Fourth Meeting of the Social Inclusion Forum

15th November 2007

Conference Report

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Foreword from the Chairperson

I am pleased to introduce this report of the fourth and latest meeting of the Social Inclusion Forum (SIF)which was held in the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham on the 15th of November 2007. The meeting was attended by almost 300 people. In fact, such was the level of interest that many who wanted to attend could not be accommodated due to lack of space.

The SIF was established by the Government in 2002 as part of new institutional structures under the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS). It provides an important opportunity for a wide range of voluntary groups and individuals at local level who are not directly represented in the social partnership process :

— to put forward their views and experiences on key policies and implementation issues relating to the NAPS;

— to identify barriers and constraints to progress and how best these can be tackled; and

— to provide suggestions and proposals for new developments and more effective policies in the future.

We make a practice of soliciting extensive feedback from participants and this has been consistently very positive (feedback data are contained in Appendix IV of the Report).

The major themes discussed at the meeting were child literacy difficulties, employment supports for people of working age and people with disabilities, community care for older people and the integration of migrants.

This Forum is seen throughout Europe as a model of good practice for consultations with civil society. As evidence of this, the Peer Review Group from EU Member States and the European Commission attended the meeting to observe the workings of the Forum vith a view to adopting a similar format in

other EU countries. I look forward to receiving their report in due course and to any comments and observations they might have to make on the process.

We were pleased that the Minister Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mr Martin Cullen, TD used the occasion of the meeting to launch the first Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007. This outlines the progress that has been made towards meeting the targets set out in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 over the past year. In his address, the Minister emphasised the Forum's effectiveness and the power of the Forum in leveraging the experience, ideas and suggestions of those directly working with people who are socially excluded.

I would like to thank Professor David Gordon of Bristol University for his keynote address which was warmly received. I also wish to thank those who made presentations to the workshops, and those who acted as chairs or rapporteurs. We are also indebted to the staff in the NESF Secretariat, the Office for Social Inclusion, the Combat Poverty Agency and the European Anti-Poverty Network. I would also like to thank Ms Carmel Corrigan for her help and experience in preparing this report.

As well as being circulated to all those who attended, this Conference Report will now be submitted to all Government Ministers and the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, Children and Integration, which is chaired by the Taoiseach. It will also go to the other institutions that support the NAPS, including the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion, the Office for Social Inclusion, and Social Inclusion Units in Government Departments and Local Authorities. Finally it will be circulated to all Members of the Oireachtas, the European Commission and our own NESF members.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who attended for their insights, suggestions and the lively and sometimes impassioned debate they initiated about advancing and deepening social inclusion in Ireland

Dr Maureen Gaffney
Chairperson
Social Inclusion Forum
National Economic and Social Forum

Introduction and Executive Summary

1.1 The Social Inclusion Forum is part of the institutional structures put in place by the Government to support the development of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS). The current strategy is set out in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 (NAPinclusion), which covers the same period as the national partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*. The NAPinclusion also forms a key element of Irish participation in the process of co-operation between EU Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion.

1.2 The Social Inclusion Forum is convened annually by the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) in collaboration with the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI). It represents a key element of the Government's commitment to consult with all relevant stakeholders, including people experiencing poverty and the groups that represent them, in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

1.3 The basic purpose of the Social Inclusion Forum is to provide organisations and individuals that are not directly involved in the social partnership process with the opportunity to:

- Input their views on key policies and implementation issues;
- Identify barriers and constraints to progress and how best these can be tackled; and
- Provide suggestions and proposals for new developments and more effective policies in the future.

1.4 This report provides a summary account of the fourth meeting of the Forum, which took place on 15th November, 2007 in the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, Dublin. It includes a summary of the papers that were presented by the two guest speakers at the Plenary Sessions, as well as a summary of the discussions that took place in four parallel workshops and twenty brief roundtable discussions that made up part of the Programme. A copy of the papers and presentations can be obtained from the NESF Secretariat, 16 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, email info@nesf.ie, or from the NESF website at www.nesf.ie.

1.5 This report will be formally submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, Children and Integration, which is chaired by the Taoiseach.

1.6 The structure of the report is as follows:

— *Section II* provides a summary of the presentations made at the morning Plenary. **Mr. Martin Cullen, T.D., Minister for Social and Family Affairs** gave the opening address. In this, he spoke of the importance of the Forum as a place for the exchange of views and discussion between policy-makers and people who work at the coal face of poverty and social exclusion. The knowledge and experience that delegates bring to the Forum plays an important role in helping policy-makers and Government to prioritise issues and make difficult choices, and provides critical feedback on how policies are being implemented and experienced on the ground. The Minister also made reference to the progress that Ireland has made over the past decade in terms of increasing employment, increased income support for older people and children, and the fall in consistent poverty. However, the Minister also stated that there are many challenges still to be met. The Minister then officially launched the Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007.

— **Dr. David Gordon, Professor of Social Justice, School for Policy Studies at Bristol University**, gave the second keynote paper. This focused on the issue of poverty, its meaning and measurement, and more specifically on the issue of child poverty. Professor Gordon highlighted that Ireland is now a rich country and does not have the type of absolute poverty experienced by many of the world's children, one of whom dies from a poverty-related condition every three seconds. However, Ireland, with its growing wealth, has not yet achieved the reductions in levels of child poverty attained by most other developed countries. Its redistributive system, minimum wage legislation and expenditure on social investment, which is low by international standards, have relatively little effect on child poverty. Professor Gordon stressed that the eradication of child poverty is an economically sound approach due to its long-term impact and could be achieved for relatively little financial investment.

— *Section III* provides an account of the morning's Plenary Session and roundtable discussions, which immediately followed. Delegates were asked to discuss three issues in these roundtables. These were (i) what are the groups' views on key policy implementation issues? (ii) what are the barriers and constraints to progress and how best can these be tackled? and (iii) has the group any suggestions on policy proposals in the future? A very wide range of issues were raised in these discussions and this Section attempts to collate these in a reasonably detailed and accessible manner. Section III also provides a summary of a question and answer session with Professor Gordon.

— *Section IV* provides a summary of the discussions that took place in four parallel workshops. Each workshop addressed issues relating to a specific target group and theme. Box A below provides a summary of the priority issues as selected by delegates, and how these could be addressed.

— *Section V* provides a summary of the final Plenary Session, including a presentation by **Mr. Gerry Mangan, Director, Office for Social Inclusion**. Mr. Mangan addressed the issues of integration of people and communities, and also of services. He drew attention to the importance of historic economic development and the development of social protection systems in international comparisons, and the fact that Ireland's economic strength is relatively new, but that policy is moving in the right direction. What is important is that we build on this for all target groups, particularly the target groups of the NAPinclusion, and that our social welfare and protection policy systems are developing in appropriate ways. Mr. Mangan spoke of the importance of how we measure poverty and the shift towards measuring outcomes.

Cross-section of the Delegates at the Forum

Box A
Suggestions from the Workshops on the Way Forward – Priority Issues to be Addressed

Children and Literacy

- Ensure the quality of literacy teaching
- Provide supports for parents, particularly immigrants, to help them work with their children on literacy
- Provide early and better access to support services
- Increase investment in quality and accessible early childhood education

People of Working Age – Employment and Activation

- Address the barriers to taking up employment
- Address the need for greater inter-agency and inter-departmental co-operation at national and local level
- Provide accessible, affordable and appropriate childcare
- Develop flexible training and education options
- Provide clear and accessible information on the options and consequences for people taking up employment

Older People – Community Care

- Develop the Home Help service in terms of availability and quality of services and employment
- Focus services on the needs of the person, co-ordinate the services better, and develop common assessment and service delivery tools
- Investigate and develop new models of Community Care
- Develop quality respite care services for carers and those cared for

Communities – Integration of Migrants

- Provide direct funding for immigrant-led organisations
- Consult with immigrants at all stages of policy development and implementation
- Recognise that integration occurs along a continuum and not when legal status is granted

Overarching Issues Arising in the Workshops

- Develop services that meet people's needs, not services that people have to fit into
- Develop integrated approaches to policy and service delivery
- Address the gap between national policy and local implementation
- Consult with stakeholders including those affected by policies
- Build on current successful models of service implementation

The Royal Hospital Kilmainham

II

Opening Presentations

2.1 The Social Inclusion Forum was opened by **Dr. Maureen Gaffney, Chair of the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), and of the Social Inclusion Forum**. She welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular the members of an EU Peer Review Team from a number of EU Member States and the European Commission, who were present to observe and learn from our experiences with our Forum. The Social Inclusion Forum is viewed by the EU Commission, as well as our EU partners, as an innovative tool for involving civil society in not just the formulation of policy with regard to poverty, but monitoring the implementation of policy as well. Dr. Gaffney also welcomed the OECD representative who was visiting here as part of a study on the national employment activation policies in OECD countries. There was a total of almost 300 participants at the Forum.

2.2 Dr. Gaffney gave a brief summary of the background to the Social Inclusion Forum and then outlined its purpose and the day ahead. The Forum is part of the institutional structures put in place by Government to develop and review the implementation of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion and to ensure effective consultation on the Plan with all stakeholders. It provides policy-makers with feedback on how policies are working on the ground. The NESF and the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) have been charged by the Government with convening this Forum. The purpose of the Forum is (i) to allow delegates to freely engage with each other and with senior policy-makers to have their views heard; (ii) to identify the enablers of the policies that are in place, the things that actually make the policies work better; (iii) to identify the barriers that are getting in the way of implementing policies; and (iv) to make any further suggestions as to how policies can be changed, or indeed modified; or to bring emerging issues, new areas of poverty and social exclusion, to policy-makers' attention.

2.3 Dr. Gaffney assured delegates that the proceedings of the Forum will be written up as a conference report. This report will be formally submitted to the Cabinet Sub-committee on Social Inclusion, Children and Integration, which is chaired by the Taoiseach. It will also be circulated to all members of the Oireachtas, to the Senior Officials Group, the Social Inclusion Units in all Government departments and State Agencies, and to all Forum delegates.

2.4 Dr. Gaffney then introduced the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mr. Martin Cullen T.D., who gave one of two key opening addresses.

2.5 **Minister Martin Cullen, T.D.**, opened his address by saying that the Social Inclusion Forum provides a very important opportunity for reflection on where we are in relation to social inclusion and where we need to get to in the future. Since its inception the Forum has provided stakeholders with a significant opportunity at national level to exchange views and discuss the realities of poverty and social exclusion in today's Ireland, and the adequacy of the policies and their implementation for tackling these realities. The Minister also welcomed the EU Peer Review Group, which included representatives from a number of EU countries and the European Commission. He hoped that their experience of the Forum and seeing how it operates would result in it becoming a possible model for consultation in other EU countries.

2.6 The Minister stated that the effectiveness of the Forum is very much related to the fact that the delegates represent or work directly with people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. Delegates know at first hand the challenges people face in coping with poverty and in trying to achieve a decent standard of living for themselves and their families. Delegates also know what supports people in poverty need to enable them to meet these challenges, and bring this knowledge and experience to the Forum. Minister Cullen stressed the importance of hearing about the problems being faced by smaller groups whose specific needs can be lost sight of in broad-brush policies and indeed in their implementation. It is also important to hear of problems that may be particular to individual areas and what is required to overcome them.

2.7 It is always a major challenge for Governments to achieve the right balance between good social provision and maintaining the economic competitiveness that makes such provision possible. This means balancing social and economic development. It involves choosing priorities, because everything cannot be done at once. Minister Cullen asked the Forum delegates to assist in making these difficult choices by focussing on what they consider should be the priorities for their areas of concern over the coming years. It is particularly helpful that these views will be recorded and made available in a detailed published report on the Forum proceedings.

2.8 Since the previous Forum in February 2006, Minister Cullen said that much has happened in the area of social inclusion. The National Social Partnership Agreement, *Towards 2016*, was concluded between the Government and the Social Partners. Using a lifecycle approach, *Towards 2016* addresses the challenges which people in our society face at each stage of life. This involves a focus on the needs of children, people of working age, older people, people with disabilities, and the communities in which they live.

Building on the high-level commitment in *Towards 2016*, a special chapter on social inclusion was included in the National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP), launched in January 2007. The strategic approach to social inclusion was completed with the launch of the ten-year National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) in February 2007.

These plans contain high-level goals, targets, and in the case of the NDP, funding mechanisms to deliver on the Government's social inclusion strategy. The overall aim of the NAPinclusion is to continue to reduce consistent poverty to between 2 and 4 per cent by 2012, and ultimately to eliminate it by 2016.

2.9 Twelve goals and over 150 targets and actions are set out in the NAPinclusion. Just ten years ago the number of people in employment was 1.4 million. Today that figure is more than two million, an increase of over 41% in less than a decade. This has enabled a reversal of the involuntary emigration which was such a feature of Irish life for over a century. A major challenge now is to effectively integrate the large number of immigrants who have come to Ireland to avail of the employment opportunities created by our growing economy. Minister Cullen said that he was particularly pleased that the Forum would devote a workshop to this important issue.

2.10 The Minister stated that many improvements in social welfare rates had been achieved over the past decade. Between 1997 and 2007, basic social welfare rates increased by over 123%. Key targets from the previous NAPinclusion that had been achieved included increasing the basic State old age pension to €200 a week and the lowest adult social welfare rate to €150 per week in 2002 terms, while maintaining the appropriate combined value of child income support at 33% to 35% of the lowest adult social welfare rate. Improvements in social welfare rates are reflected in substantial increased spending on social protection, from €5.7 billion in 1997, to €15.3 billion in 2007. As Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mr. Cullen's priority is to work towards ensuring that we continue to meet the commitments entered into in the latest strategies, which provide a clear basis for measuring progress.

2.11 One of the challenges facing Irish society is to ensure effective implementation of the policies and the application of the resources made available in the NAPinclusion, and indeed in the NDP. Working with all stakeholders to ensure that effective implementation will be achieved is a priority. This will allow us all to build on the progress made in the past ten years, and continue to deliver major improvements in the living standards and the quality of life of the most vulnerable groups in our society.

2.12 The Minister then launched the first Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007, which details the progress made to date on meeting the commitments in the Government's social inclusion strategies. These annual reports, produced by the OSI, are provided for in *Towards 2016*. The report, which was prepared in co-operation with all the relevant Government departments and in consultation with the Social Partners, marks the first step in the development of a comprehensive monitoring process, and in reporting in a transparent way on the progress being achieved. The main focus of this report is on the progress underway with the twelve high-level goals across all stages of the lifecycle and covering a number of policy areas. The annual report shows that progress is being made and that social inclusion targets are on track.

2.13 Minister Cullen then spoke of the importance of the Social Inclusion Forum, stressing that what comes out of the Forum goes to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion, Children and Integration. This Committee is chaired by the Taoiseach and is comprised of Ministers with responsibilities relevant to social inclusion. The Committee, therefore, gives high priority to social inclusion issues. But the feedback from the Forum can only be as effective as the work delegates put into it. The quality and the succinctness of what delegates have to say will be crucial in evaluating the effectiveness of policies, whether they need to be modified, altered or replaced by policies that will be more effective. The experience of many of the delegates at the coal face of dealing with poverty provides many answers needed by policy-makers on the real impact that policies can have on the quality of people's lives.

2.14 Minister Cullen stated that while we have made many achievements in terms of social inclusion, there are many challenges still to be met and that we should not become complacent about these. Rather we should now address the challenge of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016 as set out in the NAPinclusion. This would be a major achievement for all of the delegates at the Forum, for the Government and for politicians, but also for Ireland as a society and as a people.

2.15 Minister Cullen thanked delegates for attending the Forum and assured them that their work was of crucial importance and would contribute to the achievement of progress in the coming years. He wished them well with their deliberations.

2.16 The second presentation of the morning was given by **Professor David Gordon, Professor of Social Justice, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol**. This presentation focussed on poverty and social exclusion, what it means in various countries, how it can best be measured, who the most vulnerable groups are and what are their situations of poverty, what are the short and long-term priorities in addressing poverty and how can we go about preventing it.

2.17 Professor Gordon began by stating that all cultures have a concept of poverty, but that this varies from culture to culture. In many cultures poverty is often perceived as a crime or a form of violence, something that there is a moral imperative to do away with. This is in line with Mahatma Gandhi's definition of poverty as the worst form of violence, and George Bernard Shaw's of poverty as the greatest evil and worst crime.

2.18 While there are many who are sceptical about the eradication of poverty, the great progress that has been achieved in poverty reduction in Ireland over the past century should not be forgotten. One hundred years ago the poor in Ireland were described as often having little or nothing to eat and very little to wear. Poverty in Ireland can no longer be described in such terms due to the immense progress that has been made. If such progress continues into the 21st century, poverty as we measure it today could in turn become a historical reality of the past, and no longer a current reality.

2.19 While poverty has existed in Ireland for several centuries, the idea that poverty could be ended through welfare provisions, and that it is not due to natural laws or the divine will of God, is only 200 years old. This new and radical way of thinking about poverty emerged at the time of the French Revolution through the works of the Marquis de Condorcet.

2.20 Despite 200 years of such thought, however, poverty remains a problem for most of the world, but the nature and implications of poverty are very different in rich and poor countries. For example, people in rich countries like Ireland, the rest of Europe, the USA and Japan who died between 1990 and 1995 were generally in old age, that is, over the age of 75. They had had long and relatively healthy lives. But in the poor countries of the world where 80% of the world's population live, the age at which you are at greatest risk of death is not when you are old, but when you are very young, under five years of age. It is estimated by the United Nations that between 1990 and 1995, 55 million young people died shortly after birth, largely from preventable disease.

To highlight and further illustrate this point, Professor Gordon showed a video from the Make Poverty History campaign. In this a number of celebrities each click their fingers every three seconds, with each click representing the death of yet another child. Most of these child deaths are due to preventable diseases. These include neonatal disorders resulting in death which could easily be prevented if there had been medical assistance during birth and during pregnancy; as well as diarrhoea, pneumonia, malaria, and measles, all of which can be treated at the cost of less than one Euro. In very many cases malnutrition contributed to the child's death; the child's immune system was weakened because they were starving.

2.21 The reason these conditions are untreated is extreme poverty, according to the World Health Organisation. Professor Gordon and his colleagues conducted some work for UNICEF that looked at the situation of the world's children at the dawn of the millennium.

— Almost a third of the world's children live in dwellings with more than five people per room or which have a mud floor.

— Over half a billion children (27%) have no toilet facilities whatsoever.

— Over 400 million children (19%) are using unsafe (open) water sources or have more than a 15-minute walk to water.

— About one child in five, aged 3 to 18 years, lacks access to radio, television, telephone or newspapers at home.

— 16% of children under five years in the world are severely malnourished, almost half of whom are in South Asia.

— 275 million children (13%) have not been immunised against any diseases; or have had a recent illness causing diarrhoea and have not received any medical advice or treatment.

— One child in nine aged between 7 and 18 (over 140 million) is severely educationally deprived - they have never been to school.

2.22 In the EU poverty is defined as follows: *The poor should be taken to mean persons, families, and groups of persons whose resources, material, cultural, and social, are so limited as to exclude them from a minimum acceptable way of life, in the Member State in which they live*. Poverty, in the European Union and in Ireland, is about citizenship, it is about not having enough money and other resources to participate as a citizen in the normal activities which most people in your society take for granted. Measured in this way, child poverty is lowest in the Nordic states, but is still relatively high in the UK and Ireland. In addition, in combining this measure of relative income poverty with measures of deprivation, a truer picture of poverty is obtained, particularly in a growing economy.

2.23 Poverty, however, is just one aspect of social exclusion. Ruth Levitas describes the three political discourses of social exclusion as the Redistributive Discourse (RED), Moral Underclass Discourse (MUD) and the Social Integrationalist Discourse (SID). In RED, the prime concern is with poverty and the solution is redistribution of income in the form of higher, non-means tested benefits, a minimum wage, financial recognition for unpaid work etc.

In MUD, the primary concern is with the moral and behavioural delinquency of the excluded. The underclass is culturally distinct from the mainstream and is associated with idle, criminal young men and single mothers dependent on welfare. Welfare dependency on the State is problematic, but the economic dependency of women on men is positive as women and marriage have a 'civilising' impact on men.

Finally, in SID the primary concern is inclusion through paid work. It focuses on unemployment and economic inactivity and social integration is pursued through inclusion in paid work. It ignores unpaid work (largely done by women). Debate in the UK has consistently shifted between these three discourses.

2.24 Poverty is the main reason why people do not participate in normal social activities, although discrimination also plays a considerable role. Social exclusion is multi-dimensional and in the UK is measured across three main themes: quality of life, resources, and participation, which are further divided into 10 sub-themes.

2.25 The main causes of poverty are structural and we know what they are, we know who is likely to be poor and where they are. For example, countries with strong minimum wage legislation and few people on low wages have low rates of child poverty. These are, primarily, the Nordic states and Belgium (see Diagram 1). Countries with generous welfare states that redistribute resources towards families with children also have low rates of child poverty. Again, this is predominantly the situation in the Nordic states. The converse of these situations is also true (see Diagram 2).

Diagram 2.1 Low Wages and Child Poverty

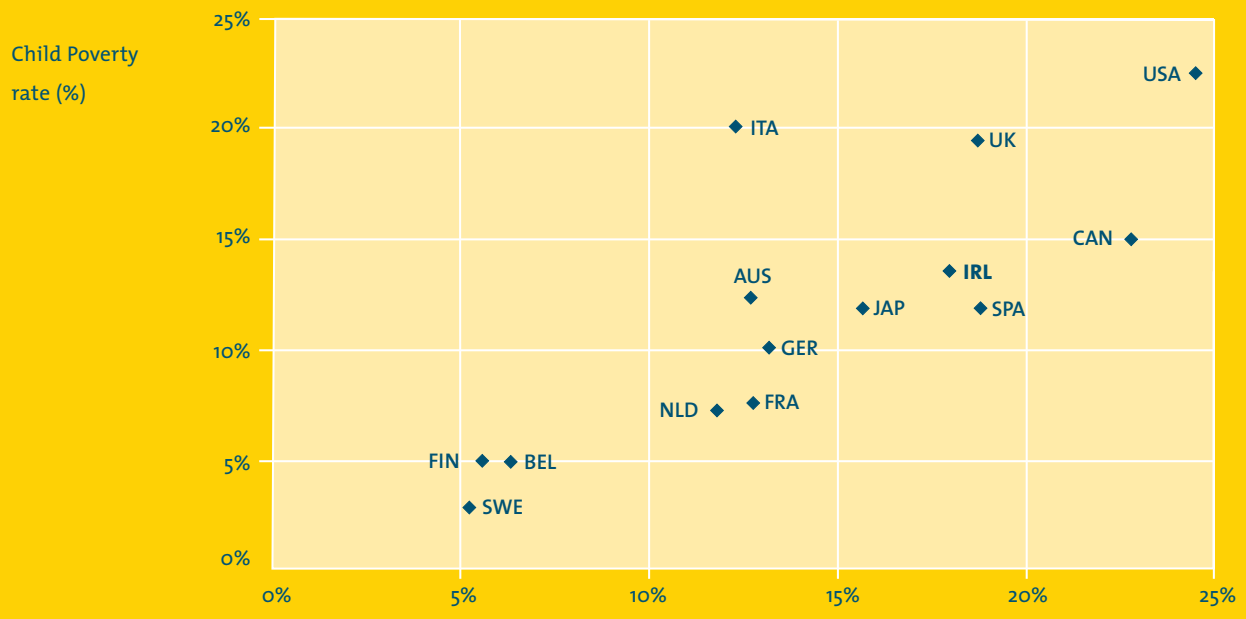
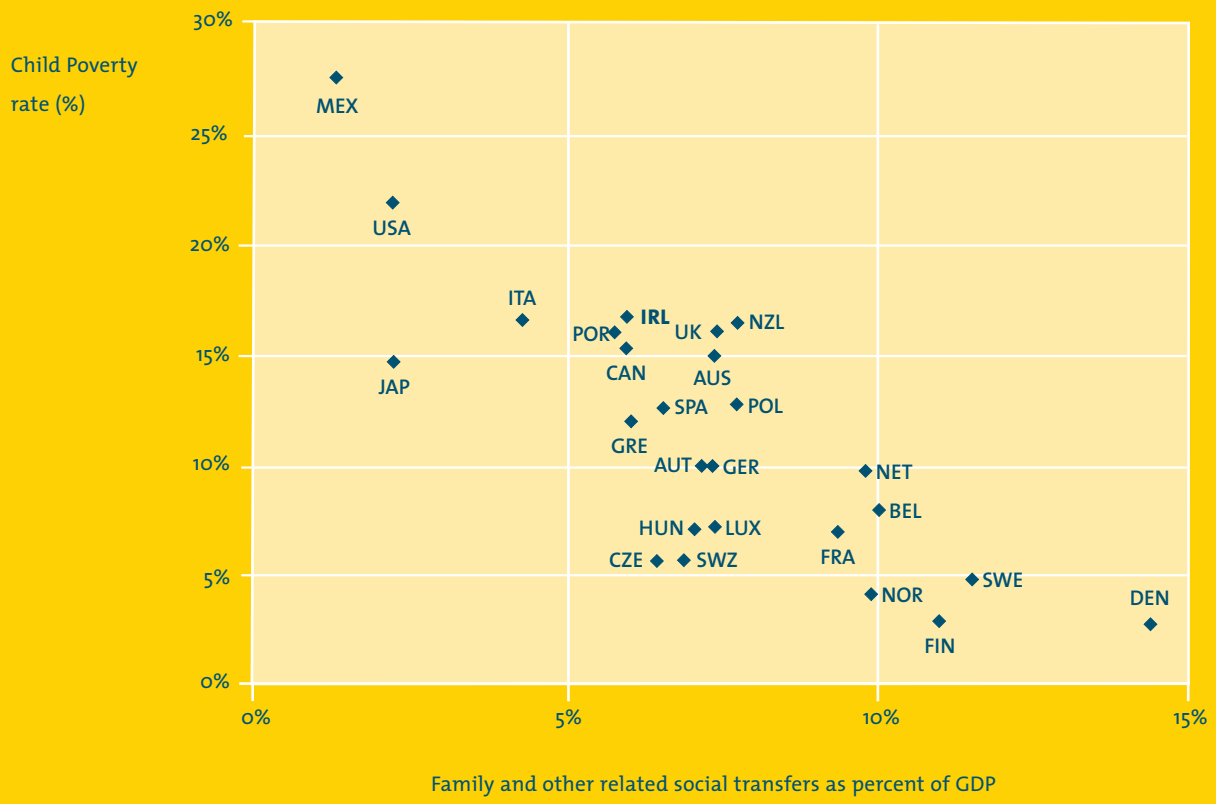


Diagram 2.2 Social Expenditure on Families, and Child Poverty



2.26 In looking at the solution to child poverty, Professor Gordon considered that this could be addressed at relatively little cost. In the UK this would cost less than half of one percent of Gross National Product; in Ireland it would be just over half of one percent of Gross National Product. However, this would have to be redistributed from those who are not poor to those who are poor to abolish child poverty tomorrow. Using a relatively strict poverty line, about 25% of Irish children are in poverty before the redistributive effects of the welfare state. After welfare payments are taken into account, this falls to about 15%.

2.27 Finally, Professor Gordon concluded his presentation with a solution to poverty espoused by the now British Prime Minister, Gordon Browne M.P., and his colleague Robin Cook M.P., 25 years ago.

"This would mean restoring to the centre of the tax system two basic principles: the first, that those who cannot afford to pay tax should not have to pay it; and the second, that taxation should rise progressively with income. Programmes that merely redistribute poverty from families to single persons, from the old to the young, from the sick to the healthy, are not a solution. What is needed, is a programme of reform that ends the current situation where the top 10% own 80% of our wealth and 30% of income, even after tax. As Tawney remarked, 'What some people call the problem of poverty, others call the problem of riches'." (Gordon Brown and Robin Cook, 1983)

II

Morning Plenary[1] and Roundtable Discussions

3.1 Following his input, a number of questions were put to Professor Gordon. First, he was asked about the relationship between citizenship and poverty, and the implications of this for asylum seekers. He responded by saying that although official citizenship status is important, what he meant by citizenship was having sufficient resources to participate fully in society without discrimination. Second, Professor Gordon was asked to comment on the Family Tax Credits in the U.K. as a means of addressing poverty. He stated that the Family Tax Credits have had an impact on poverty by moving some of those on very low wages above the poverty lines. However, the impact is probably not as good as the British Government would have hoped as it is an administratively complex approach. In addition, there is only so much one can do about poverty through getting people capable of work into employment. There will remain a number of groups, such as those with caring responsibilities, for whom such solutions will not work.

3.2 Third, Professor Gordon was asked about the role of services and innovation in combating poverty. He responded by saying that although his presentation concentrated on the income aspects of poverty, services are crucially important, with the difference between many rich and poor countries lying in part in the quality of services they provide. While cash transfers might, for example in the U.K., double the income of the poorest groups, the value of the services provided effectively doubles this again. In Ireland, this multiple could be as high as four or five, and the importance of services should not be underestimated.

3.3 Fourth, Professor Gordon was asked to comment on the generation equity debate in the US, where resources for supporting children are seen to be taken away from them and directed instead towards older adults. Is this an issue in the U.K.?.

He replied by stating that there is a similar debate in the U.K. However, given that the welfare state tends to redistribute income across people's life courses – from people of working age to children and older people – he does not see this as an important issue. With the challenge of providing adequate pensions for an ageing population that will face most of Europe

[1] The Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mr. Martin Cullen T.D. had to leave the conference after his presentation to return to vote in the Dáil and was not, therefore, himself available for questions. However, officials from his Department were on hand to do so during the day.

in the coming decades, Professor Gordon said that this of course needs to be addressed if poverty among the elderly is to be avoided. In the meantime, however, it is important and relatively inexpensive to tackle child poverty. We know that child poverty has bad outcomes in terms of poor health in later life, in terms of low educational attainments and a less skilled workforce. Therefore there is a perfectly good economic argument for investing the small amount you need to eradicate child poverty. This will have long-term economic benefits that will have a knock-on effect by creating the long-term ability to pay the kinds of pensions that people need in order to have a decent old age. It should not be seen as an either/or situation, we need to do both.

3.4 Finally, the Chair, Dr. Gaffney asked Professor Gordon to comment on how Gordon Browne's perspective might have changed over the past 25 years. He responded by saying that his perspective has obviously changed as he was then a young M.P. and he is now Prime Minister. His political realities have changed. What he is trying to do now is address poverty out of economic growth rather than current income. This serves to create a more unequal society, where the gap between rich and poor gets wider.

3.5 Following this question and answer session roundtable discussions were held. Here delegates were asked to focus their discussions on the following three questions:

— What are the group's views on key policy implementation issues?

— What are the barriers and constraints to progress and how best can these be tackled?

— Has the group any suggestions on policy proposals for the future?

A broad range of views were expressed on key policy implementation issues. The following is a summary of these views.

3.6 A number of issues relating to **healthcare** were touched on by delegates. In relation to the medical card, concern was expressed over the use of means testing as a consistent model for determining allocation and the fact that the current eligibility limit is below the lowest social welfare rate. In addition, delegates felt that the eligibility criteria have expressly excluded a large proportion of the population deemed to be living in consistent poverty from accessing medical card benefits and that the complexity of the process in applying for the GP-only card has meant that many people have not availed of this entitlement.

3.7 There is a provision in *Towards 2016* for a **coherent strategy on carers**, their rights and entitlements regarding pay, pensions and other social welfare provisions, but the fact that this does not yet exist was raised. A perceived lack of progress in the area of community care was highlighted as was the failure to implement policies on mental health and addiction.

3.8 An acute **lack of resources and funding** to enable the implementation of policies and strategies to tackle a variety of social issues was highlighted as an issue requiring significant attention if policy implementation is

to become a reality. Failure to ringfence money for social exclusion has meant that when budgets have to be tightened, social inclusion strategies have become the first to experience budget cuts and in some cases to be eliminated altogether.

3.9 ● Another issue raised was the need for the Government to implement **a system of joined-up government** that would facilitate more coherent policy development and implementation. Policy development and implementation by Government departments are still not sufficiently integrated. This in turn has significant impacts on the strategic implementation of policies. In some cases, delegates felt that current policies fail to address issues on the ground and that their complexity makes it difficult for people to challenge them.

3.10 ● The need to **connect national policies and local implementation** was also raised. Delegates felt that while relevant policies were developed at national level, these were not translating well at local level and did not reach the most vulnerable groups. One key example of this highlighted is the introduction of the National Childcare Subvention scheme. In this case community childcare facilities were not consulted on the impact of implementing this policy on the ground, despite the potentially negative effects for service providers and services users, most specifically low income families.

3.11 ● Related to this is the need to **maintain poverty as a key focus** in the development and implementation of policies in Ireland. While the NAPinclusion was seen as positive, its impacts locally were seen as minimal. The fact that it is extremely difficult to feed into the strategy from a local perspective has also hindered its effective implementation on the ground. Challenges in deciding policy priorities at national level given the number and complexity of issues involved were also identified by delegates as impacting on policy implementation.

3.12 ● **Availability and accessibility of information** on policies and their implementation was highlighted by delegates. Knowledge of rights and entitlements varies considerably which inevitably impacts on the extent to which a policy is implemented successfully. The GP-only medical card scheme was again cited as an example here, where lack of information has contributed to only a fraction of the projected number of cards to be made available being issued.

3.13 ● The **extensive application procedures** people have to go through to receive entitlements such as the Family Income Supplement (FIS) have and will continue to hinder policy implementation. People simply will not apply if these processes are too complex. Lack of automatic entitlement to certain benefits also contributes to lack of take up.

3.14 ● The **lack of targets in the NAPinclusion** for specific groups and issues such as the Traveller community, integration of migrants and gender-based issues for women were highlighted as key policy implementation issues.

3.15 Other areas identified by delegates as key policy implementation issues included the following:

— Exclusion from the labour force due to issues such as disability and mental health, and the need to encourage and facilitate labour market access for marginalised groups and women;

— Transport and accessibility to services in rural areas;

— Comprehensive childcare provision;

— Issues concerning migrants, asylum seekers and refugees such as language, access to appropriate education and, in the case of asylum seekers, access to the labour market;

— Issues for the Gay and Lesbian community;

— Equity in the distribution of resources locally and nationally; and

— The role of the community and voluntary sector in policy implementation.

An overall consensus emerged on the value of having policies in place. However this was balanced with a consensus that significant improvements are required to facilitate openness and transparency in both their development and implementation.

3.16 The second question discussed in the roundtables focussed on identifying barriers and constraints to progress and how best these could be tackled. Issues identified here are summarised below in table form.

EU Peer Review Group Meeting

Table 3.1 Issues Raised in Roundtable Discussions

Key Issues	Issues Raised	Suggestions or proposals for moving forward in the context of NAPinclusion
Structures	■ Too many structures at local level. ■ No uniform approach in CDBs and some are perceived as weak and not good for discussion. ■ Failure of local structures to link in at national level. ■ Lack of integration of services and inter-agency approach at local level. ■ Not enough practical engagement at grass roots level. ■ Attempts to combine local bodies and programmes are difficult.	■ Assess effectiveness of current structures with regard to policy implementation. ■ Increase levels of inter-agency co-operation including sharing of resources. ■ Improve data for implementation, particularly at local level, to see effects of policies. ■ Clarify structures for accessing RAPID funding. ■ Support integration of service delivery at local level.
Community Development and Participation	■ Capacity of vulnerable communities to participate needs to be built up. Representation of local people is very weak and difficult to achieve. Needs to be resourced. ■ Bureaucratic structures. ■ Disparities in level of accountability required of voluntary versus statutory providers. ■ Community and voluntary sector suffering 'consultation fatigue' because input is not taken into account and not translated into policy.	■ Expand the RAPID & CLÁR programmes. ■ Devise a common approach to needs assessment. ■ Increase targeting of resources to vulnerable groups for participation in policy-making arenas. ■ Devise new ways to reach target groups. ■ Clear accountability for overseeing the policy process at all stages.
Care Services	■ Lack of co-ordination of services between health and social welfare in community care. ■ Lack of practical help and support for carers. ■ Home-care packages not accessible due to criteria. ■ Carers often have a lack of pension entitlements and are likely to experience poverty in old age.	■ Need to ensure a continuation of support. ■ Address cross-cutting issues and disincentives built into the welfare system.

Table 3.1 Contd.

Key Issues	Issues Raised	Suggestions or proposals for moving forward in the context of NAPinclusion
Education and Childcare	■ Early school leaving resulting in unemployed young people. ■ Lack of alternative provision for those who do not want to stay in school. ■ New funding arrangements for childcare. ■ Low levels of basic literacy. ■ Lack of flexible education and training for adults.	■ Need more innovation in services and initiatives. ■ Address the tension between the regulatory environment and innovation. ■ Improve standards and consistency of performance by schools. ■ Provide quality and monitored pre-school education. ■ Provide family and educational guidance. ■ Increase focus on individual needs.
Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants	■ Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants all considered together but have different issues. ■ Migrants with work permits are tied to an employer. Asylum-seekers cannot work. ■ Direct Provision should be changed as it creates poverty and prevents integration, particularly among women. ■ Decisions on asylum take too long and can impact severely on mental health. ■ Support and capacity-building not funded. ■ Cross-cultural issues, family re-unification issues, racism and the 'blame' culture. ■ Lack of recognition of qualifications, training for adults.	■ Build capacity to participate through provision of simple, comprehensible English for non-Irish nationals. ■ Recognise the variation in issues for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and that they have to be addressed separately. ■ More language services, especially for older people and workers. ■ Employ more non-English speakers in public services.
Welfare and Secondary Benefits	■ Low payment rates for people with disabilities, older people and carers, and low fuel allowance. ■ Free travel pass scheme not accessible due to mobility issues or lack of public transport.	■ Devise a common approach to needs assessment. ■ Make carer's benefit more like maternity benefit with a higher rate for a specific period of time.

Table 3.1 Contd.

Key Issues	Issues Raised	Suggestions or proposals for moving forward in the context of NAPinclusion
	■ New rules for rent supplement. ■ Social welfare system too complex and discretionary, lacks transparency and clear standards.	■ Make social welfare system more user-friendly for clients. ■ Review social welfare entitlements for the most vulnerable groups in line with cost of living.
Policy	■ Too many different policy strategies but poverty issues are not high on the priority list. Need for better leadership. ■ Focus is on the economic over the social. ■ Overly-bureaucratic systems. ■ Lack of coordination between agencies and departments, between civil society and policy-makers. ■ Lack of emphasis on strengthening communities. ■ Social partnership is not listening to local level needs. ■ No mechanism or will to extract the learning from programmes and change policy. ■ Lack of accountability by statutory agencies. ■ Lack of information for monitoring progress of NAPinclusion targets and using various poverty measures. ■ No access to legal aid so policy issues cannot be challenged quickly. ■ Lack of services to implement the policies.	■ Focus on issues in the health services. ■ Address the need for data and indicators to evaluate policies and monitor NAPinclusion. ■ Make systems more user-friendly. ■ Greater focus on community development. ■ Review the concept of social partnership and its impacts on policy and the community and voluntary sector. ■ Devise policy implementation strategies in conjunction with service users.
Social Inclusion	■ Not enough education in the area of social inclusion for key workers. ■ Invisibility of certain groups (e.g. Traveller women, women in the home). ■ Employment still seen as answer to social exclusion and poverty. ■ Perpetuating the poverty industry – just keeping people employed.	■ Move on from seeing employment as the end point for social inclusion. ■ Draw in expertise on how to deal with specific issues. ■ Introduce targeted supports for vulnerable groups in society. ■ Consult people experiencing poverty, e.g. in the Social Inclusion Forum.

Table 3.1 Contd.

Key Issues	Issues Raised	Suggestions or proposals for moving forward in the context of NAPinclusion
	■ Lack of social solidarity and growing gap between haves and have-nots. ■ Little acknowledgement of particular difficulties faced by people in border areas. ■ Additional issues such as accessible housing, transport, rural isolation, and community infrastructure are also barriers.	■ Improve opportunities for social interaction rather than the segregation that is promoted in many policies.
Housing	■ Having to approach public representatives to get services such as housing. ■ Overcrowding not reflected in the homeless figures. ■ Not enough social housing is being provided. ■ Homelessness. ■ New housing developments without adequate transport, employment, recreation, health, leisure facilities.	■ Make tenant supports for vulnerable groups and families with limited life skills more widely available. ■ Increase supply of social housing and broaden eligibility criteria. ■ Nationally-recognised formal "Rented Accommodation Scheme (RAS) Ready" status for people whose landlords are blocking move on to RAS. ■ Low interest grants for central heating in private homes.
Information and Accessibility	■ Lack of accessible information and services.	■ Integrate information into packs and make it very accessible in local areas. ■ Accessibility issues need to be researched and clear actions devised.

3.17 The third question asked delegates for suggestions on policy proposals for the future. A large number of suggestions were put forward and these are presented thematically below.

Education: access to statutory pre-school education in the year before school must be provided, particularly for low income working families. Early school leaving needs to be prioritised. Greater financial literacy is required and should be part of the school curriculum, drawing on European experience.

C**ommunity Development and Capacity-Building:** Target groups should be supported to acquire skills to be involved in Community Development projects. A less bureaucratic system for accessing funding for voluntary organisations and more long/medium-term secure funding streams should be made available. A more developed policy to support community development and volunteerism is needed.

Capacity-Building for Policy-Makers: Policy-makers and civil servants should do voluntary work in order to understand the issues better. There is a need to strengthen local government to allow them more effectively address poverty.

Social Welfare: Many comments were made in relation to social welfare. These included simplifying access to all social welfare and social protection provisions, developing a central clearing house so that individuals provide their information once and this is held centrally for all departments and agencies, retention of secondary benefits, introducing a cost of disability payment, developing a rights-based policy to social welfare that supports everyone, and introducing a voucher system to cover private transport and taxis. Activation policies should ensure that people are supported into employment. When social welfare, in conjunction with other policies and provision, lifts people out of poverty, it should help ensure that they stay out of poverty.

Women and Children: Flexible employment practices and a system of paid parental leave should be introduced, as should affordable childcare or the provision of universal early childhood care and education. Choices available to women must be real and provide quality childcare, quality employment opportunities and training options that are appropriate to people's skills. In addition, unpaid work should receive greater acknowledgement.

Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants: Legislation is needed to allow greater clarity and security for migrants and their children. The qualifications of migrants should be recognised. Direct provision should be reviewed immediately, the asylum seeking process should be speeded up significantly and asylum seekers should obtain the minimum social welfare rate. All children resident in the State should be entitled to Child Benefit. Further significant increases in social welfare income support are needed. The language barrier that exists needs to be addressed by both Irish and immigrant communities, and policy should recognise the need for cultural activities.

Older People: A Government Minister for older people should be appointed. This has already taken place and it should be recognised that the duty of social inclusion does not end as one gets older. Transport provision for older people to allow them to make social and health-related appointments should be substantially improved, as should network supports for older people through visitors etc. It is also important to build up the supply and quality of Home Care Packages and Home Care Workers. Monitored alarms for older people could be administered through post offices.

Policy-Making: Policy should have poverty as its central focus, should be developed on a people-centred needs basis, and should ensure that it works positively for people. Much of this policy should be targeted to achieve the greatest impact. Current policies should be implemented and built on in the longer-term. However, there is also a need to set new or to revisit the targets in the NAPinclusion and for the OSI to put greater effort into working with Government Departments to ensure that reforms/targets/progress within those Departments are achieved. New policies should be transparent, based on consultation with target groups, and measurable against base-line indicators. They should focus on achieving adequate social standards to allow everyone to live with dignity. Policy should try to eliminate layers of bureaucracy, refocus efforts at promoting joined-up government and improve inter-agency working. Other points raised by delegates included the need to localise social inclusion efforts, the need to even out development commitments in each policy area, the need to commit resources for the infrastructure underpinning initiatives in each policy area and to improve our understanding of the effect of policies. Political will is required for any of the above to happen.

Tax System: Addressing the tax system is central in addressing poverty. High earners should pay more tax and tax avoidance should be tackled to ensure sufficient resources are available for redistribution. The goals in *Towards 2016* must be used as key goals to be monitored by the OSI on a regular basis. The level of corporate tax and the need for more tax brackets were also raised.

Research: A number of areas that require more research were identified. These include the 'new poor' or working poor, that is, people who are in employment on low wages and who are just surviving; the impact of jobless households on children and families; and access by people in poverty to financial services and bank accounts.

Mr. Gerry Mangan, OSI, Mr. Seán Ó h-Éigeartaigh, NESF, Dr. Maureen Gaffney, Chair, Professor David Gordon and Minister Martin Cullen T.D.

IV

Workshops on Key Target Groups and Issues

4.1 Delegates divided into four parallel workshops for the remainder of the morning and early afternoon of the Forum. Three of these workshops focused on key stages of the lifecycle approach adopted by the NAPinclusion - children, people of working age, and older people - and the fourth addressed the overarching theme of communities. In advance of the Forum, delegates were provided with a briefing for the workshop they had expressed an interest in attending. These briefings, prepared by the OSI, outlined the relevant targets included in the NAPinclusion and progress achieved in meeting these, as well as recent policy developments and strategies.

Each of the workshops included a presentation on the relevant local and national issues. Following this input, the workshops were open to discussion and delegates were asked to consider and then prioritise key issues through a voting system. Having achieved this, delegates were then asked to consider how these key issues might be addressed by the NAPinclusion. Each workshop had a chairperson and a record of the discussions was taken down by a rapporteur. The following sections provide a summary of each of the four workshops.

Workshop 1: Children and Literacy

Chairperson	Mr Paddy McDonagh, Department of Education and Science
Rapporteur	Dr Jeanne Moore, NESF
Presenters	Inspector Jim Kavanagh, Department of Education and Science; Ms Catherine Shanahan & Ms Marie McLoughlin, Primary Curriculum Support Unit

4.2 This workshop focused on Goal 2 of the NAPinclusion - *To halve the proportion with serious literacy difficulties in primary schools serving disadvantaged communities from 27-30% to less than 15% by 2016.*

It began with a presentation by **Mr. Jim Kavanagh, Inspector, Department of Education and Science** on the Government's DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools – programme. In particular, Mr. Kavanagh

focussed on one of the literacy programmes operating under DEIS in primary schools called FIRST STEPS.

This was followed by a presentation on the DEIS action plan on the ground and the role and work of the Cuiditheoir (advisor), of which there are 11 nationally working on the ground with primary schools. This was provided by **Ms. Catherine Shanahan and Ms. Marie McLoughlin, Primary Curriculum Support Programme**. Between 20-23% of the school population is being targeted under the DEIS programme.

4.3 The workshop discussion focussed on the challenges in tackling literacy and the main factors which need to be considered both to support DEIS and more widely. Key to these discussions is the high level of literacy difficulties reported in disadvantaged schools, with between 27-40% of children in disadvantaged schools having serious literacy difficulties, compared to 10% of children nationally. Boys are more affected than girls. The figure rises to 60% for Traveller children. These figures are gathered by the Department in different ways, most notably in their national assessment survey every 5 years.

4.4 Some of the main points made during the discussion are as follows.

— It is important not to lose sight of **schools and children on the edge of disadvantage.** This includes schools with some, but not serious, levels of literacy problems and children with moderate and mild literacy difficulties. Preventative actions should be put in place to ensure that the problems experienced by these schools and children do not worsen.

— There is a need to **involve families and communities** in combating literacy problems. Families should be involved in the design of support programmes and in their children's education. Literacy has to be promoted in communities through after-school facilities, youth clubs and in the link between community/home life and school in order to complement the mainstream system.

— **Disadvantaged families as well as disadvantaged communities have complex problems** that impact on children and need to be considered. For example, literacy difficulties are often made worse by poor housing conditions, poor play facilities etc. Such issues need to be addressed in a holistic way that helps children.

— There is a risk that **the most excluded children** will not be easily reached, and be left aside once targets are reached. However, it was also suggested that there is a need to look at children who perform well in disadvantaged schools as without peer models it is more difficult for children to improve.

— The **link between literacy and attendance** should be highlighted as literacy difficulties contribute to truancy, and poor attendance contributes to literacy difficulties. In addition, some delegates felt that it was important to **reduce class sizes**, although others thought that this had no impact on literacy.

- **Literacy materials and books need to be more widely available** to compensate for the lack of community literacy facilities and/or reading materials in the home. Bridging the library service and schools more directly is important as libraries have a key role to play in supporting literacy programmes. The availability of reading material is critical and public libraries are the biggest providers of this. It is not clear, however, where the libraries fit in to the DEIS programme. In addition, the book rental scheme needs to be made more available and the cost of buying books, particularly school workbooks, needs to be examined.
- There was a debate on the benefits of **targeting vs. universalism** in relation to literacy. It was agreed that targeting literacy resources at disadvantaged schools via DEIS should be a priority initially.
- A cross-cutting disability issue emerged which is **the stigma feared by families in the labelling of their children** as special needs, dyslexic, dyspraxic etc. There is a concern that once labelled and diagnosed/assessed as such, this information could become part of disputes on inheritance or mortgages (once disclosed by the person to insurance companies).
- Other issues raised included the need to address digital literacy, the need to measure outcomes and outputs as well as inputs, the importance of local as well as national interventions, and the need for a database of literacy interventions and initiatives such as exists in Northern Ireland.

4.5 Two examples of innovative projects were mentioned in this workshop. The first of these is the Preparing for Life Programme, which will be delivered in Dublin 17. This project is funded by the Northside Partnership, the Office for the Minister of Children and Atlantic Philanthropies[2]. This new early childhood intervention is implementing a five-year school readiness programme, which will begin during pregnancy and last until the children start school. It is a community-based approach to support and mentor parents. It will be subject to randomised control trials evaluation. Half of the families will be randomly allocated to receive enhanced services, including one-to-one mentoring and group parent training. A matched comparison group of 100 families will be included as a control group. This evaluation is being undertaken by the UCD Geary Institute.

4.6 The **Life Start Programme** is a home-based, educational and family support programme for parents of children aged from birth to five years. There are currently sixteen Life Start projects in Ireland - nine in the Republic and seven in Northern Ireland. Funded by the Lottery and the Health Services Executive (HSE), Life Start uses family workers in enabling roles working with parents.

[2] A charitable organisation dedicated to bringing about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. See www.atlanticphilanthropies.org

4.7 The points identified as key by the majority of delegates at the workshop were reported to the Plenary Session on policy priorities, and were as follows:

— The central focus of policy and provision has to be on the **quality of teaching to promote literacy**. The other factors which support this are assessment for learning (as opposed to assessment of learning), time on task, and early intervention.

— **Support for parents** in working with their children to improve literacy is crucial. In particular, special supports are needed for foreign national parents, as they often do not know the culture of education here and so are less able to support their children in doing their homework.

— **Early and better access to integrated support services** is necessary. Examples of good services in Ireland include the National Educational Psychological Service, the National Educational Welfare Board, speech and language therapists, educational welfare officers and learning support teachers. These are all very good services but are very difficult to access.

— **Quality and accessible early childhood education** is critical. Increased investment in this area is needed as Ireland currently spends less than 1% of GDP on this.

Workshop 2: People of Working Age – Employment and Participation

Chairperson Mr Eoin O'Broin, Department of Social and Family Affairs

Rapporteur Ms Celine Moore, Department of Social and Family Affairs

Presenters Ms Deirdre Shanley, Department of Social and Family Affairs; Ms Sharon Prendergast, OPEN

4.8 This workshop focused on Goals 5 and 9 of the NAPinclusion. These are to *Introduce an active case management approach that will support those on long-term social welfare into education, training and employment,* and to *Increase the employment of people with disabilities who do not have a difficulty in retaining a job.*

It opened with an overview from **Ms. Deirdre Shanley, Principal Officer, Department of Social and Family Affairs,** of that Department's activation policy for people of working age and for people with disabilities as outlined in the NAPinclusion. She stated that specific targets have been identified in relation to each goal.

Ms. Sharon Prendergast of One Parent Exchange Network (OPEN) gave a personal account of her journey from welfare to work and the barriers that she had to overcome. She stressed the importance of timely, accurate information to enable people to make informed decisions.

4.9 An overarching theme of the discussions in this workshop was the need to **build services around people's needs**, and not to design a suite of services and try to get people to fit in with these. If this approach was taken, and the real barriers that face people when trying to re-enter the labour market were addressed, there would be no need for activation or compulsion.

4.10 Thirteen issues were identified in this workshop. These were (i) the provision of accurate and complete information available from one point of contact; (ii) inter-agency co-operation; (iii) the provision of flexible training by FÁS; (iv) family friendly working arrangements in the private sector; (v) childcare issues; (vi) barriers to taking up employment; (vii) specific targets for specific groups, for example, members of the Traveller community; (viii) Family Income Supplement (FIS) and the 19 hours threshold; (ix) transport; (x) literacy; (xi) English language provision; (xii) attitudinal change by employers; and (xiii) personal assistance support for people with disabilities. From this list, five priorities were chosen.

4.11 The first priority issue identified was **the need to address the barriers to taking up employment**. These barriers include benefit traps, which need to be addressed by structuring welfare and tax systems to ensure that work always pays. Barriers also include the loss of secondary benefits, which have not been addressed since the mid-1990s, and which once lost can be very difficult to get back. Other barriers include the lack of access to, and the need for greater flexibility in education and training (in particular a need to move away from the 8.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. approach), and a lack of affordable childcare. A lot of the barriers were identified as having particular relevance to women who generally have the greatest childcare responsibilities.

Delegates believe that there are a number of best practice examples in employment and in education which if replicated could remove some of the barriers. In addition, the absence of targets for specific groups, such as members of the Traveller community and people with mental health issues, may result in their needs not being met. Specific targets for specific groups should be established. In addition, there should be Government-led initiatives to give members of the Traveller community access to employment.

4.12 The second priority raised in the group was the need for **inter-agency cooperation**. It was argued that the varying needs of people over their working life could not be addressed by only one Government Department or agency. Therefore there is a need for a more integrated approach to service provision. Accessing services is very important if people are to participate in society and placing them on the path to appropriate services can make a major contribution to this.

Developing new services provides a number of opportunities to progress these areas, including (i) the opportunity to build in an inter-agency approach from the outset, and not to develop services in isolation; and (ii)

to recognise all of the stakeholders and to involve them from the outset and to build them in as part of the service. There was a recognition that inter-agency cooperation is happening at a national level, but that there is a lack of connection between this and services on the ground where improvements are needed in order to meet people's needs.

4.13 The third priority issue addressed by this group was **childcare**. This was looked at under three A's – access, affordability, and appropriateness. As the national training agency, FÁS should provide crèche facilities for those undertaking training. Interventions were seen to work best when people have access to free or very low cost childcare. Physical accessibility of childcare was raised, particularly for parents who have a disability or for children with a disability. The proposed childcare subvention scheme was not considered to be workable and may leave low-income families at risk of not being able to continue in employment because of childcare costs. The lack of consultation with the people affected by the change in the scheme was also raised as an issue.

4.14 **The lack of flexible training** available through FÁS was the fourth priority issue identified. People require access to quality training programmes, and the lack of flexibility in the provision of training is a barrier. Structuring training around the 8.30 to 5.00 schedule excludes many people, particularly women with childcare responsibilities, from participating, and this is exacerbated by the absence of crèche facilities. In terms of both flexible training and education, many models already exist that could be drawn on. For example, Community Employment offers part-time flexible working arrangements for women, an approach that training and education providers could examine and adapt.

4.15 The final priority issue identified by this workshop was **the need for information**. This should be delivered through a friendly face-to-face customer service. While recognising the benefits of technology and other interfaces, the group felt that for people who are marginalised, face-to-face interaction, where somebody sits down and discusses the person's needs with them on a one-to-one basis, is the most appropriate and accessible form of communication. Information should be provided in a medium that suits the individual seeking employment, for example by sign language and in foreign languages. The use of imagery was seen as a way of getting a message across in a quick and effective way that transcends language problems.

Timely information is also crucial if people are going to access employment, for example, people who are outside the labour market find it hard to hear about job vacancies and this can cost them opportunities. It was recommended that information seminars on how to overcome the barriers to taking up employment should be organised as people need to know the impact that taking up employment can have on their circumstances. For example will they lose a benefit, a subvention, a secondary benefit etc. and will they actually be better off in employment. Such information should allow people to make an informed and timely decision.

Communication about schemes and the accompanying forms needs to be less complex and to use plain English. The roll out of the advocacy service for people with disabilities to assist them to access information is crucial.

Workshop 3: Older People – Care in the Community

Chairperson Mr Fergal Lynch, Department of Health and Children

Rapporteur Dr Anne-Marie McGauran, NESF

Presenters Ms Geraldine Fitzpatrick, Department of Health and Children; Ms Mary McMahon, Caring for Carers

4.16 In this workshop, the NAPinclusion high level Goal 7 was discussed, which is to *Continue to increase investment in community care services for older people, including home care packages and enhanced day care services, to support them to live independently in the community for as long as possible.*

First, **Ms. Geraldine Fitzpatrick, Principal Officer, Department of Health and Children** outlined the goals behind funding for care in the community, the context and purpose of this funding, and progress to date on this. In summary, she stressed that it is Government policy to support older people to live at home and with dignity in the community, and that the vast majority (96%) of older people live at home. The HSE funds a range of provisions for older people including Home Care Packages (HCPs), 23m hours of home help (HHs), increased funding for meals on Wheels (MOW), and 21,000 day care places. She also stressed that issues in relation to access, standards of service, the future of long-term care and positive ageing are all being addressed.

4.17 **Ms. Mary McMahon** outlined the work of Caring for Carers. This is a voluntary NGO working Ireland-wide to support family carers and the 'carees'. It is made up of 88 carers' groups. It provides HCPs, practical support, respite care, nurse-led carer's clinics, training for carers, information and telecare, and advocates to promote social inclusion. They have a carer's charter, which looks at the rights of those cared for, as well as those of the carer (see www.caringforcarers.org). In Ireland there are 18,152 older carers, and 10,000 provide unpaid care of over 29 hours per week, and 8,819 provide such care for over 43 hours per week. Caring is a source of major strain and psychological distress. Two-thirds of carers find it totally overwhelming at times, 70% find it a financial strain, and 73% score poorly on health tests. Ms. Mc Mahon went on to outline a wide array of issues of concern to carers.

4.18 Various aspects of **HCPs** were raised in the discussion in this workshop. These included how people got access to this service, whether or not it is good value for money (4,000 HCPs cost approximately €110m), how the services that go to make up a HCP are decided and the level of technology they use, whether or not they are available in all regions and the need for

more publicity on this service. In addition, administrative issues in relation to HCPs, such as the need for the older person to have a bank account, were also raised.

4.19 The **uneven geographic distribution of facilities, services and resources** was also raised. Physical space in the community is needed to provide services, but, for example, there is no community care centre space in Southill in Limerick. In the border region there are particular difficulties, as older people living in Dundalk may have to travel 50 miles to a service in Dublin, when a similar service is available just 6 miles away in Newry, but because this is in another jurisdiction they cannot use it. Some services are just not available in some areas at all for no apparent reason.

4.20 The issue of **transport** arose in a number of contexts. Rural transport, a key service for older people, is available and working well in some areas and is not available at all in others. Where there is no available public transport, the cost of taxis to keep hospital appointments, visit a sick partner or attend other health-related services can be very expensive for older people. It was suggested that the HSE discuss this with the Department of Transport and that people with the Free Travel pass should be able to use private transport such as taxis and hackneys.

4.21 A number of issues arose in relation to **accessing services**. These were wide ranging and included the need, in some instances at least, for recipients of Home Care Grants to find and supervise their own builders etc., the need for recipients of this grant to have planning permission for small adaptive work such as adding a downstairs toilet, the means-testing of the carer's allowance, reliance on FÁS to staff services such as Meals on Wheels at a time when they are reducing staff, the long waiting lists for some services such as chiropody, the lack of respite services for carers of older people and older carers, and the lack of services and an organisation with responsibility for older people leaving hospital.

4.22 Particular issues were raised in relation to the **Home Help Service**. These included lack of flexibility and lack of a weekend and out-of-hours service; as well as the need for this service to be better co-ordinated, and a set of standards for all home helps.

4.23 The need for **outreach services**, particularly in rural areas, was raised by a number of delegates. This may be particularly important in helping many isolated rural men access other services. The possibility of linking to such isolated older people through existing organisations in their local area was raised.

4.24 The need for a **single body and an ombudsman** for older people was raised. Such a body could provide access to services, advocacy and information for older people on their rights and services.

4.25 A wide range of other issues were also discussed in this workshop.

These included the need for

— older people to have financial education as many surviving partners do not know how to deal with finances;

— investment in health promotion;

— services to be based on need not age;

— the extension of the Friendly Call service (a check up service, by phone) in north Dublin;

— documenting and evaluating service delivery in order to feed it back into the policy loop;

— very good services in residential care, as well as in community care; and

— help for relatives to look after older people.

4.26 The five key issues to be fed back to the Plenary Session were as follows:

— **Home Help:** 55,000 older people get a home help service, so it is a large service. Training for home helps would be useful. The option of full-time employment should be open to them where needed and they should earn a decent salary. Issues of cost effectiveness need to be investigated. These include comparisons between the cost of residential care and home help care, and a cost-benefit study of their use in high dependency care.

The service should be regulated as this is the only way to ensure a quality, standard service and prevent abuse of the system by either older people or home helps. Part of the regulation of the service should be to ensure adequate and appropriate training for home helps, and the creation of an inspectorate and supervisory service. The service should be extended in terms of the daily time allowance and the weekend, out-of-hours and holiday service.

— **Services:** The availability of services is a problem, as is the lack of co-ordination of services, with a number of different organisations visiting or being in contact with an older person to provide various services. Services should be focused on the needs of the recipient, rather than on the needs of the organisations. Technology could be used more to provide services, for example, sensors linked to panic buttons or smoke alarms. Public and private transport services need to be integrated. The HSE gives a mobility allowance but this is obtained through the Community Welfare Officers and is therefore discretionary and inconsistently applied. Common assessment and delivery tools for the various services should be developed. A home maintenance service would be very useful as many older people cannot do small tasks such as changing light bulbs, light gardening etc.

— **Community care models:** There is a need to examine how primary care teams could become involved in organising different models of person-centred care. Non-medical models of care should be considered as these serve to keep people integrated into their own community. For example, Dublin City Council is trying to integrate sheltered housing into the community at the moment. A Positive Ageing strategy could help develop such models. Care models that use the Public Health Nurse services in conjunction with specialists of different disciplines on an area and/or needs-basis and that link with other services and agencies could be developed.

— **Respite care:** this is needed for carers. Emergency and on-call respite care is needed when carers are sick, for example; as is planned, and regular respite for carers. The latter type of respite care is also needed for the dependent person and this should be available in their home if they prefer this. Such provisions should be covered by the Carer's Strategy. An example of good practice is Sweden where there are 2 days of respite care every month for carers. Countries such as France have good parental leave in caring for young children and the possibility of approaching caring responsibilities for older people in a similar way should be investigated.

Workshop 4: Communities – Integration of Migrants

Chairperson Ms Karla Charles, National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)

Rapporteur Ms Helen Brougham, Citizen's Information Board

Presenters Mr John Haskins, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; Mr Aki Stavrou, Integrating Ireland

4.27 This workshop focussed on Goal 12 of the NAPinclusion which is to *Develop a strategy aimed at achieving the integration of newcomers in our society. As an initial action, resources for the provision of 550 teachers for language supports in the education sector will be provided by 2009 and access to other public services through translation of information and supports will be improved.*

The input on national issues was provided by **Mr. John Haskins, Director of the Reception and Integration Agency** and provided some background to the development of the current immigration brief, what is currently being done, and future plans in relation to immigration policy and services.

In his presentation on local issues, **Mr. Aki Stavrou of Integrating Ireland** addressed the meaning of integration, some of the main barriers to such integration as well as some of the positive actions that have been taken, and highlighted the need for a more strategic approach at policy and implementation level. Although many local authorities are making positive efforts to support integration there is still more work to be done.

4.28 Seven key issues arose in this workshop, three of which were prioritised for particular attention. These three were as follows:

— Greater effort is needed to **directly fund minority-led organisations**. The current approach to accessing funding is experienced as rigid and excludes many organisations, particularly those that are directly representative of minorities. Minority-led organisations will need greater capacity-building in the area of governance in order to prepare applications for various sources of funding, to manage public funding and to report on activities and expenditure. Some organisations are not structured in a way that fits into the current funding requirements.

— The second priority issue was that **individuals that are directly affected by policies should be part of the groups that are creating those policies**. People who are affected by policy changes are often not consulted in advance, for example, in relation to recent changes in childcare policy that will have a real impact on many of the communities represented and being discussed at the Forum. When they are consulted, this is often seen as tokenistic, with little or no meaningful feedback on the policy choices made. Often policy changes in one department affect people in many areas of their lives, but this is not taken into account. To address this there is a need to encourage groups delivering services and implementing policies to show how they will do so to meet the needs of the individuals they serve. In addition, those who are consulted about policies as well as those who devise them should be involved in the monitoring of delivery and implementation at later stages to increase accountability.

— The third priority issue related to **perceptions of when integration occurs**. The view was expressed that we think of integration as starting once a person has a legal status. Integration needs to be considered as a continuum which occurs along many different paths from a person's initial arrival, to going shopping, to taking their children to school etc. This is how and when integration occurs, not through the awarding of a legal status. Thinking of integration only when a legal status has been awarded was seen as impacting on the provision and delivery of supports and services, or the lack of same.

4.29 The four other issues raised and discussed in this workshop as needing attention were as follows:

— **Direct provision** compounds social isolation and leads to poor mental health. Direct provision as it is currently provided and experienced should be abolished. A number of delegates spoke of their own and other's negative experience of direct provision and of 'becoming useless' and 'going mad'. The duration for which people remain in direct provision should be limited to six months.

— **Segregation in education** is perhaps a more hidden form of exclusion as it is not always in the form of children from minority groups being placed in separate schools. Children whose parents cannot afford extra curricular activities, school uniforms, school books etc., experience exclusion as they can be perceived by Irish children as different. This potentially reinforces negative stereotyping.

— There is a need for **improved policy and provision for unaccompanied minors**. The State has a duty of care in this area that needs to be revisited.

— Finally, adults of many minority groups experience isolation due to **lack of proficiency in English**. Some immigrants are increasingly dependent on their English-speaking children to provide translation, interpretation or other language supports, and children sometimes miss school to help their parents apply for services or to undertake other tasks through English. However, there are inadequate places in State-provided English language classes. Other related issues raised were the lack of recognition of foreign qualifications and the costs of education.

Professor David Gordon, Minister Martin Cullen T.D. and Dr. Maureen Gaffney (Chair)

v

Final Plenary Session

5.1 In the final Plenary Session, each of the rapporteurs gave feedback from the workshops. This is already detailed in Section 4 above and is not repeated here. Although roundtables were part of the afternoon agenda, due to time pressure it was decided to forgo these and to open the floor to questions and comments from the delegates. The main issues raised and the responses to them are detailed here.

5.2 The issue of **discontinuity between national policy and local delivery** was raised. While there is significant financial investment at national level in social policies and schemes etc., this often does not translate into effective policy and provision at the local level. This is in the context of many local level initiatives working very well, but not within any national or local policy framework. There is a need to know not only what is working, but what is not working and why. The EQUAL Initiative and the Equality for Women Measure were cited as examples of good local projects and initiatives that are well documented, evaluated and shown to work, but where little or nothing of this learning has been taken into national policy. Such mainstreaming would require changing how our core services are structured and delivered, and this is why the learning is not taken on board at national level.

Also on the theme of discontinuity between national policy and local delivery, it was cited that there is a budget of €2.8 billion made available under the National Skills Strategy to improve the skills of the workforce, including literacy skills. However, only €3 million has been spent under the basic education fund. What is missing is a national implementation strategy to roll out the national policy at local level. Also in relation to education, it is known that school does not suit 10-15% of the pupils they serve, yet at national level investment is still targeted towards schools. On the other hand, we know that family literacy supports are effective in addressing literacy problems, but this is not reflected in the national funding programmes.

Finally on this issue, the question was asked as to why people should come to events like the Forum repeatedly over a period of years to make the same points if they cannot be translated into policy.

5.3 The issue of **pilot projects and initiatives** was raised by several delegates. This is of course relevant to the mainstreaming of practice arising from the EQUAL Initiative and the Equality for Women Measure cited above. However, it was also stated that some of the organisations at the Forum were involved in the provision of innovative services, such as the nurse-led carer's clinic operated by Caring for Carers Ireland. If some of these initiatives were rolled out at national level it would address many of the issues and barriers identified by delegates. There is a need to highlight examples of such services. With regard to translating pilot projects into policy, it is necessary to have proper, rigorous evaluation methods and instruments built in from the beginning of the project to show how pilots could be effective.

5.4 The issue of **unmarried and separated fathers** was also raised. This group is often excluded in reports of the Forum, as well as in other reports. In addition, the problem of negative stereotyping of men and fathers is leading to exclusion rather than integration. On the positive side, the issues facing men, fathers and grandfathers, who are denied appropriate access to their children and grandchildren, will be addressed in the Supreme Court in the coming week. It was suggested that this issue be placed on the agenda for future Forum meetings.

5.5 The need for **financial literacy supports** was highlighted. This is particularly the case for new communities in Ireland who may need help to adjust to the various financial systems. It is also very much needed for older people as many are left in very vulnerable positions when the partner who has acted as financial manager in the marriage passes away. To address this issue effectively requires an inter-departmental policy.

5.6 The need for the newly-appointed **Minister for Integration and an integration strategy** was highlighted. This development and implementation of this strategy should include those that it seeks to integrate, and should learn from the failure of other strategies. If this strategy is to be rolled out through the local authorities, then staff in these authorities will require training and resources in order to deliver on it.

5.7 The final input of the day was given by **Mr. Gerry Mangan, Director of the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI)**. Mr. Mangan first commented on the usefulness of the day for him and his colleagues, particularly the exchanges on the different forms of poverty and social exclusion, and the different approaches needed to support those experiencing them.

5.8 On the topic of integration, Mr. Mangan said that this is now a key issue and is reflected in the NAPinclusion through the adoption of the lifecycle approach. This involves not just looking at social welfare schemes or healthcare etc., but at real people at the various stages of their lives, children, people of working age, older people, migrants in communities, and so on. What the discussions at the Forum highlight is that when integration is discussed, inevitably so too is the integration of services so that better outcomes can be achieved. In addition, although a level of

integration can be achieved at national level, it is at the local level that the services and integration must be delivered. Policy will achieve little if it cannot be delivered on the ground.

5.9 Mr. Mangan then commented on the earlier discussions in relation to the target groups. With regard to **children**, Professor Gordon had drawn attention in his talk to the relatively high levels of child poverty in Ireland compared to those countries with the lowest levels, notably the Nordic countries. A major factor in achieving these low levels is the extent to which support is provided in these countries in areas such as childcare, to enable parents to earn good incomes from employment. Much is also invested in services such as child benefit, early child education, health care etc. However, households, especially those with children, with a low income and which are perhaps jobless are more vulnerable to poverty. In Ireland we are trying to address this through significant increases in Child Benefit, childcare services, improvements in education, addressing a lack of literacy, focussing on early childhood education and trying to reduce early school leaving. All of these are central in addressing child poverty.

The historic dimension must also be considered when comparing countries. A lot of the Nordic countries have been very wealthy countries for a very long time. This is not yet true of Ireland and so it will take time to build up capacity, to put the schemes and services in place that will enable us to reach the levels that Nordic countries have already attained. What is important is that Ireland is going in the right direction. To do this the OSI and other policy-makers must listen to people at events such as the Forum and through other channels, as well as learning from what other countries are doing. From this perspective it is clear that activation, enabling parents to get into employment, and give them all the support that is required to do so, is a very important part of policy and services.

5.10 In relation **to older people**, Mr. Mangan said that there is an awareness of the full range of services necessary to support older people. It is a major policy objective to enable older people to remain in their own homes, where they want to be, for as long as they can. However, there frequently comes a stage where they need support to enable them to do so. Some of this can come from family carers, but it also requires other services such as Home Help, respite care, and so on. Policy, he believes, is moving along the right direction in relation to these issues.

5.11 Mr. Mangan then reverted to a point made by Minister Martin Cullen T.D. earlier in the day, relating to how our broad-brush policies and implementation can also miss out on smaller groups of people who require extra support or more focussed support. The Forum provides an opportunity for policy-makers to hear a lot of innovative and important proposals and suggestions on how we can reach people who have specific problems. These proposals come from the people themselves or from the groups that work with them or for them on the ground.

5.12 As Professor Gordon pointed out earlier in the day, care must be taken in how we measure poverty. When we look at basic deprivation, Ireland has a relatively low level and in that regard is on a par with the most developed countries. This demonstrates that the thrust of policy, geared towards reducing consistent poverty, is working. The other main measure of poverty is related to income, and thus those termed "at risk of poverty" have incomes below a certain threshold. The proportion at risk of poverty in Ireland is high relative to other developed countries but is falling, significantly so in relation to older people. Policies that lead to increased well-paid employment, especially for households with children, and to increased pensions and improved services for older people, will as in other countries, make a major contribution to progressively reducing income poverty. There is also now a focus on outcomes. What outcomes have been achieved in terms of reducing poverty and helping people to have a reasonable standard of living?

5.13 Finally, Mr. Mangan asked that people look at the Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007, launched by the Minister earlier on in the day at the Forum, to examine the extent to which many of the issues raised during the day are currently being addressed and the extent to which progress is already being made in relation to relevant policies. He then thanked the delegates for attending and for participating so effectively throughout the day. When the report of the Forum is available the OSI will study it very carefully and compare it with their annual report on social inclusion to examine the extent to which the delegates' concerns are being addressed. Mr. Mangan then thanked his colleagues from the EU Peer Review Group for their interest in the event, and the Chairperson, Director and staff of the NESF for their collaboration with the OSI on the Forum.

5.14 The Chairperson of the NESF, Dr. Maureen Gaffney closed the Forum. She invited delegates to send any additional comments to the NESF and asked delegates to complete evaluation forms that had been circulated. She thanked everyone for their attendance and participation, as well as their ongoing work on the ground with people experiencing poverty and exclusion, and wished everyone a safe journey home.

Minister Martin Cullen T.D. addressing the Forum

Annexes

Annex I Conference Programme

9.00 **Arrival of Participants and Guests**
Registration with tea/coffee

9.30 **Morning Plenary**
Welcoming Remarks by the Forum's Chairperson, Dr. Maureen Gaffney
Address by Minister for Social & Family Affairs, Mr. Martin Cullen T.D.
Presentation by Professor David Gordon, Bristol University

10.15 **Roundtable Discussion**

10.45 **Coffee Break**

11.45 **Meeting of Workshop Groups on;**
Children – Literacy Difficulties
People of Working Age and People with Disabilities
Older People – Community Care
Communities – Integration of Migrants

1.00 **Break for Lunch**

Final Plenary

3.15 **Feedback from the Workshops**

3.45 **Roundtable Discussions**

4.15 **Open Discussion**

5.00 **Concluding Remarks**
by the Forum's Chairperson, Dr. Maureen Gaffney

Annex II Attendance List

Full Name	Organisation
Ms Elizabeth Adjei	
Ms Dorothy Anunobi	African Women's Forum
Alla Avtina	Older Person's Group
Ms Helen Bakali	African Women's Forum
Cllr. Ger Barron	General Council of County Councils
Ms Brigid Barron	Caring for Carers
Ms Cathy Barron	Office for Social Inclusion
Ms Joan Bennett	Senior Citizens' Parliament
Mr Andy Bourne	Galway Simon Community
Ms Gráinne Boyle	Cavan County Council
Ms Orla Brady	Cavan County Development Board
Ms Saoirse Brady	FLAC
Ms Helen Brougham	Citizens Information Board
Ms Lillian Buchanan	Threshold
Ms Nora Burke	Mercy Justice in Ireland
Mr Chris Burston	UK Government Department for Work and Pensions, Social Inclusion Team
Ms Frances Byrne	OPEN
Ms Irene Byrne	Irish Coucil for Social Housing
Rev Adrian Carbery	Kildare Community & Education Partnership
Mrs Christine Carroll	Ballymun Partnership
Ms Marie Carroll	Southside Partnership
Mr Timothy Casey	S.P.A.R.K
Ms Karla Charles	NCCRI
Ms Glenda Cimono	Drimnagh CDP
Mr Bevin Cody	Combat Poverty Agency
Ms Elma Collins	Older Women's Network
Ms Sheila Collins	HSE - Southern
Ms Patricia Conboy	National Council for Ageing and Older People
Ms Marie Corcoran-Tindill	Draíocht Community Development & Training Organisation

Ms Carmel Corrigan	
Ms Noelle Cotter	Centre for Housing Research
Ms Miriam Cregan	Limerick Community Forum
Ms Mary Cullen	Southside Partnership
Ms Jeanette Cullen	Oliver Bond Community Group
Mr Pat Cummins	Limerick SIMS Group
Mr Paul Cunningham	National Crime Council
Ms Patricia Cussen	Dublin City Council
Ms Mary Daly	School of Sociology and Social Policy, Queen's University
Ms Ruth Dawson	Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service
Ms Emmanuelle Devillé	Service for the Fight against Poverty, Insecurity, and Social Exclusion
Mr Séamas Devine	EAPN Ireland
Mr Seamus Diskin	NUI Maynooth
Mr Jim Doherty	Dun Laoghaire Local Drugs Task Force
Ms Ann Donegan	Northside CDP
Ms Kathleen Donohoe	Cavan Partnership
Ms Theresa Donohue	Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Mr Michael Doody	ICMSA
Ms Cepta Dowling	Northside Partnership
Mr Graham Doyle	Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission
Ms Mary Doyle	Department of the Taoiseach
Ms Mary Drumm	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Mr Brian Duff	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Mr Peter Duffy	Office for Social Inclusion
Ms Brenda Dunne	OPEN
Christiane EL-HAYEK	Ministry for Labour, Labour Relations and Solidarity/ General Directorate for Social Action DGAS
Ms Aideen Elliott	Combat Poverty Agency
Ms Nina Farrell	Dublin City Council

Mr Noel Fitzgerald	DRAIOCHT
Ms Geraldine Fitzpatrick	Department of Health & Children
Ms Annamarie Foley	Kerry Women's Refuge
Ms Ann Gilton	FÁS
Mr Paul Ginell	EAPN Ireland
Ms Geraldine Gleeson	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Mr Jimmy Glynn	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Ms Elvira Gonzalez	Económicos Tomillo
Ms Maria Gorman	Combat Poverty Agency
Mr Ian Graham	
Ms Michelle Griffin	Combat Poverty Agency
Mrs Kelly Harlin	OWN Ireland
Ms Gwen Harris	Finglas MABS
Mr Brian Harvey	Social Researcher
Mr John Haskins	Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform
Ms Renate Haupfleisch	ÖSB Consulting GmbH
Ms Máiréad Hayes	Senior Citizens' Parliament
Ms Catherine Hazlett	Department of Social and Family Affairs
Mr Paul Hill	FÁS
Mr Tom Horton	Office for Social Inclusion
Ms Jo-hanna Ivers	Combat Poverty Agency
Ms Helen Johnston	NESC
Mr David Jones	Dundalk Town Council
Inspector Jim Kavanagh	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Ms Sharon Keane	Community Platform
Miss Ursula Kearney	National Centre for Guidance in Education
Ms Stephanie Kearns	Financial Regulator
Ms Marie Keegan	Rehabcare, Tullamore
Ms Niamh Kelly	Combat Poverty Agency
Mr Ray Kelly	Unmarried Fathers of Ireland
Mr Peter Kelly	The Poverty Alliance

Ms Rosemary Kerrigan	Community Connections
Ms Kay King	SICCDA
Mr Deyan Kolev	AMALIPE - Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance
Ms Elena Kremenlieva	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Mr Martin Lafferty	
Ms Pamela Lafferty	Central Statistics Office
Ms Sonia Lavelle	Dublin City Council
Mr Peter Lelie	European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
Ms Kitty Liddy	OLL Action Centre
Ms Germaine Lloyd	Special Project on Long Term Unemployment, Tallaght
Ms Jennifer Lloyd-Hughes	South Dublin Community Platform
Ms Camille Loftus	One Parent Exchange & Network (OPEN)
Mr Fergal Lynch	Department of Health & Children
Mr Edmund Lynch	Dublin Community Television
Ms Brenda Lynch	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Sr Bernadette MacMahon	Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice
Ms Tina MacVeigh	Fatima Regeneration Board
Mr Michael Maguire	Family Solidarity
Ms Grace Maguire	Dublin City Council
Mr William Mangan	Longmeadows Pitch & Putt Company
Mr Gerry Mangan	Department of Social and Family Affairs
Ms Francisca Ramos Martín	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs de Argenta/Directorate General of Social Inclusion
Ms Izabella Marton	Alliance of Social Professionals
Ms Nyamwonda Massambn	An Cosan
Ms Louise McCann	Disability Federation of Ireland
Ms Elise McCarthy	Rice University
Ms Mary McCarthy	Trinity College
Ms Mianne McCarthy	WITS
Ms Toni McCaul	Community Partnership Network
Ms Mary McDermott	National Women's Council of Ireland
Mr Paddy McDonagh	Department of Education and Science
Ms Finola McDonnell	IBEC

Mr James McGarry	Sligo Borough Council
Ms Marianne McGill	CoOperation Ireland
Mrs Theresa McGouran	Markiewicz Community Centre
Ms Rose McGowan	Irish Wheelchair Association
Mr Tom McGrann	Westport Family Resource Centre
Mr Aidran McGrath	NUI Maynooth
Mr Reamon McKeever	Central Statistics Office
Ms Jennifer McKenzie	National Centre for Guidance in Education
Ms Athena McLean	NUI Galway
Ms Marie McLoughlin	Primary Curriculum Support Programme
Ms Aoife McLoughlin	Sligo RAPID
Ms Mary McMahon	Caring For Carers
Ms Brid McMenamin	Lifford / Castlefin Primary Care Initiative
Mr Colin Menton	Department of the Taoiseach
Mr Frank Mills	Health Service Executive South West Area
Ms Celine Moore	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Ms Ronnie Moore	
Mr Eamonn Moran	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Mr Paul Morrin	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Mr Brian Moss	Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission
Ms Geraldine Moylan	South Inner City Community Development Association
Mr Jim Mulkerrins	Social Inclusion Unit
Mr Larry Mullin	Sligo Community Forum
Ms Orla Munn	Department of Health and Children
Ms Cliona Murphy	Barnardo's
Ms Norita Murphy	Central Statistics Office
Ms Geraldine Murphy	Finglas/Cabra Partnership
Ms Lianne Murphy	FLAC
Ms Candy Murphy	One Family
Mr Eoghan Murphy	Westport Family Resource Centre
Ms Ann Murphy	Department of Social and Family Affairs
Mr Eamonn Murtagh	Department of Education and Science
Ms Mary Nally	Summerhill Active Retirement

Ms Monika Natter	ÖSB Consulting GmbH
Ms Nora Newell	Letterkenny Women's Centre
Ms Josette Newman	Sligo LEADER Partnership Co Ltd
Mr Stephen Ng'a Ng'a	Mayo Intercultural Action
Xsenia Nicolaeva	All Cultures Group
Ms Mary Norris	
Mr Gearóid Ó Conluain	Department of Education & Science
Ms Margaret O Sullivan	Limerick Community Forum
Ms Bríd O'Brien	Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed
Mr Eoin O'Broin	Department of Social and Family Affairs
Cllr. Paddy O'Callaghan	NESF
Fr Pat O'Connell	Filipino Migrants
Mr Brian O'Connell	Southill Family Resource Centre
Ms Orla O'Connor	National Women's Council of Ireland
Mr Tony O'Gorman	DES Regional Office, Limerick
Ms Vanessa Ohiwerei	Mayo Intercultural Action
Ms Maeve O'Keeffe	NUI Galway
Ms Maire O'Leary	County Clinic, Letterkenny
Mr Brendan O'Leary	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Ms Ann O'Meara	
Mr Laco Oravec	Milan Simecka Foundation, Slovak Antipoverty Network
Mr Paul O'Raw	South Kerry Development Partnership
Mr Eoin O'Seagholha	European Commission
Mrs Titilola Ossai	Louth African Women's Support Group
Ms Anne O'Sullivan	Department of Education and Science
Mr Júlio Paiva	EAPN (European Anti Poverty Network)
Ms Sharon Pendergast	OPEN
Mr John Pepper	IBEC
Mr Jim Prior	Southill Family Resource Centre
Ms Martina Prunty	Combat Poverty Agency
Mr Dermot Quigley	Department of Finance
Ms Janice Ransom	EAPN Ireland

Mr David Reynolds	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Mr Hubert Rooney	West Meath Community Development
Ms Sara Russell	Pavee Point Traveller Centre
Ms Angela Samina	All Cultures Group
Ms Catherine Shanahan	Primary Curriculum Support Programme
Ms Deirdre Shanley	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Ms Patricia Sheehan	Department of Education and Science
Ms Mary Sherry	Irish Farmer's Association
Mr David Silke	Centre for Housing Research
Mr Shruti Singh	OECD
Mr Bogdan Skoczek	European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
Ms Sinead Smith	Pavee Point
Ms Colette Spears	LYCS
Mr Aki Stavrou	Integrating Ireland
Rev John Stephens	Dublin Central Mission / Methodist Church in Ireland
Mr John Stewart	NALA
Ms Maria Svecova	Lucan Disability Action Group
Mr Hugo Swinnen	Verwey-Jonker Institute
Mr Brendan Teeling	An Chomhairle Leabharlanna
Ms Jana Tomatova	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Slovak Republic
Ms Györgyi Vajda	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour
Ms Barbara Walshe	Combat Poverty Agency
Ms Fiona Ward	MABS Unit
Ms Sarah Welford	ATD Quart Monde/ ATD Fourth World
Ms Bernadette Whelan	
Mr Tom Whelan	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Ms Sarah Williams	Volunteering Ireland

Annex III Office for Social Inclusion – Social Inclusion Forum Workshop Briefs for Participants

Briefs for Participants: Children – Literacy Difficulties

This Note was prepared by the Office for Social Inclusion to provide background information on key social inclusion developments since the last Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) was held in February 2006 and should help to inform workshop discussion. It includes information on:

- 1. Social inclusion strategies which have been put in place since June 2006;
- 2. The Vision for Children as set out in *Towards 2016*, the social partnership agreement reached in June 2006;
- 3. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007-2016;
- 4. High Level Goals in the NAPinclusion relating to children;
- 5. The Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007;
- 6. Key developments relating to children (reported in the Annual Social Inclusion Report);
- 7. Progress on High Level Goals (reported in the annual Social Inclusion Report);
- 8. Progress on NAPinclusion targets for children (reported in the annual Social Inclusion Report);
- 9. Details of relevant websites where further information is available in relation to the above.

1. New Strategies for Social Inclusion

Since the last Forum took place in February 2006, the Government has launched a number of major strategies for social inclusion. These include:

— In June 2006, the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016* was concluded setting out a coherent strategy for social inclusion based on the NESC (Developmental Welfare State) lifecycle approach.

— The **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016**, launched in February 2007, complemented by the social inclusion elements of the **National Development Plan 2007-2013**, launched in January 2007, sets out how the Government's social inclusion strategy will be achieved over the next ten years.

— In line with a commitment in *Towards 2016*, the Office for Social Inclusion has prepared the first A**nnual Social Inclusion Report** covering the period June 2006 to June 2007, reviewing the progress achieved to date in relation to high level social inclusion goals and targets/actions for each stage of the lifecycle. **This report will be launched on the day of the SIF by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Martin Cullen, TD.**

2. *Towards 2016*

The vision as set out in *Towards 2016* for in Ireland is a society where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential. Ireland has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is committed to its implementation in our laws and policies.

To achieve this vision, the Government and social partners in *Towards 2016* have pledged to work together over the next ten years towards the following long-term goals for children in Ireland:

- Every child should grow up in a family with access to sufficient resources, supports and services, to nurture and care for the child, and foster the child's development and full and equal participation in society;
- Every family should be able to access childcare services which are appropriate to the circumstances and needs of their children;
- Every child should leave primary school literate and numerate;
- Every student should complete a senior cycle or equivalent programme, (including ICT), appropriate to their capacity and interests;
- Every child should have access to world-class health, personal social services and suitable accommodation;
- Every child should have access to quality play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood; and
- Every child and young person will have access to appropriate participation in local and national decision-making.

3. National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007-2016

The new NAPinclusion, which was published in February 2007, sets out a wide-ranging and comprehensive programme of action to address poverty and social exclusion. The Plan is intended to set out a coherent and comprehensive approach for the next ten years using a lifecycle approach, as set out by National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in its report, **The Developmental Welfare State**, and adopted by the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016*. The lifecycle approach places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery by assessing the risks facing him or her and the supports available at key stages of the lifecycle.

These key lifecycle groups are: Children, People of Working Age, Older People and People with Disabilities. The adoption of the lifecycle approach offers a comprehensive framework for implementing a streamlined, cross-cutting and visible approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion.

To ensure that a decisive impact on poverty is made, the Government believes that significant interventions are required to prioritise a small number of high level goals. These targeted actions and interventions are designed to mobilise resources to address long-standing and serious social deficits with the ultimate aim of achieving the objective of reducing consistent poverty.

The overall goal of this Plan is:

To reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016, under the revised definition.

Within each section of the lifecycle, a number of high level goals are beings prioritised to achieve this overall goal. These are detailed below.

4. High Level Goals in the NAPinclusion relating to Children

Education at all stages of a child's life is of central importance for their development and future well-being. Accordingly, it forms the basis for the main targets in this area. In addition, the importance of income support in tackling child poverty is also recognised. The high level goals for this life stage are:

Goal 1: Education

Ensure that targeted pre-school education is provided to children from urban primary school communities covered by the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan;

Goal 2: Education

Reduce the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties in primary schools serving disadvantaged communities. The target is to halve the proportion from the current 27%-30% to less than 15% by 2016;

Goal 3: Education

Work to ensure that the proportion of the population aged 20-24 completing upper second level education or equivalent will exceed 90% by 2013; and

Goal 4: Income Support

Maintain the combined value of child income support measures at 33%-35% of the minimum adult social welfare payment rate over the course of this Plan and review child income supports aimed at assisting children in families on low income.

These high level goals are accompanied by over 150 more detailed targets and actions across all stages of the lifecycle. 42 of those targets and actions relate to services for children including income supports, early childhood development and care, health and nutrition, youth homelessness, sport and leisure and child participation among others. In addition, a number of cross-cutting targets in the Communities chapter of the NAPinclusion (chapter 6) will impact on children.

A copy of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion is available from the Office for Social Inclusion at (01) 7043851 or on our website at www.socialinclusion.ie

5. Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007

As part of a more streamlined and efficient monitoring and reporting process agreed in the social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*, the Office for Social Inclusion has been given an expanded role to coordinate and prepare an annual Social Inclusion Report.

The annual report will: review each stage of the lifecycle; provide a detailed assessment of progress towards set targets; identify new issues arising or issues that might benefit from a more co-ordinated, joined-up approach; and report on stakeholders' views emerging from various fora. The report will also cover the social inclusion elements of *Towards 2016* and the NDP, ensuring that the reporting processes for all three strategies are streamlined.

The first annual report covers the period from June 2006 to June 2007. However, significant developments between June 2007 and the date of going to print have been reflected where possible.

Following its launch at the 2007 Social Inclusion Forum, the annual report will be submitted to the National Partnership Steering Group. Social partners have been consulted in the development of this report.

6. Key developments relating to Children (reported in the Annual Social Inclusion Report)

6.1 National Development Plan 2007-2013

The NDP commits to investment of some €12.3 billion in the Children Programme over the period 2007 - 2013. This investment will provide childcare services, child protection and recreational facilities and educational help for children from disadvantaged communities and those with special needs.

6.2 Office of the Minister for Children

The Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) has made progress in promoting innovative and integrated service delivery, including the establishment of the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group in November 2006 and the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme.

6.3 Programme for Government 2007-2012

The Agreed Programme for Government, *A Blueprint for Ireland's Future*, contains commitments relating to childcare, children's health and well-being, income supports, education, recreation, child protection, youth justice and foster care. It also commits to the establishment of an All-Party Oireachtas committee to build consensus on a constitutional amendment to acknowledge and affirm the natural rights of all children.

6.4 Progress Against High Level Goals and Targets for Children

Part II of the Annual Social Inclusion Report sets out progress achieved in relation to some of the NAPinclusion targets. **Sections 7 and 8 of this briefing note contain extracts from the report detailing progress on the High Level Goals and targets for the children lifecycle stage.**

7. Progress on High Level Goals (reported in the Annual Social Inclusion Report)

Goal 1: Education

The Department of Education and Science has reported that:

- The Office of the Minister for Children has agreed that for capital applications under the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP), one of the criteria used in assessing applications is whether a childcare facility can demonstrate that it will support pre-school services for schools designated as disadvantaged under DEIS;
- Existing pre-schools associated with DEIS Urban Band 1 schools have been identified. An analysis of how these pre-schools could be clustered for early years intervention and the type of intervention model that could be used has taken place; and
- The model of intervention is now being further developed.

Goal 2: Education

The Department of Education and Science has reported that under the DEIS Action Plan:

- Additional literacy and numeracy tutors are being recruited to provide in-school support and guidance to all teachers in these schools;
- Training in Reading Recovery and First Steps is being rolled out to all urban/town primary schools;
  - Reading Recovery is a school based early intervention programme designed to reduce literacy problems in schools. Two new Reading Recovery Teacher leaders have completed their training and they, along with the existing cohort of trained teachers, will roll the programme out to a further 84 schools in 2007/2008;
  - First Steps targets the whole school or a specific school group on a particular strand/unit of the curriculum with the emphasis on a holistic approach to the teaching of literacy. The First Steps programme is being extended to a further 80 schools in 2007/2008;
- A new Family Literacy Project is being implemented;
- The School Development Planning service continues to support schools in developing their plans and policies for teaching literacy and numeracy and in setting measurable targets for the reduction of serious literacy and numeracy difficulties.

Goal 3: Education

The Department of Education and Science has reported that:

- Fifteen additional posts have been allocated to the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) for 2007 under the first phase of the provision in *Towards 2016*. A recruitment process to fill these posts is underway. The increase in staff will facilitate the Board to respond to more children with attendance difficulties;
- The NEWB has deployed staff in areas of greatest disadvantage and in areas designated under the Government's RAPID programme;
- An increase of €8m for Youthreach was provided in 2007 for the expansion of the number of places by 400, bringing the total to over 3,600. This will rise by a further 600 by the end of 2009;
- A group comprising representatives of the NEWB, the School Completion Programme and the Home School Community Liaison has identified a number of regions where the three teams will work together to identify particular issues that contribute to absenteeism and to develop operational guidelines. This work will commence in the 2007-2008 school year with the aim of agreeing operational guidelines by the end of the year.

Goal 4: Income Support

The Department of Social and Family Affairs has reported that:

- In Budget 2007, the three weekly rates of child dependant increases (€16.80, €19.30 and €21.60) were increased and consolidated at €22.00;
- Child Benefit was increased by €10 per month from April 2007 bringing rates to €160 per month in respect of each of the first two children and €195 per month for the third and subsequent children;
- The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, which is paid to the poorest families with children, was increased to €180 for children aged 2 to 11 years and €285 for children from 12 years of age, increases of €60 and €95 respectively;
- Table 1 overleaf shows that, following implementation of the above increases, combined child income support will range from 34% to almost 44% of the lowest personal social welfare rate.

Table A3.1 Child income support as a % of lowest personal social welfare rate, after Budget 2007

Income support (Lowest rates: weekly equivalent)	Age of Child			
	To 2nd birthday	2 to 6 yrs	7 to 11 yrs	12 yrs +
Child Benefit (€)	36.92	36.92	36.92	36.92
Qualified Child Increase (€)	22.00	22.00	22.00	22.00
Lowest personal SW rate (€)	185.80	185.80	185.80	185.80
CB+QCI as % of personal rate (one child family)	31.71%	31.71%	31.71%	31.71%
Early Childcare Supplement (€)	19.23	19.23	0	0
Back to School Clothing ... (€)	0	3.46	3.46	5.48
Total child income support (€)	78.15	81.61	62.38	64.40
Total child income support as % of lowest personal rate	42.06%	43.92%	33.57%	34.66%

8. Progress on NAPinclusion Targets for Children

Target	Progress
The findings of the review of *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* will be published in early 2007.	Publication by end 2007
A Children's Services policy will be completed and published in 2007. Roll-out and implementation of policy by the Health Service Executive (HSE) will commence in 2007.	Publication by end 2007
Standardised inspection procedures and reports will be commenced under the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 in 2007.	Regulations were commenced in September 2007. Work on introduction of standardised procedures underway.
The review of child income supports by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, informed by the NESC study on a second tier child income support, will be completed in 2007.	Work is ongoing. A detailed analysis of recipients of Family Income Supplement is almost complete, while a project on FIS take up levels has commenced.
The prevalence trends of smoking and substance use will be monitored through the National Health and Lifestyle Surveys and the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD). ESPAD results will be available in late 2007 or early 2008.	On target. Data analysis underway.
The Survey of Lifestyles, Attitudes and Nutrition (SLÁN 06) fieldwork will be completed and data analysed in 2007. The first results will be available by end 2007. The results will inform policy development at national level and service planning at national and regional level.	Fieldwork almost completed. Results available early 2008.
The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey (HBSC) results will be available from mid-2007.	Published August 2007.
A National Nutrition Policy to address children's food poverty and obesity will be finalised and launched by mid-2007. A national database will be developed to monitor prevalence trends of growth, overweight and obesity. The Programme of Action for Children has developed a growth module for children and its implementation will be dealt with in the National Nutrition Policy.	Planned completion date late 2007.

In order to meet high level Goal 1, the Early Childhood Education measure under the DEIS Action Plan will be extended to the urban primary school communities with the most immediate and pressing needs by 2010. This measure will continue to be extended to encompass the remaining schools in the urban primary strand of DEIS after 2010.	Analysis of Band 1 Urban DEIS schools with an intake of junior infants has been completed. The analysis showed that in over 90% of Junior Infant classes, some of the children had attended a pre-school service. A further analysis has looked at how schools could be clustered and the different models for implementing the Early Education strand of DEIS. These recommendations are currently being analysed in the Department of Education and Science.
To help further address absenteeism, early school leaving, behavioural problems and special needs, an additional 100 posts will be provided for the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) and the National Educational Psychological Service by 2009.	15 posts have been sanctioned and advertised for the NEWB and 31 posts have been sanctioned for NEPS and the recruitment process is underway.
Support for the effective integration of migrant children at both primary and second-level will be enhanced through the provision of an extra 550 teachers for language supports by 2009 and the reform of the current limit of two additional teachers per school. Some €637 million will be available by 2013 for teachers for language supports to assist children from non-English speaking backgrounds.	200 language support teacher posts have been allocated by the D/Education and Science (175 primary and 25 post-primary) in 2007. Currently, there are 1,450 language support teacher posts in primary and post primary schools. In addition the limit of two additional teachers per school has been lifted.
Provisions to enable the full implementation of the Children Act 2001 will be in place in 2007 with the further development of quality standards with enhanced monitoring and inspection of these standards.	The Children Act 2001 has been commenced in full in 2007. Work on enhancing the quality of inspections of children's residential centres is ongoing within the Social Services Inspectorate which is part of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA).
Young people enrolled in Youthreach centres throughout the country need additional supports to develop skills which will ensure they can reach their full potential socially, personally, educationally and economically. Some €2 million is to be allocated in 2007 to 20 existing Youthreach Centres to address the special educational needs of students aged 15-20 years. Consideration will be given to extending the arrangement to all Youthreach Centres following an evaluation. A further 1,000 Youthreach places will be provided by 2009, on top of the existing 2,700 places provided by Vocational Education Committees.	The additional €2 million has been allocated.

Target	Progress
The Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) will undertake a review of progress on the implementation of the Youth Homelessness Strategy and develop a new programme of action in 2007.	Ongoing.
15 playground projects will be completed in 2007 through funding of some €700,000 under the 2005 Local Authority Playground Grants Scheme. In addition, over €4 million is being allocated to each City and County Council under the 2006 Local Authority Playground Grants scheme to provide up to 90 additional playground projects over the next two years.	11 playgrounds from both the 2005 and 2006 schemes have been completed to date in 2007 with grants of €665,014 paid to local authorities to supplement funding from their own sources. A number of other projects will be completed by the end of the year.
21 projects to develop skateboard facilities will be completed through overall funding of €2 million by the end of 2007.	In addition to the 4 completed in 2006, a further 5 skateboard parks have been completed to date in 2007, through grants totalling €363,419 to local authorities to supplement funding from their own sources. A number of other projects will be completed before year end.
The RAPID Programme will provide €3 million under its Playground Grants Scheme in 2007.	Scheme launched on 20th July 2007.
New standards, guidelines and supports will be put in place for the operation of Comhairle Na nÓg by September 2007.	Allocation of additional supports to Comhairle na nÓg underway – due for completion by end 2007.
The OMC in partnership with the new Irish Youth Justice Service and the Justice sector, the Health Service Executive and the Department of Education and Science and the Education sector will support the accelerated implementation of the Children Act 2001. The legislative provisions will be commenced on 1 March 2007.	Completed.
The Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF) will continue to assist in the development of youth facilities (including sport and recreational facilities) and services in disadvantaged areas where a significant drug problem exists or has the potential to develop. The geographic coverage of the Fund may be expanded to other disadvantaged urban areas. The YPFSF will continue to target 10 to 21 year olds who are 'at risk'. It will continue to build on and complement youth measures under the Children's Programme in the areas where it is operational.	The allocation of additional capital funding is currently being finalised and an announcement is expected shortly.

9. Further information is available at the following websites:

Office for Social Inclusion

www.socialinclusion.ie

Department of the Taoiseach

(Towards 2016 and New Programme for Government)

www.taoiseach.gov.ie

National Development Plan

www.ndp.ie

People of Working Age and People with Disabilities

This Note was prepared by the Office for Social Inclusion to provide background information on key social inclusion developments since the last Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) was held in February 2006 and should help to inform the workshop discussion. It includes information on:

- 1. Social inclusion strategies which have been put in place since June 2006;
- 2. The overall vision for people of working age and for people with disabilities as set out in *Towards 2016*, the social partnership agreement reached in June 2006;
- 3. National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007-2016;
- 4. High Level Goals in the NAPinclusion relating to people of working age and people with disabilities;
- 5. Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007;
- 6. Key developments relating to people of working age and people with disabilities (reported in the Annual Social Inclusion Report);
- 7. Progress on High Level Goals (reported in annual Social Inclusion Report);
- 8. Progress on NAPinclusion targets for people of working age and people with disabilities (reported in the Annual Social Inclusion Report);
- 9. Details of relevant websites where further information is available in relation to the above.

1. New Strategies for Social Inclusion

Since the last Forum took place in February 2006, the Government has launched a number of major strategies for social inclusion. These include:

— In June 2006, the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016* was concluded, setting out a coherent strategy for social inclusion based on the NESC (Developmental Welfare State) lifecycle approach.

— The **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016**, launched in February 2007, complemented by the social inclusion elements of the **National Development Plan 2007-2013**, launched in January 2007, sets out how the Government's social inclusion strategy will be achieved over the next ten years.

— In line with a commitment in *Towards 2016*, the Office for Social Inclusion has prepared the first **Annual Social Inclusion Report** covering the period June 2006 to June 2007, reviewing the progress achieved to date in relation to high level social inclusion goals and targets/actions for each stage of the lifecycle. **This report will be launched on the day of the SIF by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Martin Cullen, TD.**

2. *Towards 2016*

2.1 Vision for People of Working Age

The vision as set out in *Towards 2016* for people of working age is of an Ireland where all people of working age have sufficient income and opportunity to participate as fully as possible in economic and social life and where all individuals and their families are supported by a range of quality public services to enhance their quality of life and well-being.

To achieve this vision, the Government and social partners have pledged to work together over the next ten years towards the following long-term goals for people of working age:

— Every person of working age should be encouraged and supported to participate fully in social, civic and economic life;

— Every person of working age would have access to lifelong learning, a sense of personal security in a changing work environment and an opportunity to balance work and family commitments consistent with business needs;

— Every person of working age would have an income level to sustain an acceptable standard of living and to enable them to provide for an adequate income in retirement;

— Every person of working age on welfare will have access to supports towards progression and inclusion, access to quality work and learning opportunities, encouraging a greater degree of self-reliance and self-sufficiency;

— Every person, irrespective of background or gender, would enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination;

— Every family would have access to health and social care, affordable accommodation appropriate to their needs and a well functioning public transport system; and

— Every person with caring responsibilities would have access to appropriate supports to enable them to meet these responsibilities alongside employment and other commitments.

2.2 People with Disabilities

The vision as set out in *Towards 2016* for people with disabilities is of an Ireland where people with disabilities have, to the greatest extent possible, the opportunity to live a full life with their families and as part of their local community, free from discrimination.

To achieve this vision, the Government and the social partners have committed to work together over the next ten years towards the following long-term goals with a view to continued improvements in the quality of life of people with disabilities:

— Every person with a disability would have access to an income which is sufficient to sustain an acceptable standard of living;

— Every person with a disability would, in conformity with their needs and abilities, have access to appropriate care, health, education, employment and training and social services;

— Every person with a disability would have access to public spaces, buildings, transport, information, advocacy and other public services and appropriate housing;

— Every person with a disability would be supported to enable them, as far as possible, to lead full and independent lives, to participate in work and in society and to maximise their potential; and

— Carers would be acknowledged and supported in their caring role.

3. National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007-2016

The new NAPinclusion which was published in February 2007 sets out a wide-ranging and comprehensive programme of action to address poverty and social exclusion. The Plan is intended to set out a coherent and comprehensive approach for the next ten years using a lifecycle approach, as set out by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in its report, *The Developmental Welfare State*, and adopted by the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016*. The lifecycle approach places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery by assessing the risks facing him or her and the supports available at key stages of the lifecycle.

These key lifecycle groups are: Children, People of Working Age, Older People and People with Disabilities. The adoption of the lifecycle approach offers a comprehensive framework for implementing a streamlined, cross-cutting and visible approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion.

To ensure that a decisive impact on poverty is made, the Government believes that significant interventions are required to prioritise a small number of high level goals. These targeted actions and interventions are designed to mobilise resources to address long-standing and serious social deficits with the ultimate aim of achieving the objective of reducing consistent poverty.

The overall goal of the NAPinclusion is:

To reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016, under the revised definition.

Within each section of the lifecycle, a number of high level goals are being prioritised to achieve this overall goal. These are detailed below for people of working age and people with disabilities.

4. High Level Goals in the NAPinclusion

4.1 People of Working Age

Given the key role that employment plays in combating poverty and social exclusion, the main high level goals for this life stage aim to facilitate those who are furthest from the labour market by providing them with the supports necessary to take up employment. For those outside the labour force, it is important that income supports are provided to sustain an acceptable standard of living. These two aspects are covered as follows:

Goal 5: Employment and Participation

Introduce an active case management approach that will support those on long-term social welfare into education, training and employment. The target is to support 50,000 such people, including lone parents and the long-term unemployed, with an overall aim of reducing by 20% the number of those whose total income is derived from long-term social welfare payments by 2016. This target will be reviewed in the light of experience.

Goal 6: Income Support

Maintain the relative value of the lowest social welfare rate at least at €185.80, in 2007 terms, over the course of this Plan, subject to available resources.

4.2 People with Disabilities

Many people with disabilities would like to take up employment if given the opportunity. Therefore, the high level goal for this life stage focuses on how employment and participation can help people with disabilities to lead full and rewarding lives.

Goal 9: Employment and Participation

Increase the employment of people with disabilities who do not have a difficulty in retaining a job. The immediate objective is to have an additional 7,000 of that cohort in employment by 2010. The longer term target is to raise the employment rate of people with disabilities from 37% to 45% by 2016, as measured by the Quarterly National Household Survey. The overall participation rate in education, training and employment will be increased to 50% by 2016. These targets will be reviewed in the light of experience and the availability of better data.

4.3 Targets and actions

These high level goals are accompanied by over 150 more detailed targets and actions across all stages of the lifecycle. The Plan contains twenty-eight further targets and actions relating to people of working age, covering issues such as literacy, second chance education and equality. The Plan also contains eight targets relating specifically to people with disabilities covering housing, income support, education and access to buildings, infrastructure and public transport. In addition, a number of cross-cutting targets in the Communities chapter of the NAPinclusion will impact on both people of working age and people with disabilities.

A copy of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion is available from the Office for Social Inclusion at (01) 7043851 or on our website at www.socialinclusion.ie

5. Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007

As part of a more streamlined and efficient monitoring and reporting process agreed in the social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*, the Office for Social Inclusion has been given an expanded role to coordinate and prepare an annual Social Inclusion Report.

The annual report will: review each stage of the lifecycle; provide a detailed assessment of progress towards set targets; identify new issues arising or issues that might benefit from a more co-ordinated, joined-up approach; and report on stakeholders' views emerging from various fora. The report will also cover the social inclusion elements of *Towards 2016* and the NDP, ensuring that the reporting processes for all three strategies are streamlined.

The first annual report covers the period from June 2006 to June 2007. However, significant developments between June 2007 and the date of going to print have been reflected where possible.

Following its launch at the 2007 Social Inclusion Forum, the annual report will be submitted to the National Partnership Steering Group. Social partners have been consulted in the development of this report.

6. Key developments (reported in the Annual Social Inclusion Report)

6.1 People of Working Age

6.1.1 National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP)

The NDP commits to investment of some €5.7 billion in the people of working age programmes over the period 2007-2013 which will be directed towards education, training and justice programmes for this group. In addition to this investment under the Social Inclusion Priority of the NDP, some €7.7 billion has been allocated under the Human Capital Priority for training and supports to groups outside the labour market, and training and upskilling for people in employment.

6.1.2 Programme for Government

The Programme for Government 2007 contains commitments which will benefit people of working age including PRSI reform, upskilling of low-skilled workers, adult education, improved opportunities in further and higher education with a special focus on disadvantaged areas, a range of reforms for lone parents and improvements in GP and Medical Card eligibility.

6.1.3 National Women's Strategy 2007-2016

The National Women's Strategy was launched by An Taoiseach in April, 2007. This "all of Government" Strategy aims to achieve "an Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential, while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life".

In fostering the achievement of this vision, the Strategy aims to be comprehensive and contains twenty key objectives and over two hundred planned actions. These objectives and actions have been clustered together under the following three key themes:

— Equalising socio-economic opportunity for women;

— Ensuring the wellbeing of women; and

— Engaging women as equal and active citizens.

The NDP details a package of €128 million to implement the National Women's Strategy and to fund a second programme of positive actions under the Equality for Women Measure. Some of the funding under the Equality for Women Measure will focus on women from disadvantaged backgrounds and communities.

6.2 People with Disabilities

6.2.1 National Disability Strategy

The Government launched the National Disability Strategy in September 2004 to underpin the participation of people with disabilities in Irish society. The implementation of that Strategy provides the framework for policy initiatives under *Towards 2016*, the NDP and the NAPinclusion, for this group.

The Strategy includes the Disability Act 2005, six Sectoral plans, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, the Citizens Information Act 2007 and a multi-annual investment programme, in excess of €900 million, running until 2009.

Progress in the implementation of the Strategy includes:

— The commencement of all parts of the Disability Act 2005;

— The Citizens Information Act 2007, which enables the Citizens Information Board to provide a personal advocacy service for people with disabilities;

— The publication by six Government departments[4] in December 2006 of sectoral plans for the delivery of services to people with disabilities;

— A 'Code of Practice on Accessibility of Public Services and Information provided by Public Bodies', developed by the National Disability Authority (NDA) and published in July 2006;

— The Disability Act 2005 provision for a statutory target for the recruitment and employment of people with disabilities in the public sector; and

— A Centre of Excellence in Universal Design being established in the National Disability Authority.

4 Health and Children; Social and Family Affairs; Environment, Heritage and Local Government; Transport and Marine; Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; and Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

6.2.2 National Development Plan

The NDP commits to investment of some €19.2 billion in the People with Disabilities programme over the period 2007-2013. The focus of this investment will be on services in health, education and resolving accessibility issues for people with disabilities.

6.2.3 Minister for State for Disability Issues and Mental Health

The Government appointed a Minister of State with specific responsibility for disability issues and mental health. Based in the Department of Health and Children, the new Minister of State will also focus on issues relating to people with disabilities under the remit of the Departments of Education and Science; Enterprise, Trade and Employment; and Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

6.2.4 Programme for Government

The Programme for Government 2007 commits to continue the prioritisation of the interests of people with disabilities, ensuring that the National Disability Strategy (NDS) is driven from a whole-of-Government perspective. Each year, the Government will set out the objectives and outcomes to be reached in the NDS having regard to the vision and long term goals in *Towards 2016*. This approach will be properly monitored and at least half of the NDS will be implemented by 2010.

6.3 Progress against High Level Goals and Targets

Part II of the Annual Social Inclusion Report sets out progress achieved in relation to some of the NAPinclusion targets. Sections 7 and 8 of this briefing note contain extracts from the report detailing progress on the High Level Goals and targets for both the people of working age and people with disabilities lifecycle stages.

7. Progress on High Level Goals (reported in Annual Social Inclusion Report)

7.1 People of Working Age

Goal 5: Employment and Participation

This goal is being pursued on a cross-departmental basis and progress has been reported as follows:

— The Department of Social and Family Affairs is completing a customer profiling project with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). The objective of the project is to identify characteristics other than duration of unemployment in order to target additional supports for people at risk of becoming long-term unemployed;

— A review of work disincentives within social welfare means test provisions has been initiated with the social partners. The review will include recommendations for actions to address any barriers identified and to achieve more effective welfare-to-work transitions;

— A new social assistance payment for lone parents and parents on low income, informed by the *Government Discussion Paper Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents*, is currently being developed by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Work on the development of a cross-Departmental implementation plan to progress the non-income recommendations is also continuing;

— A programme of investment under the NDP will be introduced to promote participation through activation measures aimed at people of working age. A group will be set up in September 2007 to facilitate consultation with the social partners on how this will be implemented;

— FÁS has undertaken an initiative involving proactive engagement with lone parents. The target was women on the FÁS Register, in receipt of One Parent Family Payment, who are not on a FÁS training or employment programme and who are residing in Dublin and Cork City. The overall participation rate was approximately 10% in all locations. A follow-up survey to find out why individuals chose not to respond or participate in the initiative commenced in May 2007. This evaluation will be completed in September 2007; and

— A Group, comprising representatives from the Departments of the Taoiseach; Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Social and Family Affairs; and FÁS has been established to progress the extension of the existing activation process for Employment Action Plan (EAP) clients to other groups, in particular, lone parents and people with disabilities.

Goal 6: Income Support

The Department of Social and Family Affairs reported that:

— The lowest rate of welfare payments was increased by €20 per week (12.1%) in Budget 2007 to €185.80 per week.

— As a result of improvements announced in Budget 2007, new arrangements were put in place from September 2007 whereby people in receipt of a social welfare payment, other than carer's allowance or benefit, who are also providing someone with full time care and attention, will be able to retain their main welfare payment and receive another payment. Depending on their means, the maximum amount payable will be equivalent to a half rate carer's allowance.

7.2 People with Disabilities

Goal 9: Employment and Participation

This goal is being pursued on a cross departmental basis and progress has been reported as follows:

— An annual national target is set in all FÁS regions in the first quarter of the year for a number of target groups, including people with disabilities, Travellers, and other groups. For 2007 FÁS have a target of a minimum increase of 1% over the 2006 levels for all such defined target

groups availing of its services. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment has established a Consultative Forum on an employment strategy which includes representatives from government departments, social partners, and the National Disability Strategy Stakeholder Monitoring Group. It provides a channel for members to consider strategic issues that impact on the lives of people with disabilities, with regard to the delivery of vocational training and employment services. The Forum will consider issues around job retention, job supports and job preparation;

— Research will be commissioned by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on behalf of the Forum into issues relating to job retention in respect of employees who acquire a disability in the workplace;

— The Department of Social and Family Affairs is finalising proposals for a project, based on individual case management, for people on disability welfare payments and designed to increase their rate of employment;

— A High Level Group, comprising representatives from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Department of Social and Family Affairs; the Department of the Taoiseach and FÁS, has been set up to progress the activation of certain client groups, in particular, lone parents and people with disabilities.

8. Progress on NAPinclusion targets

8.1 People of Working Age

Target	Progress
The Rural Social Scheme (RSS) allows low-income farmers and fishermen to earn a supplementary income while, at the same time, benefits rural communities by maintaining and improving local amenities and facilities. Expenditure of some €214 million will be provided between 2007 and 2013 to benefit some 2,600 households. It is an aim of the scheme that over the medium-term all participants will be facilitated with their preferences with regard to both location and type of work.	There are currently 2,600 households participating in the scheme, with 130 supervisors, which is consistent with the commitment in the Agreed Programme for Government to expand the scheme.
To achieve and surpass the Lisbon targets: to increase the overall employment rate to 70% by 2010; to continue to increase the female employment rate above 60%; and to continue to increase the employment rate of older workers (age 55-64) above 50%.	Current employment rate: Overall: 68.9% Female: 60.3% Older Workers: 54.0% (age 55-64) Source: CSO, QNHS, 2nd Quarter 2007
The extension of the *Employment Action Plan* process to those who are three months unemployed (previous threshold was six months) and those who are aged 55-64 will enable the provision of increased and earlier engagement.	Referral under the Employment Action Plan process at 3 months commenced from mid-October 2006. This is in line with a commitment in *Towards 2016*. In addition the EAP was extended in July 2006 to those aged 55 and under 64 years.
The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) will invest some €2.8 billion between 2007-2013 to improve training for people in employment, to help upskill those who may be affected by industrial restructuring, to improve and enlarge the apprenticeship system and to provide progression opportunities for school leavers.	DETE has increased the resources spent in upskilling those in employment from €55m in 2006 to €70m in 2007. There has also been an additional €15 million provided for training apprentices. It is expected that approximately 50,000 people will benefit from publicly-funded training this year.
The Workplace Basic Education Fund will register 2,000 learners during the period 2007-2010.	As of the end of 2006 almost 1,500 participants were registered with the Workplace Basic Education Fund since its inception in 2005. Based on these figures over the two year period and on the fact that the budget for the fund increased by 50% in 2007, the fund is on track to achieve this target.
A family literacy project is also being put in place under the DEIS action plan.	In its initial phase, the project will be piloted and 7 providers have been identified.

8.2 People with Disabilities

Target	Progress
Progress reports will be prepared on the implementation of the Disability Sectoral Plans after 3 years (2009 and after 1 year in the case of the Department of Health and Children only) and the Disability Act will be reviewed after 5 years (2010).	Departments are reporting at 6 monthly intervals on progress, both at Departmental level and at national level, to the Senior Officials Group on Disability and the National Stakeholders Group as well as at Departmental level with national stakeholder committees.
By the end of July 2007, each local authority will have carried out an accessibility audit and developed an accessibility implementation plan for the built environment and infrastructure within its control including all roads, streets, pavements, parks, amenities and open spaces.	An access audit and implementation planning process has been rolled out in local authorities. The implementation planning process is currently ongoing. A local authority Good Practice in accessibility website was developed and launched in March 2007. The site showcases good practice, provides practical answers to common queries, hosts a discussion forum and provides links to relevant publications, including guidance, legislation, etc. The site's address is www.la-accessibility.ie At the request of the local government sector a template implementation plan was developed and circulated to local authorities in May 2007.

9. Further information is available at the following websites:

Office for Social Inclusion
www.socialinclusion.ie

Department of the Taoiseach
(Towards 2016 and New Programme for Government)
www.taoiseach.gov.ie

National Development Plan
www.ndp.ie

Older People – Community Care

This Note was prepared by the Office for Social Inclusion to provide background information on key social inclusion developments since the last Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) was held in February 2006 and should help to inform workshop discussion. It includes information on:

- 1. Social inclusion strategies which have been put in place since June 2006;
- 2. The vision for older people as set out in *Towards 2016*, the social partnership agreement reached in June 2006;
- 3. National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007-2016;
- 4. High Level Goals in the NAPinclusion relating to older people;
- 5. Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007;
- 6. Key developments relating to older people (reported in the Annual Social Inclusion Report);
- 7. Progress on High Level Goals (reported in annual Social Inclusion Report);
- 8. Progress on NAPinclusion targets for older people (reported in the Annual Social Inclusion Report);
- 9. Details of relevant websites where further information is available in relation to the above.

1. New Strategies for Social Inclusion

Since the last Forum took place in February 2006, the Government has launched a number of major strategies for social inclusion. These include:

— In June 2006, the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016* was concluded setting out a coherent strategy for social inclusion based on the NESC (Developmental Welfare State) lifecycle approach.

— The **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016**, launched in February 2007, complemented by the social inclusion elements of the **National Development Plan 2007-2013**, launched in January 2007, sets out how the Government's social inclusion strategy will be achieved over the next ten years.

— In line with a commitment in *Towards 2016*, the Office for Social Inclusion has prepared the first **Annual Social Inclusion Report** covering the period June 2006 to June 2007, reviewing the progress achieved to date in relation to high level social inclusion goals and targets/actions for each stage of the lifecycle. **This report will be launched on the day of the SIF by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Martin Cullen, TD.**

2. *Towards 2016*

The vision as set out in *Towards 2016* for older people is that supports are provided, where necessary, to enable older people to maintain their health and well-being, as well as to live active and full lives, in an independent way in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

To achieve this vision, the Government and social partners in *Towards 2016* undertook to work together over the next ten years towards the following long-term goals for older people in Ireland in the context of increased longevity and greater possibilities and expectations in quality of life of older people:

- Every older person would be encouraged and supported to participate to the greatest extent possible in social and civic life;
- Every older person would have access to an income which is sufficient to sustain an acceptable standard of living;
- Every older person would have adequate support to enable them to remain living independently in their own homes for as long as possible. This will involve access to good quality services in the community, including: health, education, transport, housing and security; and
- Every older person would, in conformity with their needs and conscious of the high level of disability and disabling conditions amongst this group, have access to a spectrum of care services stretching from support for self-care through support for family and informal carers to formal care in the home, the community or in residential settings. Such care services should ensure the person has opportunities for civic and social engagement at community level.

3. National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007-2016

The new NAPinclusion which was published in February 2007 sets out a wide-ranging and comprehensive programme of action to address poverty and social exclusion. The Plan is intended to set out a coherent and comprehensive approach for the next ten years using a lifecycle approach, as set out by National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in its report, **The Developmental Welfare State**, and adopted by the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016*. The lifecycle approach places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery by assessing the risks facing him or her and the supports available at key stages of the lifecycle.

These key lifecycle groups are: Children, People of Working Age, Older People and People with Disabilities. The adoption of the lifecycle approach offers a comprehensive framework for implementing a streamlined, cross-cutting and visible approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion.

To ensure that a decisive impact on poverty is made, the Government believes that significant interventions are required to prioritise a small number of high level goals. These targeted actions and interventions are designed to mobilise resources to address long-standing and serious social deficits with the ultimate aim of achieving the objective of reducing consistent poverty.

The overall goal of this Plan is:

To reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016, under the revised definition.

Within each section of the lifecycle, a number of high level goals are being prioritised to achieve this overall goal. These are detailed below.

4. High Level Goals in the NAPinclusion Relating to Older People

Community care services are essential to enable older people to maintain their health and wellbeing, in order to live active, full independent lives, at home for as long as possible. Income also has a key role to play in alleviating poverty in old age. Therefore, two of the twelve high level goals in the NAPinclusion relate to this life stage aimed at making a decisive impact on the lives of older people. These are:

Goal 7: Community Care

Continue to increase investment in community care services for older people, including home care packages and enhanced day care services, to support them to live independently in the community for as long as possible; and

Goal 8: Income Support

Maintain a minimum payment rate of €200 per week, in 2007 terms, for all social welfare pensions over the course of this Plan and, if possible, having regard to available resources and the Government's commitment in *Towards 2016*, to enhance this provision. The overall pension structures and system to provide income supports for pensioners will be reviewed in the light of the forthcoming Green Paper on Pensions[3], to be finalised at end March 2007. This will review all the pillars of pension provision.

These high level goals are accompanied by over 150 more detailed targets and actions across all stages of the lifecycle. 18 of those targets and actions relate to services for older people including income supports, long-term care, housing and accommodation, education and employment, transport and participation and activation. In addition, a number of cross-cutting targets in the Communities chapter of the NAPinclusion will impact on older people.

A copy of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion is available from the Office for Social Inclusion at (01) 7043851 or on our website at www.socialinclusion.ie

3 The Green Paper on Pensions was launched on 17 October 2007

5. Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007

As part of a more streamlined and efficient monitoring and reporting process agreed in the social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*, the Office for Social Inclusion has been given an expanded role to coordinate and prepare an annual Social Inclusion Report.

The annual report will: review each stage of the lifecycle; provide a detailed assessment of progress towards set targets; identify new issues arising or issues that might benefit from a more co-ordinated, joined-up approach; and report on stakeholders' views emerging from various fora. The report will also cover the social inclusion elements of *Towards 2016* and the NDP, ensuring that the reporting processes for all three strategies are streamlined.

The first annual report covers the period from June 2006 to June 2007. However, significant developments between June 2007 and the date of going to print have been reflected where possible.

Following its launch at the 2007 Social Inclusion Forum, the annual report will be submitted to the National Partnership Steering Group. Social partners have been consulted in the development of this report.

6. Key Developments relating to Older People (reported in the Annual Social Inclusion Report)

6.1 National Development Plan 2007-2013

The NDP commits to investment of some €9.7 billion in the older people programme over the period 2007-2013. The focus of this investment will be on services which enable older people to live independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. Funding will also be directed to residential care services.

6.2 Minister of State for Older People

The Government has appointed a Minister of State with specific responsibility for older people. Based in the Department of Health and Children, the new Minister of State, Ms. Maire Hoctor, will also focus on issues relating to older people under the remit of the Departments of Social and Family Affairs and Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

6.3 Programme for Government 2007-2012

The Agreed Programme for Government, *A Blueprint for Ireland's Future*, envisages social welfare pensions increasing to €300 per week by 2012.

6.4 Progress Against High Level Goals and Targets for Older People

Part II of the Annual Social Inclusion Report sets out progress achieved in relation to some of the NAPinclusion targets. Sections 7 and 8 of this briefing note contain extracts from the report detailing progress on the High Level Goals and targets for older people lifecycle stage.

7. Progress on High Level Goals (reported in the Annual Social Inclusion Report)

Goal 7: Community Care

The Department of Health and Children has reported that:

- Some 2,000 additional Home Care Packages are being provided in 2007, benefiting some 4,000 people at a cost of €30 million in 2007 and €25 million in 2008;
- Some 780,000 additional home help hours are being provided in 2007 at a cost of €18 million;
- A steering committee has been established to design and oversee an independent evaluation of Home Care Packages and to examine all issues relating to the funding and delivery of this service.
- An additional 1,100 day places in 2007 will be provided, at a cost of €3.5 million.

Goal 8: Income Support

The Department of Social and Family Affairs has reported that:

- From January 2007, the State Pension (Non-Contributory) personal rate of payment increased by €18 per week (9.9%), bringing the weekly rate to €200 and, thereby, achieving the Government commitment;
- The State Pension (Contributory) personal rate of payment increased by €16 per week (8.3%), bringing the weekly rate to €209.30;
- The Green Paper on Pensions was published on 17 October 2007. An extensive consultation process will now commence. The Government is committed to initiating and responding to the consultation by developing a framework that comprehensively addresses the pensions agenda over the longer-term.

8. Progress on NAPinclusion targets for Older People

Target	Progress
In relation to long-term residential care, €88 million has been provided for the cost of 2,300 additional public and private long-stay beds. This comprises €28 million for the full-year implementation of 1,050 beds provided in 2006; €32 million and €22 million in 2007 and 2008 respectively for the provision of an extra 1,250 beds; and €6 million to strengthen nursing home inspections.	On target.
The Health Act 2006 provides for the establishment of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) and the Office of the Chief Inspector of Social Services within HIQA. The Chief Inspector will have statutory responsibility for inspecting and registering children's residential services, residential centres for people with disabilities, residential centres for older people and private nursing homes. The Chief Inspector will inspect these services against standards set by HIQA and regulations made by the Minister for Health and Children.	Completed.
A total of €2 million has been allocated to the National Implementation Group on Elder Abuse to address the issue of elder abuse over 2006 and 2007. This is also being incorporated into professional training courses including gerontology courses. A review of *Protecting Our Future* will be carried out in 2007. It is expected that the review will consider issues not included in the original report on elder abuse including self-neglect and institutional abuse.	On target.
Future Housing Action Plans will address special needs in a more strategic manner when the current plans come to an end in 2008.	Revised guidelines for the next round of Actions Plans are being prepared and are due to issue to local authorities in 2008.
From 2007 any amount of social welfare pension received by those over 65 years, in excess of the SWA rate, will be disregarded when determining entitlement to rent supplement.	This change came into effect in January 2007.
The earnings disregard for non-contributory social welfare pensions, introduced in 2006 to encourage recipients to take up or continue in employment, will be increased to €200 in 2007.	This change came into effect in January 2007.

The Disabled Persons, Essential Repairs, and Special Housing Aid for the Elderly grant schemes have been reviewed. Proposals to improve equity and targeting were announced in the Government's new Housing policy statement - *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities.*	Revised framework of grant aid to be implemented on 01 November 2007.
Adequate central heating systems will be made available in all local authority rented dwellings provided for older people by the end of 2008.	Local Authorities have been instructed to prioritise the upgrading of central heating in rented accommodation provided for older people.
The continued participation of older people in the labour market will be encouraged and facilitated to meet the challenge of an ageing society. Training and advisory services, including those provided by FÁS, will assist older people who wish to return to or remain in the workplace. These services are being provided within FÁS' overall services, particularly through the preventative process and through training and upskilling.	Referral under the Employment Action Plan was extended in July 2006 to those aged 55 and under 64 years.
4 pilot Community Intervention Team (CIT) projects were in place by the end of 2006. Based on progress, they will be rolled out in 2007 to other areas.	Target capacity for the 4 CIT projects is 3,900 or 75 cases per week and expenditure on CITs in the period up to 31st July 2007 is €1.5m

9. Further information is available at the following websites:

Office for Social Inclusion

www.socialinclusion.ie

Department of the Taoiseach

(Towards 2016 and New Programme for Government)

www.taoiseach.gov.ie

National Development Plan

www.ndp.ie

Communities – Integration of Migrants

This Note was prepared by the Office for Social Inclusion to provide background information on key social inclusion developments since the last Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) was held in February 2006 and should help to inform workshop discussion. It includes information on:

- 1. Social inclusion strategies which have been put in place since June 2006;
- 2. National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007-2016;
- 3. High Level Goal in the NAPinclusion relating to the integration of migrants;
- 4. Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007;
- 5. Key developments relating to migrants including progress on high level goal (reported in annual Social Inclusion Report);
- 6. Further initiatives planned for 2007/08;
- 7. Details of relevant websites where further information is available in relation to the above.

1. New Strategies for Social Inclusion

Since the last Forum took place in February 2006, the Government has launched a number of major strategies for social inclusion. These include:

— In June 2006, the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016* was concluded setting out a coherent strategy for social inclusion based on the NESC (Developmental Welfare State) lifecycle approach.

— The **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016**, launched in February 2007, complemented by the social inclusion elements of the **National Development Plan 2007-2013**, launched in January 2007, sets out how the Government's social inclusion strategy will be achieved over the next ten years.

— In line with a commitment in *Towards 2016*, the Office for Social Inclusion has prepared the first **Annual Social Inclusion Report** covering the period June 2006 to June 2007, reviewing the progress achieved to date in relation to high level social inclusion goals and targets/actions for each stage of the lifecycle. **This report will be launched on the day of the SIF by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Martin Cullen, TD.**

2. National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 (NAPinclusion)

The NAPinclusion, which was published in February 2007, sets out a wide-ranging and comprehensive programme of action to address poverty and social exclusion. The Plan is intended to set out a coherent and comprehensive approach for the next ten years using a lifecycle approach, as set out by National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in its report, The Developmental Welfare State, and adopted by the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016*. The lifecycle approach places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery by assessing the risks facing him or her and the supports available at key stages of the lifecycle.

These key lifecycle groups are: Children, People of Working Age, Older People and People with Disabilities. The adoption of the lifecycle approach offers a comprehensive framework for implementing a streamlined, cross-cutting and visible approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion. In addition, the NAPinclusion contains a chapter on communities with the objective of building viable and sustainable communities, improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital. In recognition of the fact that integration is one of the most important challenges being faced by Irish society over the coming years, this chapter contains a high level goal and targets relating to the integration of migrants.

To ensure that a decisive impact on poverty is made, the Government believes that significant interventions are required to prioritise a small number of high level goals. These targeted actions and interventions are designed to mobilise resources to address long-standing and serious social deficits with the ultimate aim of achieving the objective of reducing consistent poverty.

The overall goal of this Plan is:
To reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016, under the revised definition.

Within each section of the lifecycle, a number of high level goals are being prioritised to achieve this overall goal.

3. High Level Goal in the NAPinclusion relating to migrants

Building and supporting sustainable communities is of crucial importance, particularly those that are subject to disadvantage. Many of the policy responses required in this area have benefits for people across the life cycle, and some are crosscutting, involving the co-ordination of policies in a number of areas. The high level goal on the integration of migrants is to:

Goal 12: Integration of Migrants

Develop a strategy aimed at achieving the integration of newcomers in our society. As an initial action, resources for the provision of 550 teachers for language

supports in the education sector will be provided by 2009 and access to other public services through translation of information and supports will be improved.

The 12 high level goals in the NAPinclusion are accompanied by over 150 more detailed targets and actions across all stages of the lifecycle.

A copy of the NAPinclusion is available from the Office for Social Inclusion at (01) 7043851 or on our website at www.socialinclusion.ie

4. Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007

As part of a more streamlined and efficient monitoring and reporting process agreed in the social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*, the Office for Social Inclusion has been given an expanded role to coordinate and prepare an annual Social Inclusion Report.

The annual report will: review each stage of the lifecycle; provide a detailed assessment of progress towards set targets; identify new issues arising or issues that might benefit from a more co-ordinated, joined-up approach; and report on stakeholders' views emerging from various fora. The report will also cover the social inclusion elements of *Towards 2016* and the NDP, ensuring that the reporting processes for all three strategies are streamlined.

The first annual report covers the period from June 2006 to June 2007. However, significant developments between June 2007 and the date of going to print have been reflected where possible.

Following its launch at the 2007 Social Inclusion Forum, the annual report will be submitted to the National Partnership Steering Group. The Social Partners have been consulted during the development of this report.

5. Key developments relating to migrants (reported in the Annual Social Inclusion Report)

5.1 Minister of State for Integration

The Government have established the Office of the Minister for Integration overseen by a Minister of State with responsibility for the development of Integration policy, under the remit of the Departments of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Education and Science.

5.2 The Department of Education and Science has reported that:

— 200 language support teacher posts have been allocated (175 primary and 25 post-primary) in 2007. Currently, there are 1,450 language support teacher posts in primary and post primary schools. In addition the limit of two additional teachers per school has been lifted;

— The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has distributed intercultural guidelines to support teachers and schools in developing a more inclusive learning environment and in providing students with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in a multicultural world;

— A resource book for English Language Support Teachers has been distributed to all primary schools. This will serve as the basis for induction seminars for newly appointed Language Support Teachers;

— An independent review has been commissioned to assist in the development of a national English language training policy and framework for legally-resident adult immigrants. The review will include extensive stakeholder consultation;

— Emerging education issues facing newcomers will be identified by the Department of Education and Science's Steering Committee;

— Information on the Irish education system will be provided on the Department of Education and Science's website in 6 languages.

— 2007 saw the development of a practical toolkit for schools North and South to facilitate capacity-building on a whole-school basis in relation to learning and teaching, the role of parents and community, assessment and monitoring of students' progress and promoting the concept of inclusiveness through planning and policy development;

— During 2007, an information pack was developed for non-Irish national parents, on a North/South basis;

— Proposals were developed, during 2007, to address deficits in relation to initial teacher education and continuous professional development of teachers who deal with newcomer children and adults;

— Migrants were prioritised in a call to VECs for submissions on the provision of 3,000 adult literacy places in 2007.

5.3 The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform has reported that:

— An 'Immigrant Integration Fund' of €5 million was developed. It has provided funding for integration-related projects carried out at a regional level by NGOs and at a local level by area-based partnership companies involved in the social inclusion area;

— Targeted initiatives have been developed for vulnerable groups to promote their access to employment, with a particular focus on persons granted leave to remain under the 2005 Irish Born Child Scheme. A scheme of small grants was developed during 2006/2007 to promote interaction between newcomers and local communities;

— A cross-departmental group, chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach, has been established by Government to carry out a review of existing integration policy and to provide an initial assessment of future policy options. That review is now completed and a policy framework document has been developed which will inform developing integration policy;

— With the support of the National Action Plan against Racism the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) has launched an intercultural strategy for soccer to encourage increased participation in football among people from minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds;

— A strategic review of funding mechanisms for ethnic led organisations has been carried out which will seek to ensure fair and equal access to mainstream funding resources by these communities and groups representing them; and

— A strategic review on a future framework for interpretation and translation is in progress and is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

5.4 Department of Social and Family Affairs – Interpretation Services

— A seminar was held in February 2007 to survey demand for interpretation services and this will inform development of these services. A three-way phone system, providing interpretation for customers, is currently being tested in local offices of the Department.

5.5 Health

— A minority identifier, to facilitate more evidence-based planning through identification of needs, measurement of uptake of services, and evaluation of outcomes, has been developed and is currently being rolled out;

— A national intercultural strategy designed to address the unique health and support needs of minority groups, for example, refugees, migrants and Travellers is being finalised.

6. Further initiatives planned for 2007/08

Further initiatives planned for 2007/08 will include:

— A strategic review of the National Strategy on Information Provision will be initiated to complement existing initiatives.

— The funding of integration projects at regional and local level will be extended and developed;

— A taskforce on integration will be established.

7. Further information is available at the following websites:

Office for Social Inclusion

www.socialinclusion.ie

Department of the Taoiseach

(Towards 2016 and New Programme for Government)

www.taoiseach.gov.ie

National Development Plan

www.ndp.ie

Annex IV Thematic Papers from the EAPN

Integration of New Communities
EAPN Ireland paper for Social Inclusion Forum
15th November 2007

Introduction

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland is currently implementing a year long European Commission funded project *Focus on Poverty*. The aim of the project is to raise awareness of poverty with all members of society through various activities. More information on these and the various papers produced by the project can be found on www.eapn.ie/poverty. The issues of access to employment, access to childcare and the integration of migrants were highlighted as some of the key issues impacting on poverty. These were discussed at regional workshops with anti-poverty groups in Dublin, Cork, Westmeath and Sligo, with focus groups of people affected by these issues in Wexford, Limerick, Louth, Kerry, Roscommon and Mayo, and were also the subject of a set of policy papers developed for EAPN Ireland. This paper pulls together some of the key issues and recommendations arising from the discussion and the policy paper on the integration of migrants.

What is Integration?

The National Action Plan against Racism states that integration is:

> — [A] two-way process that places duties and obligations on both cultural and ethnic minorities and the State to create a more inclusive society. In the context of this Plan, integration means a range of targeted strategies for the inclusion of groups such as Travellers, refugees and migrants as part of the overall aim of developing a more inclusive and inter-cultural society. (NPAR 2005).

Integration is thus strongly associated with the values of inclusion, equality, interculturalism, anti-racism and cohesion. In practice, integration is recognised as covering policy areas that range from employment, education and training to healthcare, housing and accommodation, as well as naturalisation and citizenship. Ensuring that there is coherence and co-ordination of policy responses to promote and achieve integration in different spheres and at different levels can be a challenge to policy-makers. While the focus of this paper is on the integration of migrants the issues and core principles regarding integration also apply to Travellers and other Irish ethnic minority groups and the past experience of these groups also has lessons for how integration policy should be developed.

Migration, poverty and social exclusion

Migrants are a diverse group and they can face a range of issues in employment and non-employment areas that make them vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. Work-based exploitation, lack of access to social protection, the existence of racism and discrimination all constitute significant factors that push vulnerable migrants into poverty and contribute to their exclusion within society. The workshops and focus groups highlighted many of the issues as outlined below.

Asylum seekers, poverty and social exclusion

Since 2000, asylum seekers have not been allowed to work, cook for themselves, and have been required to live in 'direct provision' accommodation centres, with bed and food supplied along with an allowance of €19.10 per week (adults) or €9.60 (children). Ireland is the only one of the 27 EU member states which has refused to incorporate the Reception Directive which allows for asylum seekers to work under some circumstances. This system directly creates poverty and social exclusion as well as isolation and widespread depression and mental illness. The explicit exclusion of asylum seekers from integration policies stores up social problems for the future. Many people who receive refugee status or leave to remain in Ireland have been de-skilled and have become socially isolated, wasting a potential resource of new skills, ideas and energies which could be available to the Irish economy and society.

The issues....

Access to services: Adult asylum seekers have no access to education and training programmes and waste much of their day doing nothing. At times information is wrong or scant and hard to understand and it is accepted that all entitlements have to be fought for. This causes stress on both parties. The lack of uniformity in different areas was commented upon and some people felt that it was evident in some areas entitlements were obtained and in others refused. The discretion of Community Welfare Officers was seen as unbelievable and their total lack of respect at times was highlighted. If a decision went against you the appeals system was so daunting and frustrating that people wouldn't even consider the appeals process for fear of being victimised by the system.

Access to employment: For those allowed to work there was a difficulty in getting qualifications recognised which was described as 'nightmarish territory'. Participants highlighted discrimination against migrants as a barrier to accessing employment and also the issue of exploitation in employment. The construction industry was mentioned in particular. Progression within employment was a difficulty.

Legal Status: Legal status was highlighted as having a particular impact on migrants and their opportunity to integrate into Irish society. In particular the issue of asylum seekers not having the right to work. It was highlighted that they want to contribute to the locality and society in general but cannot. The parents of Irish Born Children not being able to access grants for 3rd level education was an issue that in effect excluded them from society. For some not having access to family reunification is a key issue. Becoming undocumented, with no

way of becoming legal, was of major difficulty particularly for migrant workers and their families who cannot access services and have limited rights. The fact that the NAPinclusion 2007-2013 did not address issues for asylum seekers or undocumented migrants was highlighted as disgraceful as for many these groups of migrants were seen as the most disadvantaged.

Income: Allowances for children were seen as much too low especially given the rise in inflation. The €19.10 for adult asylum seekers was highlighted as far too small and not substantial to cater for the requirements that asylum seekers need and that are not being provided for within the Direct Provision Hostels. Some mentioned the fact that they were unable to pay the fees or the transport costs and therefore would forego visits to doctors and hospitals.

Language: The language barrier was highlighted as a very big issue for migrants. There is a lack of knowledge amongst many immigrants about services available. This is sometimes because the information is not available in various languages and cannot be understood or that people do not know where to go to access the information. Interpretation is a major need in accessing services e.g. emergency health situations. Also the lack of English classes was seen as detrimental in many ways for example in breaking down isolation, accessing employment and other services.

Vulnerable Immigrant Groups: The most vulnerable of migrant groups facing particular issues are the Roma community who were said to be totally excluded and who experience structural discrimination. Asylum seekers, undocumented migrants named above and those trafficked for purposes of sex industry and bonded labour were also named as key vulnerable groups. It was also highlighted that within the migrant communities there are a lot of different needs e.g. young men, young women, and stay at home mothers.

Discrimination: This was raised as an issue including access to employment and access to services.

Consequences or effects of the situation on migrants

While participants acknowledged the positive changes in the way that migrants are presented in school curricula they also highlighted the following effects on them and their communities from the current situation as follows:

- Poverty
- Stress
- Depression
- Low Self esteem
- Isolation
- Fear
- Unemployment
- Poor housing
- Difficult to advance in life

Irish policy developments in relation to integration

At present, Ireland lacks a comprehensive integration policy with agreed, high-level strategic goals backed up by a resourced infrastructure. However, there have been commitments to developing such an approach. The National Action Plan Against Racism (2005-2008) was a positive step and there are some targets in the NAPinclusion (2007-2016) which states that the 'integration is one of the most important challenges over the coming years'.

Recent developments with the creation of a new Ministerial position with responsibility for integration and the proposed establishment of a Task Force

on Integration provide a timely opportunity to develop a comprehensive policy framework that effectively mainstreams integration across all areas of policy and service provision. To be effective this must address the issues faced by vulnerable migrants and their families and reduce the risk of migrants falling into poverty and experiencing exclusion.

The country is not starting with a blank slate. Much can be learned from approaches taken to the integration of Travellers and other ethnic groups and from progress made with programmes and initiatives already in place that tackle racism and promote equality and social inclusion. Positive political leadership, at national and local level, can also play a significant role in promoting integration as a key strategy in achieving a more inclusive, cohesive and inter-cultural society.

Recommendations for Developing a comprehensive Integration Policy

- Integration should have a local funding and a local strategy aspect. One cap will not fit all.
- A rights based approach is needed.
- Clearer targets, the NAPinclusion 2007-2016 targets on migration are vague especially within the community aspect and especially those at high risk, given that 10% of the population is migrant.
- Translation, interpretation and language support strategy at local and national level.
- Abolish the Direct Provision centres and system. Introduce rented accommodation.
- The Habitual Residency Condition (HRC) should be abolished.
- Regularise the situation of undocumented migrants. Undocumented migrant workers need access to emergency healthcare.
- Child Benefit for the children of undocumented workers and asylum seekers.
- Space and resources for leaders to emerge, people to organise and come together on issues facing them.
- The best approach to integration of asylum seekers is through allowing them to work e.g. six months after applying for asylum.
- Uniformity in how national policies were delivered at a local level.
- Discretionary powers of the HSE should be removed and frontline and key staff (especially CWO's) should be rotated on a 6 monthly basis to make fairer delivery happen.
- Interpreter services should be incorporated into all government departments and especially Social Welfare as they are more likely to have more contact with migrants and asylum seekers.
- Written policy information should be provided and available in different languages.

— One stop shops with information/entitlements with the translation/ interpretation services available or information should be available in various languages.

— Parents of Irish Born Children should have access to same grants and entitlements as refugees / Irish people/humanitarian leave to remain. (No overseas fees for third level),

— The Millennium Fund (to support access to third level) should include all migrants.

— Provision of suitable childcare facilities.

— From a community development point of view we need to work towards empowering migrants to be able to represent themselves. Give them a chance to have a voice.

— Advocacy work needs to be supported.

EAPN Ireland proposals for Integration Policy

As a result of the workshops and the policy paper developed by EAPN Ireland looking at policy in Ireland and the EU, EAPN Ireland proposes the following:

— The values, principles and goals of integration should include and promote equality, anti-racism and anti-discrimination, interculturalism and social inclusion and the realisation of economic, social, cultural and political rights.

— The approach to integration must include a strong focus on addressing poverty, inequality and the various forms of social exclusion that migrants and their families' experience. It must recognise all forms of migration and migrants, including those without legal status.

— The strategies adopted must take a targeted approach, identifying various groups that are at risk of poverty and social exclusion and developing responses to address the circumstances of these groups. Age, gender, ethnicity, legal and labour market status are identifiers for many of the more vulnerable migrants and their families.

— Measures to promote integration must recognise and promote actions that encourage and promote solidarity within and between communities and must specifically promote the recognition that Ireland is now a country of many communities and identities.

— These strategies will need to be measured against targets and timeframes to track progress and assess effectiveness. The strategy to develop better data on migration should specifically address sources, indicators and uses of data to track poverty and social exclusion amongst migrants and their families long-term.

— The effectiveness of a mainstreaming approach to integration will be considerably enhanced by the identification of clear co-ordination and implementation mechanisms at national and local levels.

- Strategies and responses can best be developed in consultation with civil society and other stakeholders. Consultation processes undertaken must support the participation of vulnerable migrants and their families and be adequately resourced.
- It is important to include migrants and their representatives in bodies engaged in the development, implementation and review of policies, programmes and plans around integration. Lessons from previous approaches to integration should be addressed by including representatives of Travellers and other ethnic groups in those bodies. Such representation will need to be adequately resourced.
- Any approach to integration needs to be underpinned by a clear and comprehensive legislative framework based on international human rights norms and humane principles that defines rights, requirements and remedies. New legislation should strengthen current equality and anti-discrimination legislation, address any gaps therein and should address the need for strong enforcement mechanisms.
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination should be incorporated into Irish law. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and the International Labour Organisation Migration for Employment Convention 1949 (Revised) should be ratified.

EAPN would like to thank the Combat Poverty Agency, the Office for Social Inclusion and the European Commission for funding the Focus on Poverty in Ireland Project. We would also like to thank those who have participated in the development of this work, the focus groups, the regional workshops and Siobhan Airey for work on the Policy Benchmarking Papers.

The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views of the individual funders.

Access to Affordable Childcare
EAPN Ireland paper for Social Inclusion Forum
15th November 2007

Introduction

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland is currently implementing a year long European Commission funded project Focus on Poverty. The aim of the project is to raise awareness of poverty with all members of society through various activities. More information on these and the various papers produced by the project can be found on www.eapn.ie/poverty. The issues of access to employment, access to childcare and the integration of migrants were highlighted as some of the key issues impacting on poverty. These were discussed at regional workshops with anti-poverty groups in Dublin, Cork, Westmeath and Sligo, with focus groups of people affected by these issues in Wexford, Limerick, Louth, Kerry, Roscommon and Mayo, and were also the subject of a set of policy papers developed for EAPN Ireland. This paper pulls together some of the key issues and recommendations arising from the discussion and policy paper on access to quality and affordable childcare.

Universal access to quality and affordable childcare in Ireland is an oft-repeated call of many organisations and agencies seeking ways to mitigate the effects of poverty and social exclusion as well as supporting access to employment, education and training. Though childcare has received more government attention – and funding – in recent years in Ireland, levels of public provision of childcare, and thus access to affordable childcare, lag behind many of our European neighbours. A recent EU-commissioned study on child poverty concluded –

— The provision of high quality, affordable and universal childcare offered at flexible times is essential for the reduction of child poverty as well as for the prevention of negative child outcomes. It is an effective means of preventing the intergenerational transmission of poverty. The expansion of public childcare or public subsidies to private childcare facilities should thus be high on the political agenda (Hoelscher 2004).

Childcare is important not only as an anti-poverty measure for children and families on low-incomes. Recognition has also grown of its role in promoting women's equality, supporting diverse families and fostering the inclusion of different groups and communities within our society.

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007-2016) includes the long-term goal that

— Every family should be able to access childcare services which are appropriate to the circumstances and the needs of their children

Issues

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland is currently implementing a year long European Commission funded project Focus on Poverty. The aim of the project is to raise awareness of poverty with all members of society through various activities

— There isn't yet an accepted childcare framework.

— Childcare costs are increasing which is further isolating those on low incomes.

— Affordability of childcare a big issue. Lone parents in particular find that after having put a child into childcare the cost of it makes taking up employment again a bad financial decision. There is huge demand for few places.

— One group agreed that there was insufficient supply of affordable childcare facilities in the area and that this had a negative impact on locals as it marginalised people from participating in a lot of local initiatives. Therefore further exclusion occurred.

— It was very evident that demand outweighs supply given the amount of people trying to access the number of childcare places available. This was due to the amount of enforced bureaucracy on local groups from the national perspective. Basically most of the childcare projects were being managed by voluntary management committees with increasing obligations but with no supports to deliver the service needed.

— It was pointed out that there is plenty of finance available for capital programmes but limited resources for staffing and running costs and so this burden is increasingly being passed on to the users who just do not have the money to afford the service. One participant got a grant to double the size of the crèche to cater to 15 children from seven but half the building is not in use because we have no funding for the extra staff. There is no funding for cleaning or preparatory work in the childcare centres.

— A lot of low income families are very much reliant on their parents to provide childcare and thus felt they were a burden to them. Most people felt it was wrong that the State would expect this to happen.

— A lot of the courses and schemes etc were out of bounds for people due to the fact that there was no childcare provision and so could be seen as discriminatory in nature.

- After school provision was another issue that was mentioned as being very important but that not much was being done about it. It was felt that childcare provision was too constrained towards 0-5 yrs and that there is a significant problem with older children having to fend for themselves outside of school times and especially during the summer.
- Where there are childcare projects they have no impact on inclusion due to their focus on the economic scenario rather than the social fabric. Policy is based on a perception of people as 'economic units' rather than human beings.
- There is a lack of flexibility from employers to cater for the needs of those with children.
- Play policy document – where is it now?
- There is an absence in the current NAPinclusion plan of year to year targets.
- Despite knowing for two years that the ECOP funding was going to run out the Government did nothing.
- Parents are expected to form committees and bring in extra funding but their children are often only there for one to two years making it very difficult for them to carry out that kind of work.
- The issue of provision of support for children with special needs in childcare has been largely ignored. Very hard to identify children with these needs. No individual special needs assistant for pre-schools as there is in first and second level. One of the participants' centre can take children with a physical disability like being in a wheelchair, but we have no facility at all to cater for children with other special needs who need specific supports.

Participants in the Focus groups were asked what the consequences/effects of the current situation

- It was obvious that because of the inability to access affordable childcare people were still caught within poverty traps. This was also the case for some who would have been able to access childcare too.
- It was often the case that some felt that they had to continue with hardship so as not to "crack up under the strain" and that it was an unending cycle which was in a way supporting inequality.
- Cost was a big factor in accessing childcare and because of sustainability being forced upon projects then you would have to pay the top dollar to participate.
- If you are on low income and cannot afford childcare then your children would have fewer opportunities to socialise which in the end would lead to educational disadvantage.

Relevant Irish policy developments in relation to childcare

Childcare and the provision of childcare have received considerable attention from a range of interests, including government, in recent years. Landmark developments included the introduction of regulations of pre-schools in 1996, the appointment of the first ever Minister for Children in 1994, the first National Childcare Strategy in 1999 and the establishment of the National Children's Office in 2000. The paragraphs below describe some developments in childcare provision of particular significance for children and families in poverty.

In 2000, a €500-million Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) was initiated to continue until 2006. It was established to increase access for parents to training, education and employment opportunities through increasing the number and improving the quality of childcare places. It also created an infrastructure to co-ordinate the development and delivery of childcare through the operation of County Childcare Committees.

The EOCP has been succeeded by the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) (2006-2010), a €575-million programme that aims to provide a further 50,000 childcare places over the duration of the programme. It seeks to 'support childcare facilities for disadvantaged parents and their children' and 'provide education measures for children and adults in areas of disadvantage,' amongst other aims.

In 2006, under the National Childcare Strategy (2006-2010), a further direct, nttaxable Early Childcare Supplement payment to parents of €1,000 a year towards childcare was introduced.

From January 2008 the Government are introducing a Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (2008-2010) under the NCIP. This is a €153-million programme open to eligible community-based not-for-profit childcare services. It provides a subvention (ranging from €30-80 per week and €60-110 for children under 1 year) to enable reduced fees to be charged to parents in receipt of social welfare payments. There has been a mixed response to this Scheme.

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 includes a target of developing an infrastructure to provide quality, affordable childcare with an overall increase of 100,000 childcare places over the period to 2016 (with the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010 providing 50,000 of these places).

In order to understand the overall context of Childcare in Ireland it is useful to benchmark it against other EU countries.

Comparative data on childcare Ireland, Denmark and Sweden in 2004

	Ireland	Denmark	Sweden
GDP per capita	USD 33,200	USD 29, 200	USD 28,100
Child poverty rate	15.7% after taxes and transfers	2.4% after taxes and transfers	4.2% after taxes and transfers
Funding of pre-school services	0.44% of GDP	2.1% of GDP	Over 1.9% of GDP
Rates of access to regulated childcare	0-3 years: 10-15% 3-6 years: 56% enrolled in public pre-primary	0-1 year: 12% 1-2 years: 83% 3-5 years: 94%	1-2 years: 45% 2-3 years: 86% 3-4 years: 91% 5-6 years: 96%
Average costs to parents	0-3 years: 51% of total costs or 30% of the disposable income of the average double income family, unless subsidies exist. 4-6 years: morning session of pre-primary is free, other services are paying services.	Costs are capped at 30-33% of costs with low-income families paying much less. Average parental contribution comes to about 22% of costs.	Parental fees cover about 9% of costs in pre-school, amounting to about 2% of average income.
Labour force participation of women with children under 6	Women with youngest child 0-3: 51.1%; women with youngest child 3-6: 52%.	Mothers with children 3 and below: 70%; children 3-7: about 80%	76.6% of women (aged 15-64) participate.

Adapted from OECD (2006) Country Profiles.

Recommendations

The participants at the regional workshops and focus groups made a number of recommendations for improvements in the provision of affordable childcare:

- Childcare places should be monitored due to the most marginalised being excluded because the focus is to meet the needs of the economy.
- The whole area of after school care needs to be developed – schools lying idle at weekends and in the evenings.
- Training programme for childcare managers badly needed. A childcare centre needs trained managers as well as trained childcare workers.
- All community pre-schools are to be turned into limited companies but no financial assistance for the training, administrative and legal costs this will create.
- It was felt that there should be more affordable childcare places and that a certain percentage of them should be ring fenced for those whom would be in the low income bracket and also for those who would be at risk of poverty.
- Childcare projects should be properly resourced so as to deliver a quality service that includes all within society and that there should not be a tier system.
- Local projects should have local autonomy and thus have a greater say in how they are delivered.

Based on the input from participants at the regional meetings and focus groups as outlined above and the EAPN policy paper which looked at childcare policy in Ireland and in the EU, it is EAPN Ireland's contention that progress made by the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme and the new National Childcare Investment Programme will be considerably strengthened by the development of a number of key areas, including:

- All policies relating to the provision of early childhood education and care must recognise the contribution of childcare to social inclusion, social cohesion, gender equality and economic and social equality.
- Childcare policy and programmes must include a strong focus on addressing poverty and social exclusion and must clearly address affordability and accessibility issues for specific groups experiencing poverty and social exclusion including welfare-dependent families, families on low-incomes, children with special needs, lone parents, families from ethnic minorities including Travellers and immigrant communities.
- A time-bound national plan with targets to deliver free early childhood education and care for all pre-school-age children, whether in rural or urban areas. The plan must be underpinned by a rights-based, targeted intervention strategy that specifically addresses the needs of children

in poverty, those with a disability or with special education needs, children from ethnic minorities including the Traveller and immigrant communities.

— A public funding strategy that ensures universal coverage and specifically addresses affordability for low-income families. The funding strategy must ensure the sustained provision of quality, affordable and accessible childcare as a public good into the longer-term.

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Access to Employment
EAPN Ireland paper for Social Inclusion Forum
15th November 2007

Introduction

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland is currently implementing a year long European Commission funded project *Focus on Poverty*. The aim of the project is to raise awareness of poverty with all members of society through various activities. More information on these and the various papers produced by the project can be found on www.eapn.ie/poverty. The issues of access to employment, access to childcare and the integration of migrants were highlighted as some of the key issues impacting on poverty. These were discussed at regional workshops with anti-poverty groups in Dublin, Cork, Westmeath and Sligo, with focus groups of people affected by these issues in Wexford, Limerick, Louth, Kerry, Roscommon and Mayo, and were also the subject of a set of policy papers developed for EAPN Ireland. This paper pulls together some of the key issues and recommendations arising from the discussion and policy paper on access to employment.

Government policy to support access to employment

'Activation' is a term used to describe moving people of working age on a social welfare payment into employment. Since the late 1990s the key Government policy for supporting unemployed people into employment, training and education has focused on the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) process whereby social welfare offices refer people to FÁS after a specific period of time, currently three months.

Recently the Government has set the goal of addressing the issues of those 'furthest from the labour market' which means widening 'activation' measures to all adults of working age (16-64) who are capable of employment. This will involve a wider role for FÁS in targeting training and supports to groups outside the labour market including the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents, older people, Travellers and ex-prisoners. Social and Family Affairs is also to take a more active role and are to introduce a Social and Economic Participation Programme targeting all those of working age as soon as they apply for social welfare supports. This will involve an active case management approach. It is not yet clear on how this programme will be implemented.

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016

High Level Goal No. 5 is to

— 'Introduce an active case management approach that will support those on long-term social welfare into education, training and employment. The target is to support 50,000 such people, including lone parents and the long-term unemployed, with an overall aim of reducing by 20% the number of those whose total income is derived from long-term social welfare payments by 2016. This target will be reviewed in the light of experience'.

High level Goal No 9 outlined specific targets for people with disabilities. This Goal is to

— 'Increase the employment of people with disabilities who do not have a difficulty in retaining a job. The immediate objective is to have an additional 7,000 of that cohort in employment by 2010. The longer term target is to raise the employment rate of people with disabilities from 37% to 45% by 2016 as measured by the Quarterly National Household Survey. The overall participation rate in education, training and employment will be increased by 50% by 2016. These targets will be reviewed in the light of experience and the availability of better data'.

Participants at the workshops and focus groups discussed the existing situation including the barriers they experience and proposed changes. The following pages reflect a summary of those discussions and the recommendations coming out of them.

Issues and Barriers to Employment and Training Opportunities

— Some experiences of **Jobs Facilitators** is positive and provide relevant supports – some link with community groups in identifying supports and working with individuals. Others saw the role of social welfare currently as policing, there is a fear factor and people feel pressurised.

— Dealing with people in open areas with a queue system as is the practice in **Social Welfare offices** was not appropriate to positive engagement.

— The picture was overwhelming in one focus group meeting which said that there was no support from FÁS and that if anything the barriers became more obvious. Some said that the only **support** available was from the local Community Development Project (CDP).

— **Availability of jobs** – there are often few local opportunities for jobs and transport in rural areas to jobs is a problem which involves extra resources.

— **Childcare**, or lack affordable childcare options, is a barrier. Childcare was the main issue at one focus group. This related to **a.** lack of consideration of childcare needs by employers and departments **b.** A lot of the training / education is held at the evening which counts parents out due to the childcare and seen by some as discriminatory and thus compounded social exclusion. Interestingly some consequences of lack of childcare supports were the reason for becoming involved in schemes.

— No systems in place to support **lone parents** back into the workplace.

— It was also said that in some cases people were told which course to take and that there was no choice. It was a fight to get dedicated **training** for those wishing to up-skill their needs. There was the issue of the length of the courses and that by the time the course was over progression was not made and so you were still back to the same place. The start time of courses was also a problem e.g. 8:00am. **Type of training is important** – often unimaginative, not relevant and individuals can end up repeating the same courses.

- The **training element of Rural Social Schemes and Community Employment (CE)** need to be reviewed. **Rural Social Scheme** - no training or objective to progress. **Cost of 3rd level access** a barrier and access to distant learning outside of FÁS is difficult. Waiting until **25 yrs of age is too late** to qualify for CE.
- **Literacy** level is often a barrier.
- **Loss of Secondary Benefits** (including when taking a place on CE) or not knowing the implications on levels of income can prevent people making a move to employment – including for setting up enterprises e.g. for Travellers etc – Once lost they can take a long time to get back – seen as high risk.
- **Family Income Supplement** – a person has to be more than 19 hrs – Part-time 17.5 hrs don't qualify.
- **Inter-generational** unemployment.
- Many **people with disabilities** don't have the opportunities to access training and employment to allow them to take up a job. Also difficulties getting a job even after training.
- **Long term unemployment:** Once a person had been unemployed for three months or longer it is more difficult to get a job.
- **Women** are often **dependence** on their partner which creates difficulties especially where the relationship is abusive.
- **Policies are applied differently** in different areas.
- One focus group highlighted that they saw work as a way to progress towards a better way of life but because the supports were not in place they ended up not working and some felt that they were a burden. Lack of self-esteem and self-worth would settle in and they felt unable to cope. Medical problems such as depression and hopelessness took a hold. This created a cycle of poverty which would be around for a long time to come.

Recommendations

- **Early intervention** needs to take place before a person, particularly a parent, arrives at the stage on returning to employment in terms of skills, information and developing a positive attitude to working.
- A **more holistic attitude to activation is needed** looking at participation in society and community as the priority as opposed to economic participation as the priority. The **opportunity to engage in groups** is positive for individuals and also a value for society.
- Activation should be **focused on social and not economic needs.**

— The **training of those to be involved in active case management** is essential and should involve developing a person centred holistic approach – looking at access to all areas of life.

— The ongoing work of active case management staff (e.g. Jobs Facilitators) should involve **working in the Community** and engagement with community groups. It should also involve working closely with the LES and INOU centres where they exist.

— Social Welfare needs to develop an **advocacy role.**

— Need to look at each individual on their own merit and adopt a flexible supportive approach with discretionary possibilities.

— There is a need for personal **development** support and resources.

— **Aim should be to provide a choice** and not to drive a person into any job.

— It is important to address the disconnection which often exists between the various services.

— **Mental Health issues need to be addressed**- involves cooperation between the Community Mental Health Nurse and employment supports – How will this be managed e.g. by FÁS. Need link with HSE.

— A specific strategy is needed to **address rural needs**.

— Employers need to be more **flexible regarding childcare**.

— **Lone parents** felt that they should be treated as equals within society and especially within the workplace.

— Need for a **recognition of time and skills** of people not in work but active in their communities and also parents skills. No recognition of the social value of work, only the economic value.

— **Informing people of changes to be made to their payments** etc in advance. Changes need to be flagged. Changes in relation to disability payments were not flagged.

— **Longer term programmes** (5 years) are needed for long term unemployed people.

— Getting agencies to work together is difficult.

— Entrepreneurship and Employment need **flexible approaches** – productivity as opposed to 9-5 should be the guide. – Flexibility is important for many groups including those with mental health issues.

— **Inter-generational unemployment** and poverty. It was highlighted that intervention is needed from the start e.g. pre-school or even with expectant parents. This requires greater levels of investment.

Gender

- Need to create a situation where women are **independent** of their husbands re. equal rights.
- Gender issues and **gender equality** is an issue – e.g. supports for female ex-offenders to become independent in terms of employment are limited.

People with Disabilities

- For people with disabilities **access to supports and Personal Assistants is essential** to get out into the community let alone getting a job but resources are limited.
- Need for **supports to help people retain a job** was highlighted as well as the implementation of accessibility policies.
- Parents of children with disabilities need support with **caring responsibilities** and costs and possibilities of flexible employment to carry on a dual role.

Conclusion

Activation into employment has been proposed as a central way of reducing poverty and social exclusion amongst people on social welfare. However, as highlighted above the barriers to employment are complex and require a variety of solutions. Also employment is not always a route out of poverty. Currently, nearly 100,000 people in Ireland live in working households that are in consistent poverty. If activation measures focusing on employment are to have a measurable impact on reducing poverty and social exclusion, they must also recognise and address the factors within employment, such as low pay and a lack of protection that contribute to poverty and social exclusion. Activation therefore needs to take a positive approach and be seen as addressing poverty and creating greater social inclusion and not purely about a job at any cost.

EAPN Ireland Employment Working Group in a recent Briefing on Positive Activation[5] has highlighted the elements of a positive approach as involving:

- Access to decent quality jobs
- High quality employment and other public services which are person centred
- Making work pay and addressing poverty traps
- Good quality information
- Addressing discrimination
- A joined up approach to implementation at local and national level involving the target groups themselves and their representative organisations.

5 http://www.eapn.ie/documents/48_Developing%20Positive%20Activation.pdf

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Annex V Social Inclusion Forum 2007: Evaluation Report

Participants were asked to complete an evaluation form on the day of the Social Inclusion Forum. This form sought their views on the conference overall, the morning presentations, the workshops, the venue and catering, and asked for their opinion on what worked best on the day, what they would change and how they would like to be kept informed about the progress of the NAPinclusion. Thirty-six participants returned completed evaluation forms.

The evaluation form asked participants to rate the conference and workshops on the following scale:

Excellent – Very Good – Good – Fair – Poor

The evaluation also sought to gauge participant's views on the venue and the content of the conference.

In addition participants were asked to state their preference on how they wished to be informed of progress implementing the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

In total 36 evaluation forms were completed and returned

As illustrated in Table A5.1, the majority of respondents rated the conference overall as Very Good with the remaining participants rating it as either Excellent or Good.

Table A5.1 Delegates' Rating of Conference

Rating	Number	%
Excellent	9	25%
Very Good	18	50%
Good	9	25%
Total	**36**	**100%**

Some participants made comments on the conference that reinforced their positive ratings and also pointed to some weaknesses.
Such comments included:

- Professor Gordon provided a very interesting presentation, setting the scene
- The speaker from the UK focussed on the UK experience and global one and didn't relate it to Irish developments which was disappointing
- Informative speakers and open engagement between government and other actors
- Brought a good range of people together and the diversity should not be lost in any recommendations
- Very helpful combining the local with the national

- Provides good opportunity for engagement
- Very well run and structured
- Great that policy-makers are here to listen
- Participatory levels were excellent
- More speakers would be welcome with particular expertise and more creative approaches.
- Should end a little earlier
- Smaller Workshops
- The aim of the Forum was a bit too wide

With regard to the workshops the majority of participants again rated the content as either Very Good or Excellent (see Table A5.2). 8% of respondents rated the workshops as Fair and 20% as Good.

Table A5.2 Delegates' Ratings of Workshops

Rating	Number	%
Excellent	8	22.2%
Very Good	18	50%
Good	7	19.5%
Fair	3	8.3%
Total	**36**	**100%**

Again comments were made which highlighted the view of participants, both positive and negative, of the workshops and workshop content. Comments also referred to the practical arrangements in place for the workshops and included the following:

- Need more time
- While always limited, the need for time to absorb new information and have open conversations was inadequate; moving to recommendations was without the benefit of considered thought
- Note takers – to try and write all points mentioned. It was annoying that some points were left out! Others try to write what people didn't say
- Facilitator did not record all points people made, process needs to be more inclusive and participative
- Venue did not lend itself to interactive discussion and many people did not speak
- Perhaps use a circle without tables
- A slightly more free dialogue

- In relation to the communities workshop, need a dialogue between new communities and indigenous people, anti-racism campaigns often just stifle dialogue
- Too big, interesting discussions, but difficult in large group
- The non-prioritised points must not be lost, very important
- Weak guidance of discussions
- Hope this gets results in terms of policy changes
- People should be apportioned to workshops so that interest groups don't dominate the discussion

In relation to the venue, lunch and refreshments the most common word utilised to describe participants views was *"excellent"*, many referring to the good lunch and beautiful setting in which the event took place. One participant described the food as fair while others commented on the fact that the space allocated to the workshops was too small and very tight for the number of participants. Better signposting of conference hall and workshop rooms is needed.

When asked to identify the most useful elements of the conference, the majority of participants indicated the workshops, roundtable discussions and presentations as most useful. Others found the opportunities to hear a variety of experiences and to network and discuss topics taking into account local and national perspectives as very beneficial.

Comments on the day from some participants:

"It was a fantastic experience... [other members of our group] should go to as many meetings as possible; you learn a lot; it's a great experience."

Mary Norris, Portlaw Women's Group, Waterford

"It was an excellent experience for me as I would have never attended anything like it before... We learned a lot and hopefully our opinions will make a difference... I am delighted that I got the opportunity to attend."

Bernadette Dooley Whelan, Portlaw Women's Group, Waterford

With regard to what participants would like to see change the following recommendations were made:

- A two day session
- A shorter day
- More time for roundtables
- Order of the day
- Shorter lunch time
- A keynote speaker needs to draw out lessons for Ireland
- An upbeat final speaker
- Send out preparation material for discussion and expect some in-depth and informed conversations and allow more time for this
- Different questions in workshops
- Ability to move to other topics rather than being confined to one

- When having roundtable discussions it might have been better to allocate attendees to tables to ensure a good mix of people to assist with the discussions
- After the workshops participants should be asked to return to their original roundtables for discussion
- Present what is working well
- Present what happens next
- Timetable could perhaps be condensed
- A smaller agenda

When asked to make suggestions for future Social Inclusion Forum meetings, responses from participants were similar to the changes recommended. Other suggestions are detailed below:

- Topics for future meetings: Employment and training for people who have a disability, fuel poverty, information gaps, access to financial services
- Liven up afternoon part
- Earlier finish
- Aim to organise it so that everyone has an opportunity to make a contribution in smaller groups
- More papers from inspirational speakers
- Use case studies and best practice to illustrate points
- Explore different participatory processes such as 'open space'
- Stick to agenda
- Rapporteur should be somebody from the NESF
- Integrate roundtable discussions into workshop sessions e.g speakers – break – roundtables – rapporteur gathers views for Plenary
- Question and answers session with Minister and Director of Office for Social Inclusion
- To put in place all recommendations from to-day
- Themes should focus on why recommendations are not in place or not working

To conclude the evaluation, participants were asked to state how they would like to be kept informed of progress on the implementation of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. The majority of participants identified email as their preferred method of ongoing communication. Other suggestions included through websites, the media, through local and national representative organisations, quarterly/interim progress reports, regional fora and conferences, newsletters and through the postal system.