same time, the integration of political ex-prisoners into society and in particular into the employment market remains a stated priority of the British and Irish Governments, particularly since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in which the issue of political ex-prisoners occupied a prominent position.(3) The provision of training schemes to assist them in re-entering the employment market has also been a stated priority in terms of the European Union's Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (SSPPR) (or Peace 1 and 2 as it is more commonly known). Yet recent evidence would suggest these stated priorities appear to have had little effect in practical terms on the long-term problems ex-prisoners face of continuing discrimination in the employment field, high levels of unemployment and a low take-up of existing training provision. This research set out to investigate some of these issues with a view to formulating proposals that might alleviate the situation. Clearly, if we are serious about attempting to create a new society, one gauge of our success must include how the experience of republican ex-prisoners in the training and employment fields is improved.

### The Extent of the Problem

Since no reliable official figures exist, estimates for the number of political ex-prisoners living in the North vary immensely. Coiste na nIarChimí has itself estimated that about 15,000 republicans have been imprisoned during the current phase of the conflict in Ireland.(4) Most (but not all) of these have been released from jail. Some areas of the North have traditionally had higher concentrations of ex-prisoners. The Tús Nua research (1999) estimated that ex-prisoners made up about 11% of the local population in the Upper Springfield area of West Belfast while research in the New Lodge area estimated that they made up about 10% of the local population.(5) Whilst it is difficult to extrapolate these estimates to take in the whole of nationalist Belfast without further, more intensive research, McGill (1999) has suggested that for West Belfast an estimation of 6,000 ex-prisoners would not be far wrong.(6) If this figure is combined with the type of unemployment figures for ex-prisoners being obtained in local surveys it could be argued that somewhere in the region of 2,000-3,000 of the unemployed in West Belfast are ex-prisoners. The extent of the problem becomes clear when one considers that the West Belfast Unemployment Task Force currently estimates (July 2001) the real level of unemployment in the area to be between 10,000-12,000.(7) Thus it is possible that up to one in four of West Belfast's unemployed are ex-prisoners. Even if this is an over-estimate, it nonetheless shows the importance of tackling the problems faced by ex-prisoners in the employment and training fields. Despite the apparent new political dispensation and Section 75 of the N.I. Act (1998) which legislates for equality of opportunity on the basis of political opinion, it appears that

republican ex-prisoners continue to suffer because of their political beliefs and involvement in the republican struggle.

#### **Part of a Wider Community**

Republican ex-prisoners, of course, do not exist in isolation. They come from, and are part of, the wider nationalist community and share similar problems in terms of employment opportunities, discrimination and living in areas of multiple deprivation. However, they also experience problems which are unique to them as a group. The recognition of the continuing difficulties experienced by many people in nationalist areas generally in obtaining paid employment, combined with a major anti-discrimination campaign, led to improved Fair Employment legislation in the late 1980s. While it remains a matter of debate how successful such measures have been in improving the employment opportunities of many people in nationalist areas, what is clear is that republican ex-prisoners have tended not to benefit from such measures. Republican ex-prisoners continue to face high levels of direct discrimination in the employment field with the lack of protection from Fair Employment legislation. They also face high levels of indirect discrimination due to their lack of experience in paid employment as a result of years of imprisonment and involvement in the conflict.(8)

#### **Historic high unemployment levels**

High concentrations of unemployment in nationalist areas led to a British Government drive throughout the 1980s and 1990s to promote the establishment of new small businesses, self-employment and the growth of training schemes. The effects were limited. One fundamentally flawed concept to be promoted by the successive administrations was that lack of training and a reluctance on the part of the unemployed to work, were the primary reasons for unemployment. Failed government investment initiatives in nationalist areas were not taken into account. Policy was also underpinned by a philosophy that it was primarily the responsibility of the private market to solve the unemployment problem. The result has been increasingly draconian measures to force the unemployed off claimant registers alongside a growth of a plethora of different training schemes. A major criticism that can be made of this approach is that it suggests that the problem of unemployment in such areas is one which only the unemployed can solve themselves, by training to become more attractive to potential employers or by employing themselves. One commentator on the subject noted that 'It appears to be a case of blaming the victim for his/her own predicament and, as such, is an abdication of responsibility for years of neglect and structural discrimination'.(9) It has also meant that there has been a lack of a coherent strategy linking training to job creation. Instead training policy has been based on the notion that the jobs are available if only the unemployed could gain the right skills to make them employable. At the very least this is a highly contentious perspective.

Recent preliminary research commissioned by the Belfast Area Partnership Boards (10) for example, suggests that within Targeting Social Need (TSN) areas - which include the City's main nationalist areas - people without qualifications are nearly as likely to get jobs as those with qualifications. The suggestion is that the bulk of jobs available are low paid low skilled jobs. The problem remains one of a lack of highly paid highly skilled jobs available to

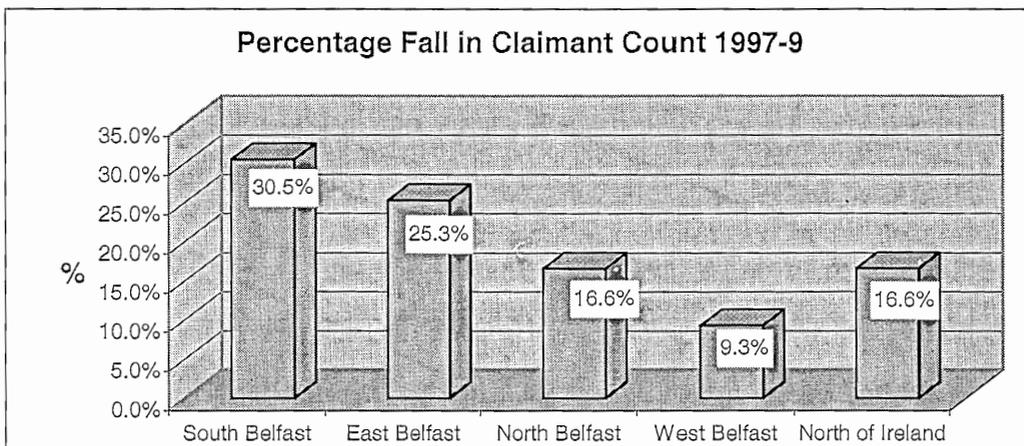
people from nationalist areas.

**Inequalities in Unemployment**

Rather than attempting to address the injustices and inequalities of the past, statutory agencies have appeared intent on trying to brush the problem under the carpet. Certainly there is no doubt that unemployment figures in nationalist areas have fallen over the past five years as the economy in general has witnessed an upturn both in the North and, in particular, in the South. However, huge question marks remain over what impact training provision has had on this and whether the benefits have been felt equally by all communities throughout the North. In relation to training, for example, no conclusive comprehensive figures exist linking current training provision to employment outcomes and in fact what information does exist appears to suggest that training has had a limited effect on employment. Nolan (2001), for example, has argued that only about 1 in 3 of the 1167 young people on the Job Skills Programme in West Belfast were reported to have entered employment and whilst no official figures for New Deal outcomes were available there were suggestions that only about 5% of New Deal 25+ people had entered employment.(11) There is also research evidence to show that large numbers of people who leave Job Seeker,s Allowance (JSA), either for employment or for training, find themselves back ‘on the Dole’ within a very short period of time. Tomlinson (2001), for example, has shown that while 9,500 people left JSA in October 1999, 43% had returned to it within a year - 22% were back on JSA within 12 weeks.(12)

While official unemployment levels have fallen the actual figures must be treated with caution. For example, Paul McGill in his unpublished report for Making Belfast Work (MBW) in 1999, argued that while unemployment in Northern Ireland had officially fallen by 2000 in 1997, the number of economically inactive people had risen by 7,000. Whilst more jobs had been created, new unemployment measures aimed at making it more difficult for people to remain on the register may have increasingly led to a movement from unemployment to various training schemes and to registers of the economically inactive. For example, the introduction of Job Seekers Allowance in October 1996 was followed within six months by a 25% drop in the official unemployment figures in Northern Ireland. David Armstrong estimated in 1997 that around 15,500 men and 10,500 women who were registered as long-term sick could be considered as part of Northern Ireland’s hidden labour

Figure 1

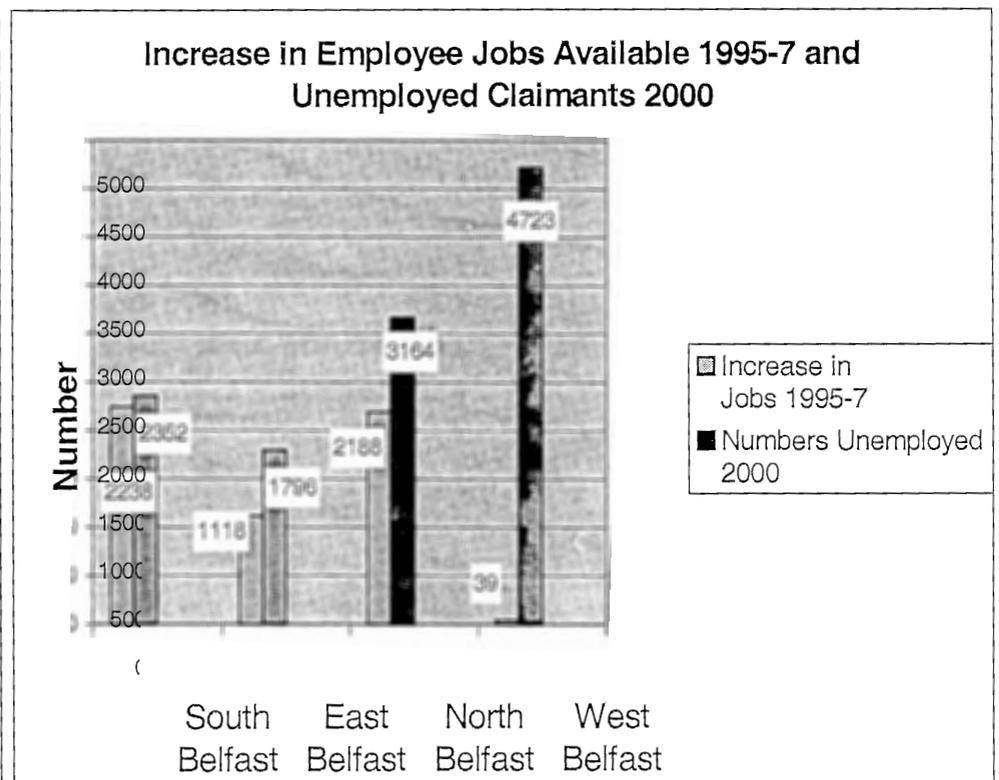


reserves.(13) According to Paul McGill this could be added to the 17,000 unemployed women who were not claiming benefit and 8,000 men and 6,000 women who were on Government Training and Employment Schemes. This would have added another 57,000 people to the then Government figure of 86,000 registered unemployed. McGill (1999), also showed that falls in official unemployment levels had not been felt equally across the North. For example, even though unemployment was far worse in West Belfast than in other parts of the city, it improved less than other parts in the years 1997-99. In South Belfast unemployment fell by 30.5%, in East by 25.3%, in North by 16.9% and in West by only 9.3%. In North of Ireland as a whole the fall was 16.6%. See also Tomlinson (2001).

Certainly an area like West Belfast still contains a disproportionately high concentration of Belfast's long term unemployed – 40% of the total. According to Labour Market Research statistics unemployment in West Belfast was 16.4% in June 2000 compared to 4.9% in East Belfast, while male unemployment was 26.2% compared to 4.9% in East.(14) The problem is further illustrated when the figures for 'jobs created' are investigated.

In the decade up until 1997, only 5 of the 102 new inward investment projects financed by the Industrial Development Board (IDB) went to West Belfast, despite that area having among the highest levels of unemployment in western Europe.(15) Between 1995-97 while the number of employee jobs available increased by 5% throughout the North of Ireland in the West Belfast Constituency the increase was only 0.2% or just 39 jobs. During the same period jobs increased by 2,238 in South Belfast, 2188 in North and 1118 in East.(16) Thus despite the wide disparities between unemployment levels in West Belfast and other areas rather than reducing over the years these appear to be continuing to increase.

Figure 2



Even when jobs do come to the area there is no guarantee that local people will get them. In the TSN areas, for example, some 3202 jobs were created in the period 1994-2000. However they were mostly low paid call centre, plant and machinery jobs. In any event only 1 in 4 jobs in Making Belfast Work (MBW) areas go to local residents while 1 in 3 MBW residents work outside MBW areas.(17) These statistics become even more important when one considers ex-prisoners who are particularly dependent on work within their own areas, and tend to be concentrated in TSN and MBW areas. The reality of the problem becomes clearer when one compares the creation of 3202 jobs in the TSN areas in six years, most of which did not benefit local residents, with the fact that there are currently about 5000 people on the claimant register in West Belfast. Estimates suggest that the true figure of those in need of a job in that area is possibly 10,000 if those on various government schemes are taken into account.(17) The significance of the problem is seen when it is considered that in 1999 there were about 22,000 jobs in West Belfast of which about 50% were public sector, in Education and Health.

#### **Continuing Discrimination**

For the unemployed in places like West Belfast the reality is obvious. In the Partnership Boards' research, mentioned above, more than 80% of them stated that the only jobs available to them were low paid. In Belfast as a whole, 54% of the unemployed made this comment. Over 60% from the West compared to 33% for Belfast as a whole said that the only jobs available were in areas where it was dangerous to work. This situation is further complicated by employment discrimination. Nearly 80% of unemployed people from West Belfast, interviewed in the research (compared to 32% for Belfast as a whole) felt that an address in the area made it difficult for young people to get an interview. These types of figures have been replicated in a wide range of other research. Sheehan and Tomlinson, in their study of the long term unemployed in West Belfast found that 42% of Catholic men in their sample who had had a job, had been intimidated, compared to 18% of Protestant men. Nearly two thirds said that intimidation was a factor in leaving a job (67% of Catholics and 50% of Protestants), while a quarter of Catholic male participants in training and employment schemes reported intimidation compared to 9% of Protestant men. (18)

The main point being made here is that while there appears to be shortages of skilled labour in East and South Belfast (19), security considerations and continuing discrimination would prevent many people from nationalist areas availing of or being offered such employment even if they had the necessary skills. The official term coined to describe this situation, 'chill factor', is wholly inappropriate. As pointed out by Fisher and McVeigh (2001) it implies that Catholics do not want to work in such areas because they feel uncomfortable. Once again it suggests a failing on the part of the victims. In reality, 'the chill factor is grounded in the use and threat of sectarian violence' and '...might more properly be named, the kill factor'. (20)

If ordinary nationalists suffer as a result of ongoing systematic discrimination and harassment in employment then it is clear that republican ex-prisoners have an even bigger problem. Even within predominantly nationalist areas like West Belfast ex-prisoners have

*In reality, 'the chill factor is grounded in the use and threat of sectarian violence' and '...might more properly be named, the kill factor'.*

experienced discrimination in employment. A survey of the larger private employers in West Belfast carried out by Sheehan and Tomlinson in 1995/6 found high levels of opposition to the employment of ex-prisoners.(21) About half of the employers stated that they would definitely not employ ex-prisoners, some of them citing the adverse effects of the conflict on their businesses. Others argued that the employment of ex-prisoners would create tensions among their workforces and that some of their current employees would refuse to work with such individuals. (This was also a view echoed by a major employer during a seminar on the subject in the course of the current research.(22)) Some employers also argued that in any event ex-prisoners would probably not have sufficient work experience to enable them to be employed.

Of course, even if discrimination were not an issue, question marks hang over the type of training on offer and its appropriateness to the needs of both unemployed and employers alike. The research carried out by the Partnership Boards, mentioned earlier, showed that an overwhelming majority of companies in the Belfast area felt that the resources spent by successive governments on vocational training had not improved the labour pool. The most commonly stated problems with employees included 'lack of motivation', 'sickness' and 'low productivity'. Employers also tended to have negative stereotypical attitudes to the unemployed preferring instead to recruit school-leavers.

#### **The Aftermath of the 1994 Ceasefires**

After the 1994 I.R.A. and Loyalist Ceasefires, the EU Peace 1 initiative (SSPPR) was hailed as a major international response to conflict resolution and economic regeneration. Emerging evidence would suggest a more complex scenario and it is important to consider the real long-term effects of the EU Peace I funding Programme on areas like North and West Belfast. Clearly it had a major effect on the community sector in those areas, at least in the medium term, and this in turn assisted local communities in developing community services and support mechanisms as well as work in the areas of conflict resolution and peace building. However, whilst it is clear that many positive programmes were funded and that as a result an infrastructure for the support and help of ex-prisoners was established, it could not possibly have rectified centuries of discrimination, neglect and conflict. This research is unable to provide a proper evaluation of the Peace 1 Programme, however it would suggest that it had several failings in the areas of job creation and training. Training funded under Peace 1, for example, did not represent a training strategy. There were different funders, different policies and different groups offering different provision. In effect Peace 1 was increasingly linked to British Government macro-economic policy given that government departments were the conduit through which it was applied. Training was geared to improving 'employability' which again largely blamed the unemployed for their situation. Furthermore, the attempt by the Department of Social Development (DSD) in particular, to promote the concept of 'sustainability' – a cost-driven notion - as a prerequisite for Peace 2 funding for community projects was an attempt to make deprived communities responsible for alleviating their own problems. Peace and reconciliation rather requires, on the one hand, economic regeneration combined with a training strategy linked to job creation, and, on the other, an end to inequality and discrimination linked to a redistribution of resources. Within this, the unique problems of the ex-prisoner population in training and employment

need to be taken into account.

### **Republican Ex-Prisoners and Training**

Over the past few years, ex-prisoners have been bombarded with a wide range of different training courses of varying quality, yet the take-up appears to have been low. A question often asked has been who is actually benefiting from the large amounts of funds devoted to such training? Is it the ex-prisoners or is it the training organisations? Is it the Government or the European Union who are benefiting by being able to make extravagant claims about how they are fighting to alleviate deprivation, with little strategic thought or follow-up? In view of these concerns and a belief that the needs of ex-prisoners have rarely been adequately catered for by much existing and past training provision, it was decided that research was needed to try to obtain some answers.

### **Lifetime Experience**

It is important to remember that when we talk of political ex-prisoners we talk of people who often have had a lifetime experience of involvement in republican politics both inside and outside of jail. In many ways their experience reflects that of the wider nationalist working class community which has been subjected to multiple conflict-related deprivation. This has included the exposure to house raids, arrest, harassment, intimidation, discrimination and the deaths of family members and friends.

Combined with this many have endured a prison experience which has often lasted many years and covers different periods. Patterns of imprisonment of republicans have historically reflected periods of political conflict. Many ex-prisoners have endured several periods of imprisonment throughout the past 30 years. Some of those imprisoned during this period of the conflict have also endured imprisonment in other periods such as the 1940s and 1950s (or have had parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc. who were imprisoned). Many of those arrested and interned in the early 1970s, for example, had spent periods of time in jail during previous campaigns. Some ex-prisoners have been interned or remanded several times but never sentenced.<sup>(23)</sup> Many have also spent long periods 'on the run', away from family, and 'on active service'.<sup>(24)</sup> Thus they have experienced disparate employment patterns throughout life. Unlike the state's combatants, such people are unable at present to have their experiences taken into account by employers, educators or trainers when seeking employment/training/education.<sup>(25)</sup> This is a further disadvantage not just to ex-prisoners but to fulltime republican activists and to many unemployed people living in nationalist areas and a further obstacle in the road to their achieving full recognition and thus full citizenship. Policies aimed at integrating ex-combatants into the new society in South Africa – in the Civil Service, the Police Service, the Army – or used to promote employment for soldiers returning after World War Two have been missing in our own situation. Certainly the idea of the need for some form of historical reparation for past state injustices seems very far from current British Government thinking. The new political dispensation, expressed through the Good Friday Agreement and the Equality Duty which imposes a responsibility on all publicly-funded bodies to ensure equality of opportunity for all regardless of political belief, does not appear to be working for political ex-prisoners in the

fields of training and employment.(26) This is despite the obvious commitment of many ex-prisoners to bettering their local communities.

Many republicans have 'dedicated themselves to a life of struggle - a life containing little in the way of financial rewards and certainly not one recognised outside their own community', 'a life of selflessness, of voluntary commitment'. These were views widely expressed during this research. This concept of volunteerism appears to be strong among many republican ex-prisoners.(27) It appears to be reflected in the desire of many of them to continue to help their communities, their involvement in voluntary work and the reluctance of republicans elected to office to accept the full salary on offer.(28)

### **Full Citizenship**

Political ex-prisoners face multiple problems in terms of access to training and employment and thus in terms of their achievement of full citizenship in the new emerging society. Imprisonment has brought its own unique social, emotional, psychological and practical problems: the breakdown of family structures and relationships, the loss of normal patterns of life and employment, the demonisation of prisoners and ex-prisoners in the media with little recourse to defence.

Release from prison can be a traumatic experience in itself. It affects prisoners and their families alike and can engender a whole range of new problems on the emotional, psychological, social and economic front.(29) Besides having to come to terms with their new, changed environment, they have to deal with a new changed relationship with family and friends. Finally they have to deal with the practical problems of trying to adapt to an employment environment that is increasingly ICT driven and totally different from the traditional working culture.

The advantages of belonging to 'a supportive wider nationalist community', of being 'part of a legitimate historical tradition', of being 'part of a community of comrades', of 'having a political legitimacy to fall back upon', all points made by ex-prisoners in the current research, are important and need to be included in any analysis of what is a complex web of factors which affect ex-prisoners in training and employment.

The current research has been informed by previous research undertaken by Coiste na nIarChimí projects as well as the anecdotal experience of ex-prisoners regarding training and unemployment. It has also been informed by the experience of the involvement of Republican ex-prisoners in two specific training projects – An Lóiste Úr Training Project and the EASE Programme - which will be looked at in greater detail later in this report.

The aim of the current research was to consolidate and build upon previous research about the training and employment experience of the republican ex-prisoner community with a view to formulating proposals for policy change and good practice to help transform the situation.

## Chapter Two—Methodology

### Introduction

The research aimed to explore the experience of republican ex-prisoners in the fields of training and employment. It took a holistic view that training and employment could be affected by a wide range of issues associated with the impact of imprisonment and the conflict on ex-prisoners and their families. It took place in the context of the Good Friday Agreement and the hopes and expectations that republicans hold about the creation of a new society where discrimination and second class citizenship are relegated to the past and are replaced by equality, social inclusion and full citizenship. The research aimed to identify the main problems experienced by republican ex-prisoners in these fields, providing an overview and evaluation of existing and past training and employment provision, identifying good practice and suggesting proposals for the future. It is hoped that this will assist the development of models of best practice as a result.

### Aim of the Research

The broad aim of the research was to investigate and evaluate the training and employment experience of the republican ex-prisoner community and to provide proposals for good practice to inform policy change.

### Objectives

Within the broad aim three objectives were identified:

- (1) To review how existing and past training/employment provision has been experienced within the republican ex-prisoner community.
- (2) To identify what constitutes good practice in training provision particularly in relation to the process by which training is designed and set in motion.
- (3) To identify proposals for informing policy in relation to training/employment provision for ex-prisoners and to specifically identify training strategies with the capacity to enhance the lives of republican ex-prisoners and the wider community in general.

### Research Schedule

The research was conducted during the period November 2000 – June 2001 and involved the following:

1. A review of the literature/evaluations/reports on previous/current training provision for ex-prisoners.
2. A series of informal interviews with key informants in the field.
3. Semi-structured interviews with republican ex-prisoners in four focus groups in North and West Belfast.
4. A more widespread in-depth structured questionnaire applied to a sample of ex-prisoners in Belfast to ascertain their views on employment, training, their experience of life in general and how they view their current needs.
5. A review of the experience of republican ex-prisoners involved in two specific training programmes – the EASE Programme and An Lóiste Úr Training Project.
6. The identification of specific proposals for change.

### **Management of the Research**

A Research sub-committee was appointed by Coiste na nIarChimí to oversee progress on the research and to advise on future directions. This group met with the researcher at regular intervals reviewing progress and providing support and advice.

Coiste na nIarChimí also provided administrative back-up to the project including costs for printing of questionnaires and other allied running costs of the research.

### **Methodology**

The research involved both qualitative and quantitative methods as well as a review of existing literature/research on the experience in training and employment of republican ex-prisoners in Belfast. In total, 102 ex-prisoners were involved in the formal research within the questionnaire sample group or within the focus groups. A major aspect of the research involved the application of an in-depth multiple choice-type questionnaire which also contained open-ended questions for qualitative responses. Initially a stratified random sample of 100 ex-prisoners affiliated to a range of six ex-prisoner projects and eight groups across Belfast was chosen, with the aim of providing a sample representative of geographical spread, age and gender.<sup>(30)</sup> It was agreed to forsake numbers and thus an increased reliability of the representativeness of any ensuing statistical analysis, for a more desired in-depth study of a smaller number of ex-prisoners. It was felt that this more in-depth research combined with that of the focus groups, would add to the breadth of research carried out by Tar Anall (a republican ex-prisoners' project in the Andersonstown area of West Belfast) and others. In the event 64 in-depth interviews were successfully completed (64%). The shortfall was due primarily to the difficulty of arranging appointments with some of the prospective interviewees, their availability, the reluctance on the part of some to be interviewed and pressures on time for the completion of the research. The interviews began in February and were completed by early May. The questionnaire contained 45 main questions supplemented by a large number of sub-questions making a total of 292 questions (see Appendix One). The completed questionnaires were analysed using an SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software programme, providing a range of statistical data and cross tabulations.

To obtain more qualitative data semi-structured interviewing techniques were employed with 38 ex-prisoners in four focus groups. These included a group made up of (ten) ex-prisoners actively involved in the management of ex-prisoner projects in the north of the city and who took part in the EASE project (mentioned below), one involving (nine) ex-prisoners from North Belfast who had been involved in the Lóiste Úr training project, one involving (ten) ex-prisoners from West Belfast who had been involved in the Tar Anall training project and one involving a group of (nine) recently released (within the past year) ex-prisoners from Belfast who had not been involved in any training since release. These groups met in March and May 2001.

A wide range of meetings and informal conversations/discussions also took place with a range of different ex-prisoners and these assisted in the formulation of the questionnaire and policy considerations.

**Restrictions on Research**

The focus of the research was on the experience of the republican ex-prisoner community in Belfast. Thus while it may provide an insight into the general experience of republican ex-prisoners throughout Ireland it is clear that experience may vary between different geographical locations and in particular between rural and urban areas. The research also has limitations in that the sample, for practical purposes, was limited to republican ex-prisoners with whom Coiste na nIarChimí was in contact via projects and local ex-prisoner groups. This meant that ex-prisoners who were not in contact with the Coiste were not included. Clearly some Republican ex-prisoners, when they get out of prison, seek to leave their past behind, most commonly because they want to create a new life for themselves and their families to make up for lost time, etc. Despite this limitation it is felt that the views expressed by those taking part in the research are broadly reflective of the general ex-prisoner experience. Another limitation may be due to the fact that it was decided to go for in-depth, and in particular, qualitative data at the expense of covering a wider sample. The result is that the numbers of republican ex-prisoners covered by the statistical data is quite small at 64. Nevertheless despite these limitations we believe the current research is important in informing the debate on the needs and experience of republican ex-prisoners.

**General Description of the Questionnaire Sample**

Of the 64 in the sample more than three-quarters (76.6%) were males. Over half the interviewees were in the 35-44 age group (54.7%). Approximately 30% were 45+ with only 15.6% being aged 25-34. No one under 25 was interviewed.

64% of the sample had first been imprisoned when they were 21 years of age or younger. A sizeable proportion of these had still been at school including 23% who were aged between 15 and 17 years when first imprisoned. The year of the last period of imprisonment for the sample ranged fairly evenly from 1973 to 2000 although 1998 witnessed the largest number of releases at 12.5%. (Reflecting the upsurge of releases under the Good Friday Agreement)

It is important to put all this into some sort of political context. In 1994 the IRA called a ceasefire which lasted until February 1996. A further ceasefire was called in May 1997 and

Figure 3

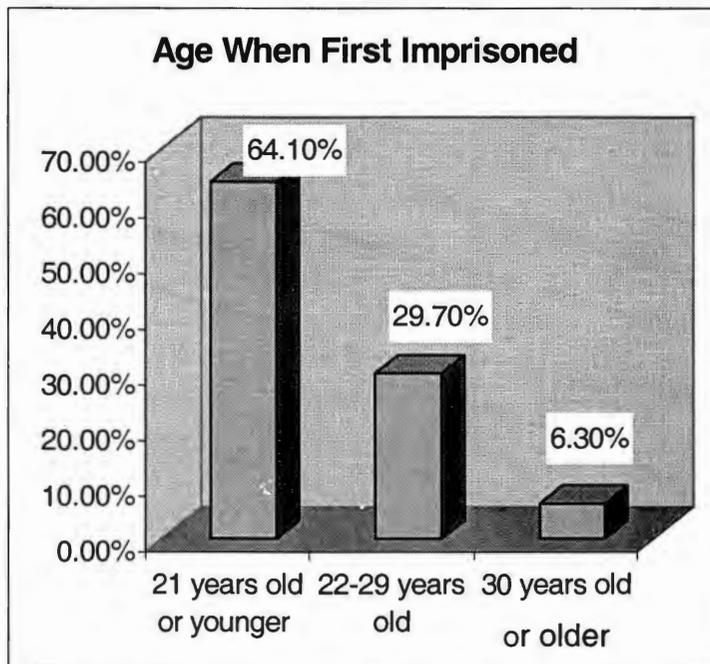
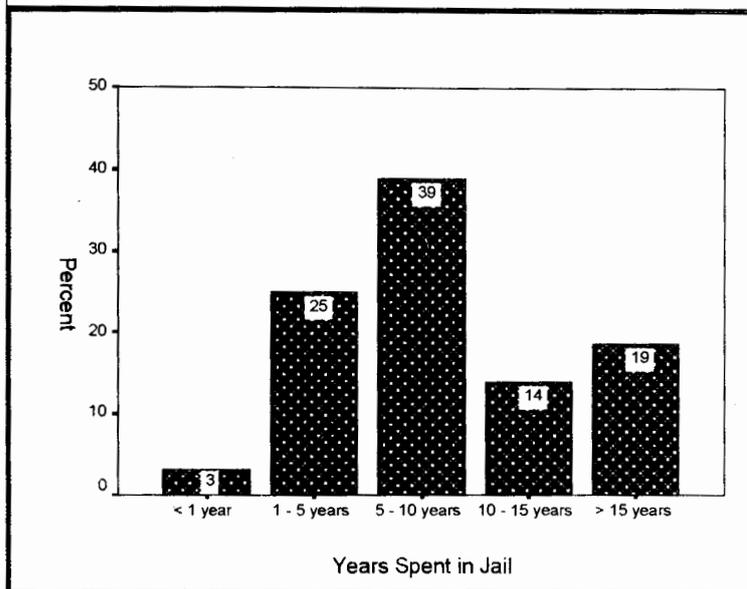


Figure 4



has held until the present time. The result has been that only a small number of republican prisoners have entered the jails since 1994. While a small number of republican prisoners still remain in jail, including a number affiliated to groups opposed to the IRA's strategy, the bulk of them were released

between 1998 and July 28th 2000 under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement. This political reality is reflected in the ages of the ex-prisoners interviewed and in their release dates from prison.

Only a small number of this sample had actually been interned which reflects the fact that Internment ended in 1975, twenty-six years ago. Nearly one fifth of the sample (18.8%) had spent more than 15 years in jail. A further 14% had spent between 10 and 15 years in jail followed by 40% who had spent between 5 and 10 years in jail. 25% had spent between 1 and 5 years in jail.

Of those interviewed approximately 40% were married (40.6%). About one fifth (20.3%) were separated/divorced. 23% were single and further 15% were co-habiting. More than three-quarters (76.6%) of the sample had dependents while one quarter (23.4%) had none. The overwhelming majority of those with dependents had between one and three children. In

Table 1

Marital Status		
Single	15	23.4
Married	26	40.6
Separated/ Divorced	13	20.3
Cohabiting	10	15.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

total the 64 ex POWs interviewed had 114 children between them. 62% were employed and 38% unemployed.

**Description of the Four Focus Groups**

The focus groups were not meant to provide a representative sample of all ex-prisoner experience but to look at specific experience as mentioned above. Of the 38 republican ex-prisoners in four different focus groups 82% were male, 18% female. About a quarter (26%) were aged 25-35, just over half (55%) were 35-45, while about a fifth were over 45. Half had been released within the last two years and 70 % within the last 5 years. This

group therefore provides a useful insight into the experience of those recently released. 63% were in employment, 21 % were unemployed while 16% were on a training scheme (see Appendix Two). The latter figure reflects the fact that two of the focus groups were specifically chosen to represent the experience ex-prisoners have had of training schemes.

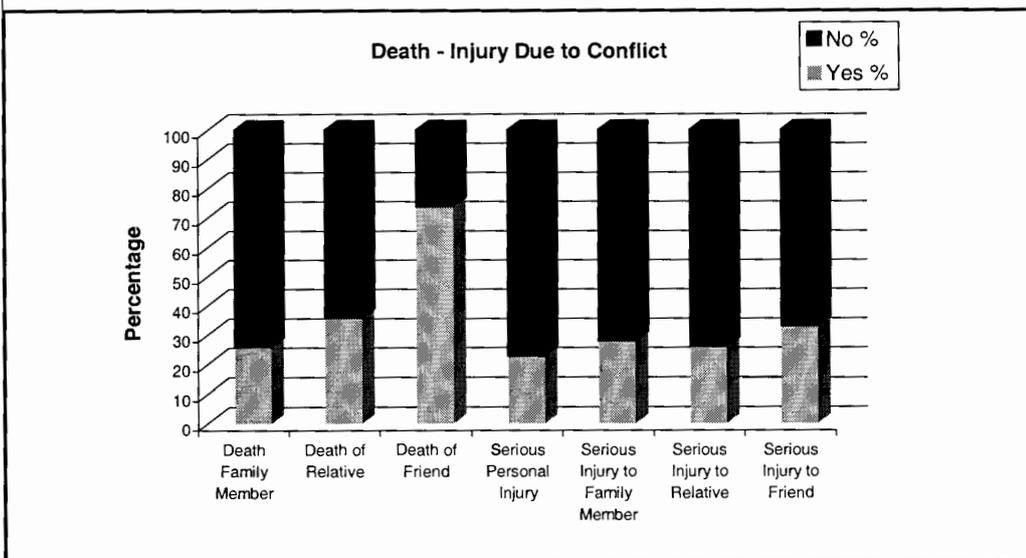
## Chapter Three – Social, Personal and Psychological Effects of the Conflict and Imprisonment on Republican Ex-Prisoners

### The Social, Personal and Psychological Effects of the Conflict on Republican Ex-Prisoners

Clearly a whole range of diverse factors affects the involvement of republican ex-prisoners in training and employment. Not least of these is the whole array of social, personal and psychological effects of the conflict in general and of years of imprisonment in particular. Many republican ex-prisoners have borne the brunt of the conflict throughout their entire lives. Many have not known a life without the conflict. The results from the questionnaire provide an illustration of the extent of this.

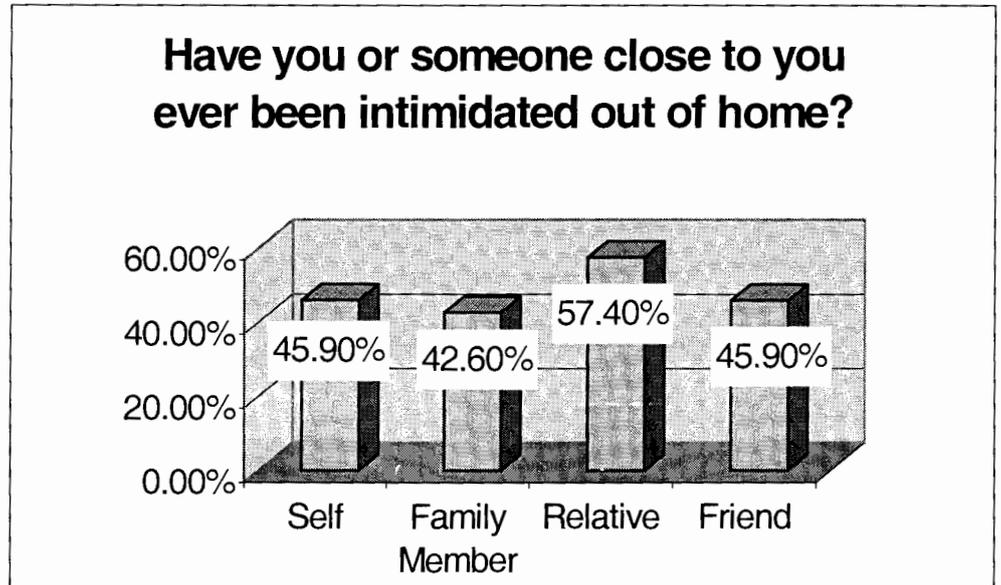
More than one quarter (26.2%) of ex-prisoners had experienced the death of a family member as a result of the conflict, with some experiencing the deaths of several family members. Nearly two fifths (36.1%) had experienced the death of a relative while nearly three-quarters (73.8%) had experienced the death of a friend. One talked of having lost two brothers in the conflict - one to loyalists and the other to the British forces. Another talked of how he had lost a brother and a son. One talked about how he had lost his father and uncle in a pub bombing. Nearly a quarter (23%) had experienced serious personal injury themselves, from gunshot wounds, to bomb injuries, to injuries due to beatings. These figures reflect those of other research. For example in a study carried out in the New Lodge area of North Belfast it was found that 75% of republican ex-prisoners had themselves been victims of armed attacks or had close family members injured in such attacks.(31)

Figure 5



In the current research a massive figure of nearly half (45.9%) had experienced being intimidated out of their home, while 42.6% had had a family member, 57.4% a relative and 45.9% a friend, intimidated out of their home. One described how, when he was eleven years old, his mother grabbed the children and ran out the back door as his father, in an attempt to save the family, was being beaten at the front door. The house was then burnt down. Besides anything else this past shows that the security fears of ex-prisoners when it comes to employment and mobility/travel to work are based on a stark reality. It also shows

Figure 6



*'I was youngest in family and mainly my father (mother was dead), brothers and sisters worried immensely about my situation. My father died while I was in prison, I wasn't allowed parole.'*

the simplistic ignorance of some political commentators when they try to suggest that a dichotomy exists between ex-prisoners on the one hand and victims on the other. Ex-prisoners in tandem with many in the rest of the nationalist community have been on the receiving end of violence from RUC/British forces throughout the conflict. The questionnaire shows that more than 90% of the sample had suffered harassment on the streets at the hands of the RUC/British forces and nearly 80% (77.8%) had family members who had experienced such harassment. More than 90% (92.1%) had experienced home searches while 80% had family members who had experienced home searches (79.4%). Besides their own imprisonment 56.5% had had a family member imprisoned also.

**The Social, Personal and Psychological Effects of Imprisonment on Republican Ex-Prisoners**

For most republican ex-prisoners the experience of jail was a community one. For example 58% of the questionnaire sample had a relative imprisoned while 75.8% had a friend imprisoned. Whilst many talked of the importance of this communal experience in terms of practical and psychological support, it is also clear that the experience has had major adverse long term effects, many of which have still not fully come to light. The confidential nature of the work of the ex-prisoners' counselling network means that a lot of the evidence of the psychological effects of the conflict and imprisonment cannot be documented.

The vast majority of republican ex-prisoners were first imprisoned at a very early age. For example, 64% of the questionnaire sample had first been imprisoned when they were 21 years of age or younger. A sizeable proportion of these had still been at school including 23% who were aged between 15 and 17 years when first imprisoned. At the same time many were jailed for very long periods. Nearly one fifth of the sample (18.8%) had spent more than 15 years in jail. The direct effects of this in training and employment terms will be discussed later. Clearly though many ex-prisoners never had an opportunity before going into jail of experiencing life and in particular their youth. The result has been ongoing problems of adjusting to the changes in life, re-learning, re-skilling and gaining lost

experience. This has had its effect on family life and relationships as outlined in some of the work published by Tar Anall,(32) and thus on the ex-prisoner's social and psychological stability (both of which are important factors in training and employment). The vast majority (79%) of those covered by the questionnaire stated that prison had had a very severe adverse affect on their family. This ranged from the social and emotional to the loss of a carer of dependents to the loss of a wage and an ensuing deterioration in socio-economic status. Prior to going to jail, 8.1%, mainly women, had looked after children and 4.8% had looked after other dependents. In some cases the family or extended family was able to cope with the sharing of the burden of caring. In other cases it wasn't. Some comments illustrate this:

'The children were moved to my mother's then sister's. They had to move school.'

'Poverty, hardship, uncertainty was the result for my family.'

'My father was in prison also so this was a severe burden on my mother.'

'My absence caused a great deal of pain and sometimes misery as my wife had to endure the everyday battles of life by being the sole provider. Such responsibility was at times too much to bear.'

'Father lost job due to my arrest which resulted in money problems. They also suffered a lot of verbal abuse from the Brits daily causing a lot of stress and fear.'

'I was youngest in family and mainly my father (mother was dead), brothers and sisters worried immensely about my situation. My father died while I was in prison, I wasn't allowed parole.'

'My kids' school work suffered and they were living separately from each other so their relationship with each other suffered.'

*'My kids' school work suffered and they were living separately from each other so their relationship with each other suffered.'*

Other practical problems were also important as illustrated by the following comments:

'Family attacked by loyalists – had to move to different area.'

'Father became a heavy drinker.'

'Mother suffered from depression.'

The research of Pete Shirlow suggests that the divorce rate among ex-prisoners is higher than the norm.(33) This seems to be borne out by the current research. Nearly 70% (69.8%) stated that all the pressure had had an adverse affect on their relationship with their family including more than 40% (43.8%) who stated that the affect on their family relationship was very severe. Many mentioned that their marriage or relationship had broken down while in jail. Others stated that they had lost their relationship with their children:

'– I split from my wife and now only see my children twice a month. It has made my son quiet and withdrawn towards me.'

'Destroyed my relationship with my wife. I missed my children growing up. My kids don't speak or have contact with me.'

'My children were babies when I went in. They had to do without their father in the formative years.'

'Lost a lot of years with my eldest daughter - being in a cell with a P.O.W. longer than I'd been with my wife until my release.'

*'- I split from my wife and now only see my children twice a month. It has made my son quiet and withdrawn towards me.'*

Others talked of other family relationship problems:

*' Lost ability to communicate with parents due to conditions and protests in jail. Lost all other aspects of family life with brothers and sisters.'*

*'Members of my family (brother, uncle) refused to have any contact with me or talk to me as a result of my imprisonment.'*

*'I drifted apart from them in terms of contact and closeness. Family events meant nothing to me.'*

About half of the sample 49.1% felt that they had been prevented from playing a fuller part in life as a result of being in prison. Comments made included that it prevented the person developing a deeper relationship with children or partner, etc.

## Chapter Four -The Training and Employment Experience of Republican Ex-Prisoners

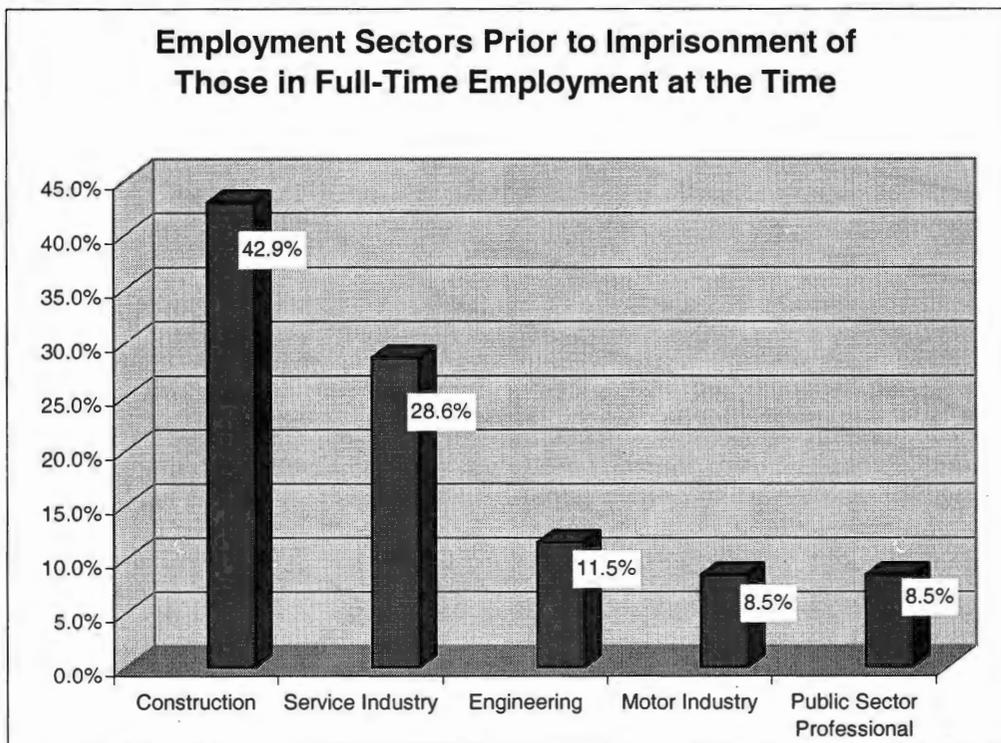
### Training and Employment Experience Prior to Imprisonment.

The experience of republican ex-prisoners has often been one of a lifetime of imprisonment and commitment to the republican struggle. As a result their patterns of employment throughout life must be related to this experience. If the collective economic experience of many nationalists of high levels of unemployment and discrimination is put alongside this, it is easy to understand why many ex-prisoners never had a real job for any length of time prior to going to jail. The fact that so many went to jail at such an early age, when they would normally have been expected to be laying down the economic foundation stones of their life, and that they collectively spent such long times in jail, on the run, or on active service, presents a picture of a group of people whose experiences, though many and varied, do not fit with the experience patterns required by most employers/training agencies.

Most of the ex-prisoners in the sample and in the focus groups, never experienced normal employment before going to jail for the first time. Of those who had been employed, the majority were involved in construction or in low paid low skilled service industry type jobs. However, there were some who worked as public sector professionals.

Among the sample, about two thirds (62%) had experienced unemployment for various periods prior to imprisonment, with 5% having experienced it for more than 10 years. Nearly 40% had experienced unemployment for up to two years. 10.9% had been employed part-time. 9.4% had been on a training scheme and only 43.8% had ever been employed full-time. Therefore well over half (56.2%) had never experienced full-time employment. These figures reflect the young age at which people first went to jail. Nearly a quarter (23%) of the sample were aged between 15 and 17 years when first imprisoned, including a number who had been at school or in full time education/training at the time, while nearly

Figure 7



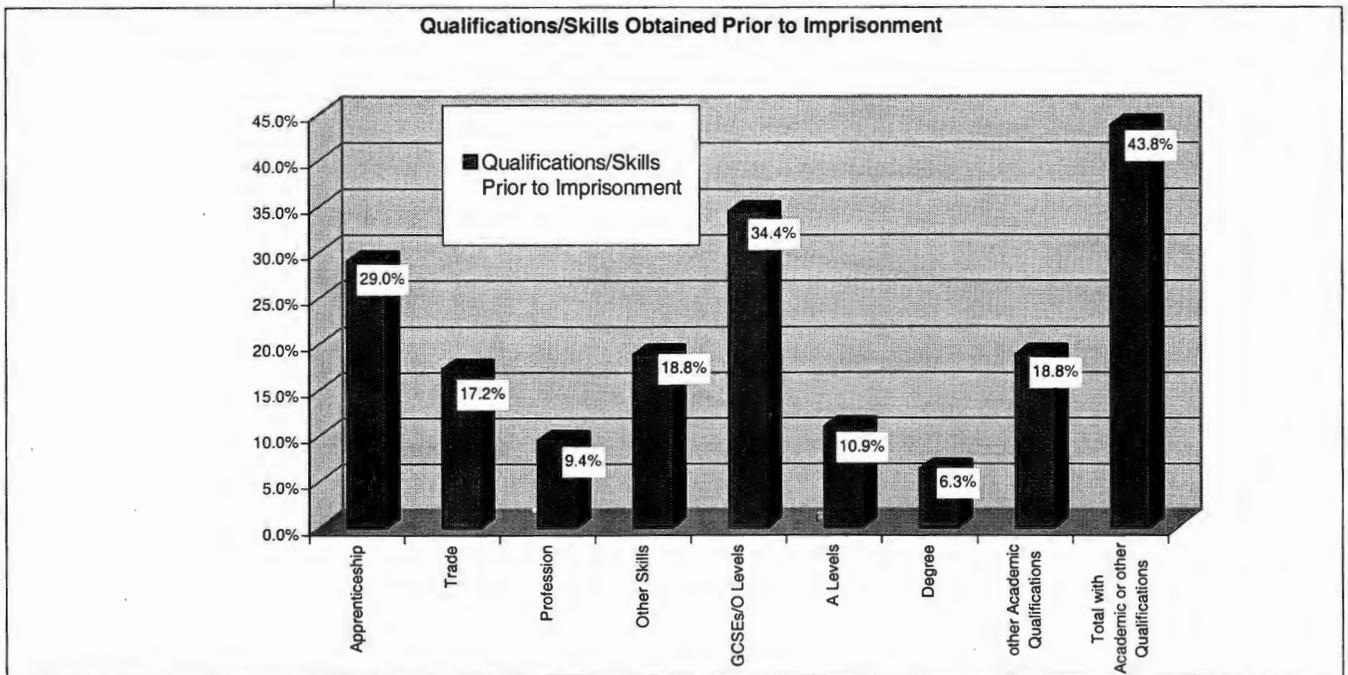
two thirds (64%) were 21 years of age or younger. This also reflects the general socio-economic experience of the nationalist community as well as the volunteering aspect of republicanism.

Of those who had some experience in employment before imprisonment, more than two-fifths (42.9%) were employed in construction, which was by far the biggest employment sector. A further 28.6% had been involved in the service industry in low-paid/low-status jobs. 11.5% were in skilled/semi-skilled engineering jobs while 8.5% were in manual work in the motor industry and 8.5% worked as public sector professionals. 9.7% of the sample stated they had worked in the home.

In terms of training, despite their young age, just over two fifths (43.8%) had academic or other qualifications prior to going into jail. More than one third of the total (34.4%) had obtained GCSE/O Levels, a further 10.9% had obtained A Levels while 6.3% had obtained a university degree. Nearly one fifth (18.8%) had obtained other qualifications such as RSAs, City & Guilds, etc.

29% had been on an apprenticeship prior to imprisonment. 17.2% had had a trade. 9.4% stated that they had a profession whilst a large portion (18.8%) stated that they had other

Figure 8



skills most of which related to the construction or service industries. This seems to give weight to the view that republican ex-prisoners, far from representing a lazy or ignorant section of society, were in fact the opposite.

**Training and Employment Experience *During* Imprisonment.**

Imprisonment was a large part of life for many republicans over the past 30 years, yet that experience is virtually never taken into account in a positive way by employers or training agencies. The norm has in fact been to discriminate against and stigmatise that experience.

Republican ex-prisoners have a lot to offer this society in terms of the experience they have gained. Prison struggle, as with the conflict on the outside, went through many different phases, offering many different types of experiences – from the self-administered communities in the cages in the early 1970s, to the physical and psychological battles of spirit and will during the blanket and hunger strike periods, to the gradual breaking down of draconian conditions and the establishment of a self-administered education system in the 1980s and the self-administered blocks (under de facto political status) in the 1990s.(34) All such experiences helped mould the character and the skills of those who underwent them. By the mid 1980s for example, republican prisoners were learning the practical skills of running their own community, taking care of administration, structures, organising work rotas, shops, stores, etc. They were also organising their own education classes and teaching them. Such skills should be recognised and valued as important assets in the new emerging peaceful society which is being created.

Throughout the whole period of the current conflict as with other phases in the 1940s, 50s, etc., the promotion of the Irish language was particularly important to the prisoners, whether through the establishment of the Gaeltacht huts in the 1970s, the ingenuity of the Irish classes during the blanket protest - with no access to books, pens, paper or even association with other prisoners - or the formal establishment of a Gaeltacht community within the H-Blocks in the mid-1990s.(35) By the 1980s republican prisoners were being allowed access to the official education system and in particular the Open University. The result was that many prisoners left the H-Blocks with degrees - some even leaving with more than one.

The latter was reflected both in the questionnaire sample and the focus groups. More than

Figure 9

**Qualifications/Skills Obtained During Imprisonment**

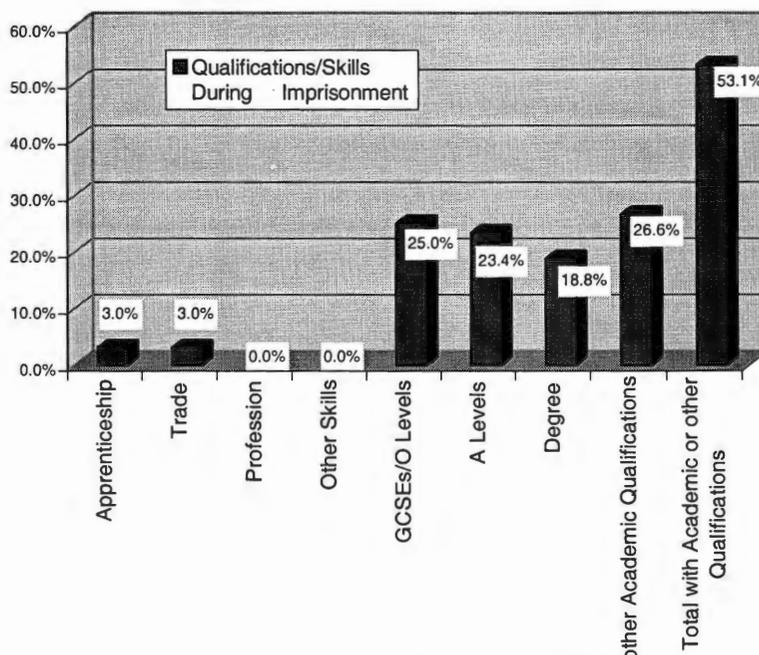
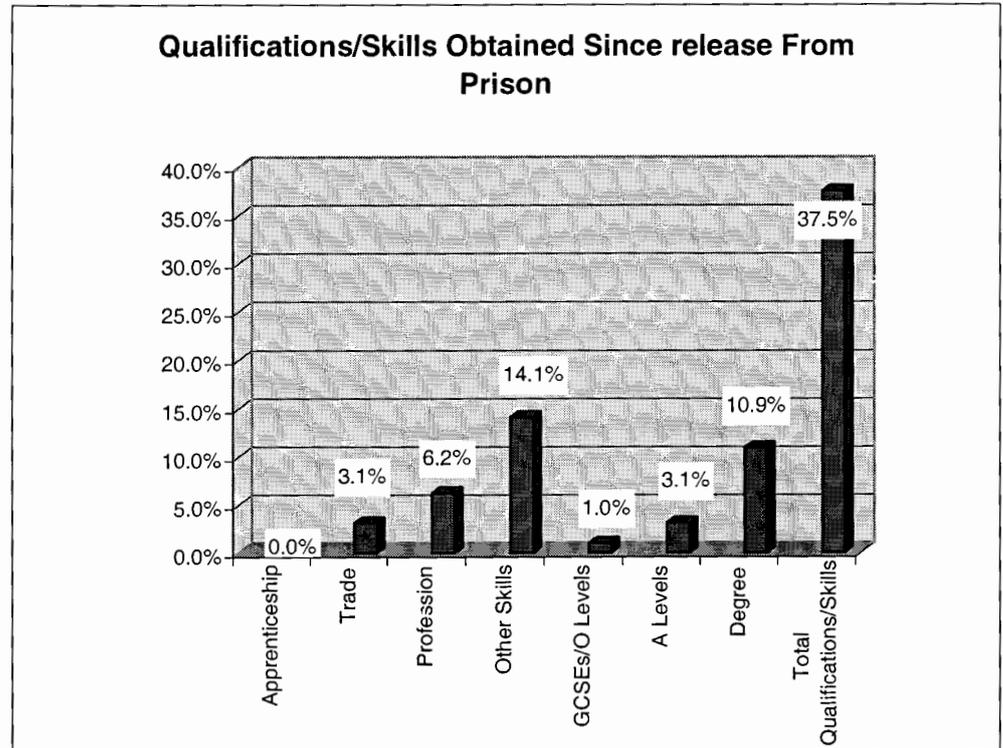


Figure 10

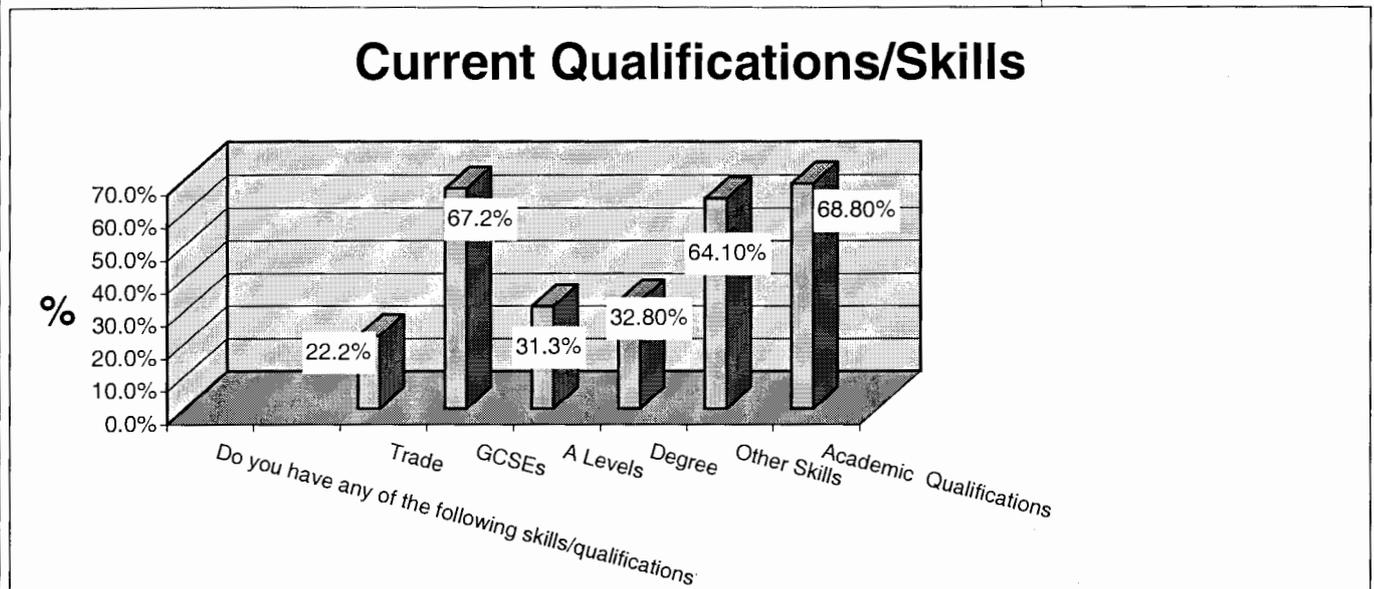


half of the questionnaire sample (53.1%) gained academic qualifications during prison. A quarter (25%) gained GCSEs, 23.4% A Levels and nearly a fifth (18.8%) gained a degree. A quarter (26.6%) gained other qualifications such as Open University Credits, RSAs, etc., especially in IT. Virtually all the academic qualifications were obtained during the late 1980s or in the 1990s. All of the degrees were obtained in the 1990s reflecting a period of academic progression as a result of changes within the prison from the mid-1980s onwards which led to increased availability and promotion of education there.

Only 3% stated that they had followed an apprenticeship/trade while in prison. This had taken place in all cases in the early 1980s when the prison regime had a policy of employing prisoners in workshops. This policy ended, along with apprenticeships, when the workshops were closed down after the escape of 1983.

**Training and Employment Experience Since Imprisonment: Training**

Only four (6.7%) of the questionnaire sample were currently participating in a training scheme and only one of those was unemployed. This was despite the fact that nearly two fifths (37.5%) of the sample were unemployed. In fact only nine (14.1%) stated that they had been on a training scheme since release. However, the failure of training schemes to attract ex-prisoners does not mean that they are not interested in obtaining new skills and qualifications. In fact after being released from jail 10.9% of the sample went on to get a degree. Four (6.3%) stated that they had gained a profession since being released, two (3.1%) had obtained a trade. One had gained GCSEs, two had gained 'A' levels, nine (14.1%) had gained other skills, mostly IT related. Academic qualifications were gained by 37.5% overall, after release, and virtually all felt that the qualifications had helped them in gaining employment.



A number of factors militate against ex-prisoners obtaining training or qualifications after prison. (See Appendix 3) Among the sample, for example, the main factor mentioned - by well over two thirds (70.7%) - was security concerns. This related primarily to where the training was sited but also who would actually carry out the training and would therefore have access to personal information on the trainee. For example, a commonly expressed view was: 'No local training available. I don't like to work outside safe areas'. This also explains why about a fifth (19%) mentioned distance from courses as a barrier. Personal security was a particularly important point raised in the focus groups involving those who had taken part in the EASE and Lóiste Úr training projects. One of the successes in both cases was the fact that the training was sited in local areas and particularly in the case of Lóiste Úr, the training was carried out by trainers the participants knew and trusted. Case studies of both these training projects have been included in this report as examples showing what has been pinpointed as good practice in the training of republican ex-prisoners.

Among the other major factors mentioned by the sample as a barrier to further training was discrimination (44.8%). 'My personal circumstances/history would not be considered by training agencies. Because I had been imprisoned I did not get on to a Post-Graduate Management Training course'. In fact about a fifth stated that they had personally experienced discrimination in training. 'In 1998 - when asked why I had such a large gap in my employment record I explained I'd been in prison and was refused on to course'.

Significantly, the families of ex-prisoners had also suffered discrimination - in obtaining qualifications (cited by 9.5% of the sample) and in training (cited by 7%). Clearly this links in to the previous points made. Ex-prisoners do not want to be stigmatised or looked down upon because of their background. They therefore require trainers sensitive to their ethos as well as to their training needs. Ex-prisoners mentioned how they were asked to state if they had a criminal record when applying for courses - many found this insulting especially after years of struggle to achieve political status and the de facto attainment of that status both in

Figure 11

*'You have to know there is a job available before you start training otherwise you are simply wasting your time.'*

*'Training for what? Sure there are no jobs about except those the trainers have.'*

the jails and in the Good Friday Agreement. Yet training and educational agencies still persisted in demanding that they state that their imprisonment amounted to a criminal record.

Over a third of the sample (36.2%) mentioned lack of appropriate courses as a reason for not continuing with training.

'You have to know there is a job available before you start training otherwise you are simply wasting your time.'

'Training for what? Sure there are no jobs about except those the trainers have.'

For years training courses have rarely led to jobs. It was important therefore that training was linked to a job or job creation and not undertaken simply for the sake of it.

'Knowing exactly what job suits and then going for training for that job is what is needed. It is difficult to train for something abstract.'

The value of much current training was therefore being called into question; there seemed to be a lack of a strategy which linked training to real jobs and to the needs of the trainee.

Some ex-prisoners in the current research argued that the type of training they were looking for was simply not available in their locality. For example, 'Lack of re-skilling facilities', was often mentioned. In particular people who had construction industry skills prior to going to jail felt there was a dearth of re-skilling courses to update their skills and give them the confidence to seek work in that industry again. Shirlow, in his research, also talks about loss of 'skills memory' and a need for re-skilling. (36)

For people to invest time, energy, enthusiasm, the loss of potential income if working, and maybe the expenditure of fees, there had to be something worthwhile coming out in the end. This was reflected in the comments of ex-prisoners during the research.

'I don't have the time to do training. I'm pushed as it is to make a living.'

'My job prevents me from attending courses during the day.'

One incentive for training frequently mentioned was the idea of waged-based training. All the big private companies and public and voluntary sector employers actually pay their staff to attend courses. This is needed even more so by the unemployed or those in low paid jobs.

Certainly most of those on the EASE programme (to be discussed later) were given paid leave by their employers to attend. The trainees on EASE were also motivated by the fact that they had a particular collective need – to develop a strategic approach to the regeneration of their area. Those on the Lóiste Úr project were paid a wage by the project to attend, while work placements were obtained for the trainees with the aim of finding them long-term employment.

Other factors discouraging ex-prisoners from taking up training include 'lack of past job experience' mentioned by about a third (32.8%) and lack of recent job experience (27.6%). Significantly, some 32.8% mentioned

Table 2

Why Is Training Important to you?	
To get a job	63.8%
To advance in employment	51.7%
Personal development	77.6%
To help your community	81.0%
Other	1.6%

lack of confidence while 24.1% mentioned lack of clear vision. Child care responsibilities was mentioned by just over 10%.

Despite all this, it is clear that most ex-prisoners recognise that training is important and needed, as long as it is appropriate. For example, 63.8% of the sample believed that training was important to them in order to get a job, while 51.7% believed that it was important for them in order to advance in employment. More than three-quarters (77.6%) stated that training was important for them for personal development reasons. Significantly, 81% stated that training was important to them so that they could help their community.

Nearly two fifths of the sample (39.7%) mentioned a lack of sensitivity to their needs by training agencies as disincentives to take up training. This reflects the distrust many ex-prisoners have for existing training provision, not just in relation to security and discrimination but in regard to the appropriateness of courses. It also supports the view that if training is to be seriously targeted at ex-prisoners then it is necessary to recognise that ex-prisoners need a particular type of training – one that is not being provided in any substantial way at present. Basically, training is required which ex-prisoners can feel ownership of, which meets their needs, is linked to real jobs, respects their ethos, background and security concerns and which also ensures they have an adequate income throughout its duration. From this has emerged the proposal that what is needed is a dedicated training agency which caters for the specific needs of republican ex-prisoners.

#### **Training and Employment Since Imprisonment: Employment**

It is clear from this and other research that republican ex-prisoners continue to suffer greatly from long periods of unemployment, and when in employment tend to be concentrated in low paid low skilled jobs or jobs in employment sectors which are unstable and susceptible to redundancies.

Within the questionnaire sample 40 (62.5%) were currently employed compared to 24 (37.5%) who were not. Four (6%) of the sample were on a training scheme, one of whom was unemployed. Within the focus groups some 63% were in employment with 37% unemployed. Among these 16% were on a training scheme. (Note that two of the focus groups were specifically chosen on the basis of involvement in training, thus explaining the relatively higher proportion in training within the focus groups). The experience of the ex-prisoners interviewed for this research can only provide a snapshot of the unemployment problem facing that group. It is worth noting however, that a high unemployment area such as West Belfast had an overall unemployment figure of 16.4% in June 2000, while male unemployment was 26.2%. This evidence appears to suggest that although they suffer from similar socio-economic problems to others who live in nationalist areas like West Belfast, the problems for ex-prisoners seem to be on a greater scale.

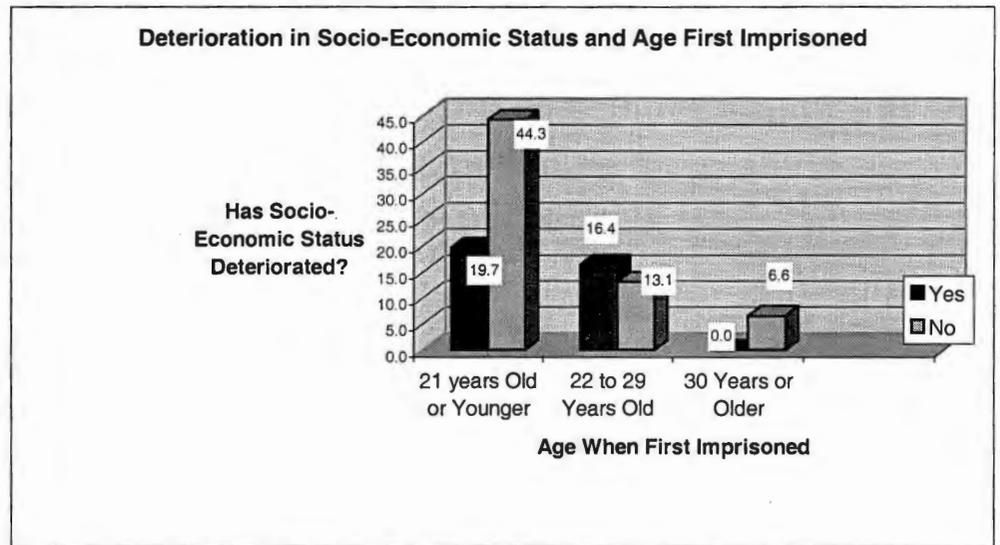
89.1% of the sample had experienced unemployment for varying periods since their release including 25% of the total who had experienced more than 10 years unemployment. About one fifth (21.9%) had experienced unemployment for less than 1 year since their release. However, 59.4% had experienced unemployment for more than 2 years. About a fifth of

*'When I was released in 1986 I couldn't get work but I had no work before jail so in that sense it had no effect on my socio-economic status.'*

the sample (18.8%) had been employed part-time for some period since their release. A link therefore appears to exist between imprisonment, depleted employment opportunities and diminishing employability.

None of the ex-prisoners in the research appeared to have a high socio-economic status. Whilst it is true that nearly two thirds (63.9%) of the sample stated that their socio-economic status had not deteriorated since being in jail, the majority of these had come from a low socio-economic base to start with. It included people who had not been working

Figure 12



*'I always worked before prison. After release I couldn't get any real work.'*

before going to jail, who had been full-time republican activists, or who had been still at school or on apprenticeships. Age is also a factor here. As people get older they tend to settle down or to reach the end of their training for work and are more likely to get a job. Ultimately this question of course dealt with perceptions of current situation compared with the past. The question which asked 'Has your socio-economic position deteriorated since being in prison?' was by its nature a subjective one relating to personal perceptions. As such it could reflect a wide range of different perceptions about an ex-prisoner's current position. Answers could reflect the relative position in relation to the ex-prisoner's circumstances before his/her release as well as his/her perceived position prior to imprisonment. Answers could also reflect general expectations of reality. If an ex-prisoner's expectations of getting a job, never mind a reasonably good job, are low anyway, it stands to reason that if they cannot get a job this may be viewed simply as something to be expected. Comments received on this subject included the following:

*'When I was released in 1986 I couldn't get work but I had no work before jail so in that sense it had no effect on my socio-economic status. It wasn't until I became qualified that I could get a decent job.'*

*'I always worked before prison. After release I couldn't get any real work.'*

*'I was working before imprisonment and had a good life. Now I can't get a job with my record, so money is tight.'*

*'Jail led to a long term break in earning power and this has had a long term effect on my family's standard of living. Now I am out and working we can start getting*

rid of the second - furniture and I've been able to buy a car – second-hand!

'I was a qualified teacher before jail and never experienced discrimination. I lived in a middle class area. Once I came out of jail I could no longer live in that area nor get work in Catholic schools. The recruitment agency that I used to get 'subbing' from told me I was no longer employable. Yet although I am financially worse off now my life is better. I am glad to be part of this community.'

*'I was a qualified teacher before jail and never experienced discrimination. I lived in a middle class area. Once I came out of jail I could no longer live in that area nor get work in Catholic schools.'*

Of those who stated that their socio-economic status had not deteriorated, not surprisingly, perhaps, 82.1% were in employment. About half of those were employed in the community sector. A further 5.6% were employed in teaching. Nearly 20% were unemployed. Just over one third (36.1%) of the sample stated that their socio-economic status had deteriorated since being in jail. Of these significantly, nearly 70% of them were unemployed (68.2%). Only 7.9% of the sample stated that they were satisfied with their current socio-economic position.

Virtually all the republican ex-prisoners interviewed felt limited to their own areas when it came to employment. The smallness of the private sector in nationalist areas meant that those employed in that sector tended to be in low paid low skilled service sector jobs such as taxi

drivers, doormen, or in small building firms. Many seemed to be dependent on voluntary sector employment. Teaching, especially of or through the medium of Irish, was also an important employment sector. A very significant portion of those in the sample currently in employment were employed in the community sector in Belfast (54.1%). All of these were employed in nationalist areas and it is clear that the advent of increased funding to the community sector via Peace I has had a large impact on the employment opportunities for ex-prisoners. The benefits, of course, are that in the medium-term, ex-prisoners have a job with its accompanying income and training and work experience potential. The problem of course with over-dependence on Peace 1 and 2 funding for employment is that it represents a false economy. Their future remains highly uncertain with insecure short-term funding which is not geared towards creating long-term high status, well paid, secure employment. (See Appendix III).

Other significant areas of work for ex-prisoners in the sample were IT tutoring (8.1%), teaching (5.4%), Irish language organisations (5.4%) and taxi driving (5.4%). Construction is also important representing 8.1% but there is increasing evidence, when comparing current employment sectors with those which employed ex-prisoners prior to imprisonment, that community development, IT and teaching have taken over from traditional working-

**Current Employment Status (by Perceived Socio Economic Status)**

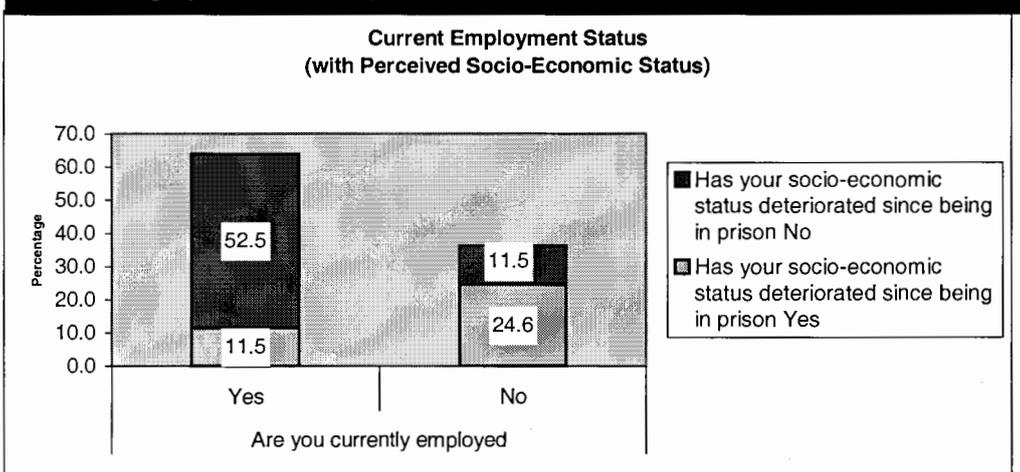


Figure 13

*'Darkie Hughes was denied a LEDU (Local Enterprise Development Unit) grant for an invention which he hoped to turn into a business. This was due to the fact that he was an ex prisoner, political vetting.'*

class, nationalist employment sectors such as construction, as major employers of ex-prisoners. Interestingly, despite attempts to promote self-employment among ex-prisoners, only one of the sample was actually self-employed. This reflects the general trends in the wider population. For example, according to the 1991 Census, only 4.8% of males and 1.5% of females in West Belfast were self-employed. Clearly, the promotion of self-employment as a solution to the lack of jobs is not working in practice. For most ex-prisoners, like the unemployed in general, it is very difficult to set up a business coming from such a low economic base. The uncertainties and instability of new business start-ups require the ability to invest without making a profit for several years, and to be able to sustain losses. This is simply not practical for most ex-prisoners. In the past, many ex-prisoners were involved in a range of self-help schemes. The Black Taxis were originally established in the early 1970s to provide employment for ex-prisoners. The same was true of the various 'peoples' co-op' initiatives where garages, food and craft shops were established. Ex-prisoners were also to the fore in a number of community economic initiatives including Conway Mill. However concerted Government attempts to destroy such initiatives culminating in the political vetting policy of the 1980s and 1990s made such initiatives difficult to sustain or reproduce.<sup>(37)</sup> This explains why during the research some ex-prisoners expressed distrust and doubts about the attitudes of government departments and financial institutions towards ex-prisoners trying to set up businesses. The political vetting of the 1980s and 1990s was mentioned:

*'Darkie Hughes was denied a LEDU (Local Enterprise Development Unit) grant for an invention which he hoped to turn into a business. This was due to the fact that he was an ex prisoner, political vetting.'*

*'Banks will not lend money to people just out of jail and are very suspicious of anyone with a record. They won't even give you a cheque book.'*

Ex-prisoners continue to be excluded from wider society, outside nationalist areas, and in particular from the private sector. Thus the economic situation of nationalists in Belfast and in particular ex-prisoners does not reflect a society emerging from conflict. Basically there has been a failure on the part of the state to provide secure, long term employment for republican ex-prisoners.

A whole range of factors affect the experience of ex-prisoners in training and employment after release. By virtue of the fact that they are part of the nationalist community in Belfast they suffer similar problems (though probably more intensely) of being confined to areas where the availability of work is low and where whatever work that is available tends to be low paid and low skilled. In relation to the factors blocking ex-prisoners getting a job/better job, by far the biggest factor mentioned in the sample was security concerns (88.9%). As one ex-prisoner stated: 'Due to my status I am unable to take on or carry out jobs available because of location throughout N. Ireland. I would be very aware and frightened of discrimination and intimidation and most importantly loss of life'. Another common comment was: 'My name is on the list (loyalist death list)'.

This further explains why about half (50.8%) listed 'lack of jobs in the area' and a fifth (20.6%) 'distance from jobs' as factors blocking employment opportunities.

'A lot of people will not apply for jobs outside their own area because of security reasons. They don't want strangers to know their personal details. Many of the families are also restricted in where they can apply for jobs.'

*'A lot of people will not apply for jobs outside their own area because of security reasons. They don't want strangers to know their personal details.'*

The fact that most jobs in the locality tend to be low waged was reflected in the fact that 'lack of a decent wage' was cited by about a third (34.9%) as a factor preventing them from getting a job.

The lack of any meaningful legislative protection from overt discrimination for ex-prisoners – (sections 42 and 57.3 of the Fair Employment (N.I.) Act 1989 and section 2(4) of the newer Fair Employment and Treatment (N.I.) Order 1998, both allow for discrimination in cases involving the use, and/or support, of political violence) - coupled with the denial of entry to civil service jobs, policing jobs, etc. and the 'decontamination' periods ex-prisoners must go through before they can obtain PSV taxi licenses or even stand for election, all make the employment position of ex-prisoners even more difficult. Besides problems getting PSVs, ex-prisoners have experienced problems getting on teacher training courses specifically because they have spent time in jail.

*'Banks will not lend money to people just out of jail and are very suspicious of anyone with a record. They won't even give you a cheque book.'*

Certainly, overt discrimination appears to be a major reason why republican ex-prisoners find difficulties in the employment field. Nearly 60% of the sample (57.4%) stated that they had personally suffered discrimination in employment as a result of being in prison.

'I lost my ability to continue working in social work field. I had to commence in new career area'.

Have You Suffered Any Of These Due To Being In Prison?	
Discrimination in employment	57.4%
Discrimination in training	18.5%
Discrimination in dealing with banks	29.6%
Discrimination in obtaining qualifications	29.6%
Barriers to travel	61.1%
Discrimination in dealings with statutory bodies	37.0%

Even those who have a job believe that discrimination would prevent them getting promotion.

'Because my past may stop me going up

the ladder in my job to a better paid one.'

Table 3

30% stated that they had experienced discrimination in obtaining qualifications such as PSV licences. Nearly two thirds had experienced barriers to travel as a result of being imprisoned. This refers in particular to bars on travel to places like USA, Canada and Australia for those who have a 'criminal record'. This is one important reason why Coiste na nIarChimí wants an end to 'criminal records' attached to republican ex-prisoners. The barriers to travel not only prevent ex-prisoners from travelling to such countries on holidays

*'...my father was jailed in the 1940s for republican activities. When he tried to go to Canada in 1962 to do a job – at a time when there were no 'Troubles' going on - he was refused entry because of his record.'*

or to visit family and friends. They also prevent them from availing of potential job opportunities. According to one,

*'...my father was jailed in the 1940s for republican activities. When he tried to go to Canada in 1962 to do a job – at a time when there were no 'Troubles' going on - he was refused entry because of his record. Who knows, I might have grown up in Canada and never got involved in the republican struggle if that hadn't occurred'.*

This is one way the families of ex-prisoners also suffered discrimination. Of the sample, 38% stated that family members had suffered discrimination in employment as a result of their being imprisoned.

*'My father lost his job due to my arrest which resulted in money problems.'*

About a tenth of the sample (9.5%) stated that family members had suffered discrimination in obtaining qualifications, 7% in training and 23.8% through barriers to travel.

Nearly one fifth of the sample had at some period been remanded in prison but never sentenced (18.8%). Virtually all of them however had been sentenced at some stage (95.3%). It is clear, though, that for many ex-prisoners it has been both the fact that they have been in jail, as well as the possession of 'a record', which has had the most profound effect on their lives and their ability to access employment and suitable training. For example, a member of one of the focus groups had spent nine years in jail having been remanded on six different occasions but never sentenced. The loss of years meant that his skills were unutilised in the workplace leading to difficulties in actually following his trade. This, combined with a lack of job experience and security concerns about where he could work, made employment difficult. Another point he mentioned was that even though he hadn't a record this did not stop people discriminating against him as an ex-prisoner.

Table 4

Has Your Family Suffered Any Of These Due To You Being In Prison?	
Discrimination in employment	38.1%
Discrimination in training	7.1%
Discrimination in dealing with banks	14.3%
Discrimination in obtaining qualifications	9.5%
Barriers to travel	23.8%
Discrimination in dealings with statutory bodies	26.2%

Having to explain away gaps in work experience to potential employers and being able to compete with others who have long-term or recent relevant work experience is also a problem. Lack of past job experience (49.2%) and lack of recent job experience (46%) was cited by about half as factors limiting their employment opportunities.

Age also has an important impact on employment, especially when linked to other determinants such as lack of recent or long-term job experience, security concerns and discrimination. A quarter (25.4%) of the sample mentioned this as a factor limiting their job opportunities. Other factors limiting employment opportunities mentioned by the sample include, lack of relevant qualifications (31.7%), lack of confidence (27%), lack of clear vision (15.9%), lack of information on jobs (15.9%) and childcare responsibilities (12.7%). (See Appendix IV).

confidence (27%), lack of clear vision (15.9%), lack of information on jobs (15.9%) and childcare responsibilities (12.7%). (See Appendix IV).

# Chapter Five - Focus on Sectoral Groups

This chapter provides a more in-depth study of the various sectoral groups identified within the questionnaire survey.

## THE EMPLOYED GROUP

### Introduction

In this section the focus will be on those in the sample who were employed at the time of the research. The aim is to identify their general characteristics as well as their experience of training and employment.

### General Description

Forty out of the 64 (62.5%) sampled were currently employed. Of these seven had been on a training scheme at some time since their release. The majority - twenty-two - of the group were aged between 35-44 years. Eleven were aged 45+ and the remaining seven were between 25 and 34 years. Thirty three were male and seven were female. Sixteen (40%) were married, seven (17.5%) were separated/divorced, seven (17.5%) were co-habiting and ten (25%) were single. Thirty-one (77.5%) had dependents. Four out of the forty had a disability/long-term illness.

**Table 5: Employment Status of Sample**

Are You Currently Employed?	Yes	40	62.5%
	No	24	37.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Training and Employment Prior to Imprisonment

About three quarters of the employed group had been jailed before they were 21 years old. Before jail 65% had experienced some period of unemployment and about 60% had never experienced full-time employment. Of the 40% who had experienced full-time employment

Figure 14

Employment status with number of years since last release

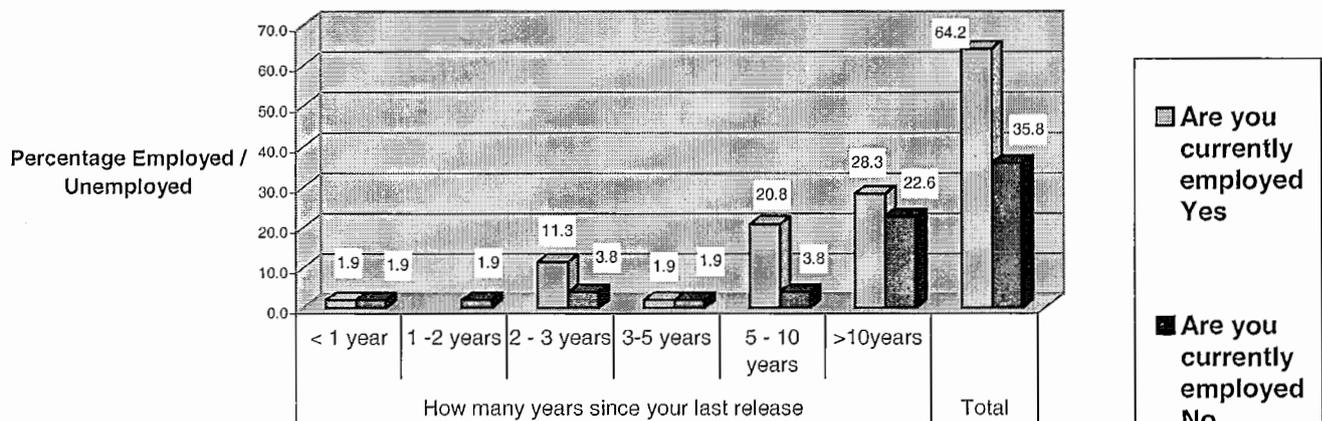
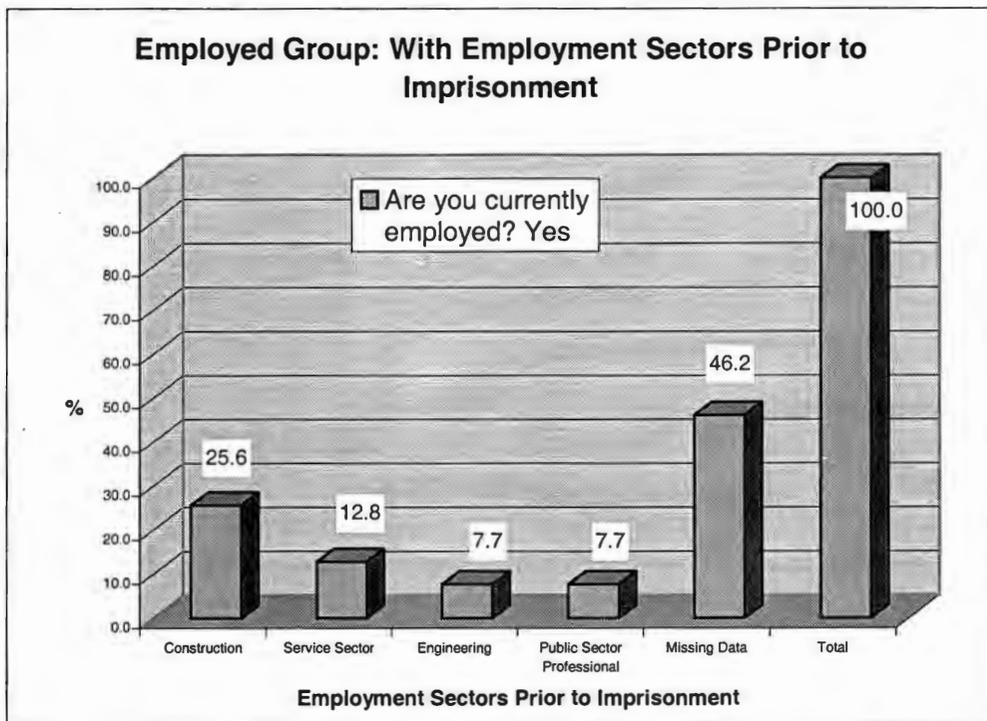


Figure 15



before going to jail, 15% had been in full time employment for more than 5 years. 15% had experienced part time employment. About one quarter of those who had employment experience prior to going to jail were employed in the construction industry, other important areas included the private service sector, the public sector, and engineering. Four had been on a training scheme, nine on an apprenticeship, six had a trade and three had a profession. More than 40% had GCSEs, 15% had A Levels and 10% (four) had degrees.

**Prison Experience**

Ten (25%) of the group had spent more than fifteen years in jail, six (15%) had spent 10-15 years, fourteen (35%) had spent 5-10 years, eight (20%) 1-5 years and two (5%) less than one year in jail. During prison two had completed apprenticeships, one gained a trade, nine gained GCSEs, while ten (25%) gained degrees. Twelve (30%) gained other qualifications.

**Training and Employment Since Release**

85% had experienced some period of unemployment, including 35% who had experienced more than 5 years unemployment since release. Eight (20%) had experienced part-time employment since release. More than three quarters had been released for more than five years and more than 40% had been released more than 10 years. There is a possible link therefore between length of time since release and the chances of employment. It is possible that this may be linked to the fact that ex prisoners can build up new skills, job experience and contacts over time, especially if they already have qualifications. They also may be able to bury their 'record' in a new C.V.

After prison, two obtained a trade, four a profession, six a degree, two A Levels and thirteen (32.5%) obtained other qualifications. Currently eight stated they had a trade, twenty-nine

(72.5%) had GCSEs, seventeen had A Levels and eighteen (45%) had one or more degrees.

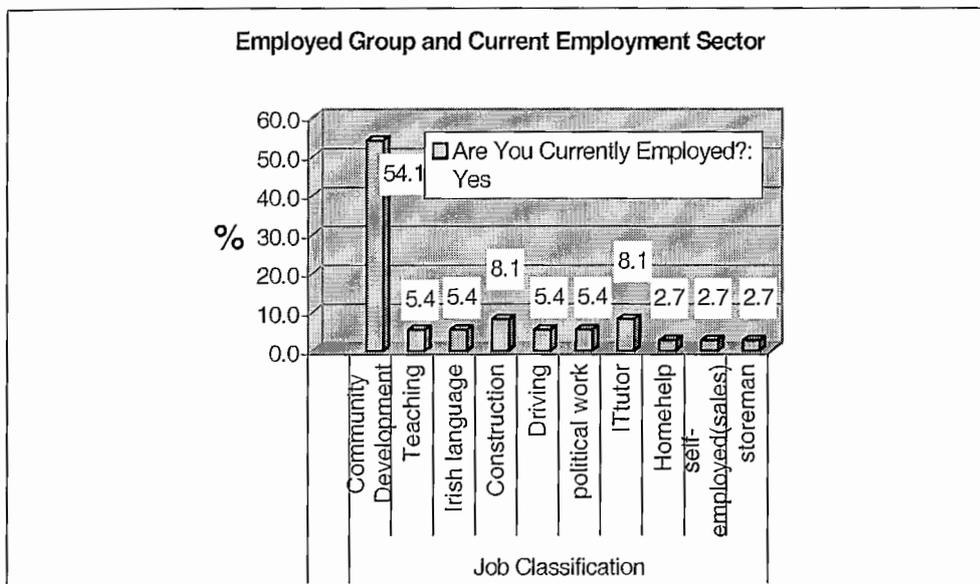


Figure 16

Nearly 60% believed that these qualifications had helped them gain employment. Only seven stated that their socio-economic status had deteriorated since they had been in jail. This was probably largely due to the fact that the people in this group were now employed, whereas in the past they had mainly suffered long periods of unemployment.

The current employment sectors of the employed group appeared much different from those they had occupied prior to imprisonment. There had been a shift away from traditional employment, in construction for example, towards newer sectors such as community development and, to a lesser extent, teaching. The dangers, already mentioned, about community development posts being subject to uncertainty of funding in the short to medium term, need to be considered in any debate on employment policy in relation to ex-prisoners. Clearly even those currently employed are very susceptible to unemployment in the future.

**Problems Related to Training/Education**

In terms of what prevented people from getting further qualifications the most common factors mentioned were security concerns (62.5%); discrimination (37.5%); lack of sensitivity to needs by training agencies (30%); lack of confidence (30%); lack of appropriate courses (30%); lack of past job experience (27.5%); lack of clear vision (25%); age (15%); lack of information on courses (17.5%); distance from courses (15%); age (15%); lack of income (12.5%). Importantly, only 12.5% gave 'lack of interest/satisfaction with current qualifications' as a reason. This suggests that there is an untapped pool of ex-prisoners out there who would like to avail of training—provided it is appropriate to their needs and supplied under the right conditions. Training was important to get a job/advance in employment for more than half. However, significantly, three quarters said that it was important for personal development and a similar number for helping their community.

### **Problems Relating to Employment**

Factors which were stated to have blocked chances of getting a job/better job included; security concerns (85%); discrimination (57.5%); lack of previous job experience (50%); lack of jobs in the area (45%); age (27.5%); lack of a decent wage (25%); lack of confidence (25%); lack of relevant qualifications (22.5%); lack of clear vision (22.5%); lack of information about jobs (15%); distance from jobs (12.5%); childcare responsibilities (10%); Significantly, only 10% of the group expressed satisfaction with their current employment situation, while only two out of the forty (5%) expressed a lack of interest in obtaining a better job. This may reflect the fact that although most in the group were highly qualified, with nearly half possessing University degrees, the type of jobs available to them were relatively low paid and generally short to medium term in duration.

### **THE UNEMPLOYED GROUP**

#### **Introduction**

In this section the focus will be on those ex-prisoners who were unemployed when interviewed during the research. The aim is to try to ascertain the main factors militating against their involvement in the training and employment fields and to discover any particular factors which may improve their training and employment opportunities.

#### **General Description**

Twenty-four (37.5%) of the questionnaire sample were unemployed at the time of the research with more than two thirds (66.7%) being male. The majority (54.2%) were aged 35-44, about a third were 45 or over, while 12.5% were aged 25-34. Thus the group did not appear to differ greatly from the age profile of the employed group. However, a much greater proportion, 30% (compared to 10% of the employed group), had a disability or long term illness. This appears to reflect evidence from voluntary disability groups which has shown that possession of a disability/long term illness often leads to people being unemployed, even when they are quite willing and able to take on a job. Finally, among the group, ten (41.7%) were married, six (25%) were separated/divorced, five (20.8%) were single and three (12.5%) were cohabiting. Eighteen (75%) had dependents.

#### **Training and Employment Prior to Imprisonment**

About half the group had been jailed when they were 21 years old or younger, a slightly smaller proportion than in the employed group, while most of the rest had been 22-29 years of age. About half had been employed for some time prior to being in jail - a fifth having been employed for between 5 and 10 years. This seems to reflect the experience of the employed group quite closely. Among those who had been employed, about a third had been involved in the construction industry (five). Similar numbers had been involved in the service sector and the motor industry/engineering. Thus they appeared to have been employed in similar employment sectors to those in the employed group prior to imprisonment. The area where the biggest difference between the two groups was exhibited was in the attainment of qualifications prior to imprisonment and in fact during and after imprisonment, as well. For example, only two of the unemployed had been on a training scheme prior to going to jail. Nine had been doing an apprenticeship while five had a trade. Three had a profession before jail. Most of them had little in the way of academic

qualifications. Five had GCSEs, only one had A Levels and none had a degree. Among the employed group some 10% had had a degree and 40% had had GCSEs prior to imprisonment. The suggestion is that a link exists between possession of qualifications and employment opportunities for ex-prisoners.

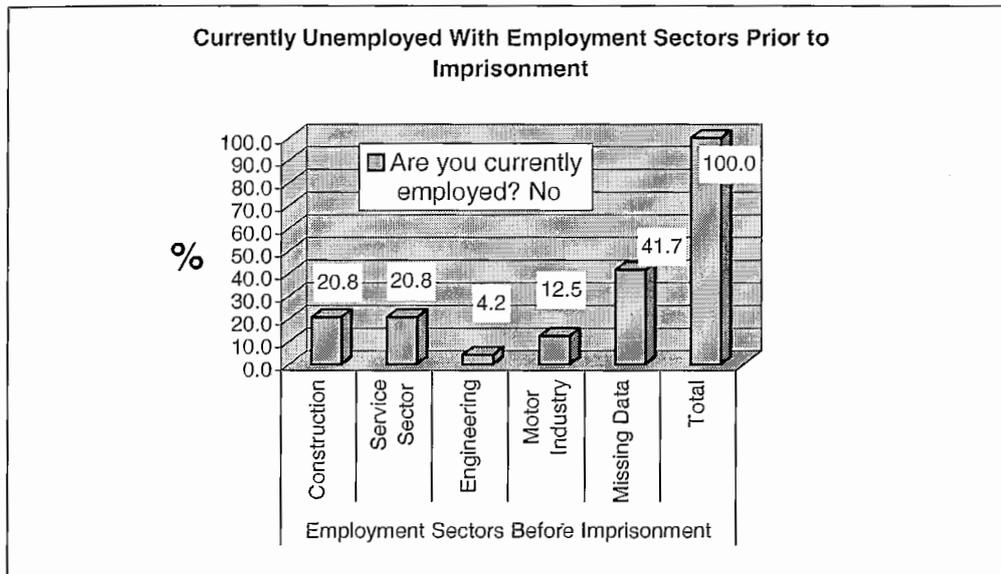


Figure 17

**Prison Experience**

20% of the group had spent more than 10 years in jail (compared to 40% of the employed group), a half had spent between 5—10 years and a third less than 5 years in jail. The ex-prisoners among the employed group therefore appeared more likely to have spent longer in jail. While in jail, most of the current unemployed had not obtained qualifications. Seven had gained GCSEs, one had gained A Levels and two had gained degrees. About a fifth (five) had gained other qualifications. A factor in this may have been the period in which these people were in jail. By and large, most of the ex-prisoners in the unemployed group appeared to have been released from jail at earlier periods during the current conflict than those in the employed group. For example, about 60% were released from jail more than 10 years ago and, in fact, 63.4% were released between 1973-87. This compares with a figure of 40% for ex-prisoners in the employed group who had been released more than 10 years ago. As mentioned earlier, the availability of institutional educational services and their acceptance by republican prisoners only began to come into play in the late 1980s. Prior to then, not only were such facilities denied to the bulk of republican prisoners but a culture existed among them not to accept such services. They preferred instead to organise their own 'untainted' education programmes. Many of the unemployed group therefore may never have had the opportunity to learn study skills or experience the formal education culture which developed in the H-Blocks, for example, from the late 1980s on.

**Training and Employment Since Release**

Nearly 40% of this group had been unemployed for more than 10 years since their release and 10% for 5-10 years. Thus the group had experienced a greater level of long-term unemployment than those in the employed group (who had also endured long periods of

unemployment). Only seven out of the twenty-four (30%) had actually been employed full time since their release and this was despite the fact that more than 60% had been released for more than ten years. Just two out of the twenty-four unemployed had been on a training scheme since their release while only one of them was currently on a training scheme. After jail few of them had gained further qualifications. While one had gained a degree, none had gained GCSEs, A Levels or a trade. Seven had gained other qualifications. Thus they were less likely than the employed group to obtain qualifications after release.

Of the twenty-four currently unemployed, 25% (six) had a trade - a higher percentage than that in the employed group where 20% had a trade. However, it was in the possession of academic qualifications that the differences were greatest. Among the unemployed group about 60% (14) had GCSEs, compared to 72.5% of the employed group. 16% (three) had A Levels and a similar number a degree compared to about 45% in each category in the employed group. While fifteen of the group had other skills a third (eight) did not feel that they had any qualifications/skills. Only one out of the twenty-four stated that their qualifications had helped them obtain employment. 62% (fifteen) stated that their economic status had deteriorated since being in jail compared to about 18% of the employed group - probably reflecting the difference in their employment status.

#### **Problems related to training/education**

When the question, "What type of training/education would you need to get a better job?", was asked most of the answers in the questionnaire were split between IT (Computer) training and training or re-skilling in a trade. When people in the sample were asked what prevented them from getting that training comments ranged from:

'It is not available locally.'

'Age.'

'Not confident enough.'

'Not knowing exactly what job is available and then going for training for that job.'

'It is difficult to train for something abstract.'

'Lack of reskilling facilities.'

'Lack of resources, in other words not enough courses available at an affordable price.'

'Restrictions on travel.'

'Security concerns.'

Sixteen out of the twenty four (66%) mentioned security concerns as a factor which prevented them from getting qualifications. Discrimination was mentioned by about half and about 50% (eleven) mentioned lack of sensitivity to their needs by training agencies. These were also the top three answers given by those in the employed group, though the percentages were lower. They were also themes which were expressed regularly in the focus groups. Other factors mentioned by the group were lack of past/recent job experience and lack of appropriate courses (33%); lack of confidence (30%); lack of information on courses/age/lack of income/distance from courses (25%). Possibly significantly, a higher

proportion (20%) than in the employed group mentioned childcare responsibilities. The fact that only 20% were satisfied with their level of qualifications suggests again that there is an untapped pool of ex-prisoners who could and should be attracted into training, given the right circumstances.

More than half (fourteen) of the group felt that training was important to them in order to get a job. More importantly, 70% (seventeen) felt that it was important for personal development while a similar number said it was important in order to help their community. This is a recurrent theme throughout the research suggesting a selfless commitment to one's local community among many ex-prisoners.

### **Problems related to employment**

The main difference between the unemployed group and the employed group appears to be that the latter tended to be better qualified. This was recognised by the unemployed themselves. Nearly all of them (twenty-three) stated that lack of relevant qualifications had blocked their chances of getting a job/better job. A similar figure mentioned security concerns while seventeen (70%) mentioned discrimination. About half mentioned lack of past job experience/recent job experience. Half also mentioned lack of a decent wage while nearly 60% (fourteen) mentioned lack of a job in the area. Four mentioned child care responsibilities as having been a factor. Only two mentioned that they were not interested in getting a job/better job while only one mentioned that they were satisfied with their current situation - an ex-prisoner who looked after the children. When linked to the high figure for those who felt their socio-economic status had deteriorated, this appears to show a real desire among the group to improve their employment status if they could possibly overcome the obstacles.

## **WOMEN**

### **Introduction**

Although only fifteen women were interviewed in the questionnaire sample, and it is not being claimed that they represent the whole experience of women ex-prisoners, it is nevertheless felt that their experience may give some insights into the type of problems faced by women ex-prisoners in the training and employment fields.

### **General Description**

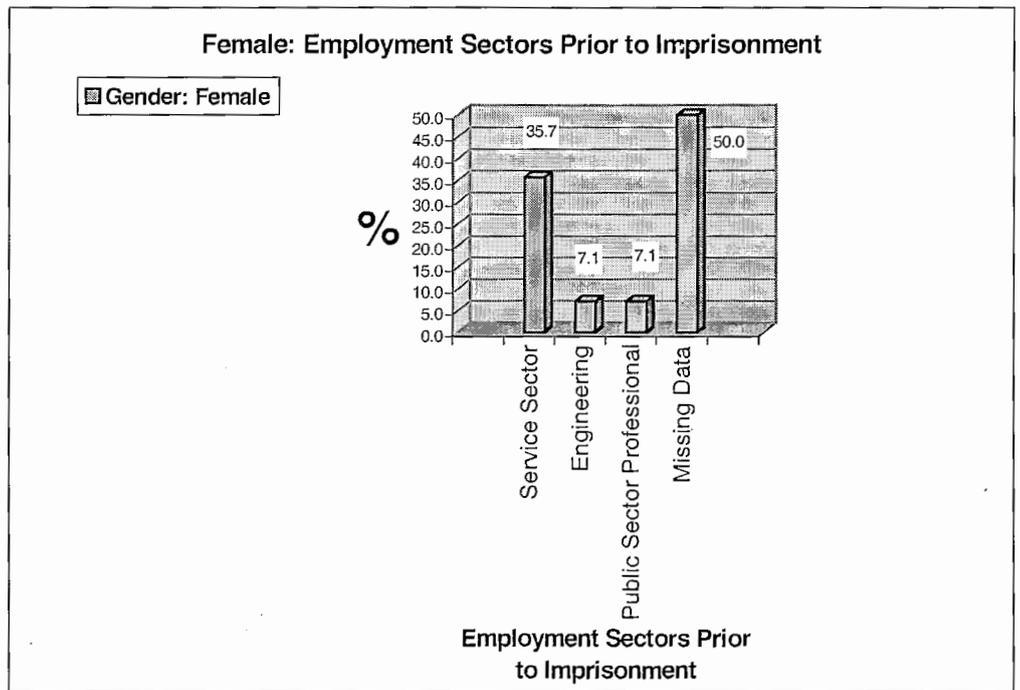
About two thirds (eleven) were aged 35-44, two were aged 25-34 and two were over 45 years. One third were married, another third single and one third separated or divorced. Two thirds had dependents. One was suffering from a long term illness. A half (seven) were currently employed.

### **Training and Employment Prior to Imprisonment**

More than half had been imprisoned when they were under 21 years of age. Before imprisonment only about one third had any experience of full time employment and only one had experienced part time employment. The bulk therefore had either been in full time education or unemployed. Two had been on training schemes while three had been

following an apprenticeship. One had a trade and four had professions. Before imprisonment about half had gained GCSEs, three had A Levels and one had a degree. Of those in employment the vast majority were in the service sector, reflecting traditional gender divisions in employment.

Figure 18

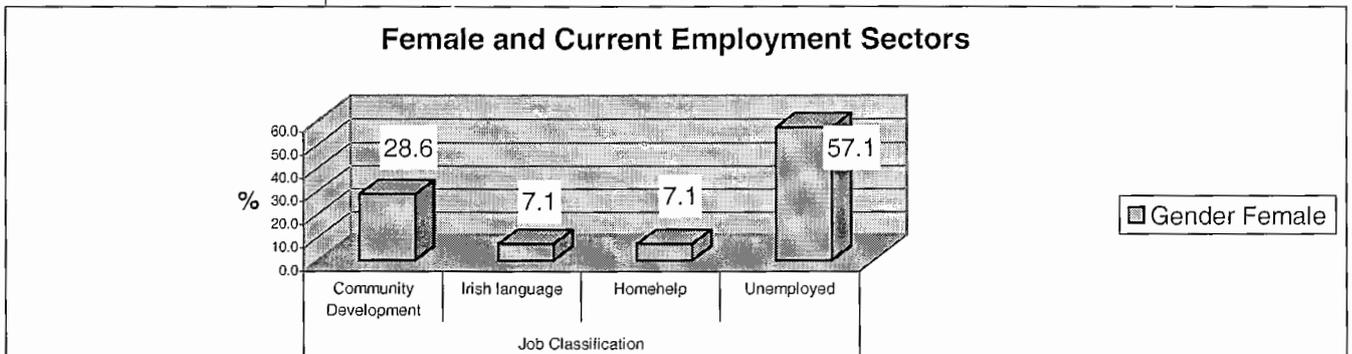


**Prison Experience**

Nine (60%) had spent between 1-5 years in jail, two 5-10years, three 10-15 years and one more than 15 years. During imprisonment about half (seven) gained GCSEs, four gained A Levels and four gained degrees. About half gained other qualifications.

**Training and employment since Release**

Figure 19



About half (seven) of the women were employed at the time of the research. Of these, four were involved in community work, one in the Irish Language sector and one was a home help. It is clear from this that at least amongst this sample of women ex-prisoners, employment sectors have changed primarily from the private and public service sector to the community sector. Two thirds (ten) had been released more than five years. Virtually all (thirteen) had suffered unemployment since release with about half having been unemployed

for more than five years. Four had been employed part-time for various periods since their release. Only two out of the fifteen had been on training schemes since their release. After release from jail, three gained a degree, while six gained other qualifications. Currently, three of the fifteen women ex-prisoners have a trade, thirteen have GCSEs, six have A levels, eight (53%) have degrees and twelve have other skills. The women therefore appeared to be better qualified than the men ex-prisoners and also better qualified than the employed group overall. Yet, only half of them were employed at the time of the research and only a third (five) said that their skills/qualifications had helped them gain employment. A third stated that their socio-economic status had deteriorated since being in jail. This included at least two who had been in professional occupations prior to jail, in the public housing sector and education, but because of imprisonment they were unable to return to their jobs. While the sample is too small to try to make statistical interpretations there are nonetheless indications that women ex-prisoners may be suffering more in the employment field than men.

#### **Problems Related to Training/Education**

More than half of the women mentioned security concerns as a factor which prevented them from gaining qualifications. Three (20%) mentioned lack of confidence and discrimination. Three mentioned lack of income and distance from courses. Four mentioned lack of sensitivity by training agencies, lack of previous job experience, age, lack of appropriate courses, and lack of childcare provision and caring commitments. Five mentioned lack of information on courses. Only two were satisfied with their existing qualifications or not interested in further training.

About one third felt training was important to them in order to get a job/better job. Nearly two thirds (nine) thought it was important for personal development while a similar number thought that it was important in order to help their community. Thus, yet again, the suggestion is that ex-prisoners would like to access training if the circumstances were right.

#### **Problems Related to Employment**

In relation to factors which had prevented the women obtaining a job/better job, three mentioned lack of relevant qualifications. Almost all (fourteen) mentioned security concerns, about half (seven) mentioned discrimination and four mentioned lack of recent/past job experience. A third (five) mentioned lack of jobs in the area, about a quarter (four) mentioned age, lack of confidence and childcare responsibilities. Only two were satisfied with their current situation —reflecting a desire for better employment opportunities among women ex-prisoners.

### **DISABILITY**

#### **Introduction**

Eleven (17%) of the questionnaire sample stated that they suffered from a disability or long term illness. Although the numbers involved were small they nevertheless throw some light on the experience in the training and employment fields of republican ex-prisoners with disabilities. It is clear that at least some of these felt that they had been adversely affected in trying to obtain training or employment as a result of their disability/illness.

An important consideration here is that political ex-prisoners have been denied compensation for injuries received, both due to the conflict and in accidents. Among those denied compensation have been people who have had their homes, cars, property destroyed in bombings. There have also been cases of compensation being denied for people who have been seriously injured or killed.

Table 5

**General Description**

**Are you currently employed \* Do you have either a disability or a long-term illness Crosstabulation**

% of Total		Do you have either a disability or a long-term illness		Total
		Yes	No	
Are you currently employed	Yes	6.3%	56.3%	62.5%
	No	10.9%	26.6%	37.5%
Total		17.2%	82.8%	100.0%

One of the sample was aged 25-34 years, five were aged 35-44 and five 45 years or older. Ten were male and one was female. Seven (63.6%) were unemployed, (including one on a training scheme) while four were employed (including one on a training scheme). Four were single, five married and two were separated/divorced. Ten of the eleven had dependents. Six had acquired their disability/injury as a result of the conflict, gunshot wounds, back injuries

and depression being the most common illness/disabilities. Others mentioned various cancers, etc.

**Training and Employment Prior to Imprisonment**

Before imprisonment about half had experienced full time employment. Seven (63%) had experienced some period of unemployment. One had been employed part time (for less than a year). Six had been on an apprenticeship, three had a trade, one had a profession and one had been on a training scheme. One had GCSEs. Most of those who had experienced employment had been in the construction industry. One had worked in the service sector and two in the motor industry. Eight of the eleven (72.7%) were 21 or younger when first imprisoned.

**Prison Experience**

One spent less than one year in jail, two 1-5 years, six 5-10 years, and two more than 15 years. During imprisonment one had done an apprenticeship, two had obtained GCSEs, two A Levels and one a degree. A majority of them (seven) had been released during the period 1973/83 at a time when institutionalised education may not have been as widely available to the prisoners.

**Training and Employment Since Release**

Virtually all (ten), had been unemployed for some time since their release, three had been employed part time for some period while only five had been employed full-time. This was despite the fact that seven had been released more than 18 years previously. Two were released in 1998). Of the four currently in employment all were employed in community development type jobs. This reflects the trend mentioned above of ex-prisoners apparently

**Job Classification \* Do you have either a disability or a long-term illness  
Crosstabulation**

% of Total

		Do you have either a disability or a long-term illness		Total
		Yes	No	
Job Classification	Community Development	6.6%	26.2%	32.8%
	Teaching		3.3%	3.3%
	Irish language		3.3%	3.3%
	Construction		4.9%	4.9%
	Driving		3.3%	3.3%
	political work		3.3%	3.3%
	ITtutor		4.9%	4.9%
	Homehelp		1.6%	1.6%
	self-employed(sales)		1.6%	1.6%
	storeman		1.6%	1.6%
	Unemployed	9.8%	27.9%	37.7%
	Training Scheme	1.6%		1.6%
Total		18.0%	82.0%	100.0%

Table 6

moving from traditional employment sectors to, in particular, the new community sector which has developed since the advent of the ceasefires with the help of Peace 1 money.

After jail one of this group had obtained A Levels and two degrees. Three gained other qualifications. Two of the eleven had been on a training scheme since being released. Currently three out of the eleven have a trade, three have a degree, three have A Levels, six have GCSEs and six have other skills. Four out of the eleven stated that they did not have any qualifications/skills. Only three felt that their qualifications had helped them obtain employment. Six believed that their socio-economic status had deteriorated since being in jail.

**Problems Related to Training/Education**

Only two out of the eleven had been on a training scheme since release despite the high level of unemployment amongst the group. Four out of the eleven stated that their disability/illness had prevented them obtaining training. Among the factors preventing people from getting further training the most common were security measures and discrimination, mentioned by eight, followed by lack of confidence (seven); lack of sensitivity to needs by training agencies (six); lack of job experience (five); lack of clear vision (four). Lack of appropriate courses was mentioned by three, while lack of childcare provision, age, lack of information on courses and distance from courses were mentioned by two. About 60% (seven) felt that training was important for them to get a job/better job. A similar number thought it was important for personal development. Virtually all (ten) felt that it was important in order to help their community. Only two of the eleven mentioned a lack of interest in further training. Thus, despite their disabilities, the vast majority were interested in further training, if the obstacles could be overcome.

**Problems Related to Employment**

The top factors mentioned by the group as obstacles to getting a job/better job were, yet again, security concerns and discrimination, mentioned by eight (70%). Lack of jobs in the area was mentioned by seven. Disability is a part of the multiple difficulties facing these ex-prisoners in finding jobs/training and allied to the problem of disability is often illness. Seven of the group had a disability combined with serious long term illness. Seven of the group (63.6%) stated that their disability/illness had adversely affected them getting a job. Five stated that this was because it had prevented them doing the job. Half felt that lack of relevant qualifications had blocked their chances of getting a job/better job. A similar number mentioned lack of job experience. More than 70% (eight) mentioned security concerns. Other important factors mentioned were: discrimination (eight); lack of jobs in area (seven); lack of a decent wage (five); lack of confidence (four); distance from jobs (four); childcare responsibilities (three) and age (two). Only one stated a lack of interest in obtaining a job/better job. No one was satisfied with their current situation.

Clearly, this focus on various sectoral groups highlights again the nature of the obstacles facing ex-prisoners in employment and training. It also shows again the desire on the part of the vast majority of them to improve their employment opportunities and to partake in further training if these obstacles can be removed and the right conditions set in place.

## Chapter Six - Issues Relating to the Attainment of Full Citizenship

This research supports previous evidence that a range of blockages/impediments exist to full participation in society for republican ex-prisoners arising, at least in part, from the fact that they are treated as ex-criminals by the law. A range of examples illustrates the pervasive nature of this problem.

- The Department of Environment requires a “decontamination” period of three years before ex-prisoners can obtain PSV taxi licences. Besides the gross insult this represents for republican ex-prisoners this also causes practical problems given the great importance of taxiing as an economic activity for ex-prisoners. The Falls Taxi Association for example was initially established in the early 1970s to provide employment for former political prisoners in response to their difficulties in obtaining employment elsewhere.
- Anyone wishing to work with children, in schools or crèches must first undergo a check with the R.U.C. to ensure that they are suitable. Ostensibly designed to prevent child abuse, this could lead to republican ex-prisoners being identified to employers as people with ‘criminal’ records.
- Ex-prisoners are excluded from employment in the Civil Service or the Police on the basis that having a ‘criminal’ record makes them untrustworthy/undesirable. The British Government also endorses discrimination through its security clearance system which disqualifies ex-prisoners from employment in places such as power stations and in some jobs linked to the Post Office and Telecommunications. Ex-prisoners who may have been in public employment prior to arrest have been refused employment there on release, even though imprisonment clearly did not affect their ability to perform the job. Given that one of the current ministers running a department in the North is himself an ex-prisoner it is likely that this bar will be politically unsustainable in the medium term.
- Most employers ask job applicants to indicate whether they have a criminal record. If an ex-prisoner answers ‘no’ – in accordance with his/her own beliefs – this can lead to problems in the future. For example, if an employer views this as a lie, the ex-prisoners could be sacked. If an ex-prisoner on the other hand replies ‘yes’ (against his/her beliefs) then they could face outright discrimination. The problem is compounded when ex-prisoners have to present a C.V. or a history of their employment record. If they attempt to explain gaps in employment by stating that they were in jail, they can be denied a job either on the basis of discrimination (since ex-prisoners have no defence under Fair Employment legislation) or on the basis of lack of job experience. Their experience as ex-prisoners or republican activists is not taken into account. This is in contrast to the way R.U.C or British soldiers are treated by employers.
- A similar situation exists if ex-prisoners apply for Further and Higher Education or

training courses; the same types of questions are asked. In at least one known case an ex-prisoner released under the Good Friday Agreement was expelled from a University in England when it was discovered he was a former prisoner. Eventually he was allowed back on the course after a lot of political pressure, but by this stage he had lost several months education and felt unable to continue. In other cases ex-prisoners have had to appear before special interview panels and undergo humiliating interrogations when applying for University courses.

- Even where employers themselves may not particularly want to discriminate against ex-prisoners the perceptions of others in the wider community towards them and the potential for conflict in a 'politically mixed' workforce may make them reluctant to do otherwise. It is arguable, of course that similar attitudes exist and have existed towards the employment of Catholics in general. Should such attitudes be allowed to stand in the way of progress?
- Another problem ex-prisoners face is indirect discrimination. Employers may not be wishing to intentionally discriminate but by the nature of the criteria they set or the questions they ask at interview they may adversely affect the chances of an ex-prisoner getting employment. An example might be where a candidate is asked to show experience in a particular employment field over, say, the previous five years, when the ex-prisoner may have been in jail during some of that period. Even though s/he may have experience in the field prior to imprisonment, the criteria set makes it difficult for the ex-prisoner to score highly in the interview. Section 49 of the 1989 Fair Employment Act was formulated to specifically deal with cases of indirect discrimination with the Fair Employment Tribunal tasked to determine what constituted indirect discrimination in each individual case. However, since ex-prisoners are specifically excluded from coverage under the legislation this cannot be used to defend them.
- The existence of a 'criminal' record also means that ex-prisoners are denied entry into many countries such as the U.S.A., Canada and Australia. This prevents them being able to visit friends and relatives, seek employment or simply have holidays in such countries. Nearly two-thirds (61.1%) of the questionnaire sample had experienced barriers to travel in this way.
- Ex-prisoners cannot stand in elections until a period of five years after release and cannot be members of management committees of social clubs or some associations which provide facilities to children and young people. This is despite the proven track record of involvement in community activity by many ex-prisoners - a fact borne out by our survey which showed 80% of the sample stating they felt training was important to them to help their community.
- Ex-prisoners continue to be discriminated against by banks and financial institutions.

Their absence from society for long periods means that they do not have credit track records and most banks or building societies are reluctant to employ someone or lend them money if they have a 'criminal record'. In the research nearly 30% stated that they had experienced discrimination while dealing with banks, etc. Several mentioned how they had been denied cheque books and mortgages. Significantly, the families of 14.3 % of ex-prisoners had also suffered discrimination in dealing with banks.

- Discrimination in dealings with statutory agencies have also been cited by ex-prisoners. Due to their lack of protection under Equality legislation many feel that statutory bodies like the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) 'Dole' offices and Social Services in general, can treat them with disdain. In the research 37% claimed to have experienced discrimination in dealing with statutory bodies. Significantly, the families of 26.2% of the ex-prisoners had also suffered discrimination by statutory bodies. Under guidelines resulting from the Children Order (N.I.) Health and Social Services Boards have identified the possession of a criminal conviction involving the use of violence as an automatic bar to adoption and fostering. The guidelines make no distinction between political and ordinary prisoners. Many political ex-prisoners have spent long years in jail, at a stage when they might normally have been raising a family. Due to their imprisonment and their age and the age of their partners upon release, fostering or adoption may be the only chance they will have of having a family. By denying them this chance the guidelines are not just discriminating against ex-prisoners but against their families also. This is particularly ironic, to say the least, given the current shortage of foster parents in the North.
- Ex-prisoners have also been denied insurance and anyone convicted under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) or Emergency Provisions Act (EPA) is ineligible for compensation if they are injured or their property damaged in a sectarian attack. Considering that nearly 25% of all those in the sample had suffered intimidation from their home and that nearly 90% in the research listed security concerns as factors preventing them from obtaining employment or training, this makes this legislation even more perverse.
- The new equality legislation, does not begin to address these discriminatory practices. In fact, it gives them the protection of the law through a provision from previous equality legislation allowing discrimination against people whose political beliefs include an acceptance of the use of violence for political ends.(38) In the past this has allowed employers to discriminate openly even against people who canvassed for Sinn Féin. This lack of protection against overt discrimination experienced by political ex-prisoners represents a powerful barrier to meaningful training and employment. It also sustains, reinforces and reproduces the notion in society that ex-prisoners are second-class citizens and should be treated as such.

*'There needs to be the beginning of a process whereby the skills and experience gained as a result of imprisonment or involvement in republican politics can be brought to bear on training and employment opportunities.'*

Ex-prisoner

*'A whole generation of young people who were energetic and enthusiastic missed the opportunity to play their part in helping their communities.'*

- Ex-prisoner

- The question of equality of access to the media is another area of discrimination. For example, the B.B.C. has guidelines concerning interviews with ex-prisoners entitled 'Dealing with Criminals'. They were designed to deal with situations involving interviews with people involved in crime in England. The guidelines insist that there should always be referral upwards if ex-prisoners are being interviewed and that the individual's victim should be contacted before the interview is broadcast. In the case of Ireland no distinction is made between political and non-political ex-prisoners. This is not the case in other conflict areas around the world nor should it be the case here. The problem about applying such guidelines to political prisoners is that it does not take into account the political conflict which has been taking place here. Instead of recognising that such conflicts lead to victims on all sides it rather simplistically and pejoratively defines ex-prisoners and victims as opposite sides in the conflict. It also reproduces and reinforces damaging negative stereotypes of ex-prisoners throughout society at a time when peace building and reconciliation should be to the fore.
- Besides the barriers placed on them preventing freedom of expression in the media ex-prisoners also have on the other hand to endure vilification in the media by others without any form of redress. As part of the overall integration of political ex-prisoners into the new society the issue of demonisation in sections of the British and Irish media needs to be seriously considered. Currently, lies and innuendo can be regularly printed and broadcast about political ex-prisoners without any recourse to redress. Libel legislation is limited and only protects those who can afford to bring cases. It is there to protect the rich. In any case, since ex-prisoners are not regarded as having 'good characters' by the courts, they cannot expect damages for character assassination. The result is that anyone can say what they like about them. This recurrent demonisation does nothing to assist the ongoing process of peace building. It presents a false image of ex-prisoners to the public and makes mutual understanding more difficult. Whilst not wishing to curtail expressions of opinion in any way, it is clear that all the public, including political ex-prisoners, are entitled to protection from false allegations and untrue smears on their characters. The media are entitled to be held accountable for what they produce.

Thus it is not just that ex-prisoners are discriminated against in employment. Full citizenship is denied them in a large number of different ways. Equal citizenship is undermined specifically with regard to training and employment which is not tailored to needs, but there are many other aspects to it – denial of other rights – a continuum which conforms to the research.

## Chapter Seven - Training Provision: What works?

### Introduction

It is clear from this research that current mainstream training is not working for ex-prisoners and that if this issue is to be tackled seriously there will have to be a move away from normal 'off the shelf training' to a process whereby the needs of trainees are treated as paramount and where training is linked to the provision of a real job. Much evaluation of existing training provision seems to concentrate on quantitative measures such as how many trainees can be put through a particular course rather than qualitative measures related to how the course actually helped the trainee to get a job or to develop skills for use in life or in his/her community. Current mainstream training is linked to British Government macro-economic policy, and this has had major implications in terms of training provision and job creation as well as on the attitudes and operation of many agencies and NGOs (Non-governmental organisations). Thus, training has been geared to improving 'employability' but not linked in any serious way to the provision of a real job on completion. Training has tended to fail to address the needs and wants of political ex-prisoners and their communities adopting, in the main a top-down approach to provision. In the case of republican ex-prisoners, their unique circumstances and training needs have rarely been taken into consideration by government, statutory bodies or training agencies.

Despite this the current research did identify a number of examples of training which might inform good practice in the future. This has been where training has been participant-driven, has involved the development of partnerships with local communities, where it has been linked to the satisfaction of the needs of trainees rather than of trainers or training agencies and where it has been linked to the creation of real jobs.

In this regard it may be useful to look at a training scheme which took place in Ballymun in North Dublin in the mid 1990s. The training involved the local community based Job Centre, FAS and Microsoft in a partnership to provide professional training in IT skills to long-term unemployed people from the area. The project was successful on a number of levels. Firstly, the training took into account the need for confidence building and motivating throughout the duration of the scheme and serious attempts were made to make the trainees feel a sense of ownership over their training. Cognition was also taken of the need to provide an income to trainees while training and this was secured. The real success was that it was linked to job creation with virtually all the participants getting jobs in the end. The training process was able to circumvent the normal academic routes to professional careers and provide training which enabled the trainees to go straight into professional well paid jobs at the end.(39)

Attempts have been made to provide similar types of trainee-centred programmes in Belfast in various ex-prisoner projects – e.g. Tús Nua in the Upper Springfield area of West Belfast and Trá Ghearr in the nationalist Short Strand area of East Belfast. Both these projects attempted to provide training which was based on the specific needs of the trainees and which was also income-based. While both projects felt their approach had been very successful, especially in being able to link ex-prisoners to community development projects, etc., one gap has been the lack of private sector interest/involvement in providing jobs.

There now follows two case studies of training programmes involving ex-prisoners in Belfast which may inform good practice on training provision for this sector. The programmes concerned were the EASE Programme and the Loiste Úr Training Project.

#### **Case Study of Ease Programme**

During 2000 Coiste na nIarChimí became involved with Ortus in a training process for republican ex-prisoners. Below is a case study describing this process.

In 2000, Ortus, a major training organisation, experienced in the provision of business start-up training programmes, and based in West Belfast, an area with a high percentage republican ex-prisoner population, decided that it should attempt to offer training in business start-up for part of what it viewed as its constituency. The problems faced by the republican ex-prisoner community, their lack of involvement in mainstream training provision and their prioritisation within Peace 1 as a group in need of support led to the development of a successful funding proposal to Proteus, an Intermediate Funding Body (IFB) for EU funding, by Ortus, to provide business training for this sector. It initially aimed to do this in collaboration with another training agency—St. Patrick's. The training programme was to be called EASE and much of it was initially based on the premise that the proposed participants faced many unique problems which could not be catered for by the normal support channels. These included;

- Low self-esteem
- Lack of knowledge of today's economy
- Ignorance of employment law/rights
- Ignorance of fiscal regulations

As a result, much of the course was designed to build confidence, social skills, self-awareness, etc.

For a variety of reasons it became clear that the recruitment of ex-prisoners onto the scheme was going to be very difficult. One reason for this was that the organisations involved, although having a wealth of experience in training delivery and business training programmes (in the case of Ortus) and training non-political ex-prisoners (in the case of St Patrick's), neither of the groups had a background in dealing with republican ex-prisoners. Republican ex-prisoners are generally reluctant to become involved in mainstream schemes due to security considerations and a general perception that they will be discriminated against or stigmatised. Besides this the vast majority of republican ex-prisoners do not exhibit similar traits to non-political ex-prisoners. This seemed to be borne out when recruitment for the project eventually got underway and it became clear that the content of the course based on the erroneous premise that the participants would be of low esteem lacking in self-awareness, low assertiveness, and poor social skills, had to be changed.

By the Summer of 2000, with the project no further on, Ortus decided to approach Coiste na nIar Chimí - the representative body for Republican ex-prisoners in Ireland - on the basis

that unless the programme had the overt support and participation of Coiste it was unlikely that ex-prisoners would actually come forward to participate in the programme. Out of the initial discussions came a view that republican ex-prisoners felt they had been bombarded with a wide range of training schemes of varying quality. The Coiste was also in the process of delivering an Enterprise Development Training Programme, in partnership with NICDA, across the nine most northerly counties of Ireland, which examined self-employment / business training, particularly in relation to the social economy. If any new programme were to generate enthusiasm it would have to be perceived by the participants as addressing their specific needs. For example, the ethos of many ex-prisoners would need to be catered for – in particular their interest in the well-being of their communities. They would also need to feel a sense of ownership of both the process and the content.

A partnership developed between Ortus and Coiste with the latter agreeing to host a series of consultative/recruitment meetings and to offer ongoing support and administration to the trainees. By early September a group of nine ex-prisoners had been located each with a specific interest/idea for establishing a community business. Probably more important was the fact that the nine also constituted a group willing to work together to include their individual ideas in an overall strategic plan for the development of their respective communities. They had in fact been already exploring the idea of a North Belfast sub-regional strategy for ex-prisoner groups before becoming aware of the EASE Programme. After a further series of meetings with the group of ex-prisoners to agree scope and content, a revised programme had been agreed by early September. The project ran from September to December 2000.

As part of the agreement with Coiste it had been decided that the design and content of the programme would be set through consultation between the trainees, trainers and organisers. A bottom-up approach was adopted alongside an ongoing process of consultation/evaluation of the programme to ensure the evolving needs and expectations of the participants. It was felt that this type of approach was necessary in order to ensure that trainees felt ownership of the course and had increased motivation to attend and complete it.

Firstly, a series of meetings were held between the Coiste/Ortus and the potential trainees in an attempt to marry needs to resources. As a result, a set of proposals was agreed in relation to content, structure, ethos and location of the programme, before it commenced. Emphasis was to be placed on the Social Economy and ideas around the creation of community business, rather than private enterprise, per se. The location for the programme was agreed and premises were rented from a local ex-prisoner group. This led to the creation of a relaxed atmosphere during sessions as the trainees felt more at home and there was also the added bonus that one of their support groups was benefiting via rent and recognition.

The consultation process continued throughout the course on an ongoing basis with time set aside at the end of each module for group evaluation of the module with discussion on evolving needs and how these might be catered for within the module programme or within the mentoring sessions. The virtual 100% attendance at most of the sessions and the fact

that no-one dropped out appears to support the contention that this may be a useful example of good practice to be adopted by future training programmes designed for ex-prisoners.

The participants had a high level of commitment to their various projects which was aided by the support of their umbrella organisation and the ongoing process of consultation which engendered a sense of ownership of the programme. The participants did not get everything they wanted from the programme due to limitations created by the terms of the initial funding application which they had had no part in drafting and due to the fact that some decisions were outside their control. It was not their project but a compromise project between themselves and Ortus. Nevertheless, satisfaction was expressed that the programme was much better than most other training programmes they were aware of or had attended.

#### **Case Study of Lóiste Úr Training Project**

The Lóiste Úr Training Project was established in North Belfast in 1997 to try to assist local republican ex-prisoners in accessing training and employment.(40) After receiving some initial funding, an audit of the needs of ex-prisoners in the area was carried out. From the start the philosophy of the project was to adopt a bottom-up approach, finding out the needs and expectations of the ex-prisoner community and involving them fully in the process of trying to realise those needs/expectations. In 1999 funding was received under Peace I to provide training opportunities for ex-prisoners in the area. Based on the training needs audit, it was proposed to organise work placements, accredited training courses, mentoring services and social and cultural development for local ex-prisoners.

One finding of the project's research had been that a major reason for non-take up by ex-prisoners of mainstream training provision was that they could not afford financially to spend that time in training without some sort of supplement to their income. Due to the patterns of unemployment experienced by ex-prisoners most have very little financial reserves. This commonly gives rise to a short-term perspective concerning personal finance and a deep worry of further debt. This is an attribute of most long-term unemployed who are forced to think in terms of very tight weekly budgets. In order for them to overcome these apprehensions and enter a long-term training programme potential trainees need some sort of financial incentive. One big advantage of this training project therefore was that it was wage-based.

Another factor emerging from the research was the reluctance of ex-prisoners to venture outside their own areas due to security considerations as well as lack of experience and therefore confidence in being in a strange environment. Fear of ridicule, embarrassment and uncertainty about their ability reinforced this reluctance. This training was therefore carried out in the safety of their local area.

The training process involved the trainees from the start. They had a large involvement in the design of the training. This meant that they felt ownership of the project and of their own training. The result was that the trainees were highly motivated and highly committed. During the research it became obvious that many ex prisoners were interested in carrying out

work which would be beneficial for their own communities. The fact that the training took on board this desire further increased the success of the project. The participants were involved in work helping their community. This had the double effect of motivating the trainees and providing a positive impact on the community. It is also argued that this in turn has had a positive impact on the peace building process. The fact that ex-prisoners were able to access opportunities not previously available showed that there were now alternative routes to achieving justice. The training project also helped create role models among the ex-prisoner community in the area to work with local youth, etc.

Among the success stories of the project was that three trainees came through the project with professional qualifications in IT training, another was qualified in Youth Development, while a fifth gained managerial skills and experience.

It is suggested that this project is an example of particularly good practice which should be replicated elsewhere. The EASE Programme case study points up how misconceptions about the republican ex-prisoner community can be made in training provision and how, with a different approach, an apparently unsuccessful programme can be turned around. The research has shown the great interest that exists amongst the republican ex-prisoner community for improved training and the acquisition of skills and qualifications. It has also shown however, that such training provision needs to be moulded around the specific needs, wants and problems of this sector if it is to be successful. In particular, it is argued, that republican ex-prisoners, while being part of the broader nationalist community, have specific needs which must be taken into account. Among the issues that training providers need to take on board are the security concerns that ex-prisoners have as well as their particular ethos. In this regard the need for a dedicated training agency to deal with the political ex-prisoner community becomes clearer.

It is also clear from this research that the type of training provision which is likely to be successful for ex-prisoners is that which is participant-led, which addresses the real needs and wants of the trainees, which takes into account the security concerns and ethos issues, which addresses the income issues (and is thus wage-based), and which is aimed at some specific end goal—the acquisition of a real job or of skills of use in work in the community, etc.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

A number of issues have emerged from this research which should inform policy on the training and employment needs of republican ex-prisoners.

Republican ex-prisoners in Belfast share many of the training and employment problems faced by other people who live in nationalist working class areas. They live in areas of high unemployment, where most jobs which do exist tend to be low skilled and low paid. Most of the jobs service the local population. Major public employment in these areas is concentrated in health and education. In particular, employment has been created through the growth of the voluntary/community sector over the past six years fuelled by the advent of Peace 1 and 2 money. However, much of the latter funding is medium term and unstable. The private sector is quite small in the area and most of the jobs it sustains are again low paid and low skilled.

While they share many of the problems of local residents, these problems are intensified for ex-prisoners. Their security concerns prevent them seeking training/employment outside their own areas, even more so than other residents. Their lack of past and recent experience in the training and employment field can also foster a lack of confidence or a sense of embarrassment. This, together with discrimination means that they are excluded from training/employment in many sectors and in many areas. Discrimination against ex-prisoners is not just limited to training and employment but covers a continuum of aspects of society where ex-prisoners are excluded or treated as second class citizens. Indirect discrimination is also widespread whereby criteria are set which prevent ex-prisoners getting jobs, access to courses or access to services (such as bank accounts, mortgages, etc.)

Despite efforts to promote self employment in nationalist areas of Belfast being a tenet of British Government policy since the 1980s, few in those areas have taken it on board as a serious possibility to alleviate unemployment. Ex-prisoners, like others among the unemployed, are beginning from a very low capital base and are unable to sustain potentially long periods of non-profit making and even loss making. Ex-prisoners who have been enterprising in the past have found themselves discriminated against by government agencies/ departments and financial institutions.

The notion that self-employment could solve the problems of unemployment in socio-economically depressed areas of Belfast, like its twin policy of sustainability, geared towards the notion that community development can self-sustain, is a method by which successive British Governments have denied responsibility for the problem and tried to place it at the door of the unemployed and low waged. It is a classic case of blaming the victim for his/her predicament. The real problem lies with inequality in society which in turn is based on past injustices. The government cannot ignore its responsibilities in this regard. In this sense it may be useful to introduce the term 'historical reparation' to government thinking. The equality agenda requires the righting of past wrongs and this in turn requires the investment of disproportionate amounts of public funding in areas of high unemployment in order to create real meaningful jobs.

Inward investment into areas of high deprivation also needs to be linked to the employment of local people. From the 1970s investment which has been provided to attract major employment to areas like West Belfast to alleviate the socio-economic problems there, has failed to have a major impact on the inequality of socio-economic deprivation suffered in such areas. While such areas have benefited from the economic upturn of the 1990s with a lowering of unemployment, they still have disproportionately high levels of unemployment, long term unemployment and low paid, low skilled jobs. A major problem has been that such initiatives tended to benefit people from outside these areas. In the case of De Lorean, Montupet, etc. the high skilled high paid jobs did not, in the main, go to people from the area. In fact as has already been noted, only 1 in 4 of the jobs in the MBW areas go to local residents. A high level of inward investment is needed into nationalist areas of Belfast to balance the capital imbalance in those areas and to fulfill the Equality Agenda of providing job opportunities for people living there. Such investment must be tied to the creation of jobs for local people. The mistakes of the past whereby investment provided on the backs of the social and economic deprivation of the people in such areas must be rectified. An opportunity now exists with, for example, the proposed Springvale Campus and possibly with the siting of Maternity Services at the Royal Victoria Hospital to go some way to fulfilling this Equality Agenda - if the will is there. It must be ensured that ex-prisoners are included in any attempts to resolve unemployment with such measures.

Despite the plethora of training provision in areas like West Belfast, this appears to have had little impact on long term unemployment and the creation of sustainable high skilled high paid jobs. The Government needs to address the question "Training for what?". Training needs to be geared towards the provision of a job on completion, or some other agreed outcome e.g. the acquisition of skills useful to the community or to some specific community project, etc. Training should therefore be directly linked to job creation instead of some vague notion that training, any sort of training, makes a person more employable. The term 'employability' is also another example where the responsibility for unemployment is placed on the individual rather than seen as the collective responsibility of us all. This is not to say that only training for employment should be supported. In this regard the interest of many ex-prisoners in supporting, developing and working in the social economy should be recognised. Clearly people train for a whole range of reasons - e.g., for personal development, to help their communities, to help them carry out their current job better, etc. However, there needs to be a much more strategic approach adopted to training which is geared towards helping the participant find employment.

Ex-prisoners, by virtue of the fact that they have been in jail and have lived through a conflict situation for many years, require a training process which is quite specific to their needs. It is quite clear from this research that current training policy is failing the bulk of ex-prisoners. They are not being attracted to existing training provision despite both their own recognition that training would be beneficial to them and their desire to take part in it. Existing training provision is, in the main, not sensitive to the particular needs of republican ex-prisoners.

Where training provision for ex-prisoners has appeared to be successful, it has tended to be

participant driven, wage based and involved partnerships with local communities. It has also often involved training for work in the social economy.

Equally, if the British and Irish Governments are serious in their stated objective of wishing to build a new society based on equality and an end to injustice, then recognition must be given to the continued second-class citizenship of republican ex-prisoners and the need to rectify this. In other conflict situations where there has not been a clear victory for one side or the other, successful conflict resolution has only been achieved when ex-combatants have been given equal citizenship in the new society. The case of South Africa clearly illustrates this.

The process of political transition and conflict resolution in South Africa has been most visibly signified by the election of a democratic government. Those same processes have also underpinned the response of policy-makers to the needs of the many South Africans who were imprisoned as political activists or forced into exile because of their political opinions or their membership of organisations opposed to, and banned by, the Apartheid regime. Since 1994, when the democratic government was first elected, political prisoners have been released and people in exile have been able to return to South Africa. However, it was recognised that to integrate these people into a society which was undergoing political transition and socio-economic transformation required retraining, re-education, and reskilling. Under a programme of 'redeployment', the democratic government in partnership with those representing political ex-prisoners and activists has sought to develop opportunities tailored to the needs of these marginalized groups.

One obvious area for redeploying these groups of people, many of whom had skills gained in the theatre of war, was in the security services including the reformed South African Police Service and South African Defence Force. This was facilitated under new legislation through a process of lateral entry into such organisations. Importantly, new legislation and policy has also been introduced in the private and public sector and within the civil service to enable the redeployment of political ex-prisoners and people returned from exile into those sectors, in a conscious and comprehensive programme to effect the reintegration of these groups into all spheres of socio-economic life.

Clearly a lot has still to be learned about the re-integration of political ex-prisoners.

#### **Proposals for the Future**

The discrimination against and exclusion of republican ex-prisoners needs to be tackled at both policy and legislative levels.

All legislation which discriminates against ex-prisoners or fails to protect them in the way that other citizens are protected needs to be reformed. In particular, section 42 and section 57.3 of the Fair Employment (N.I.) Act 1989 and section 2(4) of the newer Fair Employment and Treatment (N.I.) Order 1998, which allow for discrimination in cases involving the use of or support of political violence, need to be amended. The rights of political ex-prisoners to be treated equally to every other citizen should be enshrined in the

new Bill of Rights. Probably the easiest way to ensure that political ex-prisoners have access to full and equal citizenship however, is with the removal of 'criminal' records for those jailed as a result of the conflict. This would remove a great deal of the barriers to training and employment as well as to full participation in social, public and political life.

As part of the overall integration of political ex-prisoners into the new society the issue of demonisation in sections of the British and Irish media needs to be seriously considered. Currently lies and innuendo can be regularly printed and broadcast about political ex-prisoners, both collectively and individually, without any recourse to redress on their part. This in turn can greatly affect perceptions held about ex-prisoners in wider society and have serious implications in the training and employment fields. It also ensures that they may never feel like full and equal citizens in this society. Current libel legislation is limited and only protects those who can afford to bring cases. In any event the Courts operate on the premise that ex-prisoners do not have 'good reputations' in the first place, thus making it virtually impossible for them to show that their reputations have been damaged. Whilst not wishing to curtail the expression of opinion in any way, it is clear that some protection is needed for ex-prisoners against the publication of lies and false information. A first step could be the establishment of a pilot project to monitor, evaluate and respond to inaccurate media coverage of ex-prisoners. This would provide some gauge to the extent of the problem as well as providing a means to redress the balance in some way.

While the dangers of attack, persecution and discrimination remain, ex-prisoners and other nationalists are unable to benefit from employment opportunities available in areas outside their own. As a result, nationalist areas of Belfast and other areas where there are high concentrations of unemployment and low concentrations of jobs available, need to be targeted for special investment. Echoing the views of other researchers in the field of training and employment such as Pete Shirlow and Mike Morrissey, we believe that new jobs need to be initially created in their local communities to draw ex-prisoners into employment as a bridge to work, where they can receive training and job experience but at the same time draw a living wage.

There must also be a strategy for getting long-term, high paid jobs into nationalist areas of North and West Belfast. Jobs need to be attracted to these areas which are high skilled and high paid and which are designed specifically for the residents of those areas. An important aspect of the provision of such jobs is also the provision of career paths which allow progression. It is not enough for the British government to argue that the concentration of the conflict in nationalist areas has led to a reluctance of employers locating there.<sup>(41)</sup> One aspect of the promotion of equality must be to redress the historic imbalance in the location of employment in the North. It calls also for a form of historical reparation towards nationalist working class communities.

Employers who are attracted to these areas through Government funding which attempts to alleviate deprivation, must show a willingness to employ locally. This may require legislative changes in Fair Employment legislation but there should be a requirement for employers benefiting from the plight of the people of these areas to employ those people. One area where

this could be a reality may be in the new Springvale initiative, however this in itself would not be enough. Other major employers, possibly in the high technology sector need to be attracted to the area.

The West Belfast Economic Task Force set up to deal with this must also consider ways of ensuring that local people actually benefit from such jobs. In this regard there have been interesting developments in the Poleglass area of Belfast where attempts are being made to encourage employers to enter into voluntary agreements with the local Community on training initiatives for local young people which may lead to real jobs. Though limited by current Fair Employment legislation such developments point the way to the eradication of continuing inequality.

Concerns have been expressed about the new Springvale Campus, set up with massive public expenditure on the back of the deprivation, unemployment and concentrations of the conflict in North and West Belfast. How much local people will benefit in terms of actual jobs, particularly the better paid ones, is a moot point. It is also vitally important that all sections of those communities, including ex-prisoners, are actively encouraged to attend and are made to feel comfortable and secure. Other areas where the Campus could improve on the current position could be with the amending of the current policy of the University of Ulster in demanding that political ex-prisoners state that they have criminal convictions on their application forms. Courses too could be redesigned to take account of the needs and expectations of various groups in the local communities including the specific needs of ex-prisoners.

Besides a clear need to create high skilled, high paid jobs locally there is also a need to link training provision to the needs and wants of political ex-prisoners. Training should be linked directly to specific agreed outcomes such as the provision of a real job on completion, the acquisition of specific skills which can be used to help the community or a specific project in the community, or the development of confidence, self-esteem, etc. This research and previous research has found a desire on the part of many ex-prisoners to receive training which will assist them to become re-skilled or to update previously learned skills. It seems appropriate therefore that any proposals on training for ex-prisoners take account of the skills they already have and attempt to improve upon these. It must also take account of their security concerns and their particular ethos. The specific needs of ex-prisoners need to be taken into account and it is proposed that specific training provision be established to cater for those needs. One way of doing this would be through the establishment of a dedicated training agency specifically to cater for ex-prisoners. This would enable ex-prisoners to have some control over provision for their own training needs. It would enable them to enter into partnerships with their own communities and to put into practice the lessons learned in the various training projects in which they have been involved. In particular, it is felt that the concept of wage based training be seriously considered as the norm when it comes to training, not just of ex-prisoners, but of the long term unemployed.

It is also felt that the social economy should be a focus for the training and employment of ex-prisoners. Currently, the republican ex-prisoner organisation, Coiste na nIar-Chimí has

reorganised its Belfast organisation into four regions. This streamlining of structure makes it more adaptable in dealing with funding and statutory agencies. In particular, it means that training provision and job creation measures for ex-prisoners, can be more easily implemented in partnerships between them and the various agencies. It is important in this regard also that NGOs responsible for the dispersal of Peace II funding and for the provision of training are sensitive both to the needs of the ex-prisoner community and to the structure of its representative organisation.

A further recommendation of this research is that its insights need to be built upon with further research. It is proposed that funding should be made available for a specially commissioned research project into the integrated and interlocking needs and issues affecting republican ex-prisoners on a national basis. Conceptually, psychologically and politically the state needs to get rid of its fear of empowering people and give them the resources to solve their own problems.

Likewise, conceptually psychologically and politically ex-prisoners have to realise that they are entitled to the same rights as everyone else in this society. In particular, the notion that voluntarism, an intrinsically worthy concept in itself, is the only appropriate way of operating in society, needs to be challenged. There needs to be an increasing acceptance and promotion of the idea that political ex-prisoners are entitled to the same wages, conditions, etc. as everyone else. Finally, if republican ex-prisoners are to play a full part in the building of a new society, it is essential that they are enabled to become equal citizens. This can partly be achieved by the removal of legislative barriers placed against political ex-prisoners and the establishment of legislative safeguards under Fair Employment and Equality legislation and the Bill of Rights. However, further positive affirmative action could be taken along the lines of the lateral deployment policy in post-Apartheid South Africa. Not only should barriers be removed to the employment of political ex-prisoners in the public services and any new policing service, but there should be an active lateral deployment policy which positively takes into account the experience such ex-prisoners gained via their involvement in the political struggle.

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Tús Nua Research Team, The Cost of Imprisonment, Upper Springfield Development Trust, August 1998. This involved a survey of 56 ex-prisoners in the Upper Springfield (Ballymurphy, Turf Lodge and Whiterock) area of West Belfast. While 87.5% of them had experienced long term unemployment, at the time of the survey 52% were unemployed and 48% had jobs.

Clones Fáilte Group, Survey of ex POWs in County Monaghan, 1998.
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3. The Good Friday Agreement states:
 

'The Governments continue to recognise the importance of measures to facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into the community by providing support both prior to and after release, including assistance directed towards availing of employment opportunities, re-training and/or re-skilling and further education'. (page 25, paragraph 5)
4. This figure is an estimate provided by Coiste na nIarChimí. Some 7,625 republican prisoners have been identified as having been incarcerated and released in the north during the period 1973-90. However this does not include republican prisoners who remained incarcerated after 1990. Nor does it include republicans who were interned without trial during the early 1970s or those imprisoned in the South of Ireland, England, the USA or Europe during this period.
5. Tús Nua Research Team, 1998, op. cit., and O'Neill, Paul, 1998, op. cit.
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8. Section 42 and section 57.3 of the Fair Employment (N.I.) Act 1989 both allow for discrimination in cases involving the use or support of political violence, as does section 2(4) of the newer Fair Employment and Treatment (N.I.) Order 1998.
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10. Research commissioned by the Belfast Area Partnership Boards and carried out by The Social Exclusion Research Unit (University of Ulster).
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17. According to Shuttleworth et al (1998) out of an estimated 106,000 people who worked in MBW wards in 1998 only 26,000 or about one quarter were local residents. Shuttleworth, I., Power, J., & McKinstry, D., 'Travel to Work Patterns in the Belfast Urban Area', in Twelfth Labour Market Bulletin, Training and Employment Agency, 1998.
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21. Sheehan, M., and Tomlinson, M., 'Long-Term Unemployment and the Community Work Programme', in McLaughlin, E., and Quirk, P., Policy Aspects of Employment Equality in Northern Ireland, S.A.C.H.R., 1996.
22. Seminar organised by the new West Belfast Economic Task Force to discuss issues around the employment of ex-prisoners, July 2001.
23. O'Neill, Paul, 1998, op. cit.
24. 'On the run' in Republican parlance relates to someone who has to live away from home to avoid arrest.
25. It should also be remembered that the conflict in Ireland has gone through many different phases as has the experience of imprisonment. Internment, torture, internment by remand, attempts at criminalisation, the granting of de facto political status have alternated as policies to attempt to break republican will. Likewise the reaction of prisoners to these policies of protest on the blanket, hunger strike, escape, administering their own community, etc., have all fed into the combined prison experience.

26. Section 75 placed the promotion of equality of opportunity as a key policy and obliged all major government authorities to encourage equality practices and fair employment.

Section 75 states:

‘(1) A public authority shall, in carrying out its functions relating to N.I. have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity

(a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation.....’

‘(2) Without prejudice to its obligations under subsection (1), a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to N.I. have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group’.

Under Section 75 most public authorities have an obligation to design an equality scheme, consult named organisations from within the voluntary and community sectors as well as political parties, etc., and monitor development.

27. The whole concept of volunteerism as it pertains to republicans is mentioned in other research including, The Social Exclusion Research Unit, Republican Ex-Prisoner Groups in North Belfast, 2001.
28. Uniquely among political parties, Sinn Féin’s elected representatives only keep an amount equivalent to the average wage and donate the rest to the party.
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## Appendix I

### Coiste na n-IarChimí

Training & Employment Questionnaire (Spring 2001)

Coiste Interviewee Number \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

This Survey is being carried out under the auspices of Coiste na n-IarChimí to try to ascertain some of the needs/problems/experiences of Republican ex-prisoners in the fields of training and employment. The results of the survey will be published in a Report, however each individual respondent is guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality.

#### Status of Individual

(1) In what age group are you?

0 - 24     25-34     35-44     45+

(2) Are you?

Male     Female

(3) What is your marital status?

Single     Married     Separated/divorced     Cohabiting

(4) Do you have dependents?

Yes     No

(4a) If Yes how many dependents

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Prison History/Experience

(5) Were you?

	Yes	No	Duration in months & years
Remanded but never sentenced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Interned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Sentenced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

(6) How long did you spend in jail in total?

< 1 year     1-5 yrs     5-10 yrs     10-15 yrs     15yrs +

(7) What age were you when first imprisoned? \_\_\_\_\_

(8) What year were you released? \_\_\_\_\_





# Oiste na n-Iarchimí

Training & Employment Questionnaire (Spring 2001)

(15) Has it adversely affected you getting a job?

Yes

No

(16) Was this because it prevented you doing the job?

Yes

No

(17) Did it prevent you obtaining training?

Yes

No

(18) Before prison how many years were you?

Unemployed <1 yr  1-2 yrs  2-5 yrs  5-10 yrs  10yrs +

Employed part-time <1 yr  1-2 yrs  2-5 yrs  5-10 yrs  10yrs +

Employed full-time <1 yr  1-2 yrs  2-5 yrs  5-10 yrs  10yrs +

On Training Scheme <1 yr  1-2 yrs  2-5 yrs  5-10 yrs  10yrs +

(19) Before prison did you have any of the following? (Please specify 'type' were applicable)

	Yes	Type
Apprenticeship	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Trade	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Other skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Academic qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
GCSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
'A' Level	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Other Qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____



# Oiste na n-Iarchimí

Training & Employment Questionnaire (Spring 2001)

(20) Before prison which of these groups most accurately described your socio-economic situation? (Please tick one only)

- Managers & Administrators
- Professional Occupations
- Associate Professional & Technical Occupations
- Clerical & Secretarial Occupations
- Craft & Related Occupations
- Personal & Protective Service Occupations
- Sales Occupations
- Plant & Machine Operatives
- Other Occupations  go to q20a

Other occupations please specify \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- (21) Before prison did you
- (a) Work in the home
  - (b) Look after children
  - (c) Look after other dependents

(22) If you had responsibility for caring for children/dependents before going to prison, what happened to those children/dependents while you were in prison? (Please specify)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(23) Did being in prison have any adverse effect on your family?

- Yes  (Please specify) No  Go to q24

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(23a) On a sliding scale from zero to ten, with zero indicating no adverse effect and 10 indicating an adverse effect please indicate the effect of prison on your family?

- 0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
-    -    -    -    -    -    -    -    -    -    -



# OISTE NA N-IARCHIMÍ

Training & Employment Questionnaire (Spring 2001)

(24) Did being in prison have any effect on **your relationship** with your family?

Yes

No

(Please specify)

Go to q25

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(24a) On a sliding scale from zero to ten, with zero indicating no adverse effect and 10 indicating an adverse effect please indicate the effect of prison on **your relationship** with your family?

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
-    -    -    -    -    -    -    -    -    -    -

(25) During prison did you gain any of the following)

	Yes	Type	Year acquired
Apprenticeship	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Trade	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Other skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Academic qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
GCSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
'A' Level	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Other Qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____



## Coiste na n-Iarchimí

Training & Employment Questionnaire (Spring 2001)

(26) After prison did you gain any of the following?

	Yes	Type	Year acquired
Apprenticeship	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Trade	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Other skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Academic qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
GCSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
'A' Level	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Other Qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____

(27) Did any of these skills/qualifications help you get employment?

Yes                      No  
                             

(28) Which of the following categories best explains your current socio-economic position:

- Managers & Administrators
- Professional Occupations
- Associate Professional & Technical Occupations
- Clerical & Secretarial Occupations
- Craft & Related Occupations
- Personal & Protective Service Occupations
- Sales Occupations
- Plant & Machine Operatives
- Other Occupations  Go to q 28a

(28a) Other occupations please specify \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Coiste na n-Iarchimh

Training & Employment Questionnaire (Spring 2001)

(29) Has your socio-economic status deteriorated since being in prison?

Yes

No

 Go to q 31

(30) Why do you think your socio-economic status has deteriorated?

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(31) Which, if any, of the following has blocked your chance of getting a job/better job?

(Please tick more than one if relevant and specify)

- |                                 |                          |       |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Lack of relevant qualifications | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Security concerns               | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of past job experience     | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of recent job experience   | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Age                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Confidence              | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Clear Vision            | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Discrimination                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Information on jobs     | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Distance from job               | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Interest                | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Decent Wage             | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Jobs in Area            | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Childcare Responsibilities      | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Childcare Provision     | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |



## OISTE NA N-IARCHIMÍ

Training & Employment Questionnaire (Spring 2001)

- Care for Other Dependents  \_\_\_\_\_
- Working in the Home  \_\_\_\_\_
- Satisfaction with current situation  \_\_\_\_\_
- Other Commitments  \_\_\_\_\_
- Other  \_\_\_\_\_

(32) What type of training/education would you need to get a decent job? (Please specify)

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(33) What prevents you from getting that training/education? (Please specify)

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(34) What type of training would you most benefit from? (Please specify)

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(35) Which, if any, of the following has blocked your progression to achieve training/educational qualifications? (Please tick more than one if relevant and specify)

- |   | Yes                      | N/A                      |       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Security concerns   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Confidence  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Clear Vision  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Sensitivity by training Agencies to your training needs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Discrimination  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |



## Coiste na n-Iarchimí

Training & Employment Questionnaire (Spring 2001)

- |  |                          |                          |       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Lack of past job experience  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of recent job experience  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Age  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Information on Courses   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Interest/Satisfaction with<br>Current Level of Skills/Qualifications | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Income   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Distance from Courses  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Appropriate Courses in Local Area                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Childcare Responsibilities   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Lack of Childcare Provision  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Care for Other Dependents  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Working in the Home  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Other Commitments  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Other  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |

(36) Why, if at all, is training important to you? (Tick all that apply)

- |                                   | Yes                      | N/A                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| To help you get a job             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To help you advance in employment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To help you develop as a person   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To help your community            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



## OISTE NA N-IARCHIMÍ

Training & Employment Questionnaire (Spring 2001)

(37) Have you suffered any of the following as a result of being in prison?

(Please specify with example (s) were appropriate).

	Yes	Year	Please Specify
Discrimination in employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Discrimination in training	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Discrimination in dealing with Banks/financial institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Discrimination in obtaining qualifications for work, e.g. PSV	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Barriers to travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Discrimination in dealing with statutory bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____

(38) Has any of your immediate family suffered any of the following as a result of you having been in prison?

(Please specify with example (s) were appropriate).

	Yes	Year	Please Specify
Discrimination in employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Discrimination in training	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Discrimination in dealing with Banks/financial institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Discrimination in obtaining qualifications for work, e.g. PSV	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Barriers to travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Discrimination in dealing with statutory bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____



# Coiste na n-Iarchimní

Training & Employment Questionnaire (Spring 2001)

(39) Has having been in prison prevented you from playing a fuller part in life?

Yes  
 (Please specify)

No  
 go to q 40

### Other Experience Related to the Conflict

(40) Have you suffered any of the following as a result of the Conflict?

	Yes	No	Year
Death of a family member(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Death of a relative(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Death of a friend(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Serious personal injury	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Serious injury to a family member(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
To a relative(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
To a friend(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

(41) Has harassment by R.U.C./British Forces been experienced on the street?

	Yes	No	Less than 5 years ago	5 to 10	10 to 20	>20
By you	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Family member	<input type="checkbox"/>					
A relative	<input type="checkbox"/>					
A friend	<input type="checkbox"/>					



# OISTE NA N-IARCHIMÍ

Training & Employment Questionnaire (Spring 2001)

(42) Have searches of home being experienced?

	Yes	No	Less than 5 years ago	5 to 10	10 to 20	>20
By you	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Family member	<input type="checkbox"/>					
A relative	<input type="checkbox"/>					
A friend	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Other (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>					

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(43) Has intimidation out of home been experienced?

	Yes	No	Less than 5 years ago	5 to 10	10 to 20	>20
By you	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Family member	<input type="checkbox"/>					
A relative	<input type="checkbox"/>					
A friend	<input type="checkbox"/>					

(44) Has imprisonment been experienced?

	Yes	No	Less than 5 years ago	5 to 10	10 to 20	>20
By you	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Family member	<input type="checkbox"/>					
A relative	<input type="checkbox"/>					
A friend	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Thank you for your time and assistance in completing this questionnaire. If you have any further comments on the issues raised within this questionnaire please write in the space below.

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## Appendix II

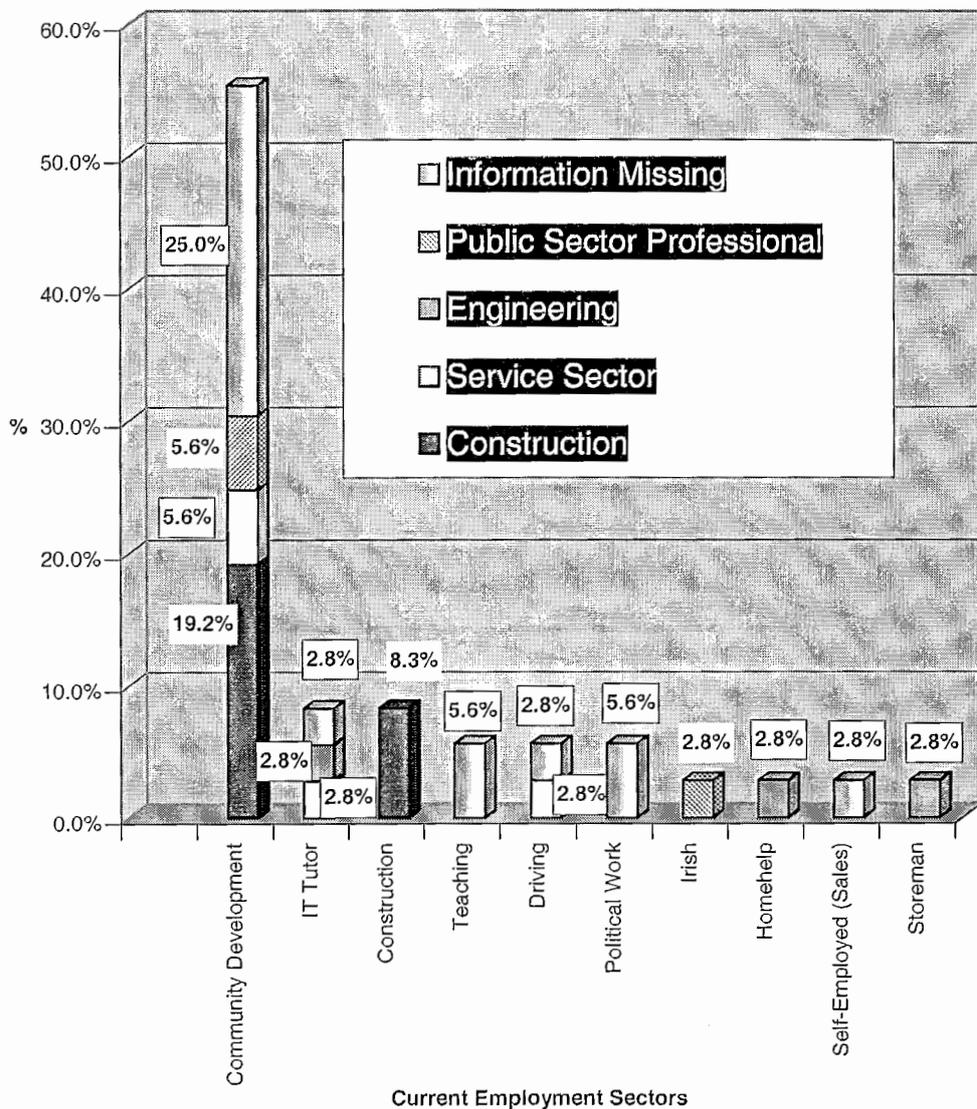
### Description of Focus Groups

Thirty-eight Republican ex-prisoners in four different focus groups took part in the research. Below is a break-down of the attributes of those involved in the groups.

Focus Groups	1	2	3	4	Total	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	8	7	7	9	31	82%
Female	2	2	3	0	7	18%
<b>Age</b>						
25-35	2	2	5	1	10	26%
35-45	6	5	2	8	21	55%
over 45	2	2	3	0	7	19%
<b>Years since release</b>						
Less than 1 yr.	0	0	0	9	9	24%
1-2 yrs	3	3	4	0	10	26%
2-3 yrs	1	1	4	0	6	16%
3-5 yrs	1	0	0	0	1	3%
5-10 yrs	2	2	1	0	5	13%
over 10 yrs	3	3	1	0	7	18%
<b>Employment status</b>						
Employed	7	2	8	7	24	63%
Unemployed	3	1	2	2	8	21%
On Training Scheme	0	6	0	0	6	16%
<b>Job Classification</b>						
Community Work	7	2	2	0	11	46%
Construction	0	0	0	3	3	12%
Driving	0	0	1	1	2	8%
Irish	0	0	2	2	4	17%
Teaching	0	0	3	0	3	12%
Other service industry	0	0	0	1	1	5%
<b>Education</b>						
Degree	6	6	6	1	19	50%
A level	6	6	8	4	24	63%
GCSE	7	6	10	6	29	76%
Trade	5	4	2	4	15	39%
Other skills/qualifications	8	9	10	9	36	95%
<b>On training scheme since release</b>						
Yes	10	9	10	0	29	76%
No	0	0	0	9	9	24%

# Appendix III

## Current Employment Sectors Compared With Previous Employment Sectors



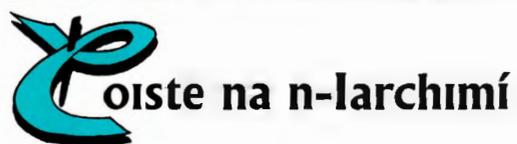
## Appendix IV

### What Prevents You Getting Qualifications?

Security Concerns	70.7%
Discrimination	44.8%
Lack of Sensitivity by Training Agencies	39.7%
Lack of Appropriate Courses	36.2%
Lack of Past Job Experience	32.8%
Lack of Confidence	32.8%
Lack of Recent Job Experience	27.6%
Lack of Information on Courses	24.1%
Lack of Clear Vision	24.1%
Age	20.7%
Lack of Income	19.0%
Distance from Courses	19.0%
Lack of Interest/Satisfied with qualifications	17.2%
Childcare responsibilities	10.3%
Lack of Childcare Provision	6.9%
Care for other Dependents	5.2%
Working in the Home	1.7%
Other	3.4%

### Have Any Of These Blocked Your Chance Of Getting A Job/Better Job?

Security Concerns	88.9%
Discrimination	63.5%
Lack of Jobs in Local Area	50.8%
Lack of Past Job Experience	49.2%
Lack of Recent Job Experience	46.0%
Lack of a Decent Wage	34.9%
Lack of Relevant Qualifications	31.7%
Lack of Confidence	27.0%
Age	25.4%
Distance from Jobs	20.6%
Lack of Information on Jobs	15.9%
Lack of Clear Vision	15.9%
Childcare Responsibilities	12.7%
Lack of Childcare Provision	9.5%
Care for Other Dependents	7.9%
Satisfaction With Current Situation	7.9%
Lack of Interest	6.3%
Working in the Home	3.2%
Other	6.3%



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