

# Social Inclusion Forum

‘Building a Society for All’

17<sup>th</sup> November 2010  
Conference Report



*An Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail,  
Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta  
Department of Community, Equality  
and Gaeltacht Affairs*

**2010**  
European Year  
for Combating  
Poverty and  
Social Exclusion



# Social Inclusion Forum 2010

Social Inclusion  
Division

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The views contained in this report reflect the views of the participants in the Forum and do not necessarily represent the views/policies/position of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Minister or the Government.



## Table of Contents

### Foreword

<b>Section I</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Section II</b>	<b>Opening Presentations</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Section III</b>	<b>Key Themes Focused on in Workshops</b>	<b>18</b>
	(i) <b>Child Poverty</b>	
	(ii) <b>Access to Quality Work and Learning Opportunities</b>	
	(iii) <b>Older People – Access to Services</b>	
	(iv) <b>People with Disabilities – Access to Services with a Focus on Employment</b>	
	(v) <b>Integration of Migrants – Developments to Date</b>	
<b>Section IV</b>	<b>Key Themes Raised at the Final Plenary Session</b>	<b>34</b>

# Section 1

## Introduction



- 1.1** The Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) was established by the Government as part of the structures to monitor and evaluate Ireland's National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007- 2016. The Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs has been given the responsibility by the Government to convene the Social Inclusion Forum. The Forum is a key element of the Government's commitment to consult with all relevant stakeholders, including people experiencing poverty and the groups that represent them in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The 2010 Forum also marked the concluding event of the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.
- 1.2** The purpose of the annual Social Inclusion Forum is to provide organisations and individuals primarily in the community and voluntary sector with the opportunity to:
- a) Input their views on key policies and implementation issues;
  - b) Identify barriers and constraints to progress and how best these can be tackled; and
  - c) Provide suggestions and proposals for new developments and more effective policies in the future.
- 1.3** This report provides a summary of the seventh meeting of the Forum, which took place on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2010 at the Convention Centre in Dublin. It includes a summary of the main points raised by guest speakers, the discussions in five parallel workshops and the questions and issues raised at the final Plenary Session.
- 1.4** This report will be formally submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, Children and Integration which is chaired by the Taoiseach.

## Fóram ar Chuimsiú Sóisialta 2010 Sochaí do Chách a Chothú

2010  
Blain an  
Aontais Eorpaigh  
um Chomhrac  
na Bochtaine  
agus an  
Eislaime Shóisialta

An Rannán um Chuimsiú Sóisialta  
Social Inclusion Division

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2010  
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Social Inclusion Forum 2010  
Building A Society For All

# Section 2

Opening

Presentations



**2.1** Ms. Kathleen Stack, Assistant Secretary, Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and Chairperson for the morning plenary opened the Forum. In welcoming the participants, Ms. Stack stressed the importance of the Social Inclusion Forum as an opportunity for a wide range of community and voluntary organisations working on the ground and the people they represent to meet with policy-makers to discuss key issues and identify challenges in anti-poverty and social inclusion work.

Ms. Stack then introduced Mr. Pat Carey, T.D., Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.

**2.2** *Mr. Pat Carey, T.D., Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.*

Minister Carey opened his address by stating that we must all be conscious of the extraordinary circumstances Ireland faces in terms of its current financial crisis and the implication that this has for our society. In this context it is important to remember that 2010 is the tenth anniversary of the Lisbon strategy that views poverty as unacceptable, a waste of talent and an obstacle to progress. The European Year for Poverty and Social Exclusion, of which the Social Inclusion Forum marked the formal conclusion, provided an opportunity to reflect on progress made, learn from the past and lay the foundations for the future we aspire to. On the issue of progress, the Minister referred to the halving of consistent poverty between 2003 and 2008 from 8% to 4.2%, representing the lifting of 140,000 people out of consistent poverty.

Progress in the current circumstances cannot be measured purely in economic terms but must also be measured by the extent to which we can emerge as a more just, socially inclusive and equitable society. Recent budgetary policy has seen the households in the bottom half of the income distribution maintain or improve their position, while better off households have seen falls in their income. While every effort will be made in the forthcoming budgets to protect the most vulnerable, all sectors of society will have to contribute to the savings required to correct our economic and fiscal position. This is the only realistic approach. Minister Carey stated that he is confident of the resilience of the Irish people to deal with and emerge from this situation.

The Minister commended all of those involved in the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion for their efforts. Referring to the *Europe 2020 Strategy* and the new European target of lifting 20 million people out of poverty by

2020, Minister Carey stated that the Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs is developing proposals on a realistic target for Irelands' contribution to this target.

The Minister encouraged participants at the Social Inclusion Forum not to think of the event as simply going through the motions. Rather, their experience and knowledge is vital in identifying the new challenges that face us in 2010. Despite increased unemployment and decreased resources the Government is committed to a better society that supports everyone to realise their potential. The 'gravel in the shoe' approach of many of the organisations working with and representing the most vulnerable, which is evidence-based, informed, articulate and deliberate and that never lets up, has a real impact on policy. This will be strengthened by ongoing work by the Social Inclusion Division on effective participation with people experiencing poverty that will inform the development of partnership approaches, collaboration and co-operation, social cohesion and solidarity and shared ownership. The local social inclusion fora, held as part of Social Exclusion Week in 2010, were attended by over 400 people. The Minister commended the work of the local authorities in this regard and particularly for their focus on active citizenship. All of this work, and new targets for poverty reduction, will be an important part of the legacy of the Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Minster Carey concluded by saying that community organisations have been key in championing new ways of tackling poverty and social exclusion that the Government and State Agencies alone could not do. The first hand experience of these groups and people experiencing poverty are essential. He wished the participants well in their deliberations and said that he looked forward to the report on their work.

### **2.3** *Ms. Barbara Nolan, Director of The European Commission Representation in Ireland*

Ms. Barbara Nolan stated that the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion highlights the European Commission's view that we share a collective responsibility in this area and congratulated the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, and the members of the Social Inclusion Division for putting this philosophy of collective responsibility into action. Having policy-makers meet their local and regional partners in a series of regional seminars was a really smart initiative. Together with the local events during the year, these have enriched policy-making at the highest level and ensured that there is a real legacy of the Year in Ireland.

Raising awareness of poverty was one of the goals of the Year and the European Commission decided to give a special 'European Year' Journalist Award. It can be hard to look at poverty and social exclusion in the media. The issues are complex and those affected can be unwilling to talk or to share their experience due to the stigma they may feel from the rest of the community. Ms. Nolan announced the two Irish journalists who will go on to the European level of the competition and presented them with their awards. In the print and online category, the winner was Conor Lally, Crime Correspondent with the Irish Times for the article "A Pimp's Family Business". In the Audio-visual category, Mind the Gap films were the winners for their entry "Music Changes Lives", which became a four-part series on RTE. Both Irish representatives found compelling ways to highlight the issues, and each of them found new ways of shining a light on the reality of living with poverty and social exclusion.

#### **2.4** *2020 Targets and Opportunities for Meaningful Participation: Mr. Aiden Lloyd and Ms. Mary Connors, European Anti-Poverty Network*

Mr. Aiden Lloyd took a retrospective look at developments, progress, pitfalls and challenges over a 25 year span of social inclusion and community development work. Over this period progress had been made in the 1980s and '90s, with the European Anti-Poverty Programmes and the creation of the Community Development Programme. Participation of the community and voluntary sector was also enhanced through the extension of social partnership and the better opportunities presented by the Community Development Programme and local partnership companies, plus the growing possibilities of EU wide anti-poverty strategies. But progress was slow and it was claimed that better provision could only come about with economic growth. However, there was optimism that things would improve in due course.

With the arrival of the Celtic Tiger economy, matters initially looked to be improving, with falls in the 'at risk' of poverty rate from 19.3% to 14.4%. However, the high rates of poverty among groups such as lone parents and the unemployed were masked by these figures. Other vulnerable groups, such as homeless people, Travellers and some migrants, are also excluded from the figures as they do not live in a permanent residence and so are not included in a number of surveys including the Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EUSILC). In addition, income inequality grew to be the second highest in Europe. Participation by the community and voluntary sector at national level was reduced when the Community Platform did not sign up to the *Sustaining Progress*, the National Agreement 2003-2005, as they didn't agree with the anti-poverty allocations. This meant that they could no

longer participate in many of the institutional structures and fora that came under the remit of social partnership. Local participation also decreased as the Cohesion process was instigated and Community Development Projects were absorbed into local development companies, further eroding the voice of marginalised people. Looking back at efforts to reduce inequality during this period one is forced to concede that the limited progress made is simply 'not good enough'.

In considering where we are now in 2010, the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, Mr. Lloyd indicated that the bringing together of equality, rights and social inclusion under one government department, the appointment of a minister with some track record in the area, and the setting of EU targets to lift 20 million people out of poverty by 2020 were all to be welcomed. He stressed the need for strong political commitment, the full participation of groups who represent and carry the voice of the socially excluded and tangible improvements in the real and relative conditions of people experiencing poverty, exclusion and discrimination. Only then will we be able to say that things are 'good enough'.

Ms. Mary Connors stated that her perspective is influenced by her life as a Traveller woman and her experience as a community development worker. She has participated in two EU People Experiencing Poverty conferences with other Irish representatives. These are exciting events where people from all across the EU come together to discuss their experiences of poverty and where policy makers hear how their policies impact on peoples' lived realities. The first time Ms. Connors participated in the conference she thought that the policy-makers would listen to the participants and act accordingly. The second time there was a great deal of talk about the European Year of Combating Poverty which was exciting and gave her and others a lot of hope.

While these EU conferences are important for allowing people experiencing poverty and social exclusion to share their experiences and views, Ms. Connors questioned whether or not the political will is there to implement their recommendations. Ireland, she claimed, is great for signing up to things like equality legislation and Traveller accommodation plans, but little ever changes and plans are not implemented as intended. In this vein, Ms. Connors made reference to the Irish Traveller Accommodation Plans, of which there have been a number. However, few local authorities have implemented these as intended as they believe that they know what is best for the local Traveller population. Even though there is a specific Traveller accommodation budget available, many local authorities do not make use of this, instead providing only standard local authority housing that does not

meet the needs or preferences of many Travellers. This is the case, for example, in Wexford where no halting sites, group housing or transient housing has been provided. No sanctions are applied to local authorities that do not implement their Traveller Accommodation Plans and therefore implementation remains a problem.

Ms. Connors concluded by saying that she is hopeful about the People Experiencing Poverty conferences, but wished that more rapid progress could be made. In addition, she hopes that some way can be found to make the Irish government and local authorities implement the plans they agree to.

**2.5** *Draft Code of Practice to Support the Engagement of People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion in the development and implementation of relevant policies: Dr. Jane Pillinger, Independent Researcher and Policy Advisor*

Dr. Jane Pillinger presented a draft code of practice for engaging with people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, commissioned by the Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs. This code of practice is aimed at public servants in government departments and other statutory bodies. It aims to provide a comprehensive framework for engagement, set out the rationale and benefits of engagement, give guidance on methods and examples of their use, and establish what people can expect from engagement. The Code is set in the context of current policy and existing government mechanisms and processes for engagement with civil society. It will establish when, how and where engagement should take place, be responsive to people living in poverty, provide a 'how to' of engagement in terms of inclusiveness, accessibility and transparency, and show how to plan and monitor processes and outcomes.

Dr. Pillinger outlined how engagement can move from the more passive forms of information giving and gathering and consultation through to more active forms such as participation, collaboration and empowerment or co-decision making. Engagement has a number of benefits for government, including improved democratic decision-making, stronger government-citizen connections and informed decision-making and policy outcomes. For people experiencing poverty it gives them a voice, recognition and engagement, harnesses their active involvement in shaping policy, empowers them, and builds their capacity, skills and resources. However, these benefits can only be achieved if engagement is properly planned. This involves government departments and agencies setting out the guiding principles for engagement, planning for the engagement process, selecting appropriate participatory methods, making engagement accessible and inclusive

and working in partnership with hard to reach groups, providing good feedback to participants, evaluating the process and building capacity among all participants.

The draft code of practice shows how various forms of engagement, such as information sharing, consultation and active participation can overlap and the importance of selecting the most appropriate method. This should be relevant to the engagement process, its goals, the time and resources available and the capacity of all participants to employ the method. Dr. Pillinger stressed the importance of a responsive process where participants can see the impact of their engagement. This helps to avoid consultation fatigue. Also important in the code is the need for evaluation that involves the people experiencing poverty who participated in the engagement process, and inclusive capacity building methods as well as engagement processes. In developing good engagement processes Ireland should also consider and learn from work in other countries, including Scotland, the UK, Australia and Canada.

## **2.6** *Poverty and Social Exclusion Regional Seminars: Ms. Ann Irwin, Co-ordinator, Community Workers Co-operative*

Ms. Ann Irwin provided a summary of five regional seminars on poverty and social exclusion held during 2010 as part of the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. These seminars were organised by the Community Workers' Co-operative (CWC) in partnership with the European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland and the Community Platform, and were supported by the Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs. The project partners are deeply concerned with anti-poverty, equality and social inclusion and want to ensure that this work is informed by the experience of the reality of living with poverty, inequality and social exclusion. The four main objectives of the 2010 Year - Recognition, Ownership, Cohesion and Commitment - represent an opportunity to state categorically that: poverty and social exclusion are unacceptable; poverty and social exclusion are bad for society in general; and that the eradication of poverty and social exclusion is a collective challenge for all that must be firmly put, and remain, at the top of the agenda of the EU and its member states.

Participants at the regional seminars welcomed the opportunity to discuss the issues and were pleased that these events took place in their own region. They were also adamant that they wanted to see the outcomes of consultation reflected in policy design, implementation and outcomes. Ms. Irwin summarised the wide range of issues raised at the seminars. These included: the multi-dimensional nature of poverty; the gender dimension of poverty and social exclusion; the need for a rights-based approach to combating poverty; exclusion and inequality; the

gap between generally good policy and generally poor implementation; the need to move away from medical models of disability; the importance of transport in combating isolation; the need to address the situation of asylum seekers and those in direct provision; the cost ineffectiveness of short-term views in tackling poverty and to cuts in the provision of services; the need to protect 'vulnerable' individuals, groups and communities in times of recession; and the value of community development and community organisations in developing and implementing sustainable interventions to tackle poverty, social exclusion and inequality and in providing opportunities for participation.

Ms. Irwin then identified a number of issues that arose at the regional seminars relevant to each of the Social Inclusion Forum workshops. With regard to Child Poverty these were the need to see poor children in the context of their family situations and for a holistic approach to these, the importance of early childhood education and early intervention and the need to tackle early school leaving. In relation to Access to Quality Work and Learning Opportunities the need to focus on those most distant from the labour and to provide relevant training opportunities and the supports required for people to access these were highlighted. The importance of supports to maintain older people in their homes and communities arose in relation to Services for Older People, while the need to take a rights-based approach and implement all the legislation available to ensure access arose with regard to People with Disabilities and their Access to Services, particularly employment.







# Section 3

## Key Themes in Workshops

The views expressed in the workshops do not necessarily represent the views, policies or position of the Department, the Minister or the Government. Rather they are the views of the participants and speakers at the Social Inclusion Forum.

**3.1** Forum participants divided into five parallel workshops in order to consider key issues of interest to them. The themes of each workshop were linked to the Irish programme for the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion and reflected the four cross cutting themes outlined in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007-2016. These themes were as follows:

- Child Poverty;
- Access to Quality Work and Learning Opportunities;
- Access to Services for Older People; and
- Access to Services for People with Disabilities (with a focus on employment);
- Integration of Migrants – Developments to Date



In considering these cross cutting themes participants were asked to consider the following questions:

- What are the main issues for people/communities experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequalities in relation to the theme?
- How will policies/implementation impact on people experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequality?
- What are the key issues that need to be taken into account by policy-makers in relation to the theme?

Participants were also asked to provide feedback on the Draft Code of Practice for Engagement and to provide examples of successful engagement processes that have taken place with government departments and agencies and ideas and/or recommendations of what represents good practice.

A presentation was given in each workshop on a key policy issue related to the specific cross cutting theme and the findings of each workshop were presented to the final plenary session by the Forum rapporteur. A summary of the presentations, the key issues raised and priorities identified at each workshop are outlined below.

## Seomra Cruinnithe Chill Mhantáin

Wicklow  
Meeting Room

# 3

### Workshop 1 Child Poverty

*An Rannán um Chuirsiú Sóisialta  
Social Inclusion Division*

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## Workshop 1 Child Poverty

**Chairperson:** Frances Byrne, OPEN

**Speaker:** Jim Mulkerrins, Department of Education and Skills

**Notetaker:** Aine Walsh, EAPN Ireland

**3.2** In his presentation Mr. Jim Mulkerrins outlined the method for identifying DEIS schools, which is based on the concentration of disadvantaged children in schools, and the main provisions of the programme. An evaluation of the DEIS Programme has been undertaken to assess its impact. This involved surveys of progress in relation to targets specified in action plans, questionnaires to examine implementation issues and a longitudinal study of pupils showing early signs of reading difficulties, potential early school leavers, children from non-Irish families and Travellers. No conclusive results are available yet but the report will hopefully be published before the end of 2010.

In considering where we are now, Mr. Mulkerrins stated that the identification process of new DEIS schools needs to be developed to reflect our current economic and social situation. New indicators of disadvantaged may need to be developed and a Steering Committee has been tasked with this objective since 2009. A robust consultation process will be needed once the full evaluation report is released. It is noteworthy that despite the economic downturn the DEIS programme has remained largely untouched and there has been no reduction in teaching posts in DEIS schools. However, the growing difference between DEIS and non-DEIS schools is a problem. Overall Mr. Mulkerrins expressed the view that we need to reconsider how we implement this programme in the future to ensure that those who really need it are reached.

A range of issues were discussed by workshop participants including the need to rethink the meaning of poverty in social as well as economic terms, the specific needs of asylum-seeking children, accountability for DEIS funding, the importance of early childhood care and development in combating poverty and educational disadvantage, the need for a more integrated and holistic approach by service providers, effective poverty proofing of policies for their impact on children and genuine participation by children.

The participants identified and rank-ordered the following six priority areas for policy:

1. Prioritise early childhood development and care and ensure that supports for young children and their families in the community, such as parental supports, pregnancy groups, toddler groups and breakfast clubs, are further developed in a holistic way.
2. Organisations should work in a smarter way that is based on structured partnerships, not personal relationships.
3. Treat all children equally, regardless of their background or status. A rights-based approach should be adopted, thus allowing every organisation and agency to be held to account for upholding these rights.
4. Respect should underpin all services. Teachers and those working with children need to actively listen to ensure that children's values and concerns are being heard.
5. Promote more volunteerism among professionals, such as teachers and there should be a method of claiming tax benefits for this goodwill. This may attract more experienced teachers to disadvantaged schools.
6. The balance between quality of services and providing adequate income support needs to be improved. At present the provision of services is lagging behind income measures in Ireland.

With regard to the Code of Practice for Engagement, participants felt that this was too focussed on government agencies and the public sector, with too little emphasis on the community and voluntary sector and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. The results of consultation processes need to be disseminated more clearly. More feedback needs to be given, and evaluations of where a prior strategy ended and where have ideas been changed as a result of the process are required. Even where no changes have been made a reason for this should be given in the form of a report. Participants expressed the view that we frequently only reach the information exchange stage of engagement and that engagement processes were often exclusionary in themselves. Implementation of the results of engagement was identified as the key.

## Workshop 2 Access to Quality Work and Learning Opportunities

<b>Chairperson:</b>	Paul Ginnell, EAPN Ireland
<b>Speaker:</b>	Barry Kennedy, Department of Social Protection
<b>Notetaker:</b>	David Logan, Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs

- 3.3** Mr. Barry Kennedy presented details of a new profiling model being developed by the Department of Social Protection. The objective of this model is to develop a systematic approach to early identification of individuals with high risk of becoming long-term unemployed and is based on extensive research on 45,000 new entrants to the Live Register.

The model predicts the probability of exit from the Live Register at 12 and 15 months based on the characteristics of the individual. Characteristics associated with an increased probability of remaining on the Live Register have been identified as being older, having children, being unemployed for 12 months or more in the last 5 years, being on Community Employment for 12 months or more, having made a number of welfare claims, being in receipt of Job Seekers Assistance, having literacy/numeric problems, having poor proficiency in English (males particularly) and living in a rural location. Criteria associated with an increased probability of leaving the Live Register include having higher levels of education, being recently employed, being willing to move for a job, having one's own transport, being in receipt of Job Seekers Benefit, being married and having a spousal income and living in an urban location.

Mr. Kennedy stressed that the model has only been launched very recently and is a work in progress.

A wide range of issues were raised in this workshop, the principal ones of which are summarised here.

- Profiling needs to be person-centred and full training must be provided to all staff using these models, including technical training procedures and how to deal sensitively with people experiencing difficulties. The profiling model must take account of the Long-Term Unemployed as well as new entrants to the Live Register.
- Meaningful and appropriate training and employment placements, with relevant financial and other supports are central to the success of this initiative.

- Training and employment programmes should have a social and community benefit. Skilled unemployed people could undertake appropriate and necessary work in their communities, but this must be voluntary, structured and not displace jobs.
- Difficulties in accessing services, including delays in processing payments, feelings of intimidation when dealing with large state agencies and inappropriate services need to be addressed.
- A robust social economy should be developed and current good practice models, such as the CDPs, should be retained.
- The distribution of activation services means that some areas, particularly rural ones, are neglected. Rural and urban unemployed people face different issues and these need to be recognised.
- Employers should be incentivised to employ people on the Live Register and disincentives to work must be removed.
- Government departments and agencies should provide information in European languages such as Polish, and the system of work permits, where migrants face great difficulty changing employer needs to be examined to avoid exploitation.
- The role of community groups in service provision needs to be recognised. The sector needs to be an integral part of informing and delivering programmes.
- A minimum income level should be introduced to ensure that all citizens can live with dignity and without the fear of poverty.



The participants made the following points on the Code of Practice for Engagement.

- The Code is aimed at policy makers and officials and many participants felt that it was not relevant to their own situations.
- Consultation is important but of little use if concrete action on policy does not follow.
- Better feedback on consultations is needed.
- Policies/proposals should indicate where the views of people involved in consultations have been taken into consideration.
- A cost/benefit analysis should be carried out on a select number of consultation processes to assess their value.
- The consultation process should build on previous learning and not repeat consultations that have already taken place.
- Consultation should empower the individual to get involved in the process. This is not the case at the moment.



## Workshop 3 Older People – Access to Services

**Chairperson:** Oonagh McArdle, Community Workers Co-operative

**Speaker:** Michael Murchan, Department of Health and Children

**Notetaker:** Cherida Darcy, Community Workers Co-operative

**3.4** Mr. Michael Murchan informed participants that in the context of an overall HSE 2010 Budget of approx. €10.5 billion, services for older people (aged 65 years and over) accounts for around €1.7 billion. Recent developments in older people's services include the establishment of the Office for Older People in 2008, the introduction of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme ("Fair Deal"), and the Long-Term Residential Care Quality Standards in 2009, the ongoing development of a Positive Ageing Strategy and various service developments in community-based care.

Mr. Murchan focussed on community-based Home Care Packages. Introduced in 2006 to support older people to live both at home and as active members of their communities, and designed to support families resolve care issues in their home, Home Care Packages are people centred and underpinned by the principles of quality, client safety, freedom and choice and value for money. The Community and Voluntary sector in conjunction with the HSE help to provide these services. In 2009, two evaluations of the Home Care Packages were carried out – one by OPA Consulting Group for the Department of Health and Children, and one by the NESF. These evaluations highlighted that while the service had made a valuable difference to supporting the most vulnerable older people, more work needed to be done regarding delivery and planning, and highlighted significant variation in relation to access, outcomes, quality and various aspects of provision at local level. In response to those evaluations a number of initiatives are currently underway by the HSE, Home Care Package Operational Guidelines; Quality Guidelines on Home Care Services (both due in 2011), Operational Guidelines for mainstream Home Help; and a recently launched Procurement Framework for Home care services, for organisations who wish to work in partnership with the HSE.

Participants in the workshop identified the following priority areas:

- The production and implementation of a Common Assessment Tool needs to be prioritised to cut down on duplicate form filling and improve access to services.
- While there is a sense that funding allocations have remained the same, the reality is that there are cutbacks on the ground, with fewer hours of care being provided to clients. These cutbacks are not based on need, there is often no

notification that hours are being reduced and there is no transparency as to why those cutbacks have been made.

- Savings in the hospital sphere leads to increased cost in the domestic sphere. For example, patients undergoing hospital procedures are now being admitted later and discharged earlier, which puts greater responsibility and duties on carers. Carers can't go home at the end of their shifts as paid staff do.
- There is a lack of interagency collaboration and co-ordinated services.
- There is a lack of information about eligibility for and entitlement to services that needs to be addressed.
- There is a need to move away from a focus on the economic and environmental impact of services on older people to one that addresses the social impact.
- Flexibility with regard to the tailoring of Home Care Packages is needed as some people in receipt of the package don't need all the services.

Participants raised a number of issues about the Code of Practice for Engagement.

- People are talking, but who is listening? Why were the HSE, for example, not present in the workshop? Consultation occurs in one space while decision-making occurs in another. These two spaces needed to be brought together.
- Feedback on consultations is very important, even if it consists of why some suggestions could not be taken on board.
- Decision-makers should be mindful that asking people to participate requires sacrifices as others often have to take up their caring roles.
- Consultation that is not followed by action is more damaging than no consultation at all.
- It is important to clarify the real expectations of those participating and what issues they want them to engage on.
- A bottom-up approach to engagement is needed but with a top-down commitment to listen.

## Workshop 4 People with Disabilities – Access to Services with a Focus on Employment

**Chairperson:** Rachel Doyle, National Women’s Council of Ireland  
**Speaker:** Eithne Fitzgerald, National Disability Authority (NDA)  
**Notetaker:** Deirdre Bodkin, Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs

**3.5** In her presentation, Ms. Eithne Fitzgerald highlighted that, despite good will on the part of employers, a range of State supports and a number of policies and pieces of legislation People with Disabilities (PWD) are underrepresented in employment in all sectors of the economy, across all age groups and all types of disability. In 2006, just over one third (35%) of People with Disabilities had a job compared to three quarters (74%) of others. Sixty per cent of People with Disabilities who are not working are restricted in type or amount of work they can do and this, along with low levels of qualifications add to their disadvantage and higher risk of poverty. Central to this is the lack of accessibility of employment opportunities.

The NDA comprehensive employment strategy aims to address the barriers to employment for People with Disabilities by ensuring work pays and removing benefit traps, equipping People with Disabilities to compete in labour market now and in the future, enlisting the support of public and private sector employers, preventing the flow of people with disabilities into inactivity, providing a systematic process of engagement, and a comprehensive approach across individuals and levels of ability. In addition, the NDA are engaged in an EU Disability Project that involves a Department of Social Protection Sectoral Plan that includes a commitment to inclusion pathways, and a Disability Activation Project, an interdepartmental approach involving the HSE, FÁS, the NDA and the VECs. Initiated in September 2008, this project has run 11 training programmes which 128 People with Disabilities have completed. In conclusion, Mr. Fitzgerald stressed the importance of joined up initiatives and policy in meeting the needs of People with Disabilities.

Participants at this workshop discussed a wide range of issues including the employment quotas, the need for workplace buddying/mentoring support, negative attitudes to and stereotypes of People with Disabilities, the need for holistic approaches and joined-up thinking, and the importance of E-learning and Distance Education.

The following priorities were identified by participants.

- Good quality up-to-date data on People with Disabilities is needed for lobbying, analysis of the current situation and evaluation of interventions and policies.
- The social welfare system must not work to keep people out of employment and training. A cost of disability payment that provides a single payment should be considered and secondary benefits should be protected.
- A different model of employment support is needed to reflect the recession. Direct relationships with employers should be developed that examines issues of access and awareness.
- Tailored supports in training and education need to be maintained, monitored and evaluated. In this context the importance of early interventions in education in preventing early school leaving should be highlighted.
- People must have more information on their individual rights and entitlements and employers should be aware of these.
- Greater interagency co-operation and communication is required to ensure coherence across policies.
- Accessibility and transport, particularly rural transport, needs to be prioritised.
- More support is needed for local disability support groups, which are key in supporting activation strategies.

In relation to the Code of Practice for the Engagement of People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion, participants in this workshop stated that consultation must be on-going and not once-off events and that the cost effectiveness of consultation should be recognised by policy-makers. Participants were concerned that money/budgets are not currently being spent and consultation has a role in monitoring this. Good engagement practice should be proactive and meet people where they are at, use existing structures, be careful about the language used and the timing of the approach, and build relationships with participants. In addition, those planning engagement processes should use information available from the Citizen's Information Boards (CIBs), local partnership companies and Disability Access Officers to inform themselves.

## Workshop 5 Integration of Migrants – Developments to Date

**Chairperson:** Catherine Lynch, European Network against Racism  
**Speaker:** Anita Toolan, Office of the Minister of State for Integration  
**Notetaker:** Amanda Butler

**3.6** Ms. Anita Toolan told participants that it is estimated that over 12% of the current population of Ireland are non-Irish nationals, with the majority of these coming from EU member states. According to the Quarterly National Household Survey, there were 402,000 non Irish-nationals over the age of 15 in the State in Quarter 1 of 2010. Approximately 160,000 of the non-Irish national population are aged less than 20 years, with 402,000 aged over 15 years. Between the 2002 and 2006 Census the numbers of non-Irish nationals increased by 87%. Reflecting this growth in the non-Irish national population the position of Minister of State with responsibility for Integration and the Office of the Minister for Integration (OMI) were created in 2007. The Office of the Minister for Integration has responsibility for developing integration policy with key stakeholders and the co-ordination of integration activities for legally resident migrants. It also has responsibility for funding initiatives and providing support to bodies with a key role to play in integration, such as sports bodies and local authorities under new funding lines. The Office of the Minister for Integration also has responsibility for the co-ordination of the Refugee Resettlement Programme, co-ordination of the preparation for Ireland's forthcoming examination before the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It also co-ordinates and facilitates meetings of the Ministerial Council on Migrant Integration and represents Ireland at various national and international meetings.

The adoption of an inter-cultural approach, mainstreaming of services, the rights and responsibilities of migrants and receiving communities, the key role played by local communities and intercultural dialogue are emphasised in Irish integration policy. At a national level, a number of Government Departments and State agencies have developed national strategies, as well as plans to make their services more accessible and more interculturally competent to cater for the needs of migrants. These have included the National Action Plan Against Racism (2005-2008), The Migration Nation Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management, The Intercultural Health Strategy (2007-2017), An Garda Síochána Diversity strategy (2009-2017), An Action Plan for Integrated Workplaces, The intercultural Education Strategy (2010-2015) and the Cultural Diversity and the Arts – Policy and Strategy. A Ministerial Council on Migrant Integration has been established to give advice to the Minister directly in issues faced by migrants. At local level, funding for integration

projects has been provided to local authorities since 2008, integration/anti-racism plans have been developed in many local areas and migrant fora have also been established.

The participants in this workshop raised a range of issues relating to problems with current policy in relation to immigration (which is the responsibility of the Department of Justice and Law Reform) and integration of migrants (which is the responsibility of the Minister for Integration) and how to resolve these.

- Policy does not deal with a plethora of issues. This included asylum seekers, who are currently under the remit of the Department of Justice and Law Reform, not the Office of the Minister for Integration, integration of policy, effective implementation, evaluation of policies, participation of migrants in decision-making and policy formulation, adequate planning and equal treatment of migrants.
- Greater inter-departmental working, up-to-date data and knowledge of the circumstances and needs of migrants, equality of treatment of migrants and the national population and ambition are needed to resolve these issues. There is a need to move beyond consultation to active participation of migrants in policy and decision-making, for the effective implementation of policy and initiatives and greater transparency and evaluation of integration funds. These measures will help remove the barriers to integration, including inequality of treatment, social exclusion and lack of empowerment.
- Of particular note in relation to asylum seekers is the system of Direct Provision which was viewed as a means of making life difficult and creating social exclusion and poverty.

Participants also identified a number of issues in relation to the Code of Practice for Engagement.

- While the Code appeared comprehensive, many participants said that they had 'heard it all before'.
- New technology, such as Facebook, and new methodologies should be employed.
- Clarity is needed about who is being consulted, why, how and within what parameters.
- Better feedback on the results of consultations need to be provided to participants, along with an account of reactions to it.
- Consultation should not replace high quality, in-depth research
- Agencies, such as Combat Poverty, which would have influenced policy and implementation and supported both local groups and government departments no longer exist.
- Consultation fatigue is an issue that needs to be addressed.
- The government departments should learn from previous positive engagement exercises, including urban re-generation projects and the Inter-Cultural Health Strategy.





# Section 4

## Key Themes Raised at the Final Plenary Session

**Panel Members:** Ann Irwin (Chairperson), Community Workers Co-operative  
Jim Mulkerrins, Department of Education and Skills,  
Eithne Fitzgerald, National Disability Authority,  
Catherine Hazlett, Social Inclusion Division,  
Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs,  
John Bohan, Department of Social Protection

## 4.1 Themes Arising

In the afternoon plenary session, the Forum rapporteur provided a summary of the issues raised and priorities identified in each of the above workshops. Following this, the session's chairperson invited comments from the floor. In the discussion that followed, three key themes were raised by the participants.

The first of these related to the absence of adequate and appropriate feedback to participants in consultation exercises. It was claimed that such feedback has always been absent and there is a real need for feedback to participants on the outcomes of the deliberations of the Social Inclusion Forum.

The second issue to arise was the perceived loss of focus on the broad agenda or poverty eradication. There was no discussion of whether there is going to be a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion after the next four year period and what is happening on the ground in the current circumstances. A number of participants felt that there was a lack of robust discussion on the current economic crisis and recession and of where Ireland to going as a society. This lack of a broader discussion was described as disappointing by one participant.

The third issue raised related to the position of migrants and particularly asylum seekers in Ireland. Frustration was again expressed that asylum seekers are not included under the remit of the Office of the Minister of State for Integration. Asylum seekers need to know where they stand in Ireland, whether they are wanted or not, whether they should be trying to integrate into society or not. The vulnerable position of undocumented migrants in Ireland was also raised. The fact that the integration of migrants was not included in the Regional Forums but was included at the Social Inclusion Forum may represent some progress in their recognition, but the issue of racism needs to be kept on the agenda and the infrastructure that has been developed to address this issue should not be dismantled. Many of the issues that were raised in the workshops touch on the integration of migrants and this should be included in the report of the Forum.

Finally it was stated that the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs should have returned for the plenary to hear the deliberations and issues raised by participants.

The Chairperson Ms. Ann Irwin, Community Workers Co-operative stated that although the issue may not have been dealt with in detail, the current financial crisis and recession had been touched on in a number of the workshops. Returning to an issue raised in the Child Poverty Workshop, Jim Mulkerrins, Department of Education and Skills, stated that while DEIS is targeted at schools, this does not leave disadvantaged children in non-DEIS schools without supports as they benefit from learning supports and resource teachers provided by the Department. On the issue of feedback he emphasised that he has now provided feedback on the development of DEIS at the Social Inclusion Forum over the past three years.

Catherine Hazlett, Social Inclusion Division, Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs responded to the comments by stating that the Social Inclusion Forum is an embedded part of the feedback structure to government on anti-poverty policy. The consultation and dialogue that it affords is an important part of the evidence base for anti-poverty work. While acknowledging the weaknesses in relation to feedback, she stressed that consultation is fraught with expectations of change and that this is not always possible in the short-term. However, the deliberations of the Forum will be fed back to the relevant government departments. The development of the Code of Practice for Engagement will also help in this matter as expectations will be clearer. With regard to the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, she stressed that there is a robust mechanism in place for analysing progress made under this and that the Economic and Social Research Institute has produced a report on the impact of the Plan up to 2007. However, time did not allow for the detail of this to be presented at the Forum.

Ms. Hazlett also stressed that the issues to do with the integration of migrants and the challenges faced by asylum seekers are not readily identifiable in the National Action Plan because of the lifecycle format of the Plan. Policies on these issues are set out in the Communities Chapter. The Regional Seminars held during the year highlighted the significance of these issues for participants and it was decided to bring these issues to the Social Inclusion Forum to consider how progress could be made. Finally, Ms. Hazlett stated that the Minister wanted to return for the closing plenary session but that Government business prevented him from doing so. He will, however, be fully informed of the Forum's proceedings.

## 4.2 Concluding Comments

In closing the Forum, Ann Irwin thanked all of those who participated in both the preparatory meetings and the Forum itself. She acknowledged that perhaps we need a more robust consideration of the current economic crisis, what led to it and how we need to address it. This could be an issue for future Fora. She thanked all the speakers, facilitators, note-takers, the Forum rapporteur and especially the participants and wished everyone a safe journey home.





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