Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Local Employment Service

Forum Report No. 17

March 2000
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Foreword by the NESF Management Committee

The present Report on the Local Employment Service was fully endorsed by the Forum at its Plenary Session on 11th January last in Dublin Castle and is now submitted for consideration by the Government.

This is the first Report to have been prepared under the Forum’s new mandate from Government. In A Framework for Partnership: Enriching Strategic Consensus through Participation – Forum Report No. 16 the Forum recommended that the national partnership bodies be restructured to achieve a new balance between the different links in the policy process – policy making, implementation and monitoring. With its new mandate, the Forum will bring a new emphasis to the implementation of policy, and aims to be an important arena for the identification and dissemination of best practice.

Under its revised structures and working arrangements, the Forum will mainly work in small Project Teams, with members drawn equally from the four different strands. The aim will be to bring a problem-solving approach to evaluating the effectiveness of policies and programmes which are designed to achieve greater social inclusion and equality in our society.

This Report should be seen against the background of the dramatic turn-around in the economy and the reduction in unemployment over the last few years. However, not all of our people are benefiting. Indeed, these notable achievements serve to highlight the greater needs and difficulties faced by the most marginalised groups in our society. The long-term unemployed, lone parents, people with a disability and Travellers cannot on their own access and benefit from mainstream education and training programmes. What is required is the intensive level of personal attention, counselling and supports provided by an effective and adequately-resourced Local Employment Service (LES).

The Report highlights the changes which need to be made if the LES is to function effectively, especially through a more focussed targeting of its services to those most in need.

1 Under its new mandate, the Forum has also published an Opinion, Local Development Issues – Forum Opinion No. 7 (September 1999).
It is also opportune, given that the Government has decided to establish the National Employment Service – itself a significant step forward towards a more fully integrated and effective employment service. The Report identifies the changes that need to be made to ensure the successful integration of the LES with the National Employment Service.

A summary of the Report’s main conclusions and recommendations is given in Box 1, Section I of the Report.

The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness sets as a goal the effective elimination of long-term unemployment and improving the opportunities for women, including returners, and disadvantaged groups to access the labour market. The Forum believes that the recommendations in this Report, if effectively implemented by the official bodies and other stakeholders involved at national and local levels, will enhance the contribution of the LES to the achievement of these objectives.
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Section I

Introduction and Overview
Introduction and Overview

1.1 This Section is divided into four main parts:
   - Project Team,
   - Consultation Process,
   - Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations,
   - Acknowledgements.

Project Team

1.2 In concluding the debate on its future Work Programme, the Forum decided at its Plenary Session on 22nd June 1999 to set up a Project Team to examine the Local Employment Service (LES). This was considered to be timely, given the dramatically improved circumstances now obtaining in the labour market. The work was also considered important given the institutional changes to the LES which have been decided by the Government. It was agreed that the Project Team’s approach should be forward-looking rather than retrospective, and that it should focus on the practicalities of tackling long-term unemployment on the ground.

1.3 The work of the Team was to be situated in the context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, the gender and equality-proofing framework recommended in Equality Proofing Issues – Forum Report No. 10 and the specific commitments to equality and social inclusion contained in Partnership 2000.

1.4 The membership of the Project Team was as follows:
   Joan Condon, ICTU Centres for the Unemployed
   Tadgh Curtis, Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland – Chairperson
   Tommy Maguire, Macra na Feirme
   Joe Gallagher, European Anti-Poverty Network
   Micheál Kitt, Fianna Fáil
   Derek McDowell, Labour Party
   Aebhric McGibney, Irish Business and Employers’ Confederation
   Brendan O’Leary, Dept. of Enterprise, Trade & Employment
   Manus O’Riordan, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
   Carole Sullivan, Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
   Bill Timmins, Fine Gael
   Michael Creedon, Independent

Forum Secretariat: Diarmuid Ó Conghaile
1.5 The Project Team set itself the aim of producing practical development proposals designed to assist the LES in meeting its objectives, as part of the overall national strategy to effectively eliminate long-term unemployment. In line with the aim of producing a report which was forward-looking rather than retrospective, and in order not to duplicate analyses already conducted, the Team decided not to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the LES, but rather to focus on specific themes, to learn from the considerable amount of evaluation work which had already been completed, at both national and local levels, and to build on agreed conclusions arising from this work.

1.6 Overall, the Team has sought to clarify the distinct role of the LES in the context of the significantly improved economic circumstances, the new institutional arrangements now agreed by the Government for the National Employment Service, and the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) for European Union (EU) purposes.

1.7 During the course of its work, the Team also focused on the following specific themes, seeking to identify best practice in each case:

- targeting strategy;
- extension of the LES to other areas of the country;
- LES outreach to long-term unemployed clients;
- co-ordination of services for long-term unemployed clients;
- liaison with employers; and
- organisation and management of the LES at local level.

1.8 The Project Team met on a regular basis between July 1999 and January 2000. It also conducted a series of consultations, which are detailed below.

**Consultation Process**

1.9 As part of an open and inclusive process to learn and synthesise the lessons from experience with the LES to date, the following programme of consultations was conducted by the Project Team:

- one-day workshop in Athlone with LES Co-ordinators (approximately 80 per cent attendance);
- one-day workshop in Athlone with LES Mediators and Employer Liaison Officers (over 90 per cent attendance);
- one-day workshop in Athlone with LES Partnership Managers (approximately 60 per cent attendance);
• meeting with Non-LES Partnership Managers in New Ross (over 90 per cent attendance);

• intensive consultations in four selected areas – Clare, Dundalk, Mayo, Tallaght; in each area, representatives of the Project Team met with the LES Management Committee, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (DSCFA), FÁS, VEC, ICTU Centre for the Unemployed, disability services, and focus groups of both clients and non-clients; where possible (Mayo and Clare), Project Team representatives also met with counselling services; telephone surveys were also conducted in all four areas of dropped-out clients and of employer users and non-users of the LES;

• submissions were invited from organisations represented on the Forum, apart from those represented on the Project Team itself;

• written submissions were also invited from Area Development Management Ltd., EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and EU LEADER; and

• all LES Co-ordinators were invited to submit one instance of best practice.

1.10 Finally, a sub-group was established to examine the role of the LES under the National Employment Action Plan, consisting of three Project Team Members, the Forum Secretariat, and invited representatives from FÁS and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

1.11 A summary list of conclusions and recommendations follows in Box 1.

Box 1

Summary List of the Project Team's Conclusions and Recommendations
(The number references are to corresponding paragraphs in the Report.)

2.50 The introduction and development of the LES to date represents a significant achievement. However, there are a number of issues which need to be addressed, at both national and local level. For the future, the Project Team particularly recommends a re-focusing of resources on those who are most in need, including a concerted policy of effective outreach.

3.12 The present economic environment represents a unique opportunity to effectively eliminate long-term unemployment. This can best be facilitated through the provision of intensive guidance and specific training, together
with other supports and the continued improvement of the incentive structure in the welfare-tax system. The LES has a central role to play in this process.

5.3 While recognising the achievements under the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) thus far, the Project Team considers that the Plan does not give sufficient emphasis to the objective of re-employing the long-term unemployed. This objective should constitute a key Guideline under the Plan.

5.13 The LES should engage fully in the administration of Guidelines 1 & 2 of the National Employment Action Plan. The involvement of the LES in this function should be arranged in such a way that its distinct ethos is actively maintained. With these aims in mind, the Project Team has drawn up a national protocol for the involvement of the LES in the NEAP.

5.18 It is important that the National Employment Action Plan be presented and perceived, both nationally and at the point of engagement with the client, as having as its central purpose the facilitation of unemployed people in progressing to training or job opportunities, or assisting them in identifying and overcoming barriers to progression.

2.47 The Project Team welcomes the establishment of the dual-stranded National Employment Service. The Team has identified a number of challenges which will need to be met if the integration of the LES into the National Employment Service is to be successfully accomplished.

6.23 Priority should be given to operating the LES in areas of particular disadvantage where the model can be successfully deployed. Within any given locality, the Team recommends that the activities of the LES be concentrated on those most in need. With this objective in mind, it recommends as a national guiding principle that 80 per cent of new LES clients should come from the long-term unemployed and other particularly disadvantaged groups. Flexibility around this guiding principle would be required at local level to ensure that LESs can respond to identified, verified local needs.

7.5 One of the first tasks for the new Employment Service Advisory Committee should be the development of an appropriate model for the provision of an LES-type service in rural areas.
7.7 The Project Team believes that an LES-type service should, ultimately, be made available throughout the country. It recommends that the LES be introduced into those disadvantaged areas where the existing model can operate successfully. In the case of those areas where the existing model manifestly cannot service the needs of local communities, the introduction of an LES-type service should occur once the appropriate model has been developed.

8.9, 9.6, 10.7 & 11.10

The Project Team recommends a model of good practice for each of the following four aspects of LES activity:

- outreach,
- networking,
- liaison with employers, and
- organisation and management at local level.

Acknowledgements

112 The Project Team would like to thank all those, too numerous to mention individually, whose co-operation and openness made the consultation process possible and worthwhile. Particular thanks are due to Patricia Curtin, FAS, John Bohan and Colm O’Neill, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, Jackie Johnson, Tallaght LES, Jane Foley, Clare LES, Gerry Mannion, Mayo LES, and Gerry Gaughran, Dundalk LES.

113 The Team would also like to thank Ann Clarke of Eustace & Clarke and Paul O’Doherty of Hay Management Consultants for their assistance and advice at different stages in its work.
Section II

Setting the Context
Setting the Context

2.1 This Section is divided into four main parts:

- Introduction and Extension of the LES,
- Recent Developments relating to the LES,
- LES Statistics,
- Project Team’s Assessment of the LES.

Introduction and Extension of the LES


2.2 The central recommendation in Ending Long-term Unemployment – Forum Report No. 4 was for the establishment of an Employment Service:

Our central recommendation is that a national, comprehensive, locally-based Employment Service should be put in place. This Service would be available to all people, i.e. those in employment as well as the unemployed and the unregistered unemployed such as spouses/adult dependants of unemployed people and lone parents… [I]t would have particular responsibility for implementing the two strategies of preventing long-term unemployment and reintegrating the long-term unemployed back into employment. With the use of mediators (counsellors), the Service would advise and guide the unemployed through the various routes to employment and ultimately endeavour to place them in a job. The Service would be the gateway to all employment and training programmes. It would also have the responsibility of establishing close links with local employers and mediating with them on behalf of clients in the execution of its placement function.…

Registration with the Service by unemployed people would be voluntary. It is accepted that this, together with the effectiveness of the Service, would have to be reviewed if registration proves to be low.…

The Service would be delivered at local level so that the mediator can match clients with local employment opportunities as far as possible. In the Local Development Programme’s Designated Areas, it is anticipated that the Service could be provided by the Area-based Partnership Company or a unit of the Company along the lines of the ‘Contactpoint’ initiative in the Northside Partnership Company in Coolock.… In other areas, this initiative might also represent a suitable model of delivery, or, alternatively, the Service could be delivered through an expansion of FÁS Employment Services Offices or other appropriate models.
The question as to whether the Employment Service should be organisation.
separate from FÁS will need to be thoroughly examined but it should, in any 
build on the staff and other resources currently available within FÁS and 
Department of Social Welfare. The Forum recommends that this, together 
operational details, should be given immediate attention through the establish-
ment of a Top Level Group which would be representative of all the main Depar-
tments and interests involved on the ground. Whatever national organisational struc-
ture is finally decided on, it would be essential in the Forum's view that the Employ-
ment Service has the autonomy and resources to carry out its functions.


2.3 A Task Force on Long-Term Unemployment² (the Task Force) was set up by 
Government to examine the Forum’s proposals, including the recom-
mendation that a national, comprehensive, locally-based employment ser-
tice be established. The Task Force agreed that there was a need for such a ser-
tice and its initial report (Interim Report of the Task Force on Long-Term Unemploy-
ment) concentrated on the introduction of the Local Employment Service. The rec-
ommendations, which were broadly in line with those made by the For-
(see later discussion), included the following:

That a nation-wide, integrated Local Employment Service be put in place to 
the needs of the long-term unemployed.

The aim of the Local Employment Service would be to provide the gateway, or a 
point, to the full range of options which should be available to enable a long-
unemployed person to return to the world of work – these include guide-
training, education and employment supports.

There would be four broad priority groups for the service – the registered long 
unemployed; the registered unemployed for more than six months; depen-
sants of the unemployed and lone parents and the young unemployed.

Priorities in allocating resources between these different target groups should be 
at local level, having regard to national criteria and priorities.

Registration with the Service by unemployed people would be voluntary & 
proactive approach would be adopted in reaching out to those in need of he 
getting back to the world of work.

² The composition of the Task Force was as follows: Office of the Tánaiste (Chair), Dept. of An Taoiseach, D 
Enterprise and Employment, Dept. of Social Welfare, Dept. of Finance, Dept. of Education, Dept. of 
Environment, FÁS, Tallaght Partnership, Ballymun Job Centre Co-op, SIPTU/Irish Trade Union Trust, Nor 
Partnership – Cork, Tralee Centre for the Unemployed, Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI) 
Development Management Ltd.
There would be clearly identifiable local contact points, at statutory or community based outlets.... One or more of these contact points in each area would be a Local Employment Centre which would provide an additional and specialist career path planning and placement service for the long-term unemployed, to include guidance and counselling, access to training and education and an active placement service.

FÁS would provide a range of enhanced core services in its Offices, in support of the Local Employment Service.

In areas designated as disadvantaged under the Local Development Programme, the service would be managed by a Local Management Committee, operating under the auspices of the Area Partnership. In other areas, a similar Management Committee would be set up to manage the Service.

The Area Action Plan of the Partnership would provide the basis for determining the nature and type of service to be provided in each area.

Additional funding should be provided... for the Local Employment Service. However, it would only be drawn down on foot of a local plan agreed by the Management Committee.... Funding should also be provided to the Local Management Committees for a Special Local Training and Education Fund for compensatory and innovative training measures to complement mainstream provision....

A special unit should be established within FÁS to deal specifically with the needs of the long-term unemployed and to provide support, by way of staffing or other resources, to the integrated Local Employment Service.

The proposals should first be introduced in the twelve established partnership areas, two non-partnership areas and progressively thereafter in other areas.

The training provided to a long-term unemployed person should be linked to an overall progression route for that person and related to identified employment opportunities.

The Local Employment Service should develop strong links with local employers to identify emerging opportunities, involve them in the design and implementation of training and encourage a positive view of long-term unemployed people who have completed training.

Mainstream training provision should be flexible and adaptable to respond to local needs and to cater for the considerable differences that exist among the long-term unemployed in terms of their future employment aspirations and needs. The Local Employment Service should influence the range and design of mainstream programmes by making recommendations and suggestions as to how services might be improved or changed. The planning timetable of the Local Employment Service and the estimates/planning process in State Agencies would need to be dovetailed to ensure maximum flexibility.
Government Decision to establish the LES (February 1995)

2.4 In February 1995, the Government decided to establish the Local Employment Service (LES) in fourteen areas: the original twelve Partnership areas – Ballymun, Cork City, Dublin Inner City, Dublin Northside, Dundalk, Finglas-Cabra, Limerick City, Mayo, South Kerry, South West Wexford, Tallaght, West Waterford; and two non-Partnership areas – Clare and Kildare. Other key elements of the Government decision were as follows:

- responsibility for the delivery of the LES was given to the then Minister for Enterprise and Employment (now Enterprise, Trade and Employment);
- an Inter-Departmental Advisory Group (IAG) was established to advise the Minister on implementation;
- a Policy Unit in the Department of Enterprise and Employment was established to support the IAG;
- all Departments and agencies were directed to work together with the local LES Management Committees to ensure the provision of a coherent, co-ordinated service, utilising as far as possible existing resources; and
- a special fund of £1 million was established for compensatory and innovative training measures.

2.5 In April 1996, in order to provide for increased participation by the Partnerships, community representatives and the INOU in the development of the LES, a national Policy Advisory Committee was established. Such a Committee had been called for in the Task Force’s Report. This Committee was charged with advising the Minister and Department on policy issues relating to the LES. It held its first meeting in June 1996. Membership of the Committee included representatives of Government Departments, Partnerships, IBEC, ICTU, ISME, INOU, FÁS and ADM. It was later extended to include a representative of the LES Co-ordinators.


2.6 The process of establishing the LES in local areas was slower than had been anticipated. The Forfás evaluation (Initial Review of the Local Employment Service (January 1997) – see later discussion), commissioned by the Department of Enterprise and Employment, documented the start-up process and the delays. Forfás wrote as follows: There has… been widespread concern about the perceived slow start-up of the local LESs. The Dáil was told in November 1996 that £2m was unspent because of slower than anticipated start-ups. The time lapse between the Government decision to establish the LES and the actual opening of the Local Employment Centre was in or around two years in a number of cases. Only in one case (Dublin Northside) did the Local Employment Centre open in under a year after the Government decision. The Forfás evaluation pointed to the
following reasons for these delays: slowness in the communication of the Government decision to the areas involved, the time required to clarify matters with the different parties at both national and local level, the time required for each Partnership to agree a plan itself and make the necessary organisational adjustments, the time required for redrafting the local plans, problems with obtaining staff on secondment, the need for budgets to be reworked and renegotiated, and the time required to get premises ready.

2.7 The Forfás evaluation gave the following conclusion on the start-up of the LES:

The start-up area process varied from area to area, and clearly lessons about logistics and planning and scheduling critical tasks can be learnt at local and national level. However, the key reality is that the work of building relationships with community groups, state agencies and employers is complex and slow. While aspects of the start-up can be speeded up at local and national level, it should also be recognised that an individual LES generally takes at least 8/9 months to plan and establish, and will take a similar amount of time subsequently to fully settle into its role.

2.8 By December 1996, eight of the original 14 LESs were working with unemployed clients and the remaining six were just starting off. The total number of LES clients at this point amounted to 5,768.

Extension of the LES to Four New Areas (February 1997)

2.9 Following on the Forfás evaluation, the Government decided in February 1997 to extend the LES to four new areas: Ballyfermot, Blanchardstown, Clondalkin and Drogheda. In each case, the LES was introduced under contract with the local Partnership Company.

Extension of the LES to Seven New Areas (September 1998)

2.10 Following the Eustace & Clarke evaluation (see later discussion), the Government decided in September 1998 to extend the LES to seven new areas: Bray, Dublin Canal Communities (Bluebell, Inchicore, Islandbridge, Kilmacsimon, Rialto), County Monaghan, Galway City, Dublin Southside (comprising twelve areas in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown), Tralee, Waterford City. Again, in each case, the LES was introduced under contract with the local Partnership Company.

Recent Developments relating to the LES

Partnership 2000 Commitment (December 1996)

2.11 Partnership 2000 gave a commitment that the LES would be introduced in all Partnership Areas within the lifetime of the agreement. As set out in the following citation, the LES was seen as the main vehicle for the development of an effective public employment service:
The development of an effective public employment service, especially through the Local Employment Service (LES), is essential to address the needs of the unemployed, and particularly the long-term unemployed.

The initial phase of the establishment of the LES in 14 areas is currently being evaluated. The LES will be extended, through the country on a phased basis, initially to areas of concentrated unemployment, such that the LES will have commenced in all designated partnership areas during the period of this Partnership. The operational agreements for an extended LES will reflect the outcome of the current evaluation and consultation with all interested parties. There will be a commitment to user representation on management committees. The expanded LES will provide advice and support services to all those seeking work, with priority being given to the groups specified...[persons on means-tested long-term unemployment payments, dependent spouses of claimants on long-term unemployment and other means tested payments, unemployed young people under the age of 18, lone parents, and persons in receipt of Disability Allowance].


2.12 The White Paper on Human Resource Development introduced formally for the first time the concept of a dual-stranded National Employment Service, comprising the LES and the FÁS Employment Service. It proposed that one of the main objectives for the new National Employment Service would be to engage systematically with persons in danger of becoming long-term unemployed. A new institutional structure was put forward to bring the two strands of the new National Employment Service together under the aegis of FÁS. The White Paper outlined the dual roles envisaged as follows:

The role of the Local Employment Service in providing a person-centered service to the long-term unemployed will complement the more general activation process which will become the primary focus of the enhanced general employment service....

[The FÁS Employment Service] will refer clients in need of the more intensive specialised service of the Local Employment Service to that strand where available, and indeed will take referrals from the LES strand who do not fall within the latter’s target group.

An important dimension of the Service [LES] is to ensure, as far as possible, that it builds on services for the long-term unemployed in particular, rather than duplicating the work currently being undertaken by FÁS, the Department of Social Welfare, the VECs, the ICTU Centres for the Unemployed and voluntary community groups.
[T]he new structural arrangements... will act as a driving force for, and provide essential co-ordination, unity of purpose and a sense of shared identity between, the two strands of the Employment Service. The Government believes that bringing together the two strands within one service and one structure will not only be beneficial to the unemployed people for whose benefit they operate, but will also bring greater coherence and sharper focus to the existing measures and administrative delivery arrangements on the supply side.


2.13 In April 1998, the Government published its National Employment Action Plan. This Plan responded to the European Council requirement that the EU 1998 Employment Guidelines be transposed into specific measures at national level. The Plan followed the four pillar framework of these Guidelines: (i) improving employability; (ii) developing entrepreneurship; (iii) encouraging adaptability in businesses and their employees; and (iv) strengthening the policies for equal opportunities.

2.14 The main new initiative in the Plan came under Guidelines 1 & 2. This is the systematic engagement with those on the Live Register which was first flagged in the White Paper, and it is this intervention which has become synonymous with the National Employment Action Plan in the public arena. This aspect of the National Employment Action Plan and the LES’s role is discussed in Section V.

Government Decision on the National Employment Service (March 1999)

2.15 In March 1999, the Government decided to establish the National Employment Service. The basic thrust of the decision was that the LES would come under FAS and together with the FAS Employment Service form the dual-stranded National Employment Service. This had first been mooted in the White Paper on Human Resource Development. This issue is discussed in Section IV.


2.16 The National Development Plan 2000-2006 sets out the following programme for the National Employment Service:

FAS will provide a National Employment Service to meet the needs of employers, job-seekers and job-changers over the period of the Plan, through its network of over 70 Employment Services Offices supplemented by part-time offices and electronic media. The Employment Service has been strengthened in recent years. It will be further strengthened in 2000, to meet the needs of those referred under the NEAP process. The Service will incorporate the specialist Local Employment Service for the

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long-term unemployed. It will further develop its ability to cater for the needs of job seekers by expanding its guidance and counselling services, increasing its use of new information technologies to provide information and advice, and by closely tracking the progress of its clients on a case-load basis. Information technologies including the Web, will be used to assist employers in notifying and filling vacancies. The Service will also develop its role in identifying the needs of job seekers for training and advising training providers of such needs.

LES Statistics

Caseload

2.17 The data presented in this sub-Section were provided by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment from the Holos Database. In most cases, the data exclude the recently-established Bray, County Monaghan and Southside LESs. In certain cases, Ballymun LES, which uses a different information system, is also excluded. In one instance, additional information on Ballymun LES is provided in a footnote.

2.18 As of the beginning of January 2000, the total number of clients registered with the LES was 36,971. Total registrations in 1999 amounted to 10,520. Figure over shows the total LES caseload broken down by individual LES and by 1996 and pre-1999 registrants. Those LESs with the biggest total caseload are generally the urban LESs established in the first phase. Dundalk and Mayo are the exceptions here: Dundalk’s total caseload is significantly lower than that of the other urban LESs established in the first phase; Mayo’s total caseload, a 3,591, is the highest of all LESs and is significantly higher than that of the other rural LESs established in the first phase (Clare, Kildare, South Kerry, South West Wexford, West Waterford). Of the LESs established in the second phase (Ballyfermot, Blanchardstown, Clondalkin and Drogheda), Clondalkin’ caseload is by far the largest. Of those established in the third phase, for which we have data, the total caseload is generally relatively small. Galway City’s, a 560, is the highest of these.

2.19 It is interesting to note that there is a very high correlation between the existing size of an LES’s total caseload and the number of new registrants in the year 1999. This indicates that those LESs with a big existing caseload are growing more quickly in terms of client numbers than those with a small existing caseload.

2.20 Figure 2 over gives a breakdown of LES caseload by unemployment category for total clients and for clients who registered in 1999. Looking at total clients, 4 per cent are in the ‘long-term unemployed’ category; 11 per cent are in the ‘unemployed for over six months’ category; 2 per cent are in the ‘dependents spouses’ category; 16 per cent are in the ‘lone parents’ category; 11 per cent...
Figure 1: Total LES Caseload – Breakdown by Individual LES

Source: Holos Database, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, January 2000.

Figure 2: Breakdown of LES Caseload by Unemployment Category

Source: Holos Database, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, January 2000.
are in the ‘young unemployed’ category; and 13 per cent are in the ‘others’ category. At a disaggregated level, caseload composition varies considerably from LES to LES. For example, 45 per cent of the Mayo caseload is accounted for by long-term unemployed, dependent spouses of the long-term unemployed and lone parents, while 90 per cent of the Ballyfermot caseload is accounted for by these three groups.

2.21 Figure 3 below gives a breakdown by client status for all LES clients. This illustrates that 14 per cent of clients are in mediation, 40 per cent have been placed in jobs, 7 per cent have been referred to training or education, 7 are on Community Employment (CE) or another Employment Programme, and 23 per cent have had their cases ‘deadfiled’, suspended or marked ‘process complete’. These categories account for over 90 per cent of total clients. Of the remainder, the status of 5 per cent is unknown, 2 per cent are awaiting a first interview, and 1 per cent are categorised as ‘Other’. In this instance, the ‘Other’ category covers those on JTS (Job Training Scheme), Jobstart, Workplace, Standard-Based Apprenticeship, or an Enterprise Scheme.

![Figure 3: Breakdown of LES Client Status](image)

*Source: Holos Database, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, January 2000.*

2.22 Figure 4 over shows the job-placement rate by unemployment category. (These data refer to total clients as of October 1999.) By far the lowest placement rate is for lone parents, 28 per cent, reflecting the reliance by this group on Community Employment (CE) and the childcare difficulties that they face in taking up a job (see gender analysis of LES caseload below). The next lowest rates, both at 40 per cent, are for the long-term unemployed and dependent
spouses of the long-term unemployed. The placement rate for the ‘Others’ category is 44 per cent; for the young unemployed, it is 49 per cent; and for those unemployed for over six months, it is 51 per cent, which is the highest rate.

**Figure 4: Placement Rates for Total LES Clients – Breakdown by Unemployed Category**

![Bar chart showing placement rates for different categories of unemployed individuals.](chart1)

*Source: Holos Database, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, January 2000.*

**Figure 5: Individual LES’s Overall Placement Rate and Proportion of Caseload accounted for by LTU, Dependent Spouses of LTU and Lone Parents**

![Scatter plot showing the relationship between overall placement rate and proportion of caseload accounted for.](chart2)

*Source: Holos Database, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, January 2000.*
2.23 Overall placement rates vary considerably across LESs, from 11 per cent in the case of the recently-established Waterford City LES to 60 per cent in the case of the Mayo LES. A good deal of this variation may be explained by differences in the composition of caseload. This is evident in Figure 5 above which plots the placement rate for each LES together with the proportion of caseload accounted for by the long-term unemployed, dependent spouses of the long-term unemployed and lone parents. Although there are certainly other explanatory factors at play, there is a clear negative correlation between LES’s overall placement rate and the proportion of its caseload accounted for by these three groups.

2.24 Finally, Figure 6 below shows the educational profile of total LES clients broken down by age group and qualification. The profile of 1999 registrants is broadly similar. Overall, 26 per cent of clients have Primary education only, 29 per cent have Junior, Inter or Group Cert, 27 per cent have Leaving Cert, and 2 per cent have Third Level education. Of the remainder, 5 per cent have an ‘Other’ level of education, and 11 per cent have ‘Unknown’ education. (These two latter categories are not shown in Figure 6. The proportion of ‘Other’ increases gradually with age. The proportion of ‘Unknown’ broadly follows the same distribution as ‘Primary’.) Apart from the under-18 group, which has the lowest educational profile, the educational profile improves as age increases. The over-45 age group has the lowest educational profile, which is as follows: 44 per cent have Primary education; 19 per cent have Junior, Inter or Group Cert; 15 per cent have Leaving Cert; 2 per cent have Third Level; 7 per cent have ‘Other’ education; and 14 per cent have ‘Unknown’ education.

![Figure 6: Educational Profile of Total LES Clients – Breakdown by Age Group and Qualification](image)

Source: Holos Database, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, January 2000.
Budget and Staffing

2.25 The original budget allocated by the Government for the development of the LES in 1995 was £6 million. For 1999, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment had a total budget of £13 million available for the LES. Of this, just over £9.5 million was approved in budget allocations for the 25 individual LESs. (This accounted for approximately 95 per cent of LES funding in 1999.) The remainder was to cover certain central costs incurred by FÁS and the Department in support of the LES and included a contingency amount to cover the extension of the LES to additional areas in 1999. For 2000, pending establishment of the new institutional arrangements, each LES has been approved a provisional amount of half of its 1999 budget plus a 2 per cent allowance for inflation.

2.26 Table 1 below shows the approved budget for each LES for 1999, together with staff levels as of December 1999. The budget ranges from £158,000 in the case of Dundalk to £521,000 in the case of Dublin Inner City. Total staff varies from 5.5 in the case of Dublin Canal Communities to 29.5 in the case of Limerick City. Table 2 below shows 1999 registrants, 1999 budget per 1999 registrant, placement rate for 1999 registrants, and 1999 budget per placed 1999 registrant. Excluding Dublin Canal Communities and Waterford City, where substantial set-up costs were incurred last year, 1999 budget per 1999 registrant ranges from £347 in the case of Dundalk to £1,426 in the case of Drogheda. Looking at the 1999 budget per placed 1999 registrant, the range runs from £828 in the case of Mayo to £8,191 in the case of Limerick City.

2.27 Figure 7 below shows 1999 budget per placed 1999 registrant plotted together with proportion of caseload accounted for by the long-term unemployed, dependent spouses of the long-term unemployed and lone parents. As is apparent, there is a positive correlation between these two variables. It will be seen that most LESs fall in or around the trend line shown in Figure 7. The exceptions at the higher-cost end are Limerick City and Drogheda. At the lower-cost end, the exceptions are Dublin Inner City and, to a lesser extent, Ballyfermot.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Approved Budget (£)</th>
<th>Co-ordinator</th>
<th>Mediators</th>
<th>Support Staff</th>
<th>Total Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Ballyfermot</td>
<td>396,000</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finglas / Cabra</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>Limerick City</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>29.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mayo</td>
<td>404,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallaght</td>
<td>497,000</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tralee</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Kerry</td>
<td>214,000</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West Wexford</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,540,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>183</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
<td><strong>356</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, January 2000.

Note: Mediator scale also includes Manager of LEC, Employer Liaison Officer, Career Guidance Officer, Pre-enterprise Officer, Research Officer, Outreach Officer,Job Club Leader, Job Club Facilitator. Support Staff scale also includes Information Officer, receptionist, clerical support staff, Job Club Secretary, and cleaner. The employment figures above include part-timers, job sharers, CE workers and Job Initiative participants. Some posts are funded by the local Partnership and / or FAS. Others are filled by secondees from state agencies.
### Table 2: LES Budget and Client Job-Placements – 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballyfermot</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>1,155</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2,624</td>
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<td>Blanchardstown</td>
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<td>Clare</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>1,164</td>
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<td>4,013</td>
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<td>Clondalkin</td>
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<td>Drogheda</td>
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<td>1,426</td>
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<td>6,792</td>
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<td>Dublin Canal</td>
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<td>Communities</td>
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<td>1,278</td>
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<td>Dublin Northside</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2,260</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dundalk</td>
<td>455</td>
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<td>Finglas / Cabra</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>457</td>
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<td>2,538</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>828</td>
</tr>
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<td>Tralee</td>
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<td>West Waterford</td>
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<td>558</td>
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<td>1,297</td>
</tr>
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<td>South Kerry</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,393</td>
</tr>
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<td>South West Wexford</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10,520</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2,655</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Note: See paragraphs 2.28 and 2.29 with regard to the interpretation of these data.

Note: Data provided independently by Ballymun LES indicate that there were 428 registrations in 1999. Of these, 70 clients were placed in jobs, giving a placement rate of 18 per cent. On this basis, the Ballymun figures for '1999 Budget per 1999 Registrant' and '1999 Budget per 1999 Registrant Job-Placed' would be £857 and £4,763 respectively.
Figure 7: Individual LES's 1999 Budget per Placed 1999 Registrant and Proportion of Caseload accounted for by LTU, Dependent Spouses of LTU and Lone Parents

Source: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, January 2000.
Note: See paragraphs 2.28 and 2.29 with regard to the interpretation of these data.
2.28 The Project Team would introduce a special note of caution with regard to the interpretation of the data in Figure 7 and Tables 1 and 2. These data should not be interpreted as necessarily reflecting value for money. There are a large number of factors which the data do not capture, including different start-up dates, whether an individual LES is based in an urban or rural area, other differences in the character of the local labour market, differences in local populations, differences in the approaches of different LESs, differences in the range and extent of activities undertaken, and so on. Nevertheless, the Team considers that the data cast useful light on the LES at this point in time. In so far as questions are raised by the data presented here, the Project Team is strongly of the view that these cannot be answered except by reference to nationally agreed and uniformly implemented performance indicators, both quantitative and qualitative. Such a system of performance measurement has yet to be developed.

2.29 While the Project Team considers that ‘1999 budget per placed 1999 registrant’ is a useful indicator, it does have certain limitations. For example, it should be borne in mind that clients who registered pre-1999 but who were placed in 1999 are not shown in the data. However, this will be balanced to some extent by the fact that a proportion of 1999 registrants will go on to be placed in subsequent years.

Gender Analysis of LES Caseload

2.30 Overall, female participation in the LES exceeds male participation: the respective proportions of caseload are 53 per cent and 47 per cent. Figure 8 below gives an age and gender breakdown for all LES clients. The age and gender breakdown for 1999 registrants gives the same pattern. Female participation exceeds that of males in the three middle age cohorts. Male participation exceeds that of females in the ‘Under 18’ and ‘Over 45’ cohorts.

2.31 Comparing the caseload of individual LESs, the proportion accounted for by females is generally on the higher side of the 40 to 60 per cent bracket. Only four LESs fall outside this bracket: South West Wexford at 35 per cent, Blanchardstown and Clare at 62 per cent, and Dublin Canal Communities at 67 per cent. With regard to Dublin Canal Communities, 38 per cent of its caseload – more than double the average proportion – is accounted for by lone parents (almost entirely females – see below), of whom over 80 per cent are in the 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 age-brackets. (It should be noted that this LES is relatively new and that its caseload is still quite small.) Blanchardstown also has a higher than average proportion of lone parents, at 27 per cent, though spread more evenly throughout the age groups. The proportion of Clare’s caseload accounted for by lone parents is about average. With regard to South West Wexford, the proportion is below average.
2.32 Table 3 below compares the proportional distribution of male and female LES clients by unemployment category. Sixty-one per cent of male clients are in the long-term unemployed category as compared with 35.5 per cent of females. Twenty-nine per cent of females are in the lone parent category compared with only 0.5 per cent of males. As would be expected, the proportion of females in the dependent spouses category is higher, at 4.3 per cent, than the proportion of males in the category, at 0.3 per cent. The proportion of females in the unemployed for more than six months and young unemployed categories is lower in each case than the corresponding figure for males. The proportions of males and females in the ‘Others’ category are almost the same.

Source: Holos Database, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, January 2000.
Table 3: Proportional Distribution of Male and Female LES Clients by Unemployment Category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Female (% of Total Female Clients)</th>
<th>Male (% of Total Male Clients)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LTU</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UE &gt; 6 Months</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Spouses of LTU</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lone Parents</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Unemployed</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100</td>
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</table>

*Source: HalaS Database, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, January 2000.*

Table 4: Job-Placement Rates for Male and Female LES Clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Females (Placed Clients as % of Total Clients)</th>
<th>Males (Placed Clients as % of Total Clients)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LTU</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>41.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>UE &gt; 6 Months</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>51.6</td>
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<td>Dependent Spouses of LTU</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
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<td>Lone Parents</td>
<td>28.5</td>
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<td>Young Unemployed</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>49.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: HalaS Database, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, January 2000.*

2.33 Table 4 above gives job-placement rates for male and female LES clients. Overall, the placement rate for males, at 43.6 per cent, is higher than the rate for females, at 37.4 per cent. In the case of lone parents, the placement rate for males, at 29.5 per cent, is one percentage point higher than the rate for females, at 28.5 per cent. The number of males involved here is small, 26, compared to 1,627 females. In the case of dependent spouses of the long-term unemployed, the number of males involved is again very small, 28, compared to 350 females. The placement rate for males in this category, at 50 per cent, exceeds the placement rate for females, at 41.2 per cent. In the case of the unemployed for over six months category, the two placement rates – 51.5 per cent for females and 51.6 per cent for males – are almost identical. In the case of each of the long-term unemployed, young unemployed and ‘Others’ categories, the placement rate for males exceeds that for females by between 2 and 4 percentage points.
2.34 Figure 9 below shows LES client status broken down by gender. These data shed some light on the lower job-placement rate for females relative to males. The proportions of males and females whose cases have been 'deadfiled', suspended, put on hold or marked 'process complete' is approximately the same, at 23.5 per cent for males and 24.4 per cent for females. Similarly, the proportions of males and females awaiting first interview, still in mediation, and in the 'Other' and 'Unknown' categories are more or less within a percentage point of each other. The proportion of females referred to training or education is higher than that of males, 7.7 per cent compared to 6.2 per cent. The proportion of females on CE (or other Employment Programmes), at 9.9 per cent, is more than double the proportion of males, at 4.4 per cent.

2.35 Further analysis of the caseload reveals that of approximately 2000 female clients on CE, almost 60 per cent are lone parents. Approximately 70 per cent of all female lone parents registered with the LES are on CE. Subtracting, for the sake analysis, lone parents on CE from the female caseload, the job-placement rate for females rises by 2.4 percentage points from 37.3 per cent to 39.7 per cent. This is still lower than the rate for males, at 43.6 per cent. In the adjusted data, this differential corresponds, to an extent, with a higher proportion of females in mediation (suggesting that females spend longer in the mediation process), a higher proportion of females referred to training or education, and a higher proportion of females not completing the process. It should be emphasised that the differences involved here are small.

**Figure 9: LES Client Status – Breakdown by Gender**

![Graph showing client status breakdown by gender](image)

*Source: Holes Database, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, January 2000.*
2.36 Figure 10 above shows the educational profile of LES clients broken down by gender. Overall, the educational profile of female clients is somewhat higher than that of male clients. A higher proportion of female clients have a Leaving Certificate: 30.9 per cent compared to 21.6 per cent for males. Also, a higher proportion of females have secondary education: a total of 58.4 per cent compared to 52.3 per cent for males. Equal proportions of male and female clients have third level education, 1.9 per cent. ‘Other’ and ‘Unknown’ levels of education are not shown in Figure 10. The proportion of males in these categories is 18.3 per cent, compared to 14.5 per cent of females.

FÁS Employment Service Statistics

2.37 Following a period when resources had been diverted to the management and supervision of Community Employment, the FÁS Employment Service has undergone considerable re-development in recent years.

2.38 The Service is structured on a 10-region basis. There are currently 57 fully operational Employment Services Offices, with over 100 additional part-time offices. The current staff complement is 406, consisting of 14 Managers, 231 Placement/Employment Officers and 161 Clerical/Administrative staff. A further 50 temporary staff members are due to be recruited to assist with the expansion of the National Employment Action Plan. The current direct cost of the FÁS Employment Service (including overheads) is approximately £11 million per annum. For the period January to December 1998, the total number of new registrants with the Service was 192,634.
Project Team’s Assessment of the LES

Forum Report No. 4 revisited

2.39 Forum Report No. 4 was published at a time of sustained increases in both overall unemployment and long-term unemployment. The problem of long-term unemployment, in particular, was one of the most pressing social and economic issues facing the country. Even though the medium-term outlook for the economy was considered favourable at that time, it was not anticipated that unemployment would fall as significantly as it has.

2.40 At that time, Ireland’s unemployment and long-term unemployment rates were among the highest in Europe and the OECD. The five years since the publication of Forum Report No. 4 have seen unemployment and long-term unemployment fall dramatically to respective rates of 5.7 per cent and 2.1 per cent as measured on an ILO basis in the Quarterly National Household Survey – Third Quarter 1999. (See also Section III.)

2.41 As described at the beginning of this Section, the proposal for the LES was put forward in Forum Report No. 4. However, as it was introduced and has evolved, the LES does not correspond in a number of important respects to the model which the Forum had recommended.

2.42 Firstly, the Forum recommended a ‘comprehensive’ Employment Service which would be available to all people: the employed, the unemployed and others. The LES, as recommended by the Task Force, and as introduced, was essentially not available to those in employment, to those unemployed for less than six months, nor to certain other categories, e.g. women returning to the labour market.

2.43 Secondly, the Forum recommended an Employment Service which would be national. As presently constituted, the LES is not a national service. It operates in 25 areas, as represented in Figure 11 below. A commitment was given under Partnership 2000 that the Service would be expanded to cover all Partnership Areas by the end of the agreement. As of now, this would entail expansion to a further fifteen Partnership Areas. This expansion has been put on hold (see Section IV). However, even if it had occurred, the LES would still be far from constituting a national service.

2.44 Thirdly, the Forum recommended that the Employment Service could be provided by the Area-based Partnership Company or a unit of the Company in Partnership Areas. The LES is certainly a partnership model and has benefited in many areas from the pre-existence of a Partnership. (The original inspiration for the model put forward by the Forum came from the ‘Contactpoint’ programme of the Northside Partnership.) However, Partnership delivery was
presented as one option in *Forum Report No. 4* and was not the only institutional structure envisaged. As the LES has evolved, the initiative has come to be regarded almost exclusively as a Partnership programme.\(^4\)

2.45 In sum, the LES has not fulfilled the full role envisaged in *Forum Report No. 4*. This gap in service provision was acknowledged in the *White Paper on Human Resources*. The White Paper quoted from *Forum Report No. 4* and arrived at the conclusion that *Ireland has been weak in the provision of counselling, guidance and placement advice to the long-term unemployed…. A key instrument in delivering such a service in a systematic way is an effective and well-resourced Public Employment Service.*

2.46 As already mentioned, the White Paper introduced formally for the first time the concept of a dual-stranded National Employment Service, the two strands being the LES and the FÁS Employment Service. It recognised that the FÁS Employment Service had weakened considerably in the previous years due to the emphasis on Community Employment and that this was a weakness which now needed to be redressed. The aims for the new National Employment Service were cited as follows:

- *engage in a new 'labour market activation' policy nation-wide,*
- *re-invigorate the delivery of employment services at a national level,*
- *further develop the Local Employment Service.*

2.47 Subsequent to the White Paper, the LES was extended into seven further areas and the FÁS Employment Service has been developed, particularly to deal with increased caseload under the National Employment Action Plan. As already mentioned, the dual-stranded National Employment Service was established by Government decision in March 1999. The Project Team welcomes the establishment of the dual-stranded National Employment Service. This development, and the shift in policy emphasis which underlies it, can be seen as a return to the Forum’s original recommendation that a *national, comprehensive, locally-based Employment Service* be put in place. The Project Team welcomes this recognition of the central importance of a public employment service in tackling the problems of unemployment. The specific role of the LES within the National Employment Service is discussed later in this Report.

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\(^4\) Only in Clare and Kildare does it operate in non-Partnership Areas. It is notable that the LES was not introduced into any non-Partnership Area in the second and third waves of expansion, and that the commitment given in *Partnership 2000* linked further expansion of the LES to the remaining Partnership Areas.
Figure 11: Areas with LES – Designated Disadvantaged Areas and others

Source: Area Development Management Ltd.
Performance of the LES – Previous Evaluation Work

2.48 As indicated in Section I, the Project Team decided at the outset not to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the LES. Accordingly, the present assessment of LES performance draws considerably on earlier evaluation work, particularly the two national evaluations: firstly, Initial Review of the Local Employment Service (January 1997) by Forfás, already referred to; and, secondly, Evaluation of the Local Employment Service (June 1998) by Eustace & Clarke. The Project Team’s conclusions also draw on previous work by the Forum (including its First Periodic Report on the Work of the Forum – Forum Report No. 8 (May 1995), Interim Report of the Task Force on Long-Term Unemployment – Forum Opinion No. 1 (March 1995), Long-term Unemployment Initiatives – Forum Opinion No. 3 (April 1996), Partnership 2000: Targeted Employment and Training Measures – Forum Opinion No. 2 (November 1997)), the experience of Project Team members and their parent organisations and the programme of consultations which was undertaken by the Team in the preparation of this Report.

2.49 Outlined below are the main findings from the two national evaluations of the LES which have been conducted so far.

Box 2

Initial Review of the Local Employment Service (Forfás (January 1997))

The Forfás’s evaluation of the LES was broadly positive overall, while at the same time pointing to a number of issues which it saw as needing to be addressed.

Overall, the initial experience of the LES has been reasonably encouraging. Unemployed clients are using the service, and are giving it overall positive satisfaction ratings. Unemployed clients, including the long-term unemployed, are being placed in both employment and progression opportunities. The initial Contact Points are in many areas widening the physical and psychic access of unemployed people to the support services. The mediation and guidance service is working in a flexible person-centered manner as envisaged. More broadly, there has been considerable additional local involvement in and commitment shown to the development of improved services for unemployed. Employers regard the service reasonably positively, albeit as one amongst a number of service providers. However, there are a number of major issues and problems that need to be addressed.

The evaluation argued that a stronger national operational centre for the LES was required with a clear vision of the model and with structures in place for systematic consultation between local and national levels. It
argued that a considerable amount of work remained to be done towards achieving the objective of greater co-ordination of services for the unemployed. It pointed out, in particular, the need for greater co-operation and co-ordination between the LES and FÁS.

Without such balanced development of its core elements and required supports/conditions there is a danger that the current LES model will fall between a number of strategic stools; and in particular, lead to a drift away from priority clients, an haphazard evolution into a more general placement service, duplication of services and confusion of clients, a low priority for the most-in-need, considerable variety in quality and standards, little impact on existing provision and considerable frustration at local level.

**Box 3**

*Evaluation of the Local Employment Service (Eustace & Clarke (June 1998))*

The Eustace & Clarke evaluation was commissioned by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in December 1997. The objective was to conduct an evaluation using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, with the emphasis on the latter. It was intended that the work would build on the Forfás evaluation.

The overall conclusions were as follows:

*The policy rationale, the model and the role of the LES is still relevant and should continue in the current economic climate with a number of very important provisos.*

*The LES must be integrated into and function within the local infrastructure while operating within the national policy framework. This includes other service providers both voluntary community and statutory, in particular the enhanced FÁS Employment Service as set out in the National Action Plan. Where the LES operates under the auspices of an Area Based Partnership Company all relevant activities must be integrated and complementary to avoid any duplication.*

*The overall national aim of the LES should be to improve the employability of the target groups with a view to ultimately placing people in jobs.*

*In the context of the commitments made under the National Action Plan there is a strong case for reassessing the original target groups for the LES. The LES must work...*
with the most disadvantaged target group. This is the long-term unemployed who even in the current economic boom remain marginalised and struggle to access the abundant job opportunities.

The LES must improve its effectiveness and focus on the agreed target groups.

The LES must build on the high standard of credibility achieved with client workseekers to date. This has been achieved through one to one guidance and supportive elements of the service provided by competent staff.

The evaluation also presented a model of good practice for the LES, which, judging from the Project Team’s consultations, was generally well received. The model has not been implemented at national level. In part this appears to be due to the fact that the institutional future of the LES has been uncertain. (See also Section IV.)

Performance of the LES – Project Team’s Conclusions

2.50 The LES represents an important resource of trained and motivated staff who have built links with unemployed clients, communities, employers, and other service providers in the different areas around the country. The service has assisted many unemployed persons in finding work or progression to training.

2.51 The introduction and development of the LES to date is a significant achievement as both a model of partnership at local level and as a means of assisting long-term unemployed people return to work. The Project Team welcomes the fact that lessons learned through the experience so far with the LES have contributed to the re-development of the FAS Employment Service.

2.52 While recognising the successes of the LES, the Project Team notes that there are problems which need to be addressed, at both national and local level. The model has been implemented with varying degrees of effectiveness in the different areas. It is also primarily an urban model, which accounts for some of the difficulties in implementing it in rural areas. These factors, together with the uncertainty that has surrounded the future of the LES, appear to have been the main reasons why it has not been extended to the remaining Partnership Areas within the time-frame set out in Partnership 2000.

2.53 The Project Team emphasises the need for the following:

- a stronger national guiding force for the LES (see also Section IV);
- a re-focusing of resources on those who are most in need (see also Section VI);
- a concerted policy of effective outreach to those who are most distanced from work (see also Sections V and VIII);

- a renewed commitment that the ultimate aim of the mediation process is to facilitate the client in returning to work (see also Sections III and X);

- increased co-ordination at both local and national level between service providers – this being especially important between the LES and the FÁS Employment Service, whose respective responsibilities and activities should be streamlined, i.e. co-operative, complementary, and non-duplicative (see also Sections IV and IX);

- continued development of the Special Education and Training Fund;

- increased marketing of the Service with employers and – where appropriate – the development and enhancement of relationships with employers to facilitate greater understanding and fulfillment of their needs (see also Section X);

- a coherent vision for the operation of an LES-type service in rural areas (see also Section VII);

- increased attention to effectiveness and value-for-money; and

- the adoption of an appropriate, standardised system of performance measurement, which would provide benchmarks for LES operation, including the mediation process, using both quantitative and qualitative measures (see also Sections VIII to XI).
Section III

Role of the LES in the Changed Economic Environment
Role of the LES in the Changed Economic Environment

3.1 This Section is divided into four main parts:
   - Falling Unemployment,
   - Widespread Vacancies,
   - Persistent Disadvantage,
   - Conclusion.

Falling Unemployment

3.2 The recent successes of the Irish economy are well documented.\textsuperscript{5} The NESC, in its Opportunities, Challenges And Capacities For Choice (December 1999) wrote as follows:

\begin{quote}
We have now attained EMU membership and are recognised as a success story in terms of key macroeconomic characteristics by European (EU) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) standards. Furthermore, by historical standards we have attained an impressive level of prosperity characterised by sustained population and employment growth, falling unemployment, increasing living standards for those in employment and sustained net immigration.
\end{quote}

3.3 At national level the labour market is now characterised by increasing participation rates, an increasing labour force, increasing employment, falling unemployment, falling long-term unemployment, and widespread employment vacancies. Tables 5 and 6 below show labour market trends over the last ten years, both in absolute terms and in terms of ratios.

3.4 Figure 12 below depicts the fall in unemployment and long-term unemployment. Starting with the peak level reached in 1993, total unemployment (ILO definition) has fallen dramatically from 219,700 to 96,900 in 1999, a fall of 122,800 in six years. Long-term unemployment (also ILO definition) has fallen from the recent peak of 128,000 in 1994 to 41,000 in 1999, a fall of 87,000 in five years.\textsuperscript{6} The proportion of total unemployment accounted for by long-

\textsuperscript{5} Most commentators agree that the current growth dynamic is likely to continue well into the first decade of the new century, albeit at a reduced pace. See, for example, OECD Economic Survey 1999 Ireland, the IMF’s Public Information Notice (PIN) No. 99/79, and the ESRI’s Medium-Term Review 1999-2005 and Quarterly Economic Commentary.

\textsuperscript{6} Overall, total unemployment has fallen from its highest-ever level of 239,000 in 1987 to 96,900 in 1999, a fall of 142,100. Long-term unemployment has fallen from its highest-ever level of 152,000 in 1987 to 41,000 in 1999, a fall of 111,000.
## Table 5: Labour Market Trends (ILO Definitions), 1988–1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (April/ Second Quarter)</th>
<th>Population, 15+ (000s)</th>
<th>Labour Force (000s)</th>
<th>At Work (000s)</th>
<th>Unemployed (000s)</th>
<th>Long-Term Unemployed (000s)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1591.1</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>41.6</td>
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</table>

Sources: Quarterly National Household Survey series, Labour Force Survey series

## Table 6: Labour Market Trends – Ratios (ILO Definitions), 1988–1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (April/ Second Quarter)</th>
<th>Participation Rate (%)</th>
<th>Employment Rate (%)</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate (%)</th>
<th>LTU Rate (%)</th>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>43.8</td>
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<td>1989</td>
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<td>54.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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</table>

Sources: Quarterly National Household Survey series, Labour Force Survey series
term unemployment has fallen from 61 per cent in 1994 to 43 per cent in 1999. In the last year, the fall in long-term unemployment was particularly rapid, at over 30 per cent (21,900) from March-May 1998 to March-May 1999. This accounted for over 70 per cent of the fall in total unemployment over that period. More recent Live Register figures indicate that long-term unemployment has continued to fall rapidly.

**Figure 12: Short-Term and Long-Term Unemployment, 1987–1999**

![Graph showing short-term and long-term unemployment from 1987 to 1999.](image)

Source: Labour Force Survey, Quarterly National Household Survey. Annual figures refer to April or second quarter of each year.

3.5 Figure 13 below shows the Live Register total (April of each year), plotted together with total unemployment (ILO definition). The Live Register total has fallen from 294,600 in 1993, its highest level, to 196,600 in 1999, a fall of 98,000 (33 per cent) in a six year period. In recent months, the Live Register has continued to fall. It stood at 176,000 at end January 2000. Figure 13 also shows an increasing divergence between total unemployment (ILO definition) and the Live Register total over the period shown. In absolute terms, the divergence remained at a level in or around 100,000 between 1995 and 1999. It has since contracted. (For a discussion of this divergence, and other policy issues relating to unemployment statistics, see Unemployment Statistics – Forum Report No. 13 (May 1997). See also ‘Chapter 9 – Poverty, Unemployment and Social Exclusion’ in Opportunities, Challenges and Capacities for Choice.)
Figure 13: Live Register Total and Total Unemployment (ILO definition), 1987–1999

Source: Labour Force Survey series, Quarterly National Household Survey series. Annual figures refer to April or second quarter of each year.

Widespread Vacancies

3.6 With regard to job vacancies in the economy, the Project Team notes the findings of the ESRI’s National Survey of Vacancies in the Private Non-Agricultural Sector 1998 (October 1999). A national survey of vacancies in almost 1,100 firms in private sector Manufacturing and Services was carried out by the ESRI ... for FAS ... and Forfás... in Autumn 1998. The information supplied by the firms who participated in the survey was weighted to ensure that it is representative in terms of size and sector of all firms in the population from which the sample is drawn.... The only regions for which it is possible to provide information on vacancies are Dublin (city and county) and Rest of Ireland. The sample size does not permit a more disaggregated breakdown....

A significant minority of firms (27 per cent) said that they had current vacancies. Vacancies exist in all sectors. They are greatest in the Hi-Tech Manufacturing and Traditional Manufacturing sectors, where over half the firms had vacancies, and for large firms in all sectors, for which at least half of the firms reported vacancies.... Firms reported that they had 53,700 vacancies at the time of the survey, a vacancy rate of just under 6 per cent. For the manufacturing sector 13,800 vacancies were recorded and the vacancy rate was 5.4 per cent....

7 Other recent survey work in this area includes Labour Force ‘99 by the Chambers of Commerce of Ireland.
The occupations with the highest vacancy rates are Computer Professionals (15 per cent); Computer Technicians/Associate Professionals (14 per cent); Engineering Professionals; Engineering Technicians; Science Technicians; and Security Staff (all 11-12 per cent)…. The occupations with highest absolute number of vacancies were Production Operatives and Sales (both 8,300); Skilled Maintenance and Skilled Production (8,100); and Clerical and Secretarial (6,800). Between them these four occupations account for almost three-fifths of all vacancies.…

Almost half of the firms which had difficulties in filling vacancies said that the main reasons were a shortage of applicants with the right practical skills or the right experience while less than one-tenth cited unattractive conditions of employment.… Only a minority of firms which had hard-to-fill vacancies took steps to deal with the problem by offering higher pay. A range of short-term and medium-term non-pay strategies were adopted to try and increase the supply of workers. Short-term strategies included hiring part-time or contract staff and considering a wider range of people for the jobs available. Medium-term strategies ranged from retraining existing staff to developing links with schools and colleges.

3.7 The Forum has recently set up a Project Team to examine the issue of labour shortages and advise on practical measures to ease shortages and associated recruitment difficulties.

Persistent Disadvantage

3.8 The Project Team's own findings reflect to a large degree the scenario sketched out by the above national statistics, but there are important nuances which emerge from its local consultations.

3.9 As unemployment and long-term unemployment have already fallen dramatically, the clients now presenting to the LES and FAS and to the Employment Support Services of the DSCFA have greater needs and are harder-to-place than earlier clients. It must be recognised that with these clients the return in terms of numbers-placed will be less per unit of resource invested, and that this will continue to go down as clients with still greater needs come forward. Another point, made very strongly by LES staff and managers and other service providers on the ground, is that while economic and labour market conditions

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8 NESC wrote as follows: (S)everal pieces of evidence reviewed (not to mention international experience) suggest that further reductions in, for example, unemployment, poor educational attainment and income poverty will be more difficult to achieve than the reductions recorded to date. A basic residualisation seems to take place in several areas of social policy as those most accessible and responsive in a client pool are the first to benefit and an underlying heterogeneity in the population is only slowly revealed. The personal, family and locational circumstances of those continuing to experience social disadvantage make them less amenable to benefiting from the measures which served the better placed among them relatively well.
have improved dramatically, large sections of the population, particularly in certain disadvantaged areas, remain untouched by the economic boom. There is also a concern that as unemployment rates fall, unemployment will no longer be seen as a priority policy issue and that resources will be diverted elsewhere. The Project Team fully endorses the view that the unemployment problem has not been solved, however low the overall rate, as long as a large component of it consists of long-term unemployment.

3.10 Clients of the LES and unemployed non-clients who took part in the Project Team's focus group discussions agreed that there were a lot more job opportunities in the economy now than had previously been the case. However, many participants (in particular the non-clients) felt that there were still no jobs available for themselves. The problems they saw were that the skills or qualification requirements for the jobs were too high or else that the pay was too low for the jobs to be attractive. Both LES staff and other service providers, particularly in rural areas, also talked about the problem of low pay. Hourly rates of £2.00 to £2.50 were quoted. Another point which emerged strongly from the consultations was that men in their forties and fifties with low skills and few educational qualifications, who had been unemployed for a number of years, in some cases for more than a decade, felt that there was no way back to the workforce for them, and that employers would not hire them.

3.11 The perception of a mismatch at the margin in terms of educational requirements between labour supply (referring here to the unemployed) and labour demand (referring to employers with vacancies) is borne out by analysis conducted by the ESRI. Table 7 below presents data which illustrate this mismatch.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Vacancy Requirements (%)</th>
<th>Attainment of Unemployed (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Secondary</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Level</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The two sets of data above are not strictly comparable since 'Vacancy Requirements' refer to 1998 and 'Attainment of the Unemployed' refer to 1997 – the most recent relevant data available from the CSO.
Conclusion

3.12 The persistence of long-term unemployment at a time when there are large numbers of job vacancies in the economy reflects to some extent a mismatch between the skill and educational requirements of employers as against the skills and educational attainment of the unemployed. Nevertheless, the conclusion taken by the Project Team from the present economic boom and from the unprecedentedly high levels of jobs being created in recent years is that the problem of long-term unemployment can be effectively resolved. People who have been long-term unemployed can, in large numbers, successfully return to work, thereby improving their situation such that there is reduced risk of poverty and social exclusion. This can best be facilitated through the provision of intensive guidance and specific training, together with other supports (see Paragraph 5.6 in Section V) and the continued improvement of the incentive structure in the welfare-tax system. Now is the time of unique opportunity, and now is the time when the requisite resources are available to invest in effectively eliminating the problem of long-term unemployment. A main element in this process must be the role of the National Employment Service, and, within that, of the LES. The latter (see Section VI) should have the targeted role of working with those who are particularly distanced from work.
Section IV

LES Integration with the National Employment Service
LES Integration with the National Employment Service

4.1 This Section is divided into three main parts:

- New Institutional Arrangements,
- LES Integration with the National Employment Service,
- Conclusions.

New Institutional Arrangements

4.2 In March 1999, the Government decided on the following institutional arrangements for the National Employment Service:

the assimilation of the Local Employment Service (LES) under FÁS, as a discrete component of a more integrated, dual-stranded national Employment Service (the other component being the existing FÁS Employment Service);

the establishment of an Employment Service Advisory Committee within FÁS which shall have responsibility for advising on the operation and development of all components of the national employment service function, including the Local Employment Service;

membership of the Advisory Committee to include one representative, drawn from the main FÁS Board, of each of the following: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Department of Finance, Department of Social Community and Family Affairs, Department of Education and Science, IBEC, ICTU, Worker Director; together with a representative each from Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOU), PLANET (the representative body of the Partnerships), Area Development Management Ltd. (ADM) and the LES Co-ordinators;

the provision of central support and secretariat services by FÁS;

the transfer of operational management of the LES network from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to the Employment Support Service Unit of FÁS, under the direction of the Advisory Committee; and

the transfer, with effect from the year 2000, of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Subhead for operational management of the LES... to FÁS.
4.3 The Government's rationale for this decision was to clarify and integrate the respective roles of the two employment services, this having been put forward originally in the White Paper on Human Resource Development, and called for in other policy contributions such as the OECD's The Public Employment Service – Greece, Ireland, Portugal (September 1998), the National Competitiveness Council's Statement on Skills (December 1998), and the ESRI's National Investment Priorities for the Period 2000 to 2006 (March 1999). The Government was concerned at what was perceived as the increasing convergence between the roles and client base of the two services, with the attendant dangers of confusion, duplication and inefficiency. Overall, the Government's intention was to rationalise the employment services in order to maximise the impact of the resources deployed, particularly given the challenges in the present labour market.

4.4 In November 1999, the FÁS Board, following discussions between FÁS and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, agreed to establish the National Employment Service Advisory Committee. Nominations have recently been invited and the Committee is expected to meet in the near future. Its purpose will be to:

advise the FÁS executive on all aspects of the National Employment Service, within the framework of national policy as conveyed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, including the parameters which should be included in both the FÁS and LES plans for employment services, targeting, monitoring of activity and performance, development of best practice etc.

LES Integration with the National Employment Service

4.5 As already mentioned in Section II, the Project Team welcomes the establishment of the dual-stranded National Employment Service. However, there are a number of challenges to be met if the integration of the LES with the National Employment Service is to be successful. The main challenges, as perceived by the Project Team, are set out below.10

Clarification and Integration of Roles

4.6 Central to the whole project of establishing a dual-stranded National Employment Service is the idea of clarifying and integrating the roles of the LES and the FÁS Employment Service. The role of each strand, relative to that of the

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9 Each of these three policy contributions recommended the amalgamation of the FÁS Employment Service and the LES into one institutional structure.

10 In advance of having seen a more detailed outline of the new structural arrangements, and in advance of the first meeting of the Advisory Committee, the comments which the Project Team can make on this issue now are necessarily provisional.
other, must be clarified at national level, firstly, and, secondly, at local level in each case to cater for local variations. The Project Team considers that the role of the LES should be to provide its intensive user-friendly mediation service for the long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged groups (see Section VI) and to co-ordinate with other agencies involved in the provision of services to this client group.

4.7 It is also imperative that each strand of the National Employment Service co-operate with the other so that each can fulfil its role effectively. For example, systems for client referral between the two strands at local level must be improved. National protocols to govern such referrals and other matters would prove useful in this regard.

Retention of the LES ‘Brand’ for Long-Term Unemployed Clients

4.8 One point which emerged strongly from the Project Team’s consultations with LES clients was that they greatly value the user-friendly personalised service which the LES offers. (Many individuals in the focus groups complained that what was lacking in the FAS Service was precisely this aspect. Overall, a rather negative perception of the FAS Employment Service emerged from the focus groups with long-term unemployed people. While recognising that this was only one source of information, some Members of the Project Team felt that an evaluation of the FAS Employment Service was called for.) Though a great deal more attention needs to be paid to advertising, promotion and outreach, the LES has established a very positive ‘brand image’ in certain areas. It is important that the distinctiveness and independence of this brand are maintained and developed under the new arrangements. This will also assist the LES in fulfilling its targeted role.

Retention of LES Autonomy in relation to the Co-ordination of Services

4.9 It can be argued that the new institutional arrangements will enhance the co-ordination of services for long-term unemployed clients through improving the links between the LES and FAS. However, this may not necessarily be the case. Those currently involved in the LES have argued strongly that networking and co-ordination are processes which will work best when there is equality between the different agencies. According to this argument, if the LES becomes subordinate to FAS, it will lose status and influence with service providers. It is difficult to make a prediction about this, in the same way that it is difficult to assess the extent to which the LES currently influences service providers. LES staff complain en masse that other agencies are not responsive to them, but numerous instances of productive co-ordination at local level in certain areas

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11 With regard to co-ordination specifically between FAS and the LES, a number of distinct lines of communication can be distinguished: co-ordination and cross-referral between the two employment services, co-ordination and referral between the LES and FAS Training Services, and – in the future – budgetary planning, reporting and transfer of monies.
emerged in the Team's consultation process. One or two other service providers did remark that, if the LES was amalgamated with FÁS, then they would not deal with the LES independently of FÁS in the future. The Project Team considers that this would be a negative effect, and to guard such an effect, it is important that LES autonomy is maintained and is seen to be maintained.

Allocation of Budgets between the two Strands of the National Employment Service

4.10 If it arises that the two strands of the National Employment Service in a given area are to be funded from one budget, it is important that the respective allocations to the FÁS Employment Service and the LES reflect the diversity of local clients' needs. One concern expressed to the Project Team in the course of its consultations was that the FÁS Employment Services might be developed at the expense of the LES, without due regard to local clients' needs. Another concern was that budgetary allocations made on the basis of quantitative measures of performance would unduly penalise the LES. As already mentioned in Section II of this Report, the Project Team recognises that simple numerical indicators are not good measures of performance where the LES is working with particularly hard-to-reach, hard-to-place clients. If the LES is to focus effectively on these clients, as the Project Team argues it must, then managers must not be faced with incentive structures which would deter them from pursuing this objective.

Retention of LES Autonomy in relation to Expenditure within Budget

4.11 One of the defining characteristics of the LES is that it has had the resources and flexibility to respond in different and sometimes innovative ways to clients' needs - which vary from locality to locality. This flexibility is central to the idea of a locally-based service. It is important, therefore, that the budgetary systems put in place under the new institutional arrangements, while fulfilling the requirements of accountability, do not constrain the LES from responding flexibly on the ground.

Maintaining the Partnership Ethos of the LES

4.12 As already pointed out, the original inspiration for the model put forward in *Forum Report No. 4* came from the Contactpoint programme of the Northside Partnership. Apart from Clare and Kildare, the LES has been implemented in contract with Partnerships and has certainly benefited from the prior existence of partnership structures in many areas. Initially, under the new institutional arrangements, it was proposed that each LES would be set up as a corporate entity separate from the Partnership Company. It has now been decided by the Tánaiste that the precise arrangements will be decided upon at local level following consultation between FÁS and the Partnership Company. The Project Team considers it imperative that the partnership character of the LES is maintained under the new institutional arrangements. If, in certain areas, the
LES is set up independently from the Partnership Company, it is important that co-ordination with the Partnership Company nevertheless continues. In this regard, it is important that the composition of the LES Board/Management Committee fully reflects the partnership character of the intervention. The Project Team welcomes the representation of the Partnerships on the new Employment Services Advisory Committee.

**Improvement in FÁS-LES Relationship**

4.13 In certain areas, FÁS and the LES clearly enjoy co-operative and productive relationships. In other areas, the Project Team's consultations indicate tensions and difficulties between the two organisations. It is difficult to ascertain precisely the substance of these problems or how widespread they are. The Project Team considers that a good deal of these tensions probably result from misunderstandings, problems of perception and differences in organisational culture. It welcomes the fact that these difficulties have now been recognised openly and that a willingness to overcome them has been expressed. The introduction of the new institutional arrangements represents an excellent opportunity in this regard.

**Ensuring a Driving Role for the Employment Services Advisory Committee**

4.14 As indicated above, further information on the precise role and functioning of the Employment Service Advisory Committee is awaited. In the interim, the Project Team offers the following comments with regard to this Committee and its role.

4.15 Firstly, it is important that the Committee should build on and learn from the experience of the Policy Advisory Committee. The Forfás evaluation wrote as follows about this Committee:

> The group has met only twice and discussed general issues. There is considerable dissatisfaction at national level with the functioning of the Policy Advisory Committee and the perception of the relatively minor role that is envisaged for it. The Task Force approach implied that there would be feedback from the experience of the individual Local Employment Services, that could feed into and inform the national policy debate on long-term unemployment, and that there would be a national overview of the development of the LES by bodies representing those who at local level are involved in individual LESs.... The... Committee should be given a renewed mandate to address the policy issues arising from the LES experience, and should be structured accordingly (i.e. they should meet quarterly, have access to policy feedback, and include Co-ordinators and other staff).

4.16 Some members of the Project Team expressed concern that there had been no consultation with the parties involved between the Government decision (March 1999) to establish the National Employment Service and the decision by the FÁS Board (November 1999) on certain key elements of the new institut-
tional arrangements. It was considered that this lack of consultation did not bode well for the future role of the new Employment Services Advisory Committee.

4.17 Secondly, it is important that the new Committee fulfils the need for a stronger national driving force for the LES. The Forfás and Eustace & Clarke evaluations, and also Partnership 2000: Targeted Employment and Training Measures – Forum Opinion No. 2, all called for more leadership of the LES from a national perspective. This also emerged very clearly from the Project Team’s own consultations.

Conclusions

4.18 While welcoming the establishment of the dual-stranded National Employment Service, the Project Team has identified the following challenges as needing to be met if the integration of the LES with the National Employment Service is to be successful:

- clarification and integration of the respective LES and FÁS Employment Service roles;
- retention of the LES ‘brand’ for long-term unemployed clients;
- retention of LES autonomy in relation to the co-ordination of services;
- allocation of budgets between the two strands of the National Employment Service reflecting the diversity of local clients’ needs;
- retention of LES autonomy in relation to expenditure within budgets;
- continuation of the partnership ethos of the LES;
- improvement in FÁS-LES relationships; and
- ensuring a central, driving role for the new Employment Services Advisory Committee.
Section V

The LES and the National Employment Action Plan
The LES and the National Employment Action Plan

5.1 This Section is divided into two main parts:

- EU Guidelines 1 & 2 / Working Systematically with the Long-Term Unemployed,
- Operation of EU Guidelines 1 & 2 / Involvement of the LES to date.

EU Guidelines 1 & 2 / Working Systematically with the Long-Term Unemployed

5.2 In considering the role of the LES in the context of the National Employment Action Plan, the Project Team has focused on ‘Guidelines 1 & 2 – Tackling youth unemployment and preventing long-term unemployment’ under ‘Pillar One – Improving Employability’. These guidelines are quoted in Box 4 below.

Box 4

EU Guidelines 1 & 2 – Tackling Youth Unemployment and Preventing Long-Term Unemployment

In order to influence the trend in youth and long-term unemployment the Member States will intensify their efforts to develop preventive and employability-oriented strategies, building on the early identification of individual needs; within a period to be determined by each member state which may not exceed four years and which may be longer in Member States with particularly high unemployment, Member States will ensure that:

1. Every unemployed young person is offered a new start before reaching six months of unemployment, in the form of training, retraining, work practice, a job or other employability measure;

2. Unemployed adults are also offered a fresh start before reaching twelve months of unemployment by one of the aforementioned means or, more generally, by accompanying individual vocational guidance.

These preventive and employability measures should be combined with measures to promote the re-employment of the long-term unemployed.

(National Employment Action Plan (1999))
5.3 While recognising the achievements under the Plan thus far, the Project Team is strongly of the view that these guidelines do not give sufficient emphasis to the re-employment of the long-term unemployed. This is mentioned in the text quoted above as an additional aim rather than as a central one. The Team is of the view that the re-employment of the long-term unemployed should itself constitute a guideline, with targets, and that this should be reported on at national and European level. The Team also considers that Ireland should be taking the lead role in arguing the case in Europe for increased policy focus on re-integration of the long-term unemployed.

5.4 The Project Team recognises that systematic engagement with the long-term unemployed will be a resource-intensive process. It also recognises that success rates, measured in simple numerical terms, will be lower for this group than for the groups currently covered by Guidelines 1 & 2. However, it is crucial to make the appropriate interventions now, while labour market conditions offer considerable job opportunities.

5.5 Given the expertise and the profile it has built up, the LES, where it operates, should play a central role in any such engagement. This should be understood as an outreach to individuals who are long-term unemployed. It is considered that this would provide an impetus to individuals who – perhaps due to long-term social exclusion and demotivation – might not take the necessary first step entirely of their own accord.

5.6 If a process of engagement along the lines suggested here is undertaken, it is crucial that adequate services are in place to provide realistic progression opportunities for the clients, namely: employment placement services, appropriate training and education, bridging courses to training and education, numeracy and literacy supports, counselling services, substance-abuse services, childcare solutions, transport solutions. Not only should these services be available but they also need to be co-ordinated. In its key role of providing a gateway to services, the LES, as was originally intended, is ideally placed as a focal point for such co-ordination. However, for this to occur and to improve, it must be seen as a shared responsibility for all service providers.

5.7 The Project Team would re-iterate that many of these people will face considerable challenges in returning to the world of work. However, these challenges, in most case, are not insurmountable. For example, from the consultations process, it has emerged that some clients may need counselling before they can progress, but that a lot can be achieved in even a small number of sessions with a professional counsellor. Counsellors indicated that someone who was not ‘progression ready’ could become so in a relatively short time with the right supports. Of course, there will be cases where the problems are more intractable.
Operation of EU Guidelines 1 & 2 / Involvement of the LES to date

5.8 To end-October 1999, a total of 17,080 individuals have been referred to FÁS for interview by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (DSCFA) under Guidelines 1 & 2. FÁS notifies the DSCFA where individuals do not attend for interview or where they subsequently drop-out of the process. The DSCFA, in turn, may review the benefit entitlement of such individuals. Further details on the operation of this aspect of the National Employment Action Plan are presented in Box 5 and Table 8 below.

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**Box 5**

**Current Operation of EU Guidelines 1 & 2**

The Irish National Employment Action Plan, adopted by the Government as its response to the European Employment Guidelines, included a commitment to more systematic engagement of the employment services with the unemployed. Partial implementation of this commitment — in respect of young persons aged under 25 years — commenced on 1st September, 1998. From that date, persons in this age group who reach six months on the Live Register (LR) are being referred by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (DSCFA) for interview by FÁS. Commencing 1 March 1999, persons aged under 25 who reached 18 months on the LR were also referred. Finally persons aged 25–34 years, approaching twelve months on the LR, have been included in the referral process from May onwards. (National Employment Action Plan 1999)

It is intended that the process will be extended to cover the 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 age-brackets in the first half of this year. Data on cumulative referrals to date are provided below in Table 8.

The Project Team notes also the existence of pilot programmes in Ballyfermot and Kilkenny City where all those on the Live Register, excluding those signing for credits and those working part-time, will be referred by the DSCFA to FÁS for interview. These programmes began in September 1999 and will run for 6 to 12 months. In each area, every week, 40 cases of individuals in the 35 to 55 age-bracket unemployed for more than six months and 10 cases of individuals in the 18 to 34 age-bracket unemployed for more than eighteen months are randomly selected and referred to FÁS.
Table 8: Referrals under the NEAP to end-October 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Referrals by DSCFA</th>
<th>No. interviewed by FÁS</th>
<th>No. placed in jobs/training</th>
<th>No. of those referred who have left the Live Register</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25 at 6 months</td>
<td>14,642</td>
<td>8,902</td>
<td>4,762</td>
<td>11,547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 25 at 18 months</td>
<td>4,823</td>
<td>2,725</td>
<td>1,195</td>
<td>3,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34 at 12 months</td>
<td>4,312</td>
<td>2,859</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>2,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23,777</td>
<td>14,486</td>
<td>7,082</td>
<td>17,621</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


5.9 In some areas, under local arrangements, FÁS refers individuals called up under Guidelines 1 & 2 to the LES. In other cases, no such referral mechanism exists. Where referrals do occur, it appears that no LES provides feedback to FÁS on the progress of the individuals in question or on whether they are actively engaged with the Service. In sum, the practice varies considerably at local level, and nationally the picture is one of confusion and uncertainty.

5.10 The Project Team’s consultations uncovered a considerable divergence of views on the future involvement of the LES in the administration of Guidelines 1 & 2. Some employees and managers of the LES consider that LES involvement in this area is a natural and not unwelcome development. Others, however, argue strongly that such involvement would destroy the distinct ethos of the LES and completely undermine the voluntary and confidential nature of the service which it provides.

5.11 Government policy is that the LES will be involved in the administration of Guidelines 1 & 2 in the future. This is articulated as follows in the National Employment Action Plan.

A new and more integrated organisational arrangement between the FÁS Employment Service and the heretofore separate Local Employment Service (which to all intents and purposes has operated outside the Action Plan process) has been agreed by Government and will be put in place. This will create new synergies through more co-ordinated action and targeting, both in respect of the preventative strategy and the reintegration strategy. In addition, improved co-ordination of Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (D/SCFA) and FAS service continues apace.
5.12 Judging from the client focus groups which it conducted, the Project Team takes the view that what clients value most about the LES is the intensive user-friendly personalised service which it provides, and that this service would not necessarily be jeopardised by involvement in NEAP referrals. Moreover, the Team considers it important that the LES option should be available to individuals called up under the NEAP who would have particular need of it and who would benefit from it. Furthermore, the Team recognises that the NEAP is currently the major vehicle for national policy in relation to employment and unemployment and would not consider it desirable for the LES to be marginalised from mainstream policy through non-involvement in the NEAP.

5.13 In these circumstances, the Project Team recommends, firstly, that the LES should engage fully in the administration of Guidelines 1 & 2 of the NEAP, and, secondly, that the involvement of the LES in this function should be arranged in such a way that its distinct ethos is actively maintained. With these overall aims in mind, the national protocol detailed in Box 6 below is recommended.

5.14 Having identified the involvement of the LES in the administration of Guidelines 1 & 2 as a problem, the Project Team set itself the task of exploring the difficulties and producing a formula which would be agreeable to all parties. A sub-group of the Project Team, including representatives from FÁS (Ms. Patricia Curtin) and the DSCFA (Mr. Colm O'Neill), was set up to examine this matter. As part of this sub-group’s work, Mr. Michael Creedon undertook an informal consultation with LES Co-ordinators on the issues involved. The results of this consultation and the sub-group’s own discussions formed the basis for the national protocol proposed in Box 6 below.

5.15 The challenge for the LES, as reflected in the recommendation above, is for the Service to become involved in the administration of Guidelines 1 & 2, while at the same time maintaining its distinct ethos. In this regard, it is crucial that the mediation process should remain a client-driven process, and a process which is confidential, except with regard to the fact of active engagement or non-engagement. This information would be made available to FÁS (see below) and in turn to the DSCFA. It is, of course, also important that the LES does not become a hideaway for individuals unwilling to progress, and that it is not perceived as such by the unemployed or by the other organisations involved in administering Guidelines 1 & 2, principally the DSCFA and FÁS.
Box 6

National Protocol for the Involvement of the LES in Guidelines 1 & 2 of the NEAP

1. The LES will accept appropriate referrals from FÁS under Guidelines 1 & 2 of the NEAP. ‘Appropriate referrals’ will be individuals who are significantly distanced from work, who wish – ultimately – to find employment, and who are in need of and capable of benefiting from the LES mediation service.

2. When an individual presents for interview to FÁS under the NEAP, the Placement Officer will assess the individual’s needs and options in the customary fashion. This process may take more than one interview. If the Placement Officer considers that the individual is an appropriate candidate for the LES, the LES will be presented as an option and a description of the Service will be given. If the individual wishes to avail of this option, the Placement Officer will make an appointment with the LES on the client’s behalf, specifying the time and place of the appointment and the name of the LES mediator who will meet with the client.

3. Where the individual does not turn up for the initial LES interview, the LES will inform FÁS of this fact.

4. In the case where the individual attends for the interview, a preliminary discussion will take place in which the service is explained in more detail by the mediator and the individual is invited to register with the LES. It will be explained to the individual that since the referral is under the NEAP, the LES is obliged to report back to FÁS as outlined under 6 below, but that otherwise the process is confidential. If the individual chooses to register, the LES will then ask FÁS to transfer the individual’s file/information to the LES. It will be made clear to the individual in advance that registration will entail the transfer of his/her file/information in this manner. If the individual declines to register with the LES, the LES will inform FÁS of this fact.

5. The mediation process for the NEAP client proceeds as with other LES clients.

6. In the case where the mediation process reaches an end without the client having progressed to a training or employment opportunity, or where the mediator considers that the client is not seriously engaged in the process,
the file will be marked 'process complete' and returned to FÁS, minus any confidential case notes. Where possible, i.e. in cases where contact remains, the mediator will inform the client that this step has been taken.

7. The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, FÁS and the LES will consult and co-operate at local level on all aspects of the involvement of the LES in Guidelines 1 & 2 of the NEAP. For example, they will agree criteria for determining whether referral to the LES is appropriate. They will agree how precisely the LES option is presented to the client in the initial FÁS interview(s). They will monitor the referral and feedback processes and adopt a consultative approach towards solving any problems which arise. They will ensure that the 'process complete' label is consistently understood and applied. Each organisation will respect the ethos, objectives and working methods of the others.

8. In each area, FÁS and the LES will each nominate one member of staff who will be responsible for co-ordinating the referral and feedback processes.

9. In the case where an individual referred to FÁS under Guidelines 1 & 2 of the NEAP is already a client of the LES, the individual will be informed by FÁS that his/her engagement with the LES is now regarded as occurring under the NEAP process. The LES will be informed of this by FÁS, and will itself explain to the client the implications of this change in status, i.e. that the client's case may be subject to the feedback arrangements outlined under 6 above.

5.17 Another issue which arose in the course of the Project Team's consultations was the negative image which many LES managers and staff have of the NEAP. (Objections to the NEAP were more likely to arise in group consultations than in discussions with individuals.) It was represented in certain cases as little more than a policy of harassing unemployed people, and even as an infringement of civil liberties. While the Project Team has heard of instances of negative treatment of clients, it considers that such criticisms are not, generally speaking, valid. The administration of Guidelines 1 & 2 by the DSCFA and FÁS is far from being client-unfriendly. There is recognition of the considerable obstacles which many unemployed people face in achieving progression, and recognition also that some individuals are not 'progression ready' in the short-term.

5.18 However, the Project Team agrees that Guidelines 1 & 2 are, to an extent, popularly perceived as representing a policy emphasis on benefit fraud, and that this is counter-productive. **It is important, therefore, that the policy should**
be presented and perceived as having as its central purpose the facilitation of unemployed people in progressing to training or job opportunities or assisting them in identifying and overcoming barriers to progression. The organisations involved in administering the policy need also to continue to ensure that this is the emphasis at the point of the delivery: in particular, the dignity of all individuals must be respected. Of course, the success of the intervention, from whatever point of view, depends ultimately on the quality of the service which is provided to the client, once he or she engages.
Section VI

Targeting Strategy for the LES
Targeting Strategy for the LES

6.1 This Section is divided into six main parts:

- Target Groups Indicated by the Task Force,
- Previous Evaluation Findings,
- Consulation Feedback,
- Development of LES Caseload,
- Impact of National Employment Action Plan,
- Conclusions.

Target Groups Indicated by the Task Force

6.2 As already mentioned in Section II, current LES clients can be divided into six categories:

- long-term unemployed;
- unemployed for more than six months;
- dependent spouses of the long-term unemployed;
- lone parents;
- young unemployed; and
- others.

6.3 Of these six categories, the first five are the designated target groups put forward by the Task Force in its Interim Report. Table 9 below shows the relative size of these different groups in 1994 (as quoted by the Task Force) and in 1999. It also shows the breakdown of current LES clients, both for all clients and for clients who registered in 1999.

6.4 In its final report, the Task Force put forward a more comprehensive definition of ‘the long-term unemployed and those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed’. The definition was labelled ‘Live Register Plus’ and consisted of the following:

- long-term unemployed;
- unemployed for more than six months;
- young unemployed (aged 18-21) at risk of long-term unemployment;
• dependent spouses of unemployed people;
• lone parents; and
• recipients of Disabled Persons Maintenance Allowance (subsequently Disability Allowance).

Table 9: Relative Size (%) of LES Target Groups and Breakdown of Caseload

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relative Size of Groups in 1994 (%)</th>
<th>Relative Size of Groups in 1999 (%)</th>
<th>Total LES Clients (%)</th>
<th>LES Clients: 1999 Registrations (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-Term Unemployed</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed &gt; 6 Months</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Spouse of LTU</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parents</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Unemployed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This definition was somewhat different from the target groups proposed for the LES in the Interim Report, which simply specified ‘young unemployed’ rather than ‘young unemployed (aged 18-21) at risk of long-term unemployment’ and ‘dependent spouses of the long-term unemployed’ rather than ‘dependent spouses of unemployed people’.

6.5 It should be emphasised that the relative sizes of the target groups as outlined by the Task Force were never intended to represent targets in themselves. The Task Force’s view was that priorities in allocating the resources between the different groups should be decided at local level. In the case of lone parents, for example, it stated that people in receipt of a lone parent payment who seek out the Service should be able to avail of it.
6.6 Both the Forum and Task Force expressed the view that the overriding priority in local areas must be to help those least able or motivated. The Task Force recognised that this would entail difficult choices, particularly in regard to how those easiest to place are treated, but believed that priority must be given to those most in need and who are not benefiting or even being reached through existing measures.

Previous Evaluation Findings

6.7 The Forfás evaluation examined a number of interventions in other countries designed to tackle unemployment. It concluded that 'positive programme outcomes are most likely when the targeting is relatively precise and programme activities are designed to meet the needs of individuals or particular groups, rather than unemployed people in general'.

6.8 The Forfás analysis suggested that:

while the Contact Point can be a referral point/gateway for all the unemployed in an area, the job placement/mediation/guidance services should be aimed at those within the target groups, and the more intensive guidance should be aimed at the especially disadvantaged, demotivated, etc.

6.9 While Forfás concluded that the LES was, in general, reaching the target groups envisaged by the Task Force, it saw pressures towards less, rather than more, focus on those most difficult to place. It recommended that criteria for the selection and referral of clients at the various stages of the LES process be clarified and specified and that processes for handling and referring non-priority clients should be reviewed by the local LES Management Committees.

6.10 The Eustace & Clarke evaluation expressed concern at the significant proportion of clients classified as 'Other' and at what they saw as a tendency to drift from the specified groups. They concluded that, even given the current economic boom, there was a need for a one to one, person-centred service ... in particular for the hard-core, long-term unemployed individuals who, even in a buoyant labour market, remain marginalised and struggle to access and achieve employment.

Consultation Feedback

6.11 The consultations which took place with Partnership Managers and LES Co-ordinators and staff established a variety of definitions of who should constitute the target groups. There was general agreement that targeting should occur on the basis of 'distance from the labour market' rather than the fact of being on the Live Register for a certain duration. However, the area-based nature of the LES and the concomitant importance of responding to
local needs was also emphasised. In this regard, many potential target groups were identified, including the long-term unemployed, early school-leavers, youth at risk of unemployment, lone parents, women returning to the workforce, people with disabilities, Travellers, those with addictions, ex-offenders, small farmers, spouses of those on low incomes, refugees, widows, participants on CE or Job Initiative etc. It was argued that different areas have different populations and needs. In one area, for example, there might be large numbers of Travellers, both settled and transitory, with very specific needs. In another area, there might be a large numbers of lone parents. Flexibility in targeting policy, allowing the LES to respond to local needs, was seen as being a key requirement.

6.12 Another particular concern expressed was that if the LES became exclusively associated with the long-term unemployed and other difficult-to-place clients, that the Service would become marginalised, that employers would develop negative perceptions of it and that this would adversely affect its ability to place clients. As against this, however, the survey of employers conducted by the Project Team indicated that most employers already associate the LES with the long-term unemployed.

6.13 Other service providers consulted by the Project Team, including FÁS, the DSCFA and the VEC, often commented that the LES was not attending to the target groups it had been set up to cater for.

**Development of the LES Caseload**

6.14 Table 10 below gives the evolution of the LES caseload since start-up. The proportion of the caseload accounted for by the long-term unemployed has increased from 41 per cent in November 1996 to 47 at end-1999 (49 per cent of new registrations in 1999), and the proportion accounted for by lone parents has doubled to a level of 16 per cent at end 1999 (17 per cent of new registrations in 1999). The proportion of caseload accounted for by those unemployed for more than 6 months has dropped by one third to 11 per cent (8 per cent of new registrations in 1999), and the proportion accounted for by ‘Others’ has almost halved to 13 per cent (13 per cent of new registrations in 1999). The proportion accounted for by dependent spouses of the long-term unemployed has increased over the period, from 1 to 2 per cent (3 per cent of new registrations in 1999).

6.15 The Project Team would regard these as positive developments. The three groups with an increased share (long-term unemployed, dependent spouses of the long-term unemployed and lone parents) are also those which, on average, have the greatest needs, as reflected, for example, in their lower job-placement
rates relative to the other three groups (see Section II). As discussed below, the Project Team is strongly of the view that priority must be given to the continued development of the LES caseload in this direction.

6.16 Together, the 'Other' category, the young unemployed and those unemployed for more than 6 months currently account for 35 per cent of total LES caseload. Of course, this is an average. Looking at the figures for individual LESs, the proportion of caseload accounted for by these three categories ranges from 10 per cent to 62 per cent.\textsuperscript{12} The 'Other' category alone ranges from 1 per cent to 34 per cent. The long-term unemployed category ranges from 25 per cent to 80 per cent. It is in this context that the concerns of the two evaluations with regard to 'drift' and the danger of drift, and the similar comments by other service providers in the Project Team's consultations, are best understood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10: Evolution of LES Caseload since Start-Up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total LES Clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as of November '96 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as of end '99 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrations (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-Term Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed &gt; 6 Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Spouses of LTU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Initial Review of the Local Employment Service, Holos Database.

Impact of National Employment Action Plan

6.17 The implementation of the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) has a number of implications for LES targeting, which are as follows.

6.18 Firstly, since young unemployed and short-term unemployed are to be systematically referred to the FÁS Employment Service under the NEAP, the LES no longer needs to target these two groups. Individuals in these two groups whose needs could best be dealt with by the LES would in any case be referred

\textsuperscript{12} There are a number of different factors which may explain a large proportion of clients in the 'Other' category, for example involvement in a programme to assist a large number of employees made redundant at one time (not strictly LES target clients) or a large caseload pre-existing the establishment of the LES.
to the LES under the proposed National Protocol put forward in Section V. Of course, young persons who are long-term unemployed can access the LES on the basis of this status.

6.19 There is some confusion surrounding the precise definition of the ‘young unemployed’ category. Some LESs define the category as covering (unregistered) unemployed under the age of 18, while national policy (as per the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment) is that the LES can only deal with such clients on an exceptional basis. Of those in the young unemployed category at end-1999, 86 per cent are 18 or over. Of those in the category who registered in 1999, 70 per cent are 18 or over. In the future, the majority of this client stream would be covered by the NEAP. However, since individuals under the age of 18 are not eligible for Unemployment Assistance, a proportion of this client stream would not be covered under the NEAP. This sub-group is returned to again below.

6.20 Working with the 1999 registration figures, if both of the above groups (apart from the under-18 sub-group) are removed from the stream, long-term unemployed, dependent spouses of long-term unemployed, and lone parents would account for 82 per cent of new registrations. (In its conclusion below, the Project Team is recommending a proportion of this order.)

6.21 **Secondly**, since the NEAP does not currently envisage a systematic engagement with the long-term unemployed (the Project Team argues in Section V that it should), the efforts of the LES to engage this group must be strengthened. In general, the re-vitalisation of the FAS Employment Service implies a much more specific focus for the LES. Such a focus should see a reduction in the proportion of caseload accounted for by the current ‘Others’ category. The fact that the present placement rate for this category is higher than that for the long-term unemployed group suggests that the ‘Others’ group does not, on average, comprise those who are particularly distanced from work, but rather people who are relatively less distanced from work.

6.22 **Thirdly**, under the proposed National Protocol, a new stream of clients to all LESs – referrals under the NEAP – will be introduced.

Conclusions

6.23 The Project Team considers that the rationale for the LES is as strong as it has ever been. Long-term unemployment has been falling rapidly, but those who remain long-term unemployed, and other disadvantaged groups such as lone parents and people with disabilities, have relatively greater needs and many will require the intensive, user-friendly guidance which the LES provides. In this respect, the Project Team would emphasise the need to tackle resolutely the
residualisation process now occurring, whereby, for example, older males now account for a rising proportion of both male long-term unemployment and total long-term unemployment. While this group will be particularly difficult to assist, the Team wishes to emphasise that the LES can be especially useful now in this regard, given the job opportunities currently available in the labour market.

6.24 The continuing rationale for the LES is dependent on its activities being focused on those most in need. There are two aspects to this focus. In the first instance, the Project Team recommends that priority be given to operating the LES in areas of particular disadvantage where the model can be successfully deployed. In the second instance, within any given locality, the Project Team recommends that the activities of the LES be concentrated on those most in need within that locality.

6.25 Accordingly, the challenge for the LES is to ensure that its services are concentrated on those who most need them. It is imperative that this objective is reflected in the targeting and outreach strategies (see Section VIII). If the LES is not concentrated on those most in need (both male and female), then the justification for the resource-intensity of the service is called into question.

6.26 The Project Team recommends, as a national guiding principle, that 80 per cent of new LES clients should comprise the following:

- registered long-term unemployed;
- those who have been registered unemployed for at least 12 months in the latest 36 months and who are in danger of becoming registered long-term unemployed;
- dependent spouses of registered long-term unemployed ('Qualified Adults');
- lone parents; and
- those in receipt of Disability Allowance.

6.27 Of course, any such figure is somewhat arbitrary. What is important, however, is the driving emphasis. Flexibility around this guiding principle will be required at local level to ensure that the LES can respond to identified, verified local needs. In rural areas, for example, where the LES may be the only employment service available in certain localities, the guiding principle may not be appropriate.

6.28 The remaining 20 per cent of new clients should comprise:

- referrals to the LES under the NEAP; and
• individuals not included in the above 80 per cent target category, but who are particularly distanced from work.

With regard to the latter of these subheadings, the Project Team has in mind, for example, young people under the age of 18 who, while not on the Live Register, are effectively unemployed and particularly distanced from work (the needs of this group are focused on to an extent by the Education (Welfare) Bill 1999), and women, again not on the Live Register, who are also effectively unemployed and particularly distanced from work. In assessing distance from work, account should be taken of the following factors:

• length of time unemployed;
• educational attainment;
• skills and experience;
• work history;
• address;
• gender;
• ethnic/cultural background;
• transport needs;
• childcare needs;
• low self-esteem and confidence;
• perception of work as comparing unfavourably to staying on social welfare;
• disabilities;
• past addictions;
• criminal record.

The LES should seek to highlight these factors so as to promote a better appreciation of the complexities of our long-term unemployment problem.

6.29 Depending on the volume of referrals to the LES under the NEAP, the 80–20 proportions recommended here should be monitored, and revised if necessary, in the light of experience. This task could be undertaken by the Employment Services Advisory Committee.
Section VII

Extending an LES-type Service to Other Areas
Extending an LES-type Service to Other Areas

7.1 This Section is divided into two main parts:

- Applicability of the LES Model to Rural Areas,
- Extension to Other Areas.

Applicability of the LES Model to Rural Areas

7.2 In common with other analyses, the Project Team has identified problems with regard to the applicability of the LES to rural areas. The central difficulty may be stated broadly as follows. In the urban model, the logic of the mediation process is that the client will proceed to a training or education opportunity or to a job. In rural areas, and particularly in the more remote areas, there is a lack of both jobs and training opportunities within the geographic reach of the client. Therefore, the urban-model mediation process operating in rural areas could, at worst, be characterised as a means to no end. It is this central difficulty which led the Forfás evaluation to conclude that:

the LES model should only be considered for areas with an active labour market, which generally implies large urban areas and networks of rural towns.

7.3 However, it is clearly unsatisfactory to leave the matter there. Long-term unemployment is a nationwide phenomenon. The numbers in certain areas may be small in nominal terms, but this does not diminish the extent of the problem for the individuals and communities concerned.\textsuperscript{13} Horizontal equity in the provision of State services requires that an intervention which is made available to long-term unemployed people in urban areas should, in so far as is reasonable, also be made available in rural areas. If this principle is accepted, the problem then becomes one of developing an LES-type model which is applicable to rural areas. On this note, the Forfás evaluation said the following:

Peripheral rural areas should be serviced through LES outreaches. In addition, a special rural mediation/development initiative should be undertaken directly under the auspices of the rural-based Partnerships.

\textsuperscript{13} The White Paper on Rural Development (August 1999) states as follows: 'The National Economic and Social Forum... [Forum Report No. 12 – Rural Renewal: Combating Social Exclusion (1997)] identified the following groups as being at an increased risk of poverty in rural areas: unemployed people, women, people with a disability, older people, migrants, local authority tenants, travellers, lone parents, Gaeltacht communities, fishermen and farmers on small holdings. There is convincing research evidence that unemployment is the main factor causing poverty. While there has been a considerable reduction in unemployment, long-term unemployment remains a problem, accounting for 50% of the unemployed in 1998 (compared to 64% in 1987).'}
7.4 The Forum also commented as follows in *Partnership 2000: Targeted Employment and Training Measures – Forum Opinion No. 2*.

*The Forum is also concerned at the lack of focus on expanding the LES into rural areas with significant levels of unemployment and under-employment and re-iterates its concern that further work be done to promote the most effective model of delivery for the LES in these areas.*

7.5 The Project Team recommends that one of the first tasks for the new Employment Service Advisory Committee should be the development of an appropriate model for the provision of an LES-type service in rural areas. The following issues need to be addressed in this regard:

- the need for the service to be part of an integrated strategy for rural development;
- the overall requirement to facilitate responsiveness to local needs;
- targeting – a narrowly defined target group may not be appropriate in remote rural areas;
- outreach – the methods of outreach appropriate and effective for a rural client population will to some extent be different to those in urban areas;
- the appropriate vehicle for the delivery of the LES-type service;
- the appropriate balance of direct service provision versus a gateway role;
- specific difficulties with the co-ordination of services – apart from logistical issues, the Project Team’s consultations suggest that the ‘relationship’ challenges of inter-agency co-ordination may be greater in certain rural areas than in urban areas;
- the challenges of identifying and providing appropriate services which are accessible to the client;
- the specific needs of underemployed clients in contrast to those who are unemployed;
- the role of enterprise support, including support for self-employment;
- transport difficulties;
- the need for the LES role to be sufficiently well-defined so that the intervention does not drift into a general community development role, thereby leading to duplication of effort and inefficiency in the use of resources;
- the specific skills needs for LES staff in rural areas; and
- the additional costs of providing an LES-type service in rural areas.
Extension to Other Areas

7.6 As already mentioned, Partnership 2000 included a commitment that the LES be extended throughout the country, initially to the Partnership Areas within the lifetime of the agreement. The White Paper on Rural Development (August 1999) also gave the undertaking that:

the Local Employment Service and the national FÁS Employment Service will work together effectively and in a co-ordinated way to ensure that employment opportunities in rural areas are accessible to those in need, including women, small holders and people with disabilities.

7.7 Ultimately, an LES-type service should be made available throughout the country. The Project Team recommends that the LES be introduced into disadvantaged areas where the existing model can successfully operate. In the case of those areas where the existing model manifestly cannot service the needs of local communities, the introduction of an LES-type service should occur once the appropriate model has been developed. In these cases, the provision of an LES-type service may not necessitate the setting-up of an LES per se. The service might also be provided by the FÁS Employment Service or through another vehicle. The operation of existing LESs in rural areas could also be revised or adjusted in line with the rural model, once it has been developed.
Section VIII

LES Outreach to Long-Term Unemployed Clients
LES Outreach to Long-Term Unemployed Clients

8.1 This Section is divided into two main parts:

- Background and Consultation Feedback,
- Model of Good Practice.

Background and Consultation Feedback

8.2 A finding which has emerged from the consultation process is that the LES in recent times has increasingly been dealing with clients who have considerable needs, and who are considerably distanced from work, relative to the first wave of clients who used the Service in its earlier years. Given the continuing fall in long-term unemployment, and particularly if the targeting strategy recommended in this Report is adopted, this tendency will intensify in the future.

8.3 In recommending that the LES should focus on those who are most-in-need, the Project Team is conscious of the fact that these clients are often the most difficult to reach. For example, in many cases, they do not engage with the community and voluntary groups with which an LES would typically have contacts. Also, literacy difficulties may render many written methods of outreach ineffective. There are numerous other barriers to contact/engagement, some of which have been mentioned already in this Report. Others include lack of childcare, and lack of peer/family encouragement for individuals to progress, particularly where there is a history of inter-generational unemployment.

8.4 To tackle difficulties such as these requires a very innovative and energetic approach to outreach. Such an approach will be a key component in successfully implementing the proposed new targeting strategy for the LES.

8.5 The consultation process has indicated that the establishment of LES contact points in the community does not in itself accomplish the job of outreach. A wide variety of different methods are at present employed by the LES to reach potential clients, including the following:

- employment of designated outreach workers;
- knocking on doors;
- targeted posters;
- leaflet drops;
- open days;
- free-phone numbers;
- advertising (in local radio and press, on supermarket receipts, in parish newsletters etc.); and
- neighbourhood coffee mornings/evenings.

8.6 Varying degrees of success are reported for these different methods, with no one method consistently being seen as the best. However, it did emerge that community support for outreach activity was a crucial factor in determining its success. For example, in one area where the rapport with the community had not been sufficiently developed, a policy of knocking on people’s doors met with considerable hostility and had to be discontinued, whereas in another area, where considerable groundwork had already been done, the same method met with a positive response. LES staff have emphasised that the process of building trust in a community is a slow one. Concerns were expressed that any compulsion on long-term unemployed people to use the LES could damage the trust that had been built up to date.

8.7 Despite the different forms of outreach listed above, all of the Team’s focus-group discussions, with both clients and non-clients, indicated that much needed to be done in terms of advertising/publicising the LES. This was also the almost unanimous feedback from the employers’ survey. Many unemployed people and employers have never heard of the LES or have heard of it but do not know what it does. Word-of-mouth recommendation is still the most usual way that unemployed people hear of the LES, indicating that the credibility of the Service on the ground is a key factor in building confidence and client numbers. The suggestion that a national advertising campaign be conducted was made a number of times.

8.8 The question of outreach in rural areas raises a number of distinct problems. For example, potential clients’ lack of transport facilities reduces the effectiveness of contact points, and, in many cases, the Service may have to be developed on a mobile-clinic basis.

Model of Good Practice

8.9 The models of good practice presented in this Section and in Sections IX, X and XI were originally developed by Eustace & Clarke but have been adapted and revised in the course of the current exercise. Each model consists of a series of statements, with each statement constituting a key criterion of good practice in that particular area of activity. The idea is that the existing activity of
each LES should be measured – in a systematic and objective fashion – against these key criteria, using the rating scale set out in Box 7 below. This set of measurements would constitute a benchmark, against which the progress of the LES could subsequently be assessed. At least one such review of performance per year is recommended. It is important that a variety of reliable data and evidence be employed to determine the ratings.

### Box 7

**Rating System for Models of Good Practice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of current performance against criterion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This criterion is being fully and successfully achieved.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This criterion is being achieved but there are some development needs.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This criterion is being achieved to a reasonable extent but there is still work to be done.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a considerable way to go before this criterion is fully achieved.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This criterion is not being achieved at all.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Box 8

**Model of Good Practice for LES Outreach**

*Key criteria:*

- A long-term strategy has been developed to build confidence in the LES among potential clients and community groups.
- Activity is geared towards employment placement rather than community development.
- Activity responds to identified local needs.
- Activity is focused on those most in need.
- Contact points are based in community organisations, situated within easy reach of the target group, and are accessible and friendly.
- Proactive outreach, supported by the community, is undertaken to attract and engage clients.

- Outreach workers are known and trusted in the community.

- Clients and potential clients are respected, for example through being met on their own territory, and through the use of appropriate language.

- Information provided is accurate and up-to-date.

- Promotional literature or advertising clearly explains the service in appropriate language.

- Clients are assisted to make the transition from informal outreach contact to the formal, structured approach of mediation.

- Outreach is used to follow-up with clients who have dropped out of the LES.

- Guidelines are in place for all sub-contractual arrangements covering objectives, responsibilities and boundaries, staffing, targets, monitoring and review.

- Roles and responsibilities of contact points and centre(s) are well defined, including guidelines on boundaries of service provision, and standards for client progression and client referral.

- The local community participates in the LES, e.g. clients or community groups are involved in LES Boards/Management Committees, and clients or community groups contribute to plans and provide feedback on service provision.
Section IX

Co-ordination of Services for the Long-Term Unemployed
Co-ordination of Services for the Long-Term Unemployed

9.1 This Section is divided into two main parts:
   - Background and Consultation Feedback,
   - Model of Good Practice.

Background and Consultation Feedback

9.2 The Task Force stated that agencies should:

   work with, in and through the local framework within the parameters of the agreed plan, to ensure that a coherent and co-ordinated service is delivered to the unemployed.

9.3 Both the Forfás and Eustace & Clarke evaluations concluded that considerable work remained to be done towards achieving this aim. Eustace & Clarke found that successful networking was more dependent on personality than organisational protocol. Both Forfás and Eustace & Clarke called for renewed emphasis on the gateway role of the LES.

9.4 The Project Team’s consultation process confirmed that networking/co-ordination relies on local personalities rather than organisational protocol. Many examples of effective networking were cited by LES staff and other service providers, but all agreed that considerable work remains to be done in this field. The networking which occurs in some areas is considerably weaker and less productive than that in other areas. In some areas, the different agencies barely communicate. The Project Team asked repeatedly during the course of its consultations as to what should be done at national level to promote networking/co-ordination at local level. One response was that national agencies had to encourage local flexibility, and that top management in these agencies needed to send a clear message to middle managers calling for networking/co-ordination. The lack of integrated service provision between the statutory and voluntary/community sectors was also seen as a limiting factor, as were resource constraints, which can hamper the ability of agencies to respond to LES proposals.

9.5 In addition to the success stories which emerged in the consultations, there were numerous example of mistrust or even hostility between agencies. Some agencies expressed wariness of the LES on the grounds that it is unfairly
resource-rich and unaccountable. Lack of feedback on clients referred to the LES was seen as being a particular problem by certain agencies\textsuperscript{14}, and the refusal of the LES to accept referrals (for example, from the DSCFA in certain areas) was characterised as irresponsible. Further complaints by other service providers included LES drift from its client group, competition for certain clients, competition in the provision of certain services (primarily training) and lack of understanding of other agencies’ objectives and constraints. From the LES point of view, other service providers were sometimes seen as unresponsive and inflexible and, in some cases, as treating the LES as a ‘dumping ground’ for difficult clients.

Model of Good Practice

9.6 The following model of good practice is recommended. It should be applied using the rating system presented in Box 7 (see Section VIII). Since networking/co-ordination is a responsibility of all service providers, and not simply the LES, all network partners should have their networking performance assessed on a regular, systematic and objective basis, using a model along the lines of the one presented below.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Box 9}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textit{Model of Good Practice for LES Networking}
\end{center}

\textit{Key Criteria:}

- LES’s networking partners treat LES as equals, understanding and respecting the aims, constraints and cultures of the LES.

- LES treats its networking partners as equals, understanding and respecting the aims, constraints and cultures of the other organisations.

- Awareness of LES in the community is actively promoted.

- LES keeps the community informed of activities and developments.

- Internal guidelines on the practicalities of networking have been developed.

- Guidelines on the networking roles and responsibilities of outreach, contact-point, mediation and employer-liaison staff have been developed.

\textsuperscript{14} The Task Force saw it as critical that appropriate exchanges of information occur to allow the progress of individuals to be tracked and, thereby, facilitated.
- External networks (both one-to-one and group-based) between all levels of LES staff and their counterparts in local organisations such as FAS, DSCFA, VEC, and community, voluntary and support groups have been created and are developed on an on-going basis.

- Clear protocols for communication and engagement with network partners have been agreed between LES and network partners.

- Networking processes are subject to regular review.

- Collaborative projects with network partners are undertaken.

- The extent of a candidate's links with network partners is an important factor in the decision to recruit for the LES.

- The LES Board/Management Committee functions well as a partnership body.

- The members of the LES Board/Management Committee are interested, committed, capable and accountable individuals who feed back to their organisations and have sufficient influence to effect change.

- Client feedback is incorporated into the process of service development.

- Barriers to integrated service provision are regularly identified, challenged and overcome.
Section X

LES Liaison with Employers
LES Liaison with Employers

10.1 This Section is divided into two main parts:

- Background and Consultation Feedback,
- Model of Good Practice.

Background and Consultation Feedback

10.2 Forum Report No. 4 emphasised that the involvement of employers in the Employment Service would be an important ingredient in the success of the intervention. It concluded that:

>The active co-operation, support and involvement of employers with the Service will be critical to its success. The Service must be in a position to provide a quality service to employers so that they use it to notify and subsequently fill vacancies. This requires that employers are involved both at local and national levels in the administration of the Service. Trade union commitment and involvement will, of course, be also indispensable.

10.3 A number of different models of employer liaison have evolved since the LES was first set up. In the original model, the mediator played the link role between the employer and the unemployed client. While this is still the case in some LESs, in most LESs, one particular member of staff has now been designated Employer Liaison Officer (ELO). This has been in response to employers’ preferences for a single point of contact with the LES, while at the same time allowing mediators to devote more time to unemployed clients. Mediators do continue to play a role in employer liaison, for example through the provision of ‘aftercare’ to the previously unemployed client and the employer.

10.4 The surveys of employers conducted by Forfás and Eustace & Clarke both found that employers were reasonably positive about the LES, but that they wished to see the LES develop a closer relationship with them and conduct better screening of candidates. The Forfás evaluation recommended various forms of engagement with employers, including the following: targeting particular vacancies at local level, building structured relationships with lead companies, and establishing special arrangements with companies coming into an area. It also highlighted a tension between the LES objective of focusing on the most in need and the aim of building credibility with employers as a placement service. This difficulty was seen as an argument in favour of a mixed client group, or of a tiered provision of service, as follows:
the contact points... [would be] a general access point for all-comers and the general unemployed;

- the initial mentoring/information and advice... [would be] aimed at clients from the priority groups; and

- the intensive job-advocacy and guidance services... [would be] for the disadvantaged within the priority groups.

10.5 Some LESs have attempted to overcome this tension through the establishment of independent job-matching services, either directly or through the Partnership Companies. Such services draw job-ready clients from a variety of backgrounds, some within the LES target groups, and others outside these groups, for example people who are short-term unemployed or school leavers.

10.6 The survey of employers conducted in preparing this Report confirmed some of the findings from the previous studies, but produced one answer which was quite different (see below) and also provided some useful additional insights into why employers come back to the LES. The main findings from the survey of employer users (of the LES) and non-users were as follows:

- The reason for contact with the LES was to fill vacancies. Few had contact for other reasons. Where other contact did take place, it related to future recruitment and/or training needs. Unlike the previous studies, few respondents indicated that they wanted more interaction with the LES. Those that did suggested that the LES might contact them when candidates were job-ready. In fact, consultation with LES staff suggests that this is how many LESs already operate, i.e. contact is made with employers only when a job-ready candidate is available.

- The majority of employer-users had used the LES at least twice and had successfully filled vacancies, at least half of the time.

- The main reasons for repeat usage of the LES were because employees taken on through the LES had worked out well (60% of respondents), the employer had a good relationship with a particular member of the LES staff (43%), and staff had provided a helpful and prompt service (33% and 27%, respectively).

- Non-users were asked what would attract them to use the LES. The majority (56%) responded that the provision of suitable, job-ready candidates was what they required.

- Suggestions for improvements to the service mirrored the findings of previous surveys, i.e. more advertising/promotion and better screening/seletion of candidates. These suggestions were also made by employers currently not using the LES. Few of these non-users were aware of the LES and those that were understood it as an intervention to assist the long-term unemployed.
Many of the non-users indicated that they thought it unlikely that the LES would be able to help them, particularly for skilled workers, although a small proportion of respondents did indicate that the LES might be able to offer trained candidates.

The majority of both samples of employers indicated that there was currently duplication in the public provision of placement services.

Model of Good Practice

10.7 The following model of good practice is recommended. It should be applied as outlined in Section VIII of the Report, using the rating system presented in Box 7.

**Box 10**

**Model of Good Practice for LES Liaison with Employers**

*Key Criteria:*

- The model of employer liaison used responds to local circumstances.
- Strategic relationships with employers, employer groups and other network partners have been developed.
- Internal protocols have been developed covering when and how staff should deal with employers, including provision for feedback and monitoring.
- Where an Employer Liaison Officer has been appointed, he or she is regularly in contact with mediators.
- Where an Employer Liaison Officer has been appointed, he or she meets clients who are ready for placement.
- The objectives, constraints, ethos and working methods of the LES have been explained and are understood by employer users.
- Time is made available to deal with employers.
- Employers' needs and recruitment practices are understood.
- Employers are dealt with in a professional fashion: responses are timely; appropriate language is used; information provided is accurate.
- LES is open and honest with employers.

/*...*/
• Employers are visited in their premises.

• Guidelines are in place to ensure that clients presented to employers are genuinely job-ready and suitable for the position in question.

• Aftercare is provided to both the client and the employer, as appropriate.

• Working relationships have been developed with local employers to facilitate the identification of non-advertised vacancies and to determine staff and skill needs in advance.

• Employers participate actively in the LES, for example in the LES Board/Management Committee.
Section XI

Organisation and Management of the LES at Local Level
Organisation and Management of the LES at Local Level

11.1 This Section is divided into three main parts:

- Background,
- Consultation Feedback,
- Model of Good Practice.

Background

11.2 The Task Force envisaged LES Management Committees operating under the auspices of Partnerships (where they existed), with the Partnerships determining the chair, membership and structure of the Committee in each case. Committees would have responsibility for overseeing the formulation of an overall plan for the provision of services to the long-term unemployed in their areas, while responsibility for the provision of the different services would rest with the individual agencies. Other responsibilities of the Committees would include setting objectives and targets, developing linkages and providing feedback to the agencies on the operation of the LES in general and on how the core services of agencies might be changed or improved. This latter function assumed that agency representatives on Management Committees would be able to influence decision-making, directly or indirectly, in their own agencies on the basis of the feedback provided.

11.3 While nearly all LESs are linked to Partnerships, a variety of arrangements in terms of reporting structures, responsibilities and controls exist. Forfás concluded that the quality and detail of the LES plans varied considerably. The commitment and influence of agency representatives on Management Committees was also reported to vary considerably. Both Forfás and Eustace & Clarke noted different degrees of participation in Management Committees by the community and the unemployed. Eustace & Clarke, building on the work done in this area by the INOU, identified a need to develop guidelines covering user representation.

11.4 Eustace & Clarke concluded that where strong local leadership was absent a number of consequences could arise. These included a drift away from the target group, piecemeal service development, reduced staff commitment and motivation, and absence of or reduced credibility with local employers and other service providers. They recommended that Management Committees be
facilitated and supported to develop an understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

11.5 The Forfás review recognised the demanding nature of mediation and emphasised the need for staff supports such as teamwork, good referral systems, access to progression opportunities, a reasonable mix of clients, regular caseload review with the co-ordinator, and on-going training. Both the Forfás and Eustace & Clarke evaluations recommended regular systematic review of all caseload clients by staff, the development of formal quality standards, and clarification of key reporting requirements and standard categories in the Caseload Database (CDB). It was also recommended that ground rules on the exchange of information should be reviewed and made explicit.

Consultation Feedback

11.6 Many of the points made by previous evaluations were echoed in the present consultation process. Particular challenges referred to included: the recruitment of staff in urban areas; provision of supports to mediators (e.g. counselling, supervision, team structures) and Management Committees; the development of procedures to monitor quality, including setting appropriate performance criteria; the development of a rural model for LES operations; and the development of a framework through which learning and good practice at local level can be communicated to policy-makers.

11.7 It was generally felt that the national structures that the LES had been operating under were weak and that the LES, as a result, lacked a national strategic vision.

11.8 The view was also generally expressed that the CDB was not an appropriate tool to measure quality of service as it does not reflect the process or extent of engagement with the client. Concern was expressed that the CDB was used to compile numerical comparisons between LES with FÁS caseloads. Given the different nature of the services provided and the priority target groups of the LES, it was felt that a direct comparison between the two services, particularly on a cost-per-client basis, was not valid.

11.9 Finally, PLANET representatives argued very strongly for a continuing role for Partnerships in the development of the LES. The principal reasons put forward included the need for local flexibility and ownership in order for the LES to be successful. The LES was seen as fulfilling the Partnerships’ remit to address unemployment, and the overlap between Partnership boards and LES Management Committees was seen as assisting in the development of local networking.
Model of Good Practice

11.10 The following model of good practice is recommended. It should be applied as outlined in Section VIII of the Report (using the rating system presented in Box 7).

Box 11

Model of Good Practice for LES Organisation and Management at Local Level

Key Criteria:

- The objectives, responsibilities and activities of the LES nationally have been clearly articulated and are understood by the LES Board/Management Committee, managers and staff.

- The specific local objectives, responsibilities and activities of the LES have been clearly articulated and understood by the LES Board/Management Committee, managers and staff.

- A local plan has been developed which is used as a management tool to monitor the performance and strategic direction of the Service.

- Objectives and activities are reviewed on an on-going basis.

- Financial, operational and service-quality performance indicators are in place and are used for on-going monitoring.

- The LES’s activities are integrated with the service provision of local, statutory, voluntary and community organisations.

- Effective working links with the local Partnership Company are in place and subject to periodic review.

- Effective working links with FÁS Services are in place and subject to periodic review.

- Regular consultation and analysis of needs with target groups occurs, through formal and informal mechanisms for gaining feedback.

- Regular, systematic review by staff of all clients occurs.

- Ethos of organisation supports organisational learning and development as an ongoing process.

- All social partners are involved in the LES on a continual basis through representation on the Board and/or other forums such as network groups set-up for specific purposes.

/...
- Where applicable, Board members are capable of effecting change within their own organisations.

- Attention is given on an ongoing basis to facilitating the working of the Board as a group.

- Attention is given on an on-going basis to ensuring the equality of Board members.

- All Board members, including, for example, user representatives, have access to support and facilitation to fulfil their membership roles.

- Terms of reference are in place outlining the respective roles and responsibilities of the Board and Co-ordinator, including reporting protocols.

- Board meetings occur regularly as per an agreed and communicated schedule.

- All Board meetings have a large majority of Board members in attendance.

- Formal and informal interaction between all levels of staff in the LES occurs on a regular basis, including meetings between the Board and all staff and between the Co-ordinator and all staff.

- Staff are consulted on key operational decisions.

- Guidelines and standards for service have been developed.

- Staff are well supported, for example through appropriate training, case supervision, and team structures.

- Criteria have been developed for assessing employability and job-readiness in a consistent way.

- Criteria have been developed for closure or cessation of cases, with or without placement, and for managing clients who persist in abusing the social welfare system or who do not engage seriously in the mediation process.

- Available, relevant data are systematically analysed to observe trends and isolate issues.

- Consistent definitions are understood and applied to data classifications by all staff.

- All staff have been properly trained in the use of data systems.

- Explicit ground rules for the exchange of information, both internally and externally, have been agreed.
References


Project Team on the Local Employment Service: Terms of Reference

1. The aim of the Project Team is to produce a set of practical development proposals designed to assist the LES in meeting its objectives, as part of the overall national strategy to eliminate long-term unemployment. These proposals will be presented in a concise report, which the Team intends to complete by end-December 1999.

2. The project will be forward-looking rather than retrospective. In line with this, and in order not to duplicate work which has already been carried out, the Team will not undertake a comprehensive review of the LES. It intends to focus on specific themes (see below), to learn from the considerable amount of evaluation work which has already been completed, at both national and local levels, and to build on agreed conclusions arising from this work.

3. Overall, the Team will seek to clarify the distinct role of the LES in the context of the National Employment Action Plan, the agreed institutional arrangements for the National Employment Service, and the changed economic environment.

4. The Team will focus on the following specific themes: (i) targeting, (ii) outreach to unemployed clients, (iii) facilitating client progression through the co-ordination of services, (iv) liaison with employers, and (v) organisation and management at local LES level. The Team will identify best practice and produce recommendations designed to support the implementation of best practice.

5. An introductory section in the report will present the history of the LES and a brief review of performance to date, with particular reference to the recommendations and expectations of Forum Report No. 4.

6. The Team will conduct its work through analysis of existing written material and data and through a programme of consultations with parties involved in the LES. Written submissions will be invited from organisations represented on the Forum (apart from those represented on the Project Team itself) and from other selected parties.

7. In the conduct of its work, the Team will take into account equality and rural development issues.
Terms of Reference and Constitution of the Forum

1. The main task of the Forum will be:

   - to monitor and analyse the implementation of specific measures and programmes identified especially those concerned with the achievement of equality and social inclusion;

   - to do so through consideration of reports prepared by teams comprising the social partners, with appropriate expertise and representatives of relevant Departments and agencies and its own Secretariat;

   - with reports to be published by the Forum with such comments as may be considered appropriate; and

   - to ensure that the teams compiling such reports take account of the experience of implementing bodies and customers/clients, including regional variations in such experience.

2. The Forum may consider such policy issues on its own initiative or at the request of the Government.

3. Membership of the Forum will comprise representatives from the following four strands:

   - the Oireachtas;

   - employer, trade union and farm organisations;

   - the voluntary and community sector; and

   - central government, local government and independents.

4. The terms of office of members will be for an initial period of at least two years during which alternates may be nominated. Casual vacancies will be filled by the nominating body or the Government as appropriate and members so appointed shall hold office until the expiry of the current term of office of all members. Retiring members will be eligible for re-appointment.

5. The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Forum will be appointed by the Government.

6. The Forum will decide on its own internal structures and working arrangements.
7. The Forum will be under the aegis of the Department of the Taoiseach and funded through a Grant-in-Aid which will be part of the overall Estimate for that Department. The annual accounts of the Forum will be submitted for audit to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

8. Finally, the staffing and conditions of employment of the Forum’s Secretariat will be subject to the approval of the Department of the Taoiseach.
Membership of the Forum

Independent Chairperson:

Maureen Gaffney

Deputy Chairperson:

Dermot McCarthy

(i) Oireachtas
   Fianna Fáil:
   Noel Ahern T.D.
   Seán Haughey T.D.
   Beverley Cooper-Flynn T.D.
   Michael Kitt T.D.
   Senator Margaret Cox
   Senator Paschal Mooney
   Gerry Reynolds T.D.
   Paul McGrath T.D.
   Bill Timmins T.D.
   Senator Mary Jackman
   Senator Therese Ridge
   Derek McDowell T.D.
   Senator Joe Costello
   Senator Helen Keogh
   Michael Lowry T.D.

Fine Gael:

Labour:

Progressive Democrats:

Independents:

(ii) Employer, Trade Union and Farm Organisations

(a) Employer/Business Organisations:

IBEC:

Small Firms Association:
Construction Industry Federation:
Chambers of Commerce /
Tourist Industry/Exporters Association:

(b) Trade Unions:

(c) Agricultural/Farming Organisations:

Irish Farmers Association:
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association:
Irish Co-Operative Organisation Society:
Macra na Feirme:
Irish Country Womens Association:

Brendan Butler
Aileen O’Donoghue
Lilian O’Carroll
Mirette Corboy
Carmel Mulroy
Eamonn Devoy
Blair Horan
Jerry Shanahan
Manus O’Riordain
Joan Carmichael

John Dillon
Pat O’Rourke
Mary Coleman
Eileen Doyle
Eva Coyle

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(iii) **Community and Voluntary Sector**

*Womens Organisations:*
- Ursula Barry
- Gráinne Healy
- Susan McNaughton

*Unemployed:*
- Mike Allen
- Joan Condon
- Mary Murphy

*Disadvantaged:*
- Joe Gallagher
- Chris McInerney
- Janice Ransom

*Youth:*
- Gearóid Ó Maoilmhíchil

*Older People:*
- Paddy Donegan

*Disability:*
- Roger Acton

*Environment:*
- Jeanne Meldon

*Others:*
- Fr. Séan Healy
- Mary Murphy

(iv) **Central Government, Local Government and Independents**

(a) **Central Government**

*Secretary-General, Department of Finance*

*Secretary-General, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment*

*Secretary-General, Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs*

*Secretary-General, Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation*

*Secretary-General, Department of the Environment and Local Government*

(b) **Local Government**

*General Council of County Councils:*
- Councillor Constance Hannify
- Councillor Tom Kelleher
- Councillor Enda Nolan

*Association of Municipal Authorities:*
- Councillor Tadhg Curtis
- Donal O’Donoghue

(c) **Independents**

Professor Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, National University of Ireland, Galway
Ms. Marian Vickers, Northside Partnership
Ms. Helen Johnston, Surg Equipment Ltd.
Mr. Niall Fitzduff, Rural Communities Network
Ms. Noreen Kearney, Trinity College, Dublin

**Secretariat**

*Director:*
- Seán Ó hÉigeartaigh

*Policy Analysts:*
- Laurence Bond
- Diarmuid Ó Conghaile
- David Silke

*Executive Secretary:*
- Michelle Ryan
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