



**NATIONAL ACTION PLAN
FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION 2007-2016**



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FOREWORD



Building an inclusive society continues to be the key priority of Government. We have made significant and visible progress since Ireland adopted the first National Anti-Poverty Strategy back in 1997. Our strong and sustained economic and employment growth has enabled us to improve the living standards of all groups in our society. Our success in tackling unemployment has halted the scourge of migration and transformed our nation into one that is vibrant, prosperous and competitive. This success has enabled us to make substantial increases in social welfare payments and devote increased resources to social services and infrastructure in areas such as health, housing, education and disadvantaged communities. As a result of our policies and investment, we have lifted some 250,000 people from consistent poverty, including 100,000 children, in recent years.

Despite this success, we continue to face the challenge of tackling poverty and social exclusion. That is why this Plan sets out a wide-ranging and comprehensive programme of action to assist those who continue to be socially excluded from the greatly improved living standards and opportunities that the majority of us enjoy.

While the Plan identifies a wide range of targets and interventions, the Government has also identified a number of high level strategic goals in certain key priority areas in order to achieve the overall objective of reducing consistent poverty. These targeted actions and interventions are designed to mobilise resources to address long-standing and serious social deficits. Both this Plan and the National Development Plan 2007-2013 *Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life for All* highlight these high level goals which are aimed at making a decisive impact on poverty.

They focus on:

- Ensuring children reach their true potential;
- Supporting working age people and people with disabilities, through activation measures and the provision of services to increase employment and participation;
- Providing the type of supports that enable older people to maintain a comfortable and high-quality standard of living;
- Building viable and sustainable communities, improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital.

In view of the very substantial progress in enhancing income support over recent years, these goals place a renewed emphasis on services, activation measures and supporting good quality employment. This recognises the continuing challenges faced by those in work but on low incomes, as well as the vulnerability of those in households without any employment.

Our strategic processes have been enhanced by a streamlined and comprehensive approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion. The overarching framework set out in the national partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*, is supported through the implementation of the actions in this Plan and by the social inclusion elements of the National Development Plan. Both these documents set out the roadmap to Ireland's future.

We recognise that the challenge is now delivery. This becomes more complex as we seek to tailor supports around the needs of individuals at different stages of their lives. We will continue

to modernise and reform how we design and deliver services, income support and activation measures at both national and local level. We have identified actions to strengthen our institutional structures to address any implementation gap and we will ensure that our response to tackling poverty and social exclusion remains both flexible and concentrated. The OECD's current work to identify and inform good management practice in our public service will also help to shape future approaches and policies.

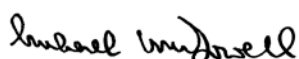
The Government is committed to achieving the targets set out in this Plan. Taken together with the National Development Plan and *Towards 2016*

we believe it represents a coherent and ambitious strategy that will deliver real change for those most vulnerable in our society. We wish to pay tribute to the many individuals, groups, organisations and the social partners who contributed their time, views and expertise which greatly informed our response and proposals. We also wish to thank the Office for Social Inclusion for their work and commitment in preparing this Plan.

Working together, in a true spirit of partnership, will ensure that we build on what has been achieved, that no one is left behind and that we achieve the common goal of building a true and inclusive society for all.



Bertie Ahern, T. D.
Taoiseach



Michael McDowell, T.D.
Tánaiste



Séamus Brennan, T.D.
Minister for Social and Family Affairs

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OVERVIEW

Introduction

The Government is committed to a coherent strategy for social inclusion based on the lifecycle approach set out in the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016*. This National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion), complemented by the social inclusion elements of the National Development Plan 2007-2013: *Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life for All*, sets out how the social inclusion strategy will be achieved over the period 2007-2016.

The commitments set out in this Plan are ambitious and challenging. The new strategic framework will facilitate greater co-ordination and integration of structures and procedures across Government at national and local levels, as well as improved reporting and monitoring mechanisms.

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) has been prepared in a different context to the original 1997 National Anti-Poverty Strategy. Income support targets (social welfare rates and pensions) have now been achieved and, in line with the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) report on the *Developmental Welfare State*, there is greater emphasis on services and activation as a means of tackling social exclusion. This is reflected in the nature of the Plan, which complements the NDP 2007-2013 and *Towards 2016*.

The Plan has a strong focus on actions and targets, clearly defined and measurable, which are essential if the Plan's objectives are to be achieved and progress in achieving them effectively monitored. By adopting the lifecycle approach, the Plan also supports the development of a more joined-up and multi-disciplinary approach to policy making, with co-ordinated inputs from a wide range of actors.

High Level Goals

The NAPinclusion sets out a wide-ranging and comprehensive programme of action to address poverty and social exclusion. To ensure that a decisive impact on poverty is made, the Government believes that significant interventions are required to prioritise a small number of high level goals. These targeted actions and interventions are designed to

mobilise resources to address long-standing and serious social deficits with the ultimate aim of achieving the objective of reducing consistent poverty. The overall goal of this Plan is:

Overall Poverty Goal

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

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

Children

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

Goal 1: Education

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

Goal 2: Education

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

Goal 3: Education

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

Goal 4: Income Support

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

People of Working Age

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

Goal 5: Employment and Participation

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

Goal 6: Income Support

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

Older People

Community care services are essential to enable older people to maintain their health and well-being, in order to live active, full independent lives, at home for as long as possible. Income also has a key role to play in alleviating poverty in old age. Therefore, the high level goals for this life stage focus on these two areas.

Goal 7: Community Care

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

Goal 8: Income Support

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

To ensure that a decisive impact on poverty is made, the Government believes that significant interventions are required to prioritise a small number of high level goals.

People with Disabilities

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

Goal 9: Employment and Participation

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

Communities

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

Goal 10: Housing

Deliver high quality housing for those who cannot afford to meet their own housing needs and to underpin the building of sustainable communities. An important element will be the enhanced housing output reflected in *Towards 2016*, which will result in the accommodation needs of some 60,000 new households being addressed over the period 2007 to 2009. This will embrace meeting special housing needs (the homeless, Travellers, older people and people with disabilities);

Goal 11: Health

Develop 500 primary care teams by 2011 which will improve access to services in the community, with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of holders of medical cards;

Goal 12: Integration of Migrants

Develop a strategy aimed at achieving the integration of newcomers in our society. As an initial action, resources for the provision of 550 teachers for language supports in the education sector will be provided by 2009 and access to other public services through translation of information and supports will be improved.

Regular monitoring and evaluation of progress against social inclusion targets and objectives is essential, together with service delivery that is accessible, flexible and customer centred.

Making It Happen

The NAPinclusion focuses on delivery and achieving positive outcomes. This requires continuing to develop an openness to change, involving government departments, agencies and other organisations working together more effectively and continuing to progressively overcome traditional barriers to co-operation. Regular monitoring and evaluation of progress against social inclusion targets and objectives is essential, together with service delivery that is accessible, flexible and customer centred.

Both at national and local level, all government departments and agencies have specific responsibilities to deliver on key targets. In addition, a number of actions aimed at achieving greater co-ordination and strengthened delivery of the social inclusion agenda are being established. The following measures are aimed at developing more co-ordinated and integrated approaches at national and local levels, and between these levels:

- The Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) will provide a strong leadership role in improving outcomes for children. Drawing on the experience of the Childhood Development Initiatives, the Children Services Committees and the County Childcare Committees, integration of services will be improved around the needs of individual children and families through new and enhanced local structures;
- To ensure a better integration of activation, income and other supports to assist people into employment, a new high-level group will be established. This will be composed

of the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Social and Family Affairs, FÁS and other relevant agencies as required. This group will report to the Cabinet Committee regarding progress in delivering on the targets set out in this Plan and other related issues;

- The Local Government Social Inclusion Steering Group (LGSISG) will be further developed to support the linkages between the national and local level and will report to the Cabinet Committee, as appropriate;
- New mechanisms will be developed in 2007 at national and local level to improve co-ordination and delivery of housing, in particular where there is a care dimension, for older people and people with disabilities.

At the local level, the involvement of local interests, particularly local authorities and County/City Development Boards (CDBs), will be key elements in ensuring the delivery of social inclusion across all sectors of society. Developments here include:

- The County/City Development Board structure will be developed and strengthened to support its role in co-ordinating public service delivery (including social inclusion activities) at local level. In this context, the extension of Social Inclusion Units to half of the city and county councils, by end 2008, will support this approach. CDBs will, in addition, prioritise the work of the Social Inclusion Measures (SIM) groups, established to improve co-ordination of social inclusion activities at local level;

- The delivery of the RAPID (Revitalisation of Areas by Planning Investment and Development) programme, which aims to direct State assistance towards improving quality of life and access to opportunities for communities in the most disadvantaged urban areas throughout the State, will be strengthened and enhanced.

Bridging the Implementation Gap

There is always the risk that outcomes intended and planned for may not be achieved because implementation is deficient. This can occur because of administrative failures in relation to individual policies, lack of effective co-ordination or weak performance monitoring and evaluation. The Government is convinced that the structures outlined above will avoid these risks and minimise implementation gaps. These structures, combined with the strong commitment to the high level goals and the many actions and policies outlined in this NAPinclusion, should ensure that the overall goals of the strategy are achieved.

A new strategic framework aims to achieve a more comprehensive and efficient monitoring and reporting process that is streamlined across *Towards 2016*, the NDP and the NAPinclusion. The key element will be the preparation by the Office for Social Inclusion, of the annual Social Inclusion Report. This report will be presented to the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, the Partnership Steering Group and the NDP Monitoring Committee.

CHAPTER 1
CONTEXT AND
STRATEGIC APPROACH

1.1 Introduction

Poverty and social exclusion can affect all age groups. It is multi-faceted and combating it requires a multi-policy response. This is reflected in the definition of poverty and social exclusion which the Government first adopted in 1997:

People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.

This definition continues to be valid and underpins the Government's strategic response to tackling poverty and social exclusion as set out in this National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion).

Ireland introduced a strategic approach to combating poverty in 1997 with the publication of the first National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS). Key challenges in the preceding period were high levels of unemployment, high emigration and comparatively limited resources for development of services. The high levels of economic growth over the last decade have transformed the economy, leading to major social and economic advances. These include a substantial reduction in unemployment, a substantial increase in women working in the paid economy and, as a consequence, a major increase in the number of two income households. Other significant changes include the ending of high emigration, a major increase in return migration and in the numbers of immigrants from other countries.

This NAPinclusion is intended to set out a coherent and comprehensive approach for the next ten years using a lifecycle approach, as set out by National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in its report, *The Developmental Welfare State* and adopted by the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016*. It represents a wide-ranging and comprehensive programme of action to address social exclusion. In addition, the Government believes that high level goals are required in a small number of key areas in order to achieve the overall objective of reducing consistent poverty. These goals are designed to mobilise resources to address long-standing and serious social deficits. Both this Plan and

the National Development Plan 2007-2013: *Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life for All*, (NDP) will be informed by these goals which are set out in the overview and in each lifecycle chapter.

The lifecycle approach places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery by assessing the risks facing him or her and the supports available at key stages of the lifecycle. These key lifecycle groups are: *Children, People of Working Age, Older People and People with Disabilities*. The adoption of the lifecycle approach offers a comprehensive framework for implementing a streamlined, cross-cutting and visible approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion. The *Towards 2016* strategic vision and key long-term goals for each stage of the lifecycle, together with agreed priority actions, form the basis for the targets and actions, and for the complementary economic and social infrastructure measures set out in the NDP.

1.2 Economic, Demographic and Employment Trends

Economic development and employment growth is crucial to making a decisive impact on poverty. The economic situation has been favourable in this regard over the past number of years and it is expected that the economy will continue to expand at a rate of between 4.0% and 4.4% over the period 2006-2013.

Population levels are at their highest since 1861. Preliminary census data for 2006 shows a 16.8% increase in the overall population between 1996 and 2006, from 3.63 million to 4.24 million persons. Net immigration is estimated to have accounted for the vast bulk

of this increase with the number of immigrants now estimated at 400,000. Non-nationals now comprise some 10% of the labour force – one of the highest in the European Union (EU).

Central Statistics Office (CSO) population and labour force projections suggest that continued economic growth will lead to further immigration in the years ahead. Population projections for the period 2006 - 2016 forecast an increase of between 437,000 and 686,000 people, with increased immigration levels contributing some 150,000 to 300,000 to this growth.

During 2006 the numbers of those in employment exceeded 2 million for the first time: at the end of the third quarter of 2006 there were over 2.07 million people in employment, compared with just 1.47 million at the end of 1997. This represents an increase of 605,600 or 41% in the last nine years, a very impressive rise by international standards. The increase in the female employment rate from 48.4% to 60.3% over the same period is also notable.

The main Lisbon employment target has almost been reached with an overall employment rate of 69.6% in the third quarter of 2006. The employment rates for male and female workers are 78.7% and 60.3% respectively, with the female employment rate now exceeding the Lisbon employment target of 60%. Employment of older workers (55-64 years) has increased to 52.9% and also exceeds the EU target of 50%. In addition, the unemployment rate continues to remain at a low level (4.8% for the third quarter of 2006) with the long-term unemployment rate remaining low at 1.3%. Over the medium term, the current buoyancy in the labour market is expected to continue and the labour force is

projected to increase by 2.0% to 2.5% between 2007 and 2013.

1.3 Income Support

The strong performance of the Irish economy since the first NAPS has allowed for significant additional investment in the social protection system. Between 1997 and 2007, the basic rate of social welfare support has increased by 123.7%, well ahead of the 41.4% increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), and the 61.8% increase in gross average industrial earnings. This represents an increase in real terms of 58.2%. Improvements in social welfare rates are reflected in substantially increased spending on social protection, from €5.7 billion in 1997 to €15.3 billion in 2007.

The Government set a number of key targets for social welfare rates. The 2002 Review of the NAPS included targets to increase the lowest adult social welfare rate to €150, in 2002 terms, and to maintain the appropriate combined value of child income supports at 33%-35% of the lowest adult social welfare rate. Another important target contained in the 2002 Agreed Programme for Government was to increase the basic state pension to €200 a week. It is a significant achievement not only for those who have benefited, but for the integrity of this strategic process, that these commitments for combating poverty have been fundamentally met.

The success of the economy has also produced the resources for significant investment in social services, such as housing, health services, childcare, education, training, community development and social inclusion generally.

The lifecycle approach places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery by assessing the risks facing him or her and the supports available at key stages of the lifecycle.

1.4 The Challenge of Poverty and Social Exclusion

Low levels of unemployment and the substantial resources devoted to social welfare and other social services have helped to lift a significant number of people out of consistent poverty over the past decade. Accessing and retaining employment has proved to be one of the most important routes out of poverty. Success in this area has been complemented by the introduction of the national minimum wage¹, reform of the tax system and greater flexibility in the social welfare system aimed at supporting people into employment.

Virtually everyone in Irish society has benefited from the significant economic growth in recent years and the enhanced level of public support that this has been able to deliver. However, not everyone has benefited to the same extent, including in particular, those who live in jobless households. Particular categories involved include lone parent families, people with disabilities, those who are long-term unemployed, and minority groups, such as Travellers. An emerging challenge is the situation of the growing numbers of migrants and their families.

Employment is the main route out of poverty but, even during a period when an unprecedented number of jobs became available, some remained jobless. While unemployment has a major impact on the individual, it also affects children – the majority of children in poverty live in jobless households. It is also the case that for many people, employment may not be possible.

These include older people who are retired, people unable to work due to illness or disability, and those temporarily unable to work due to care responsibilities in the family or lack of the necessary skills and aptitudes. In these cases, adequate income supports and services to help them achieve greater autonomy and well-being are essential.

1.5 The Strategic Approach

The strategic approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion over the past 10 years has included identifying the groups and areas which are vulnerable to poverty. The multi-policy response is becoming progressively more co-ordinated and integrated at national and local levels, and between these levels. This approach is achieving better outcomes not only for those experiencing poverty but also, better value for money for taxpayers who fund the Government's policies and actions.

Social inclusion is firmly on the public policy agenda. This is being further strengthened by an integrated framework that aims to ensure that social and economic development go hand in hand. This will be achieved by streamlining the goals and implementation of the key social inclusion processes. This will create more coherent and integrated structures and facilitate improved reporting and monitoring.

While many areas of social provision impact across all sectors of the population, e.g. health, education and housing, this NAPinclusion focuses primarily on those who are most

¹ The national minimum wage is currently €8.30 per hour and is due to increase to €8.65 on 1st July 2007.

deprived and vulnerable. The main emphasis, using the lifecycle approach, is on:

- Ensuring children reach their true potential;
- Supporting working age people and people with disabilities, through activation measures and the provision of services to increase employment and participation;
- Providing the type of supports that enable older people to maintain a comfortable and high-quality standard of living;
- Building viable and sustainable communities, improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital.

As the key income targets set out in the last NAPS have been achieved, it is important that we have a strengthened focus on the effective delivery and implementation of supports and services. As set out in the NESR report, *The Developmental Welfare State*, access to a wide set of services is essential to attaining the workforce quality that underpins a competitive, knowledge-based economy, and to maintaining social cohesion and combating social exclusion.

This Plan is not about committing additional resources as these have already been negotiated and set out in *Towards 2016* and the NDP. It seeks to focus on achieving meaningful outcomes within a ten-year framework based on strengthening delivery and implementation through integrated responses. Inherent in this approach will be the delivery of institutional change and joined-up approaches, with a much greater focus on rigorous evaluation of performance and outcomes.

1.6 Measuring Poverty

There is no one measure that gives a complete picture of the situation regarding deprivation, poverty and social exclusion. This is particularly true for a country like Ireland that has experienced rapid economic growth over the last ten years. Therefore, a number of indicators are used to measure progress in achieving social inclusion covering areas such as income, levels of deprivation, early school leaving, jobless households, long-term unemployment, and life expectancy.²

The official Government approved measure used in Ireland is consistent poverty, developed independently by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). This measure identifies the proportion of people, from those with an income below a certain threshold, (less than 60% of median income³), who are deprived of one or more goods or services considered essential for a basic standard of living.

The target set in 2002 was to reduce the numbers of those who are consistently poor to 2.0% by 2007 and, if possible, to eliminate consistent poverty, as then defined. A major discontinuity between the Living in Ireland Survey (LIIS), previously used for monitoring progress, and the new EU Survey on Income and Living

² EU Member States adopted a revised set of common indicators of social protection and social inclusion in June 2006, against which to report in their National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NSSPIs). The list of main social inclusion indicators is attached at Annex 1.

³ Median income is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal parts, half of people having incomes above the median, half having incomes below the median.

Conditions (EU-SILC), which was introduced from 2003, means that it is not possible to compare trends in consistent poverty between the two surveys. However, continuing low levels of unemployment and the substantial resources devoted to social welfare and other social services support the view that the downward trend, (from 8.3% in 1994 to 4.1% in 2001), would have continued and the target would have been reached.

This NAPinclusion will use the EU-SILC data to monitor trends for the future. These data indicate that the overall consistent poverty rate was 8.8% in 2003 reducing to 7.0% in 2005. However, within this overall rate, it is important to note that some groups are especially vulnerable; groups such as lone parent households with a rate of 27.2% (33.6% in 2003) and people with illnesses or disabilities at 17.4% (22.4% in 2003). Also reflected in the findings is the impact of employment, with only 1.7 % of people at work experiencing consistent poverty (2.6% in 2003) compared with 21.6% of those who are unemployed (28.3% in 2003)⁴.

Other poverty measures, as referred to above, are also useful, and highlight different aspects of the reality of poverty. The 'at risk of poverty' measure is the best known and quoted as it affords some comparisons with other countries. It does not, however, measure poverty as such, but rather the proportion of people below a certain income threshold. The income threshold used can result in very different findings. For example, taking the EU threshold of 60% of median income, the measure indicates that 20.1% of older people in Ireland are at risk of poverty while, at the

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) or United Nations (UN) threshold of 50%, only 7.5% are at risk.

The 'at risk of poverty' indicator has particular limitations as a measure of poverty in the case of Ireland in recent years. It takes no account of overall living standards and fails to reflect the fact that the 60% median income threshold increased by 88% from €102.44 in 1997 to €192.74 in 2005. Over the same period, prices (CPI) increased by 30.6%, average industrial earnings increased by 56.4% and basic social welfare payments increased by 79.1%. The high levels of economic growth led to an increase in the number of women in the workforce and, consequently, in the number of two income households. Incomes in these cases outpaced the incomes of those who were not in the workforce and of some single income families. All groups in society have benefited from economic growth, therefore, the main value of the indicator is in identifying particular groups which may have difficulty keeping pace with living standards generally. It has also been acknowledged that the 'at risk of poverty' indicator is not suited to making comparisons between countries at different stages of economic development.

A decrease in the 'at risk of poverty' rate in Ireland from 19.7% in 2003 to 18.5% in 2005 was recorded by EU-SILC and this may indicate that the distorting effect of significant structural changes may no longer be a major factor.

1.7 New Poverty Target and Measure

The overall goal of this strategy is to make a decisive impact on consistent poverty. This is

⁴ Annex 2 contains further information on poverty data

Low levels of unemployment and the substantial resources devoted to social welfare and other social services have helped to lift a significant number of people out of consistent poverty over the past decade.

underlined by the fact that a new target is being set, which will use a set of up-to-date indicators, more realistic and more in keeping with living standards today. The new target is:

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

The new target reflects experience and expert advice that it may be difficult to bring consistent poverty down to zero. This is due in part to the subjective and sensitive nature of the survey questions used to identify deprivation. This is borne out by the fact that, in addition to those below the 60% poverty threshold, a significant minority of people with incomes above that threshold also report deprivation. This may occur for a variety of reasons such as consumption patterns and choices, or temporary and unexpected heavy spending. It is accepted, however, that the consistent poverty measure does clearly identify those who are most vulnerable.

The consistent poverty measure was devised in 1987 using indicators of deprivation based on standards of living at that time. The Government has accepted the advice of the ESRI to revise the deprivation indicators to better reflect current living standards and, in particular, to focus to a greater degree on items reflecting social inclusion and participation in society. This will see the current measure, based on lacking one or more items from an 8-item index, changing to one based on lacking two or more items from an

11-item index⁵. This revised set of deprivation indicators will be used to measure consistent poverty over the course of this NAPinclusion. The current rate of consistent poverty using the new measure is 7.0%.

There are difficulties in setting poverty targets for a number of reasons, as recognised in *Towards 2016*, including the relatively recent status of EU-SILC. Nonetheless, the Government and the social partners have agreed that it is important to set real and achievable targets. In this context, the overall approach to effective poverty measurement will be reviewed by the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI), supported by its Technical Advisory Group, which advises the Office on the development of its data strategy.

1.8 Making It Happen

Achieving the overall poverty goal will require particular focus on vulnerable groups and on achieving the high level goals relating to different stages of the lifecycle. In addition to these goals, a number of other important targets and actions have been developed which are set out in the appropriate chapters of this Plan.

Effective implementation is essential. Therefore, a main priority over the next 10 years will be to avoid any 'implementation gap'. In order to deliver on the ambitious targets, we will strengthen integrated approaches and ensure that the investments being made are focused on outcomes. Strengthening administration through greater co-ordination across Government at national and local levels and between these

⁵ Annex 3 details items contained in the revised deprivation index

levels will be a priority. This will include regular monitoring and evaluation of progress and consultation with stakeholders on performance. Chapter 7 sets out the mechanisms which have been identified in this regard.

1.9 Reviewing Progress

Tackling poverty and social exclusion is a challenge that requires flexible and ongoing policy responses and service delivery that is accessible and focused on the needs of the individual. The majority of the targets and actions set out in this Plan have clear delivery times. Some of these measures are already in progress and will be delivered in the earlier period of this Plan. However, this does not mean that once delivered, no further action will be undertaken. The establishment of a number of key milestones, as set out below, will provide an opportunity to review progress and revisit targets in the light of experience:

- 2008 – first review under *Towards 2016*;
- 2010 – reporting of outcomes on the 2010 Lisbon Goals;
- 2013 – conclusion of the NDP;
- 2016 – conclusion of *Towards 2016* and this NAPinclusion.

The annual Social Inclusion Report produced by the Office for Social Inclusion will detail progress across the key national social inclusion strategies (see Chapter 7 for further details).

1.10 Content of the NAPinclusion

This Plan contains one chapter for each of the four main lifecycle stages. However, certain policies that benefit one group can also impact positively on other groups and these are cross-referenced as appropriate. Similarly, many policies affect a range of groups or geographical areas and these are detailed in Chapter 6. It should be noted that, unlike previous plans, policy responses to the needs of specific vulnerable groups are not dealt with separately, but rather are addressed within the lifecycle and communities chapters. The final chapter (Chapter 7) sets out the implementation and monitoring arrangements.

Within each chapter of this Plan, policies and actions are set out using the three overlapping areas of welfare state activity set out in the NESC report, *The Developmental Welfare State*. These are services, income support and activist or innovative measures, delivered in an integrated manner.

This Plan, together with *Towards 2016* and the NDP, has been informed by an extensive consultation process which was conducted by the Office for Social Inclusion. Other consultation events fed into the process. A report on the consultation process has been published and is available from the Office for Social Inclusion⁶. The preparation of this Plan has also been assisted by data compiled for the Office for Social Inclusion by the ESRI. This work will be published in a series of social portraits.

⁶ Annex 7 provides details of the consultation process and lists those who made submissions.

This Plan, together with Towards 2016 and the NDP, has been informed by an extensive consultation process which was conducted by the Office for Social Inclusion.

A report on the consultation process has been published and is available from the Office for Social Inclusion.



CHAPTER 2
CHILDREN

2.1 VISION

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

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

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

2.2 Context

Children make up about one quarter of the population – just over one million - a high proportion compared with other European countries. The CSO estimates that the proportion of children in the population could fall significantly, by as much as 5 percentage points, over the period to 2036. However, the actual number of children is projected to increase by some 240,000 over the same period.

We know that children do not experience disadvantage on their own but in the context of their family⁷. More children are vulnerable to poverty than adults, as there are on average more children in poorer households than there are adults. Households with children which are particularly at risk include: those headed by a person working in the home particularly lone parents; people with disabilities; and those who are unemployed, although the number in this latter group has declined significantly. Data show that children aged up to 14 years experienced the highest levels of consistent poverty in 2004 and 2005, at 9.5% and 10.2% respectively.

A trend in children's circumstances is the fall in the number of children per family and the changes in family structures observed between 1981 and 2002. The average number of children per family fell from 2.2 in 1981 to 1.6 in 2002.

The 2002 Census indicates that 81% or over 820,000 children were living with both parents. Most of the remainder, 14% or almost 142,000, were living in lone parent families. These families

tend to have fewer children than two-parent families. Lone parent families (with children under age 15), are increasing rapidly and now constitute almost 17% of families. The vast majority of lone parents, 90.7%, are female.

Research in Ireland and internationally confirms that poverty rates for children in jobless families are substantially higher than in those where one or both parents work. Therefore, policies that strongly support parents into employment will have a major impact on child poverty. Typically, poverty levels also tend to be higher among larger families and lone parent families. This can be due to the direct costs of rearing children, including childcare, and the reduced earning capacity of parents where one parent works within the home.

Health

Health is fundamental to the well-being of children. Health inequalities manifest themselves in a higher incidence of low birth weight and premature mortality among children from lower socio-economic groups and through emerging issues such as exercise, nutrition and obesity. On the positive side, the majority of school-going children and young people now have a greater involvement in extra-curricular sports activities. Involvement in sports is more prevalent among second-level students than among primary students and male students in both primary and second-level schools are more likely to have higher levels of involvement than females.

Education

Education is a major factor in contributing to the development of children, their future economic

⁷ The Developmental Welfare State, NES, 2005

independence, standard of living and overall well-being. Missing out on an adequate education at any stage of a child's upbringing can have negative consequences, both for their immediate well-being and in adulthood.

In 2004, only 7.0% of children aged 3 or under, and almost half of 4 year-olds were in pre-school education. Therefore, access to educational opportunities for this group requires particular attention.

There are over 450,000 primary school pupils and over 340,000 second-level pupils in Ireland. It is projected that the primary school population will increase by approximately 100,000 between 2007 and 2013, which will also feed into the post-primary system. Some 1.5% of primary school pupils are enrolled in special schools and a further 2.0% are identified as having special needs but are enrolled in national schools. About 4.0% of young people leave school without taking any examinations, while 15% leave after the Junior Certificate. Addressing this deep-rooted challenge requires a concentrated and targeted approach.

Income support

Income support makes a major contribution to the well-being of families and children. Child Benefit is available in respect of almost all children, irrespective of their parents' incomes, and has grown substantially from €53.96 (lower rate) in 2000 to €160 per month in 2007. As it is neutral with regard to the employment status of the child's parents, it does not contribute to poverty traps. While the role of Child Benefit in alleviating child poverty is important, it is recognised that there must be a balance between selective and universal payments to

achieve more effective outcomes in combating child poverty.

The reform of the more targeted supports in recent years illustrates this more selective approach by targeting children in poorer households while at the same time reducing employment disincentives. Reforms have included the re-focusing of Family Income Supplement thresholds in favour of larger families in 2006 and 2007 and a new standard Qualified Child Allowance (formerly Child Dependant Allowance). Other initiatives, such as the national minimum wage and the *National Employment Action Plan*, have also served to reduce the impact of the loss of Qualified Child Allowance in the decision to take up employment.

In addition, the introduction of the Early Childcare Supplement in 2005 and the improved Back to School Clothing and Footwear allowance have impacted positively on the position of children in low-income families, in particular children under six years of age.

2.3 High Level Goals

The provision of adequate income supports for children has been identified as a high level goal. In addition, as education is viewed as a key indicator of future life chances and opportunities, a number of the high level goals are in this area.

Goal 1: Education

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

Research in Ireland and internationally confirms that poverty rates for children in jobless families are substantially higher than in those where one or both parents work. Therefore, policies that strongly support parents into employment will have a major impact on child poverty.

Goal 2: Education

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

Goal 3: Education

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

Goal 4: Income Support

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

Other important targets and actions include:

2.4 Income Support

Various issues governing the payment of Child Benefit are currently being examined by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. These include:

- The review of child income supports by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, informed by the NESC study on a second tier child income support, will be completed in 2007;
- The introduction of legislation to provide for Child Benefit to be divided equally between parents in cases where they are not living

together and where joint equal custody arrangements apply; and

- The implications of and issues involved in transferring payment from the child's primary carer to an alternative qualified person in circumstances where it is established that the Child Benefit is not being utilised for the benefit of the child.

2.5 Services

2.5.1 Early Childhood Development and Care

Income supports assist families in providing for children, but the provision of childcare is now becoming essential to enable parents participate in the workforce and to obtain an income that provides an acceptable standard of living for both them and their children. Quality childcare can also make a significant contribution to child development in the early years of a child's life, which is a crucial foundation for future development. In addition to the high level goals set out above, other targets in this area include:

- An infrastructure will be developed to provide quality, affordable childcare and an increase in the number of childcare places (of all types) by 100,000 over the period to 2016. *The National Childcare Investment Programme, 2006-2010* (NCIP) will create 50,000 of these places;
- The review of the NCIP, 2006-2010, will be undertaken during 2010 in consultation with the social partners. This will assess progress made to date to address childcare needs with a view to ensuring that new policy responses and any subsequent programme(s) are appropriate to emerging needs in childcare;

- A National Childcare Training Strategy will be developed to provide 17,000 childcare training places over the period 2006-2010, and include the quality and training provisions of the NCIP;
- The findings of the review of *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* will be published in early 2007;
- A Childcare Services policy will be completed and published in 2007. Roll-out and implementation of policy by the Health Service Executive (HSE) will commence in 2007;
- Standardised inspection procedures and reports will be commenced under the Childcare (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 in 2007.

2.5.2 Health

Access to good quality healthcare is essential for the well-being and future development of children. However, the development of healthy behaviour and attitudes, particularly in relation to exercise, eating habits and avoidance of alcohol and other substance abuses is also crucial. The following targets have been identified in this area:

- The delivery, under the framework of the *Vision for Change Strategy*, of child and adolescent Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) in the order of 1 CMHT per 100,000 of the population by 2008 and 2 CMHTs per 100,000 of the population by 2013;
- The prevalence trends of smoking and substance use will be monitored through the National Health and Lifestyle Surveys and the European School Survey Project on Alcohol

and other Drugs (ESPAD). ESPAD results will be available in late 2007 or early 2008;

- The Survey of Lifestyles, Attitudes and Nutrition (SLÁN 06) fieldwork will be completed and data analysed in 2007. The first results will be available by end 2007. The results will inform policy development at national level and service planning at national and regional level;
- The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey (HBSC) results will be available from mid-2007;
- Substance use policies will be put in place in 100% of schools by 2008;
- Access to treatment will be provided to 100% of problematic drugs users aged under-18 within one month after assessment.

2.5.3 Nutrition

- A National Nutrition Policy to address children's food poverty and obesity will be finalised and launched by mid-2007. A national database will be developed to monitor prevalence trends of growth, overweight and obesity. The Programme of Action for Children (PAC) has developed a growth module for children and its implementation will be dealt with in the National Nutrition Policy.
- The 475 schools in the DEIS action plan not benefiting from the school meals programme will be targeted to increase participation and the current number of participating schools will be increased by 215, by the end of 2007. Additional funding of €3 million has been provided for this programme in 2007.

2.5.4 Education

- In order to meet high level Goal 1, the Early Childhood Education measure under the DEIS Action Plan will be extended to the urban primary school communities with the most immediate and pressing needs by 2010. This measure will continue to be extended to encompass the remaining schools in the urban primary strand of DEIS after 2010.
- To help further address absenteeism, early school leaving, behavioural problems and special needs, an additional 100 posts will be provided for the National Educational Welfare Board and the National Educational Psychological Service by 2009;
- Support for the effective integration of migrant children at both primary and second-level will be enhanced through the provision of an extra 550 teachers for language supports by 2009 and the reform of the current limit of two additional teachers per school. Some €637 million will be available by 2013 for teachers for language supports to assist children from non-English speaking backgrounds.
- Provisions to enable the full implementation of the Children Act 2001 will be in place in 2007 with the further development of quality standards with enhanced monitoring and inspection of these standards.
- Young people enrolled in Youthreach centres throughout the country need additional supports to develop skills which will ensure they can reach their full potential socially, personally, educationally and economically. Some €2 million is to be allocated in 2007 to 20 existing Youthreach Centres to address the special educational needs of students aged 15-20 years. Consideration will be

given to extending the arrangement to all Youthreach Centres following an evaluation. A further 1,000 Youthreach places will be provided by 2009, on top of the existing 2,700 places provided by Vocational Education Committees.

2.5.5 Traveller Children

Traveller children have specific vulnerabilities in relation to education. Additional measures are required, therefore, and these include:

- The majority of the recommendations of the *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy*, mindful of the *Survey of Traveller Education Provision*, will be implemented between 2007 and 2011;
- Segregated provision at primary and post-primary level will be phased out to ensure that Travellers are integrated into mainstream schools by 2009;
- Pre-schools for Travellers will be integrated over a longer period with current and new pre-school provision, so that young Travellers may experience an inclusive integrated education from an early age.

2.5.6 Youth Homelessness

Young people who are homeless are among the most marginalised and vulnerable of all young people. Their homelessness may be symptomatic of serious underlying personal, family and social problems. To address this problem, therefore,

- The Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) will undertake a review of progress on the implementation of the *Youth Homelessness*

Missing out on an adequate education at any stage of a child's upbringing can have negative consequences, both for their immediate well-being and in adulthood.

Strategy and develop a new programme of action in 2007.

2.5.7 Sport and Leisure

Sport and leisure have a key role in healthy child development, quality of life and well-being. Therefore significant resources are being made available to develop the necessary facilities which include:

- 15 playground projects will be completed in 2007 through funding of some €700,000 under the 2005 Local Authority Playground Grants Scheme. In addition, over €4 million is being allocated to each City and County Council under the 2006 Local Authority Playground Grants scheme to provide up to 90 additional playground projects over the next two years;
- 21 projects to develop skateboard facilities will be completed through overall funding of €2 million by the end of 2007;
- The RAPID Programme will provide €3 million under its Playground Grants Scheme in 2007;
- Proposals for the roll-out of the Youth Café Programme will be developed by September 2007.

Additional targets and actions in relation to sport are also dealt with in Chapter 6 including the key role of Local Sports Partnerships in developing primary school sport.

2.6 Innovative Measures

2.6.1 Child Participation

Priority is now being given to promoting and facilitating child participation in the design and implementation of the *National Children's Strategy* and other related measures and activities. Targets include:

- New standards, guidelines and supports will be put in place for the operation of Comhairle Na nÓg by September 2007;
- The duration and frequency of Dáil na nÓg will be reviewed by 2008;
- Measures to ensure that hard-to-reach children and young people are included in the above participation structures will be established by 2008;
- The OMC will report to Government in 2012 on the overall assessment of models of best practice which promote integrated, locally-led, strategic planning for children's services. This will be informed by:
 - the OMC initiative testing models for integrated services and interventions for children at local level;
 - the development of multi-agency Children's Services Committees within each of the City/County Development Boards;
 - the ongoing research and data development initiatives undertaken or supported by the OMC.

2.6.2 Community Training Centres (CTCs)

CTCs are important facilities for the provision of education and training. Working in partnership with FÁS, they provide early school leavers with basic skills and work experience and assist with their progression to further training, education or employment. Measures for their further development include:

- All CTCs, which are funded by FÁS, will have quality assurance procedures for early school leavers in place by December 2007;
- An Individual Learning Plan will be developed and implemented for every learner and regularly reviewed during their period in training. This process will be in place from 2008;
- A progression strategy for each learner leaving the CTCs including a minimum of 6 months support will be developed and available from 2008.

2.6.3 Youth Justice

The provision of a focussed, integrated approach to prevention, support and rehabilitation of young people at risk of offending or re-offending includes:

- The OMC in partnership with the new Irish Youth Justice Service and the Justice sector, the Health Service Executive and the Department of Education and Science and the Education sector will support the accelerated implementation of the Children Act 2001. The legislative provisions will be commenced on 1 March 2007;
- The Irish Youth Justice Service will ensure that the services needed to facilitate

commencement of all community alternatives to detention, delivered by the Probation Service, are provided as early as possible during the period 2007-2013;

- The scheduled date for the commencement of the legislative provisions to implement community sanctions is 1 March 2007. The measures will subsequently be rolled out on a phased basis across the country. This roll-out will be completed by 2013;
- The total number of Youth Diversion Projects will increase to approximately 130, catering for in the region of 4,500 young people by 2013. A comprehensive evaluation of the Youth Diversion projects will be conducted in 2007-2008 to inform the evolution of the projects;
- An education strategy for all children in high support, special care and Children Detention Schools is being prepared to provide a continuum of education and training opportunities for these children before, during and after any periods in special care or detention.

2.6.4 Youth at Risk from Drug Misuse

The Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (YPF SF) will continue to assist in the development of youth facilities (including sport and recreational facilities) and services in disadvantaged areas where a significant drug problem exists or has the potential to develop. The geographic coverage of the Fund may be expanded to other disadvantaged urban areas. The YPF SF will continue to target 10 to 21 year olds who are 'at risk'. It will continue to build on and complement youth measures under the Children's Programme in the areas where it is operational.

2.6.5 *Growing Up in Ireland:* the national longitudinal study on children in Ireland

This major study, initially contracted for the period April 2006 to end 2012, will track the outcomes for children of Government supports and policies, community and family support, and will aim to identify what policy changes and further developments are required to achieve improved outcomes. It is expected that a report comprising the initial data from the study will be published by the end of 2008.



CHAPTER 3
PEOPLE OF WORKING AGE

3.1 Vision

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

To achieve this vision, the Government and social partners in *Towards 2016* undertook to work together over the next ten years towards the following long-term goals for people of working age in Ireland:

- Every person of working age should be encouraged and supported to participate fully in social, civic and economic life;
- Every person of working age should have access to lifelong learning, a sense of personal security in a changing work environment and an opportunity to balance work and family commitments consistent with business needs;
- Every person of working age should have an income level to sustain an acceptable standard of living and to enable them to provide for an adequate income in retirement;
- Every person of working age on welfare should have access to supports towards progression and inclusion, access to quality work and learning opportunities, encouraging a greater degree of self-reliance and self-sufficiency;
- Every person, irrespective of background or gender, should enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination;
- Every family should have access to health and social care, affordable accommodation appropriate to their needs and a well functioning public transport system;
- Every person with caring responsibilities should have access to appropriate supports to enable them to meet these responsibilities in addition to employment and other commitments.

3.2 Context

People of working age constitute the largest of the lifecycle groups with some 2.6 million people aged between 18 and 64. A range of supports is required, particularly for those experiencing poverty and social exclusion to ensure their well-being and that of their families. People and groups vulnerable in this regard include lone parent households, the long-term unemployed, workers on low income, Travellers, the homeless, and migrants and ethnic minority groups.

3.2.1 Poverty within the Working Age Group

The diversity within the working age population is evident in the consistent poverty rates for various groups. While the overall rate for those aged 15-64 in 2005 was 6.5%, only 1.7% of those at work were in consistent poverty. This low figure compares with 27.2% of lone parents who were classified as being in consistent poverty and 21.6% of those who are unemployed. Non-Irish nationals experienced higher rates of consistent poverty compared to Irish nationals: 13.1% as opposed to 6.6%.

3.2.2 Employment/ Unemployment Variations

The differences within the working age population can also be seen in the following CSO statistics:

- People who are long-term unemployed comprise 1.3% of the total labour force.

The unemployment rate was 4.8%, so the long-term unemployed constitute about one quarter (Quarter 3 2006);

- A higher proportion of lone parents are unemployed (6.0%). They also have a lower employment rate⁸, 47%, compared to 60.3% for women and just below 70% of the working age population overall (Quarter 3 2006);
- Some 71% of non-Irish nationals are in work compared with 60% of the Irish population (Quarter 3 2006);
- Only 17% of all Travellers aged between 15 and 64 were recorded as being in work in 2002, compared with an employment rate of 69.6% for all persons aged 15-64 (Quarter 3 2006);
- Some 40% of Travellers of working age were unemployed, compared with 6.0% for the working-age population as a whole (Census 2002).

3.2.3 Education Variations

Qualification levels determine to a significant degree the quality of the jobs that people of working age enter. Data on education levels also show up variations within the overall working age group. For example, lone mothers have significantly lower levels of educational attainment, 17% having no formal qualifications. A further 29% have only lower second-level qualifications while only 15% have attained a third-level qualification. A recent survey suggests that non-Irish nationals have considerably higher levels of education with over 54% having third-

⁸ The employment rate is the number of employed people aged 15 – 64 as a percentage of the total population aged 15 – 64.

level qualifications, which is twice the figure for Irish nationals⁹. Immigrants from non-English speaking countries are more likely to be employed in relatively low-skilled occupations, suggesting that weak English language skills may result in a gap between qualifications and occupations.

Groups outside the workforce and people in low-paid employment need additional supports to enhance their employability. It is important that a balance between flexibility and security is achieved. This involves a smooth transition between jobs, with minimal absence from the workforce; the ability to continuously develop skills and competencies through lifelong learning and up-skilling; supports for those with caring responsibilities and greater flexibility in work organisation (the role of caring is addressed in Chapter 6).

3.2.4 Gender Issues

While women comprise 50% of the population they are very poorly represented at senior levels in the public and private sectors, despite the fact that women generally achieve higher educational qualifications. Women also disproportionately have to balance work and family responsibilities, which can impact on their earning capacity and lead to a high proportion of women being in part-time or lower paid jobs. These factors contribute to the gender pay gap which is measured in different ways and is currently thought to be between 11% and 14%.

⁹ Barrett, A., A. Bergin and D. Duffy (2006), The Labour Market Characteristics and Labour Market Impact of Immigrants in Ireland, The Economic and Social Review, Vol. 37, No. 1, 1-26.

The forthcoming *National Women's Strategy, 2007-2015* will aim to address this issue and other gender-related issues.

3.3 High Level Goals

Employment has proven to be a major factor for people exiting poverty and also influences quality of life and social well-being. Therefore, while social welfare income support remains crucial and must be adequate to meet needs, passive income support alone is not sufficient if poverty and social exclusion are to be comprehensively addressed.

A number of high level goals have been adopted that will make a decisive impact on the lives of people of working age:

Goal 5: Employment and Participation

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

Goal 6: Income Support

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

While social welfare income support remains crucial and must be adequate to meet needs, passive income support alone is not sufficient if poverty and social exclusion are to be comprehensively addressed.

Other important targets and actions include:

3.4 Income Support

People of working age may need income support during the course of their working lives: in circumstances of unemployment, sickness or disability; as a supplement for low-income employment; and to meet family responsibilities, including balancing work with these responsibilities. It is also during this period that people have to save for retirement, mainly through pension schemes. The following actions are proposed:

- The role of the Family Income Supplement scheme as an income support for low-income working families with children has been substantially improved and will be reviewed during 2007;
- The Rural Social Scheme (RSS) allows low-income farmers and fishermen to earn a supplementary income while, at the same time, benefits rural communities by maintaining and improving local amenities and facilities. Expenditure of some €214 million will be provided between 2007 and 2013 to benefit some 2,600 households. It is an aim of the scheme that over the medium-term all participants will be facilitated with their preferences with regard to both location and type of work;
- The report of the Unemployment Benefit Expenditure Review Group, due in early 2007, will be considered in the context of its conclusions on social protection issues relating to atypical workers;

- The issue of part-time availability for work within the social welfare system is being considered in the context of proposals being developed aimed at supporting lone parents and parents on low income back into employment;
- The standard means test for Rent Supplement (and other secondary benefit payments) under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme (SWA) will continue to be reviewed with a view to providing enhanced financial incentives to take up part-time employment, training, education or other progression options, and minimising where possible, the impact of the withdrawal of social welfare supports. The overall emphasis will be on the provision of appropriate long-term housing solutions.

3.5 Services

3.5.1 Employment and Employability

The high level goal is to remove obstacles and create incentives to employment for those who are furthest from the labour market. Another key priority is to provide opportunities and supports for those who are in low-skilled employment. These priorities involve increasing activation and enhancing employability through appropriate education and training. The aim is:

- To achieve and surpass the Lisbon targets: to increase the overall employment rate to 70% by 2010; to continue to increase the female employment rate above 60%; and to continue to increase the employment rate of older workers above 50%.

To deliver on this, the following actions will be taken:

- A new *Social and Economic Participation Programme* will be introduced by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The aim is to move from the current largely passive approach to one where the Department will engage with all people of working age in receipt of social welfare at the initial claim stage in order to deliver more intensive engagement on an individual basis. Some €50 million will be invested in this programme between 2007 and 2013 with an initial €13 million to be spent in the first 3 years. As part of this process, research aimed at developing a *National Profiling System* will be finalised by the end of 2008;
- The extension of the *Employment Action Plan* process to those who are three months unemployed (previous threshold was six months) and those who are aged 55-64 will enable the provision of increased and earlier engagement;
- Almost €4.9 billion is being allocated by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment over the period 2007-2013 to provide targeted training and supports to groups outside the labour market such as the unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents, Travellers and prisoners. This funding will also support the increased participation of women, older workers, part-time workers and migrants;
- The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will invest some €2.9 billion between 2007-2013 to improve training for people in employment, to help upskill those who may be affected by industrial

restructuring, to improve and enlarge the apprenticeship system and to provide progressive opportunities for school leavers;

- Special projects will be provided by the Department of Social and Family Affairs to support personal development, intensive training, counselling and other supports for those who are most marginalised. It is estimated that 420 projects per year will be funded over the lifetime of this Plan;
- Positive actions will be set out in the forthcoming *National Women's Strategy, 2007-2015* to further increase the number of women in the labour market, to foster the advancement of women in the workplace and to address the gender pay gap;
- A National Skills Strategy will be implemented to increase the skills levels of those at work, based on the *Forfás Expert Group on Future Skills Needs Study*.

See also Chapter 6 for other community-based employment programmes.

3.5.2 Literacy

Lack of adequate literacy can be a significant barrier to self-esteem, employment and more generally to achieving social inclusion. Measures to promote increased levels of literacy will include:

- The proportion of the population aged 16-64 with restricted literacy will be reduced to between 10%-15% by 2016, from the level of 25% found in 1997 (restricted literacy being defined as Level I on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) scale, or equivalent);

- As part of the general national literacy service, the Vocational Education Committees will provide an additional 7,000 places by 2009, from the current level of 35,000 participants annually. There will be a particular focus on increasing the number of migrants receiving an English language service;
- The Workplace Basic Education Fund will register 2,000 learners during the period 2007-2010;
- A family literacy project is also being put in place under the DEIS action plan.

3.5.3 Second Chance Education

Some people of working age have missed out on reaching an adequate level of educational attainment for a variety of reasons during their years of schooling. Measures to provide second chance education include:

- The Back to Education Initiative, providing support for adults who did not complete upper second-level schooling, will be expanded by an additional 2,000 places by 2009, in addition to the 8,000 places currently provided;
- A total of €1 billion will be invested in the post-leaving certificate sector over the period 2007-2013 to provide participants with specific vocational skills to enhance their prospects of securing employment and support progression to other studies;
- In consultation with the Department of Education and Science, the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education will set goals and targets and develop baseline data for the participation of students with a disability, mature students and those

from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, including Travellers and other minorities over the period 2007 - 2013. Grant support to students will be provided through the Fund for Students with a Disability, the Student Assistance Fund, the Millennium Partnership Fund, and the financial resources of higher education institutions.

3.5.4 Health

Access to quality health services is a prerequisite for participation in the social and economic life of society. Working to improve the health status of all, and particularly vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities including those with mental illness, drug users, the homeless and Travellers, is an essential element of social inclusion. Achieving positive outcomes will contribute to their greater participation in education, training and employment, thus helping to break the cycle of disadvantage and poor health over the long-term. The measures to achieve this include:

- Ensuring that people who are not able to meet the cost of GP services for themselves and their families are supported appropriately, either by means of a medical card or a GP visit card, depending on their means. Since the beginning of 2005 some 122,296 additional people have qualified for access to GP services free of charge. This includes a net additional 74,746 medical cards and 47,550 GP visit cards;
- There is a strong body of evidence linking poverty and poor mental health and poverty is associated with greater use of mental health services. By 2013, there will be two General

Adult Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) per 100,000 of the population;

- Working in partnership, the Department of Health & Children will develop specific community and sectoral initiatives to encourage healthy eating and access to healthy food and physical activity among adults, with a particular focus on adults living in areas of disadvantage;
- The Department of Health and Children will publish a *Men's Health Policy and Action Plan* in 2007, against a backdrop where life expectancy among Irish men is among the lowest in Europe.

Other health-related measures are contained in Chapter 6 on Communities.

3.6 Innovative Measures

3.6.1 Lone Parents

Following the consultation process on the Government's Discussion Paper proposals will be considered by Government in early 2007 aimed at reforming income supports for lone parents and other low income families and supporting them into education, training and employment. The proposals will address supports such as access to childcare, flexible training and education programmes, and positive opportunities for customers. Priority consideration will be given to extending the *National Employment Action Plan* process to include lone parents and other parents on low income while funding for the Community Services programme, which targets lone parents among others, is to be increased.

3.6.2 Probation Service

The Probation Service will continue to advance initiatives designed to address patterns of criminal behaviour associated with social exclusion, with an emphasis on restorative justice initiatives. In particular, there will be support to extend the Linkage Programme to increase the number of offenders successfully placed in employment, education or Community Employment schemes. Referrals by the Probation Service to the Linkage Programme are expected to result in a rise from 614 placements in 2005 to 900 placements a year by 2016.

3.6.3 Equality

- The *National Women's Strategy, 2007-2015*, to be published early in 2007, aims to put in place a range of measures to equalise socio-economic opportunity, ensure well-being and encourage greater engagement of women in decision-making and civil society. It includes measures to encourage women to advance within the labour market, thereby increasing their earning capacity. It also addresses the gender pay gap, another phenomenon which impacts on women's economic standing.
- The Department of Social and Family Affairs will commence a major review in 2007 of the social welfare code to examine its compatibility with the Equal Status Act, 2000. The review will identify any instances of direct or indirect discrimination on any of the nine grounds identified under the Act, including gender, marital and family status that are not justified by a legitimate social policy objective.



CHAPTER 4 **OLDER PEOPLE**

4.1 Vision

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

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

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

4.2 Context

Older people constitute about 11% of the population which is low by EU and international standards. However, projections indicate that by 2050 older people will represent 29% of the population. This shift over the coming decades will have a major impact, particularly on pensions, health and care services, including long-term care, and on other services such as transport.

It is a positive development that people are not just living longer but staying healthy longer. In 2005, nine out of ten older persons considered their health to be fair to good, and only 3.0% deemed it to be very bad. However, over 51% of those aged 65 or over reported having a chronic illness or disability, compared with 18% of the working age population.

In relation to income, social welfare pensions have been substantially increased in real terms, especially in recent years. The achievement of the target of €200 per week for the lowest social welfare pension fulfils a major commitment set out by the Government in 2002 in its Agreed Programme for Government. The effects of lower incomes are also offset by reduced living expenses as a result of a range of non-cash benefits for older people including medical cards, electricity and telephone allowances, TV licence, Free Travel, and minor house repairs. Most older people also benefit from owning their own homes.

4.2.1 Poverty Levels

Older people have among the lowest levels of consistent poverty at 3.7% in 2005. There has also been a significant reduction in the numbers

'at risk of poverty' from 27.1% in 2004 to 20.1% in 2005 (below 60% of median income), and just 6.8% below the 50% threshold. State pensions and other social transfers are particularly important for this group since they account for some 60% of their income and reduce their risk of poverty from 88.1% to 20.1%.

The provision of higher levels of care and support for older people, particularly the growing number of those living alone, is required as they become more dependent with age. Most would prefer support services to be delivered in ways that enable them to stay in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. Such service provision is a key objective of policy on care.

Therefore, while maintaining the value of pensions, priority will be given to investment in the type of services that provide a good quality of life for older people, including community care, good housing standards, health services, transport, security, options for continued participation in the labour market and access to lifelong learning opportunities. Access to a continuum of care services from support for self-care, through to support for family and informal carers, formal care in the home, the community or in residential settings is particularly important.

4.3 High Level Goals

A number of high level goals have been identified that will make a decisive impact on the lives of older people. These are to:

Goal 7: Community Care

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

Goal 8: Income Support

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

Other important targets and actions include:

4.4 Income Support

- The level of the Qualified Adult Allowance for pensioner spouses will be increased to the level of the State Pension (non-contributory) by 2009;
- From 2007 any amount of social welfare pension received by those over 65 years, in excess of the SWA rate, will be disregarded when determining entitlement to rent supplement.

4.5 Services

4.5.1 Long-term Care

- In relation to long-term residential care, €88 million has been provided for the cost of 2,300 additional public and private long-stay beds. This comprises €28 million for the full-year implementation of 1,050 beds provided in 2006; €32 million and €22 million in 2007 and 2008 respectively for the provision of an extra 1,250 beds; and €6 million to strengthen nursing home inspections;
- A new Nursing Home Support Scheme will be introduced in 2008 that will make long-term residential care affordable to all who need it. It will replace the present system, in which older people generally face considerably higher costs if they use a private rather than a public nursing home. Under the new scheme, each person will make a contribution to the cost of their care, based on means, and the State will meet the balance, in both public and private nursing homes. In the interim, the basic and enhanced rates of nursing home subvention have been increased substantially pending the introduction of the Nursing Home Support Scheme in 2008.
- The Health Bill 2006 provides for the establishment of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) and the Office of the Chief Inspector of Social Services within HIQA. The Chief Inspector will have statutory responsibility for inspecting and registering children's residential services, residential centres for people with disabilities, residential centres for older people and private nursing homes. The Chief Inspector will inspect these services against standards set by HIQA and

Priority will be given to investment in the type of services that provide a good quality of life for older people, including community care, good housing standards, health services, transport, security, options for continued participation in the labour market and access to lifelong learning opportunities.

regulations made by the Minister for Health and Children;

- A total of €2 million has been allocated to the National Implementation Group on Elder Abuse to address the issue of elder abuse over 2006 and 2007. This is also being incorporated into professional training courses including gerontology courses. A review of *Protecting Our Future* will be carried out in 2007. It is expected that the review will consider issues not included in the original report on elder abuse including self-neglect and institutional abuse.

Chapter 6 sets out additional material in relation to carers.

4.5.2 Housing and Accommodation

- Future Housing Action Plans will address special needs in a more strategic manner when the current plans come to an end in 2008;
- New protocols will be developed and implemented for inter-agency co-operation in housing and accommodation where there is a care dimension between 2007-2009;
- The Disabled Persons, Essential Repairs, and Special Housing Aid for the Elderly grant schemes have been reviewed. Proposals to improve equity and targeting have recently been announced in the new policy statement - *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*;
- Adequate central heating systems will be made available in all local authority rented dwellings provided for older people by the end of 2008;

- Services to provide enhanced home security, energy conservation and other measures for vulnerable older people will continue to be a priority activity within the Community Supports for Older People. It is intended to fund applications for some 5,000 people per year.

4.5.3 Education and Employment

- Older people will be encouraged and supported to access further and higher education and appropriate targets will be set in the context of proposals on life-long learning;
- The continued participation of older people in the labour market will be encouraged and facilitated to meet the challenge of an ageing society. Training and advisory services, including those provided by FÁS, will assist older people who wish to return to or remain in the workplace. These services are being provided within FÁS' overall services, particularly through the preventative process¹⁰ and through training and upskilling.

Chapter 6 of this Plan contains information in relation to the Rural Transport Initiative which is a particularly important service for older people, and in relation to information and communications technologies and other services.

¹⁰ The *National Employment Action Plan* preventative process is designed to minimise the drift to long-term unemployment by offering the unemployed a job or an employability support after a 3 month period.

4.6 Innovative Measures

To deliver on the high level goal of supporting older people to live in the community, the following measures will be undertaken.

4.6.1 Home Support Packages

Home Care Packages consisting of a mixture of grants, contracted care services, therapeutic input and equipment and other such community services will be provided following a needs assessment aimed at facilitating the older person to remain at home. Targets and actions in this regard will include:

- An additional 2,000 home care packages, benefiting an estimated 4,000 people will be provided, at a cost of €30 million in 2007 and €25 million in 2008;
- An additional 780,000 hours of home help services will be provided, at a cost of €18 million in 2007;
- An additional 1,100 day places in 2007 will be provided, at a cost of €3.5 million.

4.6.2 Community Intervention Teams (CITs)

The main focus of CITs is the prevention of avoidable hospital admission and the facilitation of early discharge from hospitals through the provision of care in the community. CITs services will be additional to existing mainstream community services and will address issues such as:

- Capacity to provide fast-tracked non-medical care or supports for an interim period while mainstream services are being arranged for the patient on a 7 day per week basis. This is achieved by providing dedicated services to ensure an immediate response for patients who are identified by the GP as requiring new or enhanced home supports;
- The link between community services and patients being discharged from Accident and Emergency Departments, who require community supports;
- 4 pilot CITS projects were in place by the end of 2006. Based on progress, they will be rolled out in 2007 to other areas.

4.6.3 Participation and Activation

- The earnings disregard for non-contributory social welfare pensions, introduced in 2006 to encourage recipients to take up or continue in employment, will be increased to €200 in 2007;
- Older people will be encouraged and supported in actively involving themselves in family literacy projects, as set out in the *DEIS Action Plan*. A working group has been established to identify and support specific projects that enhance family literacy and the rollout of such projects will commence in 2007.



CHAPTER 5
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

5.1 Vision

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

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

- Every person with a disability would have access to an income which is sufficient to sustain an acceptable standard of living;
- Every person with a disability would, in conformity with their needs and abilities, have access to appropriate care, health, education, employment and training and social services;
- Every person with a disability would have access to public spaces, buildings, transport; Information, advocacy and other public services and appropriate housing;
- Every person with a disability would be supported to enable them, as far as possible, to lead full and independent lives, to participate in work and in society and to maximise their potential, and;
- Carers would be acknowledged and supported in their caring role.

5.2 Context

Research shows that people with disabilities have lower participation in education, far lower participation in the workforce and are at twice the risk of poverty of other citizens. Social life outside the home is more restricted, and lack of transport and an inaccessible physical environment adds to the difficulties people with disabilities experience in everyday life in the community.¹¹

About one in twelve people in Ireland has a disability. People with disabilities form 8.3% of the population, representing about 320,000 people, according to the 2002 Census. This also indicated that there were about 130,000 people with disabilities of working age not in employment. These numbers are higher when people with long-standing illnesses are added, as in the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) figures. Up to 190,000 people of working age among this wider group were recorded as out of work in 2004. Overall, about 60%-65% of this group are aged under 55. However, not everyone with a disability will be able to take up work or training.

EU-SILC 2005 indicates that persons with a chronic illness or disability were almost twice as likely to be in consistent poverty as those without a chronic illness or disability (9.5% compared to 4.8%), while almost a quarter of this group were 'at risk of poverty'.

¹¹ National Disability Authority report 'How far towards equality? Measuring how equally people with disabilities are included in Irish society' (2005)

5.3 Strategic Approach

The National Disability Strategy, published in 2004, will continue to underpin the participation of people with disabilities in Irish society through its key elements:

- The Disability Act 2005;
- Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act, 2004;
- The Citizens Information Bill 2006;
- A multi-annual investment programme, in excess of €900 million, running until 2009;
- The Sectoral Plans published by six government departments.¹²

Implementation of the Strategy will be the focus of policy over the period to 2016.

5.3.1 Disability Act 2005

The Disability Act 2005 sets out the legal requirements of public bodies, subject to certain considerations. These include the following:

- Ensure that the provision of access to services by people with and without disabilities is integrated;
- Ensure that the services and goods provided by them are accessible to people with disabilities;

¹² Health and Children; Social and Family Affairs; Environment, Heritage and Local Government; Transport; Communications, Marine and Natural Resources; and Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

- Ensure that communications with people with disabilities are provided in accessible formats;
- Establish procedures in relation to the making and investigation of complaints from people with disabilities;
- Give effect to the provisions of the Act relating to the employment, in the public sector, of people with disabilities; and
- Make their buildings accessible to people with disabilities by 31 December 2015.

All sections of the Act have now been commenced, with the exception of Part 2. Sectoral Plans were published in December 2006 and are being implemented by six Ministers and their government departments. Progress reports will be prepared on the implementation of the Sectoral Plans after 3 years (2009) and the Disability Act will be reviewed after 5 years (2010).

Part 2 of the Act, which involves assessments of need and service statements will commence for children aged under 5 years with effect from 1 June 2007. The Act will then be commenced for those children aged 5-18 years in tandem with the implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has outlined the steps to be taken to facilitate implementation on a phased basis up to 2010. The successful implementation of the Act will require the commencement of the various sections to be co-ordinated in line with the availability of health supports and in tandem with the implementation of the Disability Act 2005. To this end a cross-sectoral group comprising representatives of the Departments of Education and Science, Health

and Children, the HSE and the NCSE has been established.

5.4 High Level Goal

A key aim is the promotion of equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the open labour market supported by enhanced vocational training, employment programmes and further development of supports. Accordingly, the high level goal aims to:

Goal 9: Employment and Participation

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

Not everyone with a disability who is out of work will be in a position to take up a job or training. In the absence of a formal process of engagement, it is difficult to gauge how many are potentially available to work or undertake training, given appropriate supports or accommodation of their disability.

It is acknowledged that more remains to be done to establish reliable data in relation to people with disabilities. In particular, baseline information will be assembled to allow for more rigorous

The National Disability Strategy, published in 2004, will continue to underpin the participation of people with disabilities in Irish society...Implementation of the Strategy will be the focus of policy over the period to 2016.

testing and assessment relating to engagement strategies and participation rates.

By 2010, a comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities will be developed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The Social and Economic Participation programme, being introduced by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, will also be of major importance for this group (the details of this programme are contained in Chapter 3).

Other important targets and actions include:

5.5 Income Support

In terms of ensuring adequate levels of income for people with disabilities, the Government will work for the continued enhancement and integration of supports in line with overall social welfare commitments and targets. Issues around the cost of disability will be progressed in the context of:

- The development of the needs assessment process to be established under Part 2 of the Disability Act, 2005, (due to commence by mid-2007);
- The opportunities for the rationalisation and development of payments following the transfer of disability-related income maintenance schemes from the HSE to the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Provision for the transfer of these schemes is to be made in the Social Welfare Bill 2008;
- The results of the National Disability Survey, which will be published in 2007; and

- The Inter-departmental Group on the Costs of Disability will oversee these developments¹³.

5.6 Services

5.6.1 Education

The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education will set goals and targets and develop baseline data for the participation of students with a disability over the period 2007-2013. In addition to the means-tested maintenance grants schemes, there will also be continued provision of the Third Level Access Fund aimed at tackling under-representation. The Fund for Students with a Disability is an essential part of the Third Level Access Fund. It provides grants towards the provision of services and the purchase of equipment for students with disabilities attending courses in third-level institutions or post leaving certificate courses.

5.6.2 Access to Buildings and Infrastructure

By the end of July 2007, each local authority will have carried out an accessibility audit and developed an accessibility implementation plan for the built environment and infrastructure within its control including all roads, streets, pavements, parks, amenities and open spaces.

¹³ Membership of this group comprises Departments of Health and Children (Chair); Social and Family Affairs; Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Finance; Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Health Service Executive and the National Disability Authority.

5.6.3 Access to Public Transport

A key objective of transport policy is to ensure the accessibility of the public transport system by providing fully accessible city buses and enhanced access to bus and railway stations in line with the Department of Transport Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act, 2005. Measures include:

- The replacement of inaccessible Bus Éireann and Private Operator coaches with coaches that are accessible to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments by 2015;
- Making all urban buses accessible to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments by 2012; and
- Making practically all inter-urban passenger rail services accessible to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments by 2009.

5.6.4 Housing and Accommodation

- A national housing strategy for people with disabilities will be developed by end 2009, as recommended in the NESC *Housing in Ireland* report. This will have particular regard to adults with significant disabilities and people who experience mental illness. It will be progressed through the establishment of a national group, under the aegis of the Housing Forum¹⁴, headed by the Department

of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and involving the Department of Health and Children, the HSE, Social Partners and other relevant stakeholders.

- Proposals to reform the Disabled Persons and Essential Repairs Grant Schemes to improve equity and targeting have recently been announced in the New Statement of Housing Policy - *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*.

5.7 Innovative Measures

- The Citizens Information Bill 2006, expected to be enacted in 2007, provides for the assignment of a personal advocate to a person with a disability who is unable or who has difficulty in obtaining a social service without assistance.
- The National Disability Authority is in the process of establishing a Centre for Excellence in Universal Design within the Authority. The main aim of the Centre will be to facilitate the achievement of excellence in universal design through collaboration with relevant bodies to support the development of standards, education and awareness raising.

¹⁴ The Housing Forum is the chief mechanism through which the social partners input into housing policy development and implementation. Chaired by the Minister of State with responsibility for Housing and Urban Renewal, it also includes representatives of government departments and other agencies.



CHAPTER 6 COMMUNITIES

6.1 Introduction

The overall aim of the NAP inclusion is to build viable and sustainable communities, improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital. Therefore, tackling disadvantage in urban and rural areas remains a key priority. Urban poverty can take a number of forms – poor households living in urban areas, urban communities where there are high levels of unemployment and high concentrations of poverty and areas suffering from a decline in the environmental and social infrastructure. Similarly rural disadvantage can manifest itself in a number of ways. Declining or slow-growing populations, migration of younger people from rural to urban areas, lack of services, lack of employment opportunities, low income farming households, higher dependency levels and isolation are examples. Whether in the urban or rural context, social exclusion is frequently the result of multiple disadvantage.

The lifecycle approach is designed to assist departments and policy makers achieve better coordination and integration of services with a view to obtaining better and more effective outcomes at national and local levels and between these levels. Measures specific to each lifecycle group are also supplemented by more general programmes designed to improve the quality of life and promote the social inclusion of all people, particularly those who may be vulnerable and isolated.

This chapter outlines a wide range of such programmes which support disadvantaged local communities. Many of these programmes, both rural and urban, are cross-cutting and have benefits for people across the lifecycle. The aim is to enable communities as far as possible to identify and address issues and challenges in their own areas.

The issues being tackled under these programmes are varied and include:

- Creating employment opportunities for vulnerable people;
- Access to quality services;
- The Rural Transport Initiative;
- Housing measures;
- Equality measures;
- Community health initiatives;
- Support for carers;
- Programmes to address the problem of drugs misuse;
- Information and communications technology;
- Community development initiatives; and
- Financial inclusion.

6.2 High Level Goals

The following high level goals have been identified that will make a decisive impact on the lives of our communities:

Goal 10: Housing

Deliver high quality housing for those who cannot afford to meet their own housing needs and to underpin the building of sustainable communities. An important element will be the enhanced housing output reflected in *Towards 2016*, which will result in the accommodation needs of some 60,000 new households being addressed over the period 2007 to 2009. This will embrace meeting special housing needs (the homeless, Travellers, older people and people with disabilities);

Goal 11: Health

Develop 500 primary care teams by 2011 which will improve access to services in the community, with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of holders of medical cards;

Goal 12: Integration of Migrants

Develop a strategy aimed at achieving the integration of newcomers in our society. As an initial action, resources for the provision of 550 teachers for language supports in the education sector will be provided by 2009 and access to other public services through translation of information and supports will be improved.

Other important targets and actions include:

6.3 Services

6.3.1 Housing

The core objective of the Government's housing policy is to enable every household to have an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment, and, as far as possible, at the tenure of its choice.

The Housing Policy Framework *Building Sustainable Communities*, published in 2005, outlines key priorities in providing high quality, integrated sustainable communities, which reflect the needs of a modern, dynamic and multi-cultural society. The Government's strategic approach to housing is multi-dimensional reflecting the broad spectrum of housing needs from those who require some assistance to purchase their own homes - affordable housing - to social housing and housing for those with special needs. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has recently published a new Statement of Housing Policy - *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* - which provides greater detail on the actions required if the goals in the framework document are to be achieved.

The Government is committed to delivering high quality social housing in mixed community settings and aims to support and build communities in which people can take pride. About €1 billion has been spent since 1997 on programmes to improve run-down local authority estates. Significant resources are being made available under the NDP to meet the commitments in *Towards 2016* to expand

output of both social and affordable housing to 2009 and to continue the investment beyond these years. The planned increase in investment in social housing stock over the coming years provides an opportunity to tackle some long-standing problems in communities that have suffered multiple disadvantage.

As well as the targets set out below, additional measures relating to housing and accommodation are also detailed in earlier chapters.

- As set out in high level Goal 10 the needs of some 60,000 new households will be addressed over the period 2007-2009. Under the NDP, progress towards this will be reviewed after three years of activity. However resources reflected in the NDP will allow for a broadly similar level of output beyond 2009 resulting in the needs of some 140,000 households overall being provided for in the period 2007–2013;
- A more comprehensive and objective means of assessing need will be developed by end of 2008. This will include a focus on the provision of housing advice to allow housing supports to be tailored to reflect changing accommodation needs through a person's lifecycle;
- Investment over the period 2007-2009 will allow for the commencement or acquisition of 27,000 homes for people in need of social housing through a combination of local authority, voluntary, and co-operative housing and RAS contractual arrangements. Under the NDP, progress towards this target will be reviewed after three years of activity. However, resources reflected in the Plan will allow for a broadly similar level of output beyond 2009 resulting in some 60,000

Integration is one of the most important challenges being faced by Irish society over the coming years. Some €36 million will be made available over the period 2007-2013 to facilitate coordination initiatives and to generally promote integration.

homes overall being commenced or acquired through these programmes between 2007 – 2013;

- The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) will be implemented fully by 2009. Some 32,000 households which have been in receipt of rent supplement for over 18 months and which have a long-term housing need will benefit;
- Investment will be used to intensify efforts to rejuvenate and, where necessary, regenerate existing social housing communities. The resources available under the NDP will allow for the completion of the current phase of the regeneration of Ballymun. Further renewal schemes will be rolled out nationwide, part-funded by the resources made available through the sale of dwellings:
- It is proposed to undertake a survey of the local authority housing stock by end 2008 which will help inform housing authorities on the physical condition of the stock and provide the basis for future programmes of improvement works;
 - » Rolling out a programme of other remedial works to improve local authority housing between 2007 and 2012;
 - » Rolling out a programme of regeneration for all run-down estates nationwide between 2007 and 2016;
 - » Making adequate central heating systems available in all local authority rented dwellings by end 2008;
- Arrangements will be made through local authorities for additional land and units to be provided to the voluntary and cooperative sector for the purpose of

meeting identified need. Units and sites sufficient to supply some 3,000 dwellings will be identified by 2009;

- Some 17,000 new units will be delivered between 2007 and 2009 through affordable housing measures under the NDP following which, progress will be reviewed. It is expected that a broadly similar level of output will be delivered beyond 2009, resulting in the delivery of some 40,000 new units overall between 2007 and 2013;
- Minimum standards regulations for the private rented sector will be updated by mid-2007 and effectively enforced.

6.3.2 Homelessness

Measures to address homelessness have been successful in recent years with their numbers reducing from 5,500 in 2002 to slightly in excess of 3,000 in 2005¹⁵. The following targets and actions will address the needs of those who remain homeless:

- A revised government strategy on homelessness will be published during 2007;
- Long-term occupancy of emergency homeless accommodation will be eliminated by 2010. This will involve addressing the needs of up to 500 households;

¹⁵ Source: National Assessment of Housing Need, 2002 and 2005. Because the homeless are a small, mobile and fluctuating population: their situation cannot be reliably captured through household surveys such as QNHS, which measures employment/unemployment, and the EU-SILC survey, which measures household income and poverty rates. The series of social portraits for each stage of the lifecycle, developed to inform this NAPInclusion, will include specific statistical data on the homeless.

- The involvement of the voluntary and co-operative housing sector will be strengthened through the establishment of a National Homelessness Consultative Committee under the aegis of the Housing Forum during 2007.

6.3.3 Health

- Primary healthcare services will be further developed, drawing on the Primary Care Strategy, by ongoing investment to ensure integrated, accessible services for people within their own communities. The target is to provide 300 primary care teams by 2008, 400 by 2009 and 500 by 2011. A review of these targets will be undertaken in 2008;
- Out-of-hours GP services will be further developed with a view to having those services available to the whole population over the course of this Plan;
- In line with the recommendations of *A Strategy for Cancer Control in Ireland*, the Department of Health and Children will liaise with the HSE to ensure that arrangements are put in place to monitor inequalities in cancer risks, cancer occurrence, cancer services and cancer outcomes. The policy indicators proposed in the Strategy will provide an important means of maintaining a policy focus on cancer inequalities. Targets around the following policy indicators will be developed during 2007:

- Stage of presentation of common cancers, broken down by geographic area and by deprivation index (SAHRU index category¹⁶);
- Survival rates for common cancers, broken down by geographic area and by deprivation index (SAHRU index category);
- Uptake of breast cancer screening, by women in the appropriate age group covered by BreastCheck Programme, broken down by medical card status;
- Cigarette smoking prevalence, broken down by social class and gender;
- Procedure rate for females, broken down by geographic area.

A range of health services is being provided for minority groups:

- An ethnic identifier, to facilitate more evidence-based planning through identification of needs, measurement of uptake of services, and evaluation of outcomes, has been developed and will be rolled out from 2007;
- The HSE will develop a *National Equality Strategy Framework* in 2007;
- A national intercultural strategy designed to address the unique health and support needs of minority groups, for example, refugees, migrants and Travellers will be developed by early 2007.

¹⁶ Small Area Health Research Unit, Department of Public Health and Primary Care, Trinity Centre for Health Sciences, Adelaide and Meath Hospital.

6.3.4 Carers

Informal and family carers play a very valuable role in our society particularly in enabling older people and people with disabilities to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. In order to carry out this role carers require a range of services and supports. Several actions in relation to formal long-term care have been outlined earlier but the following actions have also been identified to address the needs of carers themselves:

- A National Carers' Strategy that focuses on supporting informal and family carers in the community will be developed by end 2007;
- The scope for further development of income supports for carers will continue to be reviewed. In particular, the aim will be for the level of the Carer's Allowance disregard to keep pace with gross average industrial earnings so that those on average industrial earnings can continue to qualify for the payment;
- There will be an annual consultation meeting of carer representative organisations and relevant departments and agencies in order to inform future policy in this area;
- The scope for the development of training courses for carers will be reviewed by the relevant departments and agencies over 2007 and 2008;
- From 2007 certain social welfare recipients who are providing full-time care and attention will be able to retain their main social welfare payment and also receive a payment equivalent to half-rate Carer's Allowance.

6.3.5 Travellers

Travellers are a vulnerable group comprising about 23,700 people, or less than 1% of the population in 2002¹⁷. They have particular vulnerabilities; including significantly inferior health outcomes compared to the population generally. The High Level Group on Travellers which reported to Government in 2006 identified three priorities for the effective implementation of policy to support the fullest possible participation of Travellers in Irish society:

- coherent inter-agency co-operation;
- meaningful consultation with Travellers and their representatives; and
- incorporation of law enforcement measures into the inter-agency approach.

Towards 2016 commits all social partners to "give concentrated attention to achieving progress" on this approach including opportunities for Travellers to participate in employment and measures to promote positive communication between Travellers and the wider community.

The range of programmes set out below seeks to address their needs;

- Funding will be made available to local authorities to support the implementation of their second Traveller Accommodation Programme, which covers the period 2005-2008. Approximately 2,000 units of accommodation will be provided (made up of additional families accommodated in standard

¹⁷ Source: Census of population 2002

Informal and family carers play a very valuable role in our society particularly in enabling older people and people with disabilities to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

local authority accommodation and additional units of permanent Traveller-specific accommodation constructed);

- Research on Travellers' health status, being commissioned jointly by the Department of Health and Children and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland in 2007, will be completed in 2009. The research will aim to assess the impact of the health services currently provided and to identify the factors which influence mortality and health status. The study will also include a detailed census of Traveller numbers on the island of Ireland.

Details of further programmes and inter-agency co-operation at local level, which can address the needs of Travellers, are set out in other chapters of this Plan.

6.3.6 Migrants

Integration is one of the most important challenges being faced by Irish society over the coming years. Some €36 million will be made available over the period 2007-2013 to facilitate coordination initiatives and to generally promote integration. Additional actions include:

- All Department of Social and Family Affairs Local Offices will be surveyed by end of February 2007 to identify demand for interpretation services for migrants and appropriate services will be made available;
- A guide to all the schemes and services operated by the Department of Social and Family Affairs will be available on the department's website in eight different

languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, and Spanish) in addition to Irish and English, by the end of the first quarter of 2007.

The National Action Plan against Racism (NPAR) is being implemented over the period 2005-2008. This includes:

- The development of an intercultural dimension to mainstream public policy;
- Specific research or consultancy projects in particular sectors; and
- Public awareness information initiatives.

The NPAR will run until 2008, at which time an opportunity will arise to review and to consider new strategies in the design and implementation of diversity policy.

6.3.7 Transport

The Rural Transport Initiative (RTI) has been put on a permanent footing following the end of the pilot period in 2006. Funding of €9 million is being provided in 2007 to facilitate the transition of the RTI into the beginning of the mainstreaming process. Funding for rural transport services will be steadily increased thereafter, ultimately to a cash level of some €18 million. Priority will be given to areas of the country which do not currently have access to public transport services. The extensions to the Free Travel Scheme operated by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, including the introduction from early 2007 of all Ireland Free Travel for pensioners, are further positive developments.

6.3.8 Library Services

The public library service is by definition, a socially inclusive one. Policy, as set out in the 1998 *Branching Out* report, links libraries to two key objectives of overall Government policy: to establish an inclusive society in which all citizens can participate fully in social and economic life; and secondly, to ensure that Ireland moves rapidly to embrace the opportunities of the Information Society. Since 1998 as a result of improved co-funding by the local authorities and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, an additional 72 libraries have been built or are in the planning or construction stage, giving a total of 350 at the end of 2006. This funding has also provided improved materials and computer facilities. Consultation in relation to the review of the *Branching Out* report has identified a number of specific social inclusion measures, including access to library services for isolated rural and urban communities and the development of services to meet the needs of a multi-cultural society.

6.4 Innovative Measures

6.4.1 Active Citizenship

- The Task Force on Active Citizenship has been asked to recommend measures which could be taken to facilitate and encourage a greater degree of engagement by citizens in all aspects of life and the growth and development of voluntary organisations as part of a strong civic culture. Arising from the work of the Task Force, consideration will also be given to the development of appropriate measures and indicators of social capital, and

to future approaches in relation to citizenship education and voter participation;

- Investment in supporting volunteering activity will be continued over the period 2007-2016. Central to this approach is the constructive role of voluntary activity in improving the quality of life in local communities. Under *Towards 2016* an additional €5 million per year is being provided to support volunteering. Policies and schemes in this area will be further informed by the findings of the Task force on Active Citizenship;
- Core funding is being provided to 8 Volunteer Bureaux totalling €1.73 million over the period 2005-2007 to enable them to be placed on a sound footing, to employ a full-time development officer and develop databases matching volunteers to local community and voluntary groups. In addition funding of €150,000 has been provided over three years to Volunteer Centres Ireland for the employment of development staff to support the further development of Volunteer Bureaux;
- Once-off grants will be available to local voluntary and community groups including Equipment and Refurbishment Grants and Education, Training and Research Grants. It is expected that at least 600 local organisations will be funded per year.

6.4.2 Fuel Poverty

The term 'fuel poverty' has been described as the inability to afford adequate warmth in a home, or the inability to achieve adequate warmth because of the energy inefficiency of the home.

The Green Paper on energy policy, published in October 2006, stated the Government's

commitment to reducing fuel poverty. This issue will be further addressed as the current energy policy formulation process develops through the Green Paper consultation phase and White Paper publication and implementation.

The role of the social welfare system in relation to fuel poverty is primarily to provide income support through weekly social welfare payments and specific programmes such as the fuel allowance scheme and the household benefits package. Recent developments include:

- Improvements to the fuel allowance including increasing the duration and rate of payment and the income threshold for eligibility have enabled more people to qualify for the scheme. Expenditure on the scheme will increase by €31.8 million to €156.9 million in 2007.
- Improvements in Electricity or Gas Allowances provided through the household benefits package was increased by 33%.
- The Community Welfare Service of the Health Service Executive administers a special heating supplement for people who have an exceptional heating need by virtue of a health condition or medical need.

Examples of other initiatives in this area include:

- Local authorities spent €27.4 million on the installation of central heating in local authority rented dwellings in 2006 and a further €70 million will be allocated over the period 2007 – 2008;
- Since its introduction in 1985 over €440 million has been spent under the Remedial Works Scheme to fund major refurbishment

works to groups of local authority rented dwellings;

- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's Social Housing Guidelines require that during the design process of social housing developments, regard should be had to the implications for sustainability and energy efficiency in all aspects of dwelling design. Local authorities are advised that appropriate design decisions in relation to dwelling layout, levels of insulation, construction materials, etc can contribute greatly to ensuring sustainability.
- The Warmer Homes Scheme provides funding to community-based organisations for the installation of energy efficiency measures for those who need it most. Some €2 million will be provided for the Warmer Homes Scheme in Sustainable Energy Ireland's (SEI) 2007 budget and it has been estimated that this will enable 2,900 homes to be covered;
- The Department of Social and Family Affairs has provided €2 million to SEI for fuel poverty research in respect of dwellings in Waterford City and County which are regarded as being vulnerable to fuel poverty. The project will be completed and a report produced by May 2008;
- A fuel poverty action research project is currently being undertaken by a number of organisations lead by SEI and the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) to improve energy efficiency in selected dwellings in the Cork area and rural Donegal. The post-intervention survey will get under way in the last quarter of 2007 and results will be ready by March 2008.

6.4.3 Broadband

- The Broadband Programme will promote the rollout of broadband across the rural economy to ensure its availability across rural Ireland. Total indicative investment over the period 2007-2013 will be €435 million. To date, 27 Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) have been completed under the NDP 2000-2006 with a further 90 towns under Phase II of the MANs 2005-2007. Under the Group Broadband Scheme, over 120 projects were operational at the end of 2006 and another 10 are expected to become operational during 2007. Under the School Broadband Scheme 96.8% of schools have had broadband installed;
- Funding under the Broadband Programme in future years will focus on those parts of the country where the private sector will be unable to justify the commercial provision of broadband connectivity. Options to address the gaps in broadband coverage are currently being considered by a Steering Group comprising officials from the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources and representatives from the Communications Regulator, and will be announced in early 2007.

6.4.4 Sport

In addition to promoting a healthy lifestyle, sport contributes to a sense of identity and belonging and brings people together in positive social and community settings. Approximately 400,000 adults or 15% of the adult population are involved in volunteering in Irish sport, while some

43% of the adult population play sport, 20% regularly and intensively.

The Government has spent €900 million since 1997 in helping to put in place sports facilities at local and regional level and a range of relevant programmes and initiatives. Actions in this area include:

- In 2007 over €87 million is being provided for local and regional sports facilities and sporting organizations with priority being given to projects in disadvantaged areas;
- The Irish Sports Council budget for 2007 has been increased by 20% to €49 million for programmes and activities including initiatives in disadvantaged areas. The target for 2006 - 2008 is to increase the numbers of children taking part in sport by 3% and the number of adults participating by 1.5%. This will involve:
 - The implementation of the complete national roll-out of the Local Sports Partnership (LSP) network by early 2008;
 - the associated roll-out of the Buntús programme for primary schools and pre-schools through the LSP network;
 - the introduction of the LISPA (Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity) child centred model for lifelong participation in Irish sport; and
 - support for national sports organisations that attract young people, particularly in disadvantaged areas.
- A new initiative, the National Awards to Volunteers in Irish Sport has been established. The first awards will be made in 2007.

6.4.5 Arts and Culture

Participation in arts and culture brings many benefits to individuals and communities. However, research has shown that access to and participation in arts and culture in Ireland varies according to a number of factors including socio-economic status, area and age¹⁸. This variation is associated with a range of barriers such as economic costs, poor transport, lack of literacy and social and psychological barriers. Over the lifetime of this Plan:

- each of the national cultural institutions¹⁹ will put in place policies, particularly within their outreach and education programmes, to actively invite and encourage individuals, groups and schools from disadvantaged communities to visit, participate and benefit from educational programmes and exhibitions;
- The institutions will take steps to ensure accessibility of all exhibitions, such as having an open and inviting entry area, taking steps to facilitate people with disabilities and in the case of chargeable exhibitions, having deductions or free days for people with certain income limits;
- As set out in *Towards 2016* participation by children in arts and cultural activities will continue to be encouraged as a means to enrich their quality of life.

6.4.6 e-Inclusion

A new *Knowledge Society Action Plan*, the successor to *New Connections*, will be agreed in 2007. The Plan will provide for an inclusive three-strand approach - access, awareness and application and use - to promoting the knowledge society in Ireland and will use the lifecycle approach where appropriate. The plan will target those at risk of being left behind in the move to the knowledge society through ensuring everyone has access to modern ICT, the development of the knowledge society at the community level and through the development of electronic public information and services that are accessible to everyone. In this regard in 2007 the ASC (Access, Skills and Content) Initiative will continue to target vulnerable groups.

Actions will focus on:

- a nationwide broadband scheme that aims to provide 100% broadband coverage;
- access to ICT skills in the context of breaking down barriers to lifelong learning;
- building awareness of the knowledge society through the use of various channels and networks including the Citizen Information Centres and the existing channels with Local Authorities;
- exploiting existing ICT infrastructure in communities;
- an ICT and Content Strategy for Schools;

¹⁸ 2006 NESF draft report on Cultural Inclusion.

¹⁹ National Library of Ireland, National Museum of Ireland, Chester Beatty Library, The Irish Museum of Modern Art, The National Concert Hall, The National Gallery of Ireland, National Archives.

In addition to promoting a healthy lifestyle, sport contributes to a sense of identity and belonging and brings people together in positive social and community settings.

- an e-Accessibility Charter between the business communities and disability organisations;
- enhancing the accessibility and usability of public service information and services;
- exploring three aspects of ICT and ageing: independent living, staying active in the community and staying longer in the workforce - dialogue within the multi-sectoral e-Inclusion Stakeholder Group.

6.4.7 Dormant Accounts Fund

The Dormant Accounts Fund uses money from unclaimed accounts in credit institutions and unclaimed life assurance policies in insurance undertakings to support programmes or projects targeting social and economic disadvantage, educational disadvantage and persons with a disability. The current disbursement plan provides that RAPID, CLÁR and Drugs Task Force areas will receive particular priority in relation to disbursements from the Fund. It is anticipated that approximately €30 million per year will be available for disbursement during the early years of this Plan.

6.4.8 Financial Inclusion

The Financial Regulator is considering the policy implications within its remit of the 2006 study, *Financial Exclusion in Ireland: an exploratory study and policy review*, which it commissioned from the Combat Poverty Agency.

In addition, the Regulator provides consumers with clear and appropriate information in plain English about the costs, risks and benefits of financial services and is working in partnership

with other agencies to increase the level of financial literacy and competency.

Families on low incomes can experience difficulties in managing their money and can fall into debt, particularly when large or unexpected bills arise. Such families may also have limited access to credit and can experience financial exclusion. The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, provides an independent, free and confidential service primarily to low-income families who are in debt or at risk of getting into debt. A Loan Guarantee Fund also operates to provide 'crisis' loans as an alternative to the moneylender. The target is to continue to develop the MABS by establishing it on a statutory basis during 2007.

6.5 Community-based Programmes

6.5.1 CLÁR Programme

The CLÁR programme will provide some €141 million over the period 2007-2013 for regeneration of areas suffering from population decline. Investment will support physical, economic and social infrastructure across a wide range of measures, such as water supply, sewage disposal, road access and broadband which reflect the priorities identified by the communities. The population currently benefiting from the programme is 727,000. Targets include:

- Increasing the number of mains and group water and sewerage schemes availing of CLÁR funding by at least 100% by 2008;
- Providing flashing lights for all national schools in CLÁR areas by 2008.

6.5.2 Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

€426 million will be invested over the period 2007-2013 in promoting the diversification of the rural economy with measures aimed at:

- Diversification into non-agricultural activities;
- Business creation and development;
- Encouragement of tourism activities;
- Basic services for the economy and rural population;
- Village renewal and development;
- Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage;
- Training and information for economic actors ;
- Specific targets will be contained in the *Rural Development Programme 2007-2013* when it is finalised.

6.5.3 Gaeltacht and Island Communities

The Gaeltacht and Islands Programme will invest some €457 million between 2007 - 2013 in infrastructure and enterprise development in the Gaeltacht and our island communities. This investment will provide tangible benefits across a range of projects and activities, for example:

- Better community access and related economic spin-offs from road and pier improvements;
- Higher quality and more sustainable job opportunities arising from investment in building and upgrading office and factory space;
- Improved standards of living by provision of

enhanced community facilities and services;

- Preservation of the national language and culture.

6.5.4 Local Development Social Inclusion Programme

Some €417 million will be provided over the period 2007-2013 to support locally-based social inclusion interventions. The programme will have a particular focus on supporting people and communities suffering disadvantage and exclusion through a wide spectrum of locally-promoted actions. The unified partnership companies will be well placed to support inter-agency coordination and to support and promote social inclusion at a local level in conjunction with the County/City Development Boards.

6.5.5 Community Development Programme (CDP)

A revised CDP will be prepared to cover the period 2007-2013 to support local people in improving their own communities. Local Resource Centres and Community Development Projects will support a wide range of self-help activities designed to improve quality of life for individuals and groups in disadvantaged communities. There are currently 182 projects country-wide, employing an average of two core-funded staff per project and engaging approximately 1,400 other staff (childcare workers, health workers, etc), funded through other schemes. Projects are managed by local voluntary boards from the target groups - people with disabilities, lone parent families, young people, the elderly, Travellers and other disadvantaged groups.

6.5.6 RAPID Programme (Revitalising Areas by Planning Investment and Development)

Almost €67 million will be available under the RAPID Programme Leverage Fund between 2007 and 2013 to co-fund investment by departments and agencies in the 46 RAPID designated areas. This funding will help to support new projects and initiatives, such as playgrounds and community-based CCTV, aimed at improving the quality of life and community safety for residents of RAPID areas.

6.5.7 Community Services Programme

The objective of the Programme is to support local community activity to address disadvantage, while providing employment opportunities for people from the following priority target groups: people with disabilities; the long-term unemployed, Travellers, lone parents and stabilised drug addicts. Currently 274 projects are funded which provide services to their local communities with an additional 125 projects approved for funding from 2007. Some €52 million is provided for the Programme in 2007 and this will rise to €72 million by 2009. It is expected that by 2009 the number of persons employed by the Programme will have increased from 1,400 to 2,500.

6.5.8 Joint Policing Committees

Community Policing will facilitate and support interaction between the Garda Síochána and local authorities and local communities to address local policing issues. Community Policing will not only assist in the State's

development of its overall crime prevention response but will also act as a practical means of supporting the capacity of local communities to meaningfully participate in crime prevention.

6.5.9 Family Support Services

- The aim of the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme is to help combat disadvantage by improving the function of the family unit. Family Resource Centres empower disadvantaged people by involving them in decisions which affect them and in using and developing their own skills, knowledge and experience. Priority in funding will be given to centres which serve those areas where communities are contending with multiple disadvantages. The Family Support Agency will work with County and City Development Boards to ensure a more cohesive approach to the delivery of family-focused social inclusion services provided through Family Resource Centres;
- The Family Support Agency will also continue to strengthen families by supporting voluntary organisations providing marriage, relationship, child and bereavement counselling services. The recommendations of the Review of the Grant Scheme for Voluntary Organisations Providing Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services will be examined and implemented as appropriate;
- A review of the Family Mediation Service will be undertaken in 2007. In addition, the service will continue to be expanded to meet identified demand.

6.6 National Drugs Strategy

Some €319 million will be available over the period 2007-2013 to support the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 to continue the fight against the causes and consequences of the misuse of illegal drugs. The aim will be to significantly reduce the harm caused to individuals and the community by the misuse of illicit drugs through a concerted focus on supply reduction, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and research. Specific targets to be achieved by 2008 include:

- Volume of drugs seized to increase by 50% based on 2000 figures; number of seizures to increase by 20% based on 2004 figures; and number of supply detections to increase by 20% by end of 2008 based on 2004 figures;
- The 3 Source Capture-Recapture estimate of opiate misusers, which will be released in 2007, to show a stabilisation in terms of overall numbers and to show a reduction of 5% of the prevalence rate based on 2001 figures published in 2003;
- The National Advisory Committee on Drugs (NACD) Drug Prevalence survey, which will be released in 2007, to show a reduction of 5% of the prevalence rate of recent and current use of illicit drugs in the overall population based on 2002/03 rate;
- 100% of problematic drugs users to access treatment within one month after assessment; harm reduction facilities available, including needle exchange where necessary, to open during the day and at evenings and weekends, according to need, in every local health office area; and incidence of HIV in drug users to stabilise based on 2004 figures;

- To eliminate all identified gaps in drugs research by mid-2008; to publish an annual report on the nature and extent of the drug problem in Ireland, drawing on available data; and to publish a report on progress being made in achieving the objectives and aims set out in the Strategy every two years;
- With the establishment of 10 Regional Drugs Task Forces around the country, strategic plans, to be developed by the Task Forces and based on the identified needs of the areas involved, will be central to the effort to counteract the problems of drug misuse in these areas.

The Rehabilitation Pillar, the need for which was identified in the mid-term review of the National Drug Strategy (2005), is currently being developed within the framework of the Strategy by two committees under the aegis of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Health Service Executive. The National Drugs Strategy will be reviewed in 2008. Specific targets relating to children can be found in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 7
IMPLEMENTING AND
MONITORING

7.1 Introduction

The commitments set out in this Plan are ambitious and challenging. The new strategic framework for social inclusion, aligning the social inclusion elements of *Towards 2016* and the NDP with this NAPinclusion, will facilitate greater co-ordination and integration of structures and procedures across Government at national, regional and local levels, as well as improved reporting and monitoring mechanisms.

Focusing on delivery and outcomes requires a continuing openness to change, requiring departments, agencies and other organisations to work together effectively and overcome traditional barriers to co-operation. Regular monitoring and evaluation of progress against social inclusion targets and objectives will require service delivery that is accessible, flexible and customer centred. An appropriate gender dimension will be maintained through linkage with the forthcoming *National Women's Strategy 2007-2015*.

7.2 Institutional Structures

There are a number of institutional structures in place to underpin the implementation, monitoring and ongoing development of the Government's social inclusion agenda. These include:

- The Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, chaired by the Taoiseach;
- Oireachtas Committees;
- The Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion;
- The *Towards 2016* Partnership Steering Group;
- The Office for Social Inclusion;
- The National Economic and Social Development Office;
- The NDP Monitoring Committee;
- The Combat Poverty Agency;
- The Local Government Social Inclusion Steering Group;
- County/City Development Boards and other local structures;
- Social Inclusion Units in government departments and on a phased basis, in half of all county/city local authorities by the end of 2008;
- The Social Inclusion Forum.

Annex 4 maps and details these institutional structures.

A number of other fora provide valuable support and assistance, including sectoral mechanisms such as the Housing Forum and other agencies that provide advice and research in key areas of social inclusion generally. These include the

National Disability Authority, the National Council on Ageing and Older People and the Equality Authority.

7.3 Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

The new strategic framework aims to achieve a more comprehensive and efficient monitoring process. This will ensure that reporting is streamlined, following the framework of *Towards 2016* and encompassing the NAPinclusion, Ireland's social inclusion input to the NSSPI²⁰ 2006-2008 and the social inclusion aspects of the NDP.

The key element in the social inclusion monitoring and evaluation process will be the preparation by the Office for Social Inclusion, of the Annual Social Inclusion Report which will:

- Review progress at each stage of the lifecycle on a systematic basis, drawing together relevant structures and reports, as well as other relevant national strategies (e.g. the forthcoming *National Women's Strategy*). All social partners will be consulted in this process;
- Provide a detailed assessment of progress achieved towards set targets and actions;
- Identify new issues arising and cross-cutting issues, which might benefit from a more co-ordinated approach; and
- Report on stakeholders' views arising from Partnership, the Social Inclusion Forum and other consultation fora.

²⁰ National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion.

The report will be presented to the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, the NDP Monitoring Committee and the Partnership Steering Group which will have an ongoing oversight role in relation to implementation of the lifecycle framework, providing an opportunity for engagement between the social partners in relation to progress under the NAPinclusion, NDP and other relevant strategies within the lifecycle framework.

In developing the annual report, the OSI will work with all stakeholders, at national and local level, drawing on their expertise and experience, with inputs from the Partnership Steering Committee as appropriate. The annual Social Inclusion Forum will continue to serve as a structure for wider public consultation and discussion on social inclusion issues, particularly with those experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

7.4 Making It Happen

At national level, all government departments and agencies have specific responsibilities to deliver on key targets. In addition, a number of actions aimed at achieving greater co-ordination and strengthened delivery on the social inclusion agenda are being established. The following measures are aimed at developing more co-ordinated and integrated approaches at national and local levels, and between these levels:

- The OMC which will provide a strong leadership role in improving outcomes for children. Drawing on the experience of the Childhood Development Initiatives, the Children Services Committees and the

County Childcare Committees, integration of services will be improved around the needs of individual children and families through new and enhanced local structures;

- To ensure better integration of activation, income and other supports to assist people into employment, a new high-level group will be established. This will be composed of the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Social and Family Affairs, FÁS and other relevant agencies as required. This group will have a clear mandate from Government to drive forward the activation programme and will report to the Cabinet Committee regarding progress in delivering the targets set out in this Plan and other related issues;
- The Local Government Social Inclusion Steering Group (LGSISG) will be further developed to support the linkages between the national and local level and will report to the Cabinet Committee, as appropriate; and
- New mechanisms will be developed, at national and local level, to improve co-ordination and delivery of housing, in particular care services for older people and people with disabilities.

The role of local authorities in delivering on social inclusion strategies, working with other stakeholders through the CDB and RAPID structures, will underpin and strengthen the national actions being taken. Local authorities are expanding their role in the promotion of social capital, active citizenship and community development in line with the general competence of local government to promote the interests of the community.

The new strategic framework aims to achieve a more comprehensive and efficient monitoring process...The key element will be the preparation by the Office for Social Inclusion, of the annual Social Inclusion Report.

Local partnership structures have demonstrated an ability to harness local skills and resources and have enabled the building of effective working solutions that have empowered individuals and groups to participate in finding solutions to deal with issues facing their communities. These structures will be strengthened over the lifetime of this Plan. Of key importance will be the need to promote linkages, cohesion and sharing of resources between local and community development agencies.

In this context, departments and public bodies will continue to look to existing local structures and local authorities for delivery of new local or community development initiatives. It will be important to ensure that any new measures in this area would affirm the role of the CDBs as the key co-ordinating mechanism for public service delivery at local level and the means of ensuring more joined-up delivery of social inclusion programmes on the ground.

Specific delivery actions in this area will be as follows:

- The Senior Officials Group will undertake a review of programmes delivered at local level with a view to reducing possible duplication and improving coherence;
- In line with the commitment in *Towards 2016*, the County/City Development Board structure will be developed and strengthened to support its role in co-ordinating integrated public service delivery, (including social inclusion activities) at local level. In this context, the extension of Social Inclusion Units to half of all city and county councils, by the end of 2008, will support this approach. CDBs will, in addition, prioritise

the work of the Social Inclusion Monitoring (SIM) groups, established to improve co-ordination of social inclusion activities at local level;

- The delivery of the RAPID programme, which aims to direct State assistance towards improving quality of life and access to opportunities for communities in the most disadvantaged urban areas throughout the State, will be strengthened and enhanced.

This focus on delivery requires an openness to change, including closing or adapting programmes when they are not delivering results or achieving value for money. In this regard, duplication of effort and overlapping programmes must be avoided to ensure that resources are directed to assist those who are socially excluded.

7.5 Communications

Significant progress has been made in the area of social inclusion since Ireland's first *National Anti-Poverty Strategy* in 1997. It is clear from the streamlining of social inclusion strategies that this issue now features very strongly on the Government's policy agenda at national and local level. In order to communicate the social inclusion message more effectively, to those experiencing poverty and exclusion and to the public generally, the Office for Social Inclusion will, during the lifetime of this Plan, develop and deliver a strong communications strategy to ensure that the public is kept informed of progress and that there is widespread knowledge and awareness of:

- Social inclusion initiatives and investment across a wide range of government

departments aimed at improving quality of life and providing options to remove people from poverty, and in particular, the outcome of these initiatives; and

- Ongoing trends and challenges in relation to poverty and social exclusion and their impact on vulnerable groups, both in Ireland and internationally.

The communications message will be targeted at both the national and local level and good practice will be highlighted so that it can be replicated where possible.

Public awareness research will be undertaken on a periodic basis, commencing in 2007, in order to gauge the effectiveness of the communications strategy.

The Office for Social Inclusion will work closely with the NDP Information Office in ensuring that a common approach is taken to communicating NDP activities in the area of social inclusion.

7.6 Poverty Impact Assessment and other Proofing Mechanisms

The process of Poverty Proofing, now renamed Poverty Impact Assessment (PIA), was re-developed by the OSI in 2005. The process requires government departments, local authorities and state agencies to assess policies and programmes at design, implementation and review stages for their likely impact on poverty and on inequalities which are likely to lead to poverty, with a view to poverty reduction.

Guidelines for PIA have been presented to all government departments and the new process will be implemented during 2007. Some

departments have used the new guidelines on a pilot basis and they have also informed the development of this Plan. A training programme for policy makers is being developed. The guidelines will eventually be extended to all areas of government. In the area of local government, pilot work is being undertaken by the CPA and overseen by the Local Government Social Inclusion Steering Group to inform the guidelines from a local perspective.

The Office for Social Inclusion has continued co-operation with other agencies to improve the co-ordination of the process of poverty impact assessment with other proofing mechanisms. This included participation in a pilot integrated proofing project with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Equality Authority, covering the areas of poverty impact assessment, gender proofing and equality proofing. The OSI also took account of the principles underlying the other proofing processes in the development of this Plan.

In addition, a number of Health Impact Assessments (HIA) have been carried out at a local level and a HIA of the forthcoming Integrated Homeless Strategy will be undertaken.

7.7 Data Strategy

The OSI has responsibility for ensuring that the necessary data and technical supports are in place to enable development, monitoring and evaluation of this Plan, and of the social inclusion elements of other national strategies. The Office will continue to work closely with government departments and other agencies in this regard in order to facilitate improved measurement of policy outcomes and to develop synergies.

The set of social portraits developed to inform this NAPinclusion provides a very useful collection of data in respect of persons at each stage of the lifecycle, and helps in providing a clear picture of those groups who are most at risk of poverty and social exclusion in Ireland today. The portraits assist in informing policies designed to address the particular challenges faced by these groups. These portraits will be revised periodically to ensure that the data remains current.

7.8 Poverty Measurement

The overall poverty goal outlined in Chapter 1, is to seek to eliminate consistent poverty over the period of this Plan, and as an interim target, to reduce it to between 2% and 4% by 2012. This goal is based on the revised measure of deprivation developed by the ESRI to reflect current living standards and expectations. The figures for consistent poverty levels are obtained from the EU-SILC, which was introduced in 2003. The survey will in time provide a comprehensive flow of data against which progress in tackling poverty can be measured.

The Technical Advisory Group, set up to assist the OSI in relation to data and poverty measurement issues, is being expanded to include technical experts from the social partners. This Group will provide valuable assistance to the Office in considering the measurement of poverty as further data becomes available.

7.9 Research

Research is required on an ongoing basis to examine the causes and nature of poverty, especially for specific groups, the type of policies

or the adjustment of existing policies required to meet their needs more effectively, and the outcomes being achieved. The OSI has a co-ordinating role in this area and works closely with institutions conducting research of this nature, such as the CPA, ESRI and NESF and with government departments and agencies. The Office also has a co-ordinating role in relation to the contributions made by Ireland to social inclusion research projects organised at international level. The Government will work to ensure that research which it commissions and supports, for example, by the CPA and the NESF, is effectively aligned with the priorities in this Plan, identifying the need for a focus on delivery.

7.10 International Co-operation

The OSI participates, as required, on the EU Social Protection Committee, the Council of Europe Committee on Social Cohesion, the OECD Working Party on Social Policy, the British-Irish Council, and North/South co-operation on social inclusion. Participation in the social inclusion work of the Council of Europe and the OECD provides additional and valuable insights into the nature and causes of poverty, the findings of research which can be very relevant to the situation in Ireland, and on best practice in a range of other countries. The Council of Europe includes representatives from virtually all European countries while the OECD includes representatives from countries outside Europe, including the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

7.11 EU Social Inclusion Process

Since 2001 the strategic approach for social inclusion has been aligned with the Open

At national level, all government departments and agencies have specific responsibilities to deliver on key targets...The role of local authorities in delivering on social inclusion strategies, working with other stakeholders through the CDB and RAPID structures, will underpin and strengthen the national actions being taken.

Method of Co-ordination of the European Union, to assist Member States in achieving the goal set down by the Lisbon European Council to make a decisive impact on poverty by 2010. The Open Method of Co-ordination provides for a peer review process and evaluation of the plans at EU level, and has facilitated exchanges of knowledge, experience and good practice with other Member States, under the Social Exclusion Community Action Programme. These exchanges will be continued under the new PROGRESS Programme 2007-2013.

Member States have produced a series of National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion. Under the new streamlined EU approach, Member States' strategies for social protection and social inclusion (NSSPI) now form part of a single integrated process also covering the area of pensions and health and long-term care. Ireland's first integrated report on these three policy areas, covering the period 2006 to 2008, was submitted to the EU in September 2006.

The Lisbon Agenda of 2000 was relaunched in 2005 with a renewed focus on growth and jobs. As part of this process, Ireland, along with other Member States prepared a National Reform Programme (NRP) setting out the broad range of policies and initiatives which will be undertaken over the period to 2008 aimed at sustaining Ireland's economic growth and employment performance. Under Ireland's NRP, the Lisbon goal of creating more and better jobs is to be met by attracting more people into employment or entrepreneurial activity, by improving the adaptability of workers and enterprises and by investing in human capital

through better education and skills, with funding of approximately €340 million from the European Social Fund (ESF) in addition to funding being provided through the NDP.

7.12 Co-operation between Ireland and Northern Ireland on Social Inclusion issues

The development of National Action Plans facilitates practical co-operation between the Member States. This approach provides scope for shared learning, exchanges of best practice and joint working across national boundaries. Poverty and social exclusion affect the quality of life of families and communities across the island of Ireland. Creating a more inclusive society by alleviating social exclusion, poverty and deprivation is a continuing challenge for administrations in Northern Ireland and Ireland. There are strong commonalities shared by those communities which have facilitated the establishment of a number of areas of cross-border co-operation. Progress has been significant in recent years, particularly through the work of the North/South Ministerial Council and EU funded Peace Programmes in Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland.

The Irish and UK Governments are committed to developing and promoting further North/South consultation, co-operation and common action concerning policies on poverty and social exclusion over the period of this Plan. To this end, a report outlining common and current areas of cross-border work and initiatives between Northern Ireland and Ireland will be prepared. Potential areas suitable for further cross-border co-operation will be identified as

will the mechanisms by which this work could be undertaken and delivered²¹.

Both jurisdictions are currently working to introduce an all-Ireland Free Travel scheme for pensioners resident in both parts of the island of Ireland. The scheme will extend existing arrangements by enabling pensioners resident in either jurisdiction to travel free of charge on all eligible bus and rail services within the other jurisdiction. Arrangements for implementing the scheme are being finalised for introduction in the first quarter of 2007.

7.13 Bridging the Implementation Gap

There is always the risk that outcomes intended and planned for may not be achieved because implementation is deficient. This can occur because of administrative failures in relation to individual policies, lack of effective co-ordination or weak performance monitoring and evaluation.

The Government is convinced that the structures outlined above will avoid these risks and minimise implementation gaps. These structures, combined with the strong commitment to the high level goals and the many actions and policies outlined in this NAPinclusion, should ensure that the overall goals of the strategy are achieved.

²¹ A National Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NSSPI) covering the period 2006 to 2008 was submitted to the EU by each Member State in September 2006. The UK and Irish NSSPIs both contain this text. The common text also appears in *Lifetime Opportunities: Government's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland*. Annex 6 contains further information on co-operation between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Poverty and social exclusion affect the quality of life of families and communities across the island of Ireland. Creating a more inclusive society by alleviating social exclusion, poverty and deprivation is a continuing challenge.

The Irish and UK Governments are committed to developing and promoting further North/South consultation, co-operation and common action concerning policies on poverty and social exclusion over the period of this Plan.

ANNEXES

Annex 1

Social Inclusion Indicators agreed by EU Member States

Income

- *At risk of poverty* rate
- *At risk of poverty* rate anchored at a fixed moment in time
- Persistent *at risk of poverty* rate
- *At risk of poverty* gap
- *At risk of poverty* rate before social transfers
- Dispersion around the *at risk of poverty* threshold
- In-work poverty risk
- S80/S20 income ratio
- Gini co-efficient

Employment

- Long-term unemployment rate
- Regional Cohesion (dispersions of regional employment rates)
- Jobless Households
- Employment gap of immigrants
- Making work pay indicators (unemployment trap, inactivity trap, low-wage trap)

Education

- Early school leavers
- Persons with low educational attainment
- Low reading literacy performance of pupils

Health

- Healthy life expectancy
- Child well-being (to be developed)

Housing

- Housing (to be developed)

Deprivation

- Material deprivation (to be developed)
- Self reported limitations in daily activities

Note: More information on these indicators is available on the OSI website at www.socialinclusion.ie

Annex 2

Consistent Poverty and At Risk of Poverty Rates²²

Headline Statistics

Table 1: Consistent Poverty and At Risk of Poverty Rates 1994 – 2005

	LIIS 1994	LIIS 1997	LIIS 1998	LIIS 2000	LIIS 2001	SILC 2003	SILC 2004	SILC 2005
Percentage of persons in consistent poverty	8.3	7.8	6.0	4.3	4.1	8.8	6.8	7.0
Percentage of persons at risk of poverty	15.6	18.2	19.8	20.9	21.9	19.7	19.4	18.5

Source: ESRI *Monitoring Poverty Trends in Ireland: Results from the 2001 Living in Ireland Survey (LIIS) & CSO Statistical Release on EU-SILC 2005*
Based on median income threshold (60%) and using the national equivalence scale.
N.B. LIIS consistent poverty figures are not comparable with EU-SILC data (shaded).

Consistent Poverty Rates

Table 2 – Percentage of **persons** in consistent poverty

	LIIS 1998	LIIS 2000	LIIS 2001	SILC 2003	SILC 2004	SILC 2005
Less than 50% of threshold	3.6	2.7	2.9	5.3	3.9	4.5
Less than 60% of threshold	6.0	4.3	4.1	8.8	6.8	7.0
Less than 70% of threshold	7.7	5.4	4.9	11.1	9.6	10.3

Source: ESRI *Monitoring Poverty Trends in Ireland: Results from the 2001 Living in Ireland Survey (LIIS) & CSO Statistical Release on EU-SILC 2005*
Based on median income threshold and using the national equivalence scale.

Table 3 – Percentage of **households** in consistent poverty

	LIIS 1998	LIIS 2000	LIIS 2001	SILC 2003	SILC 2004	SILC 2005
Less than 40% of threshold	3.4	2.7	2.5	4.1	3.1	3.3
Less than 50% of threshold	6.0	4.5	4.1	7.9	6.7	6.7
Less than 60% of threshold	8.0	5.8	5.2	11.5	10.0	10.1

Source: ESRI *Monitoring Poverty Trends in Ireland: Results from the 2001 Living in Ireland Survey (LIIS) & CSO Statistical Release on EU-SILC 2005*
Based on median income threshold and using the national equivalence scale.

²² Consistent Poverty rates in this Annex are based on the old 8-item index. Only limited data are currently available in relation to the new 11-item index. These show an overall level of consistent poverty of 8.0% in 2003, 6.6% in 2004 and 7.0% in 2005. Further information on statistics relating to poverty and deprivation can be found on the CSO website: http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/pr_healthsoc.htm and on the OSI website www.socialinclusion.ie

Annex 2

Table 4

Consistent Poverty Rates

Percentage of persons below 60% of median income and experiencing consistent poverty

	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)
Overall	8.8	6.8	7.0
Men	8.3	6.2	6.4
Women	9.3	7.4	7.5
Age 0-14	12.2	9.5	10.2
15-64	8.3	6.5	6.5
65+	5.8	3.3	3.7
At Work	2.6	1.8	1.7
Unemployed	28.3	19.2	21.6
Student	11.5	8.7	11.2
Home Duties	12.2	9.6	9.4
Retired	5.7	3.7	3.3
Ill/Disabled	22.4	21.7	17.4
Other	*	*	15.2
Single adult, no children	12.8	9.9	9.1
2 adult, no children	6.3	4.7	5.0
3+ adult, no children	4.5	3.5	3.3
1 adult with children	33.6	31.1	27.2
2 adults with 1-3 children	5.9	4.7	5.3
Other households with children	13.7	9.6	10.6
Irish nationals	8.5	6.4	6.6
Non-Irish nationals	15.4	14.9	13.1

Source: EU-SILC Results 2003-2005

*Sample occurrence too small for estimation

Annex 2

Table 5

Consistent Poverty Composition

Composition of population below 60% of median income and experiencing consistent poverty

	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Men	46.9	45.3	46.2
Women	53.1	54.7	53.8
Age 0-14	28.9	29.2	30.3
15-64	63.7	65.3	63.7
65+	7.3	5.5	5.9
At Work	12.3	10.6	9.8
Unemployed	11.5	9.4	10.6
Student	9.6	10.3	13.5
Home Duties	19.2	19.9	17.8
Retired	4.1	3.7	3.2
Ill/Disabled	8.8	11.5	8.9
Other	1.9	2.1	1.8
Single adult, no children	10.9	10.9	10.0
2 adult, no children	12.4	12.2	12.9
3+ adult, no children	12.9	12.9	12.1
1 adult with children	13.1	17.0	14.6
2 adults with 1-3 children	16.4	17.1	18.8
Other households with children	34.4	30.0	31.5
Irish nationals	92.0	90.0	90.1
Non-Irish nationals	8.0	10.0	9.9

Source: EU-SILC Results 2003-2005

Annex 2

Table 6

At Risk of Poverty Rates

Percentage of persons below 60% of median income

	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)
Overall	19.7	19.4	18.5
Poverty Gap	21.5	19.8	20.8
Men	18.9	18.0	18.4
Women	20.4	20.8	18.5
Age 0-14	21.0	21.2	21.2
15-64	17.6	17.6	17.4
65+	29.8	27.1	20.1
At Work	7.6	7.0	7.0
Unemployed	41.5	37.2	40.6
Student	23.1	23.6	29.5
Home Duties	31.8	32.1	27.6
Retired	27.7	26.1	20.5
Ill/Disabled	51.7	47.3	40.6
Other	*	52.3	35.7
Single adult, no children	40.4	35.7	28.8
2 adult, no children	21.2	21.4	16.6
3+ adult, no children	12.4	12.7	13.8
1 adult with children	49.3	48.3	40.7
2 adults with 1-3 children	12.3	12.5	12.8
Other households with children	23.2	23.1	24.7
Irish nationals	19.3	19.0	18.0
Non-Irish nationals	27.9	29.2	26.9

Source: EU-SILC Results 2003-2005

*Sample occurrence too small for estimation

Annex 2

Table 7

At Risk of Poverty Composition

Composition of population below 60% of median income

	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Men	47.8	46.1	49.8
Women	52.2	53.9	50.3
Age 0-14	22.3	22.8	23.6
15-64	60.8	61.7	64.3
65+	16.9	15.6	12.1
At Work	16.0	14.8	15.7
Unemployed	7.6	6.4	7.5
Student	8.6	9.8	13.4
Home Duties	22.5	23.2	19.7
Retired	9.0	9.2	7.5
Ill/Disabled	9.1	8.8	7.9
Other	1.9	2.7	1.6
Single adult, no children	15.5	13.7	11.9
2 adult, no children	18.7	19.5	16.2
3+ adult, no children	15.8	16.5	18.9
1 adult with children	8.7	9.2	8.3
2 adults with 1-3 children	15.4	16.0	17.2
Other households with children	26.1	25.2	27.7
Irish nationals	93.6	93.2	92.3
Non-Irish nationals	6.5	6.8	7.7

Source: EU-SILC Results 2003-2005

Table 8: Key EU Common Income Indicators for Poverty and Social Exclusion

Income indicators	1999		2001		2003		2004		2005	
	Ireland	EU 15 average	Ireland	EU 15 average	Ireland	EU 15 average	Ireland	EU 15 average	Ireland	EU 15 average
At-risk-of-poverty rate ²³										
- After social transfers (60% threshold)	19	16	21	15	20.1	15	20.9	17	19.7	NA
- Before social transfers (income including pensions)	30	24	30	24	31.3	25	32.9	26	32.3	NA
- Before social transfers (income excluding pensions)	37	40	36	40	37.0	39	39.1	41	39.6	NA
- Before social transfers (income excluding pensions)	4	5	5	5	5.8	5	4.8	5	4.6	NA
- 40% threshold	11	9	15	9	12.3	9	11.4	10	11.2	NA
- 50% threshold	28	23	29	23	27.0	24	29.0	24	28.1	NA
- 70% threshold										
At-risk-of poverty threshold (euro)										
One adult household	6,656	7,242	8,553	8,163	10,434	9,263	10,763	8,882	NA	NA
2 adults – 2 children household	13,978	15,207	17,961	17,142	21,911	19,452	22,602	18,652	NA	NA
Relative median at risk of poverty gap (%)	21	22	24	22	22.4	NA	19.6	NA	20.3	NA
Income distribution (income quintile share ratio)	4.9	4.6	4.5	4.5	5.0	4.6	5.0	4.8	5.0	NA
Gini coefficient (%)	32	29	29	29	30.8	30	31.6	30	32.0	NA

Sources: Eurostat & CSO, EU-SILC.

23 Based on EU definition of median income and using modified OECD equivalence scale. Figures from Eurostat are rounded.

Annex 3

Consistent Poverty Deprivation Index

Persons are regarded as being in Consistent Poverty if (i) their income is below 60% of median income and (ii) they experience deprivation in relation to the list of deprivation items.

Revised Index

Persons lacking two or more items from this index are regarded as being in consistent poverty.

1. Two pairs of strong shoes
2. A warm waterproof overcoat
3. Buy new not second-hand clothes
4. Eat meals with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day
5. Have a roast joint or its equivalent once a week
6. Had to go without heating during the last year through lack of money
7. Keep the home adequately warm
8. Buy presents for family or friends at least once a year
9. Replace any worn out furniture
10. Have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month
11. Have a morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight, for entertainment

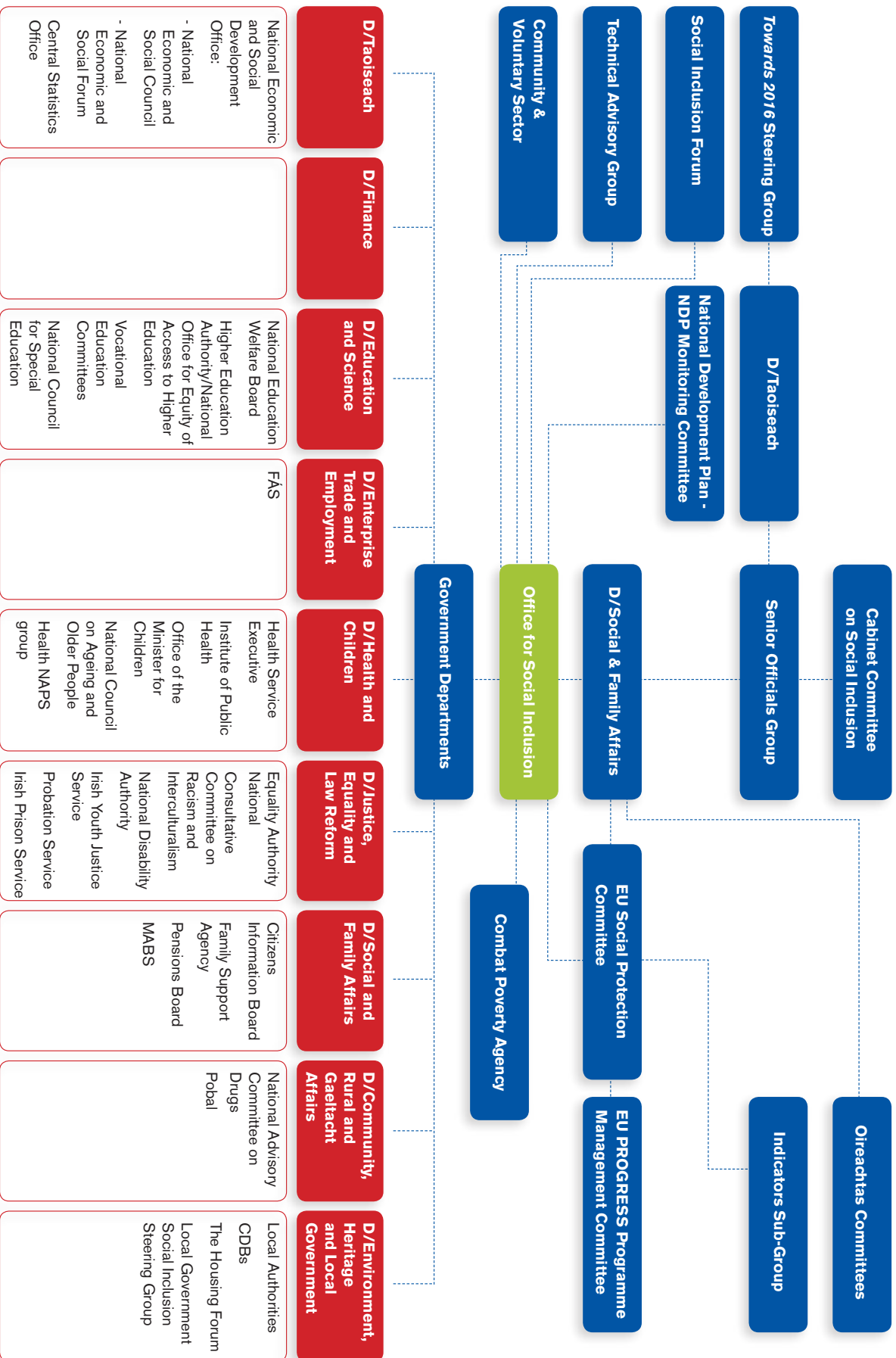
Former Index

Persons lacking at least one item from this index were regarded as being in consistent poverty.

1. Two pairs of strong shoes
2. A warm waterproof overcoat
3. Buy new not second-hand clothes
4. Eat meals with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day
5. Have a roast joint or its equivalent once a week
6. Had to go without heating during the last year through lack of money
7. Had a day in the last two weeks without a substantial meal due to lack of money
8. Experienced debt problems arising from ordinary living expenses

Annex 4

Map of Institutional Structures



Annex 5

Key Institutions and their Roles

Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion

This Committee, chaired by the Taoiseach and composed of the relevant Ministers, gives overall strategic direction to the development of policies to combat poverty and social exclusion and ensures that their implementation is regularly monitored and promoted at the highest level. It is supported in this work by the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion.

Oireachtas Committees

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs may be called to present progress reports on the implementation of the National Action Plan to the Joint Oireachtas Committees on Social and Family Affairs, and on European Affairs.

Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion

This Group is chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach. It maintains a broad overview of social inclusion issues and brings emerging topics to the attention of the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. It also deals with policy developments relating to meeting the objectives of social inclusion strategies.

The Towards 2016 Partnership Steering Group

This Steering Group representing Government and each of the Social Partner Pillars has overall responsibility for the management and review of progress on the implementation of the ten-year framework agreement as it applies to the wider non-pay issues.

Office for Social Inclusion

The Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) is located in the Department of Social and Family Affairs and has overall responsibility for co-ordinating and monitoring the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. The Office co-ordinates this process across Departments, Agencies, Regional and Local Government, and implements key support functions. The Technical Advisory Group assists the OSI in the development and implementation of an appropriate Data Strategy to underpin the NAPinclusion process.

National Economic and Social Development Office

The National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO) comprises the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) and the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCP). NESDO facilitates and promotes complementary programmes of research, analysis and discussion by its constituent bodies. NESC reports to government on issues concerning efficient economical development and the achievement of social justice. NESF advises government on policies to achieve greater equality and social inclusion and convenes the Social Inclusion Forum.

The NDP Monitoring Committee

The Department of Finance has overall responsibility for monitoring NDP programmes. The OSI supports the monitoring of the social inclusion elements of the Plan.

Combat Poverty Agency

The Combat Poverty Agency is a statutory body working for the prevention and elimination of poverty and social exclusion through advice to Government, developing innovative anti-poverty measures, examining the nature, causes and extent of poverty in Ireland and promoting a greater public understanding of poverty and social exclusion.

Annex 5

The Local Government Social Inclusion Steering Group

This group, chaired by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, consists of representatives from the Office for Social Inclusion, Combat Poverty Agency, Institute of Public Administration and Local Government Management Services Board and the County/City Managers Association and supports the development of a strong anti-poverty focus within local government including through the Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network.

County/City Development Boards and other local structures

The County/City Development Board (CDB) structure co-ordinates integrated public service delivery, (including social inclusion activities) at local level. The CDBs are led by the local authorities and include the social partners, State Agencies, local, rural and community development organisations and community and voluntary representatives. The Social Inclusion Measures Group (SIMs) support this process, as do the Community Fora.

Social Inclusion Units in government departments and local authorities

Social Inclusion Units are established in key government departments and co-ordinate their Department's contribution to the process in liaison with the OSI. Social Inclusion Units also currently operate in eight local authorities and will be extended to half of local authorities by the end of 2008.

The Social Inclusion Forum

The Social Inclusion Forum is jointly organised by the NESF and OSI. It provides an opportunity to members of the public and representatives of the community and voluntary sector to inform and be informed about the NAPinclusion process.

Community and Voluntary Sector

The community and voluntary sector, consists of a broad range of organisations active in mutual support and self help, local development, resource and service provision, representation co-ordination, campaigning and advocacy.

Technical Advisory Group

This group assists the OSI in the development and implementation of a Data Strategy to underpin the NAPinclusion process. Membership includes representatives from key government departments, the Central Statistics Office, the Combat Poverty Agency, the Economic and Social Research Institute and the Equality Authority. In accordance with the terms of *Towards 2016*, the Group will be expanded to include technical experts from the social partner pillars.

Social Protection Committee

The EU Social Protection Committee (SPC) facilitates exchanges between the European Commission and the EU Member States in relation to social protection and social inclusion policy. The SPC developed the 'Open Method of Coordination' within which Member States' social protection and inclusion plans are formulated and implemented. The Department of Social and Family Affairs is represented on the SPC and the OSI is represented on the SPC Indicators Sub-Group which formulates indicators for monitoring poverty and social exclusion. The EU PROGRESS Programme provides funding for co-operative initiatives between Member States in relation to social inclusion policy.

Annex 6

Co-operation between Ireland and Northern Ireland on Social Inclusion issues

Poverty and social exclusion affect the quality of life of families and communities across the island of Ireland. Creating a more inclusive society by alleviating social exclusion, poverty and deprivation is a continuing challenge for administrations in Northern Ireland and Ireland. There are strong commonalities shared by both communities which have facilitated the establishment of a number of areas of cross-border co-operation.

The North/South Ministerial Council, which was set up under the Belfast Agreement, facilitates co-operation between Ireland and Northern Ireland in a range of areas including health and education. The Council oversees the work of the six North/South Implementation Bodies. One of these is the Special EU Programmes Body which is responsible for the administration of the Peace Programme, INTERREG III and the cross-border elements of other initiatives such as LEADER III, EQUAL, URBAN. Cross border co-operation and building peace and reconciliation are the key elements of the work of the Special EU Programmes Body.

Both administrations agree that there is further potential to promote co-operation between the two jurisdictions in relation to social inclusion. To this end, they will prepare a report on areas of existing and ongoing cross-border work which will, include the contribution of the voluntary and community sector in promoting cross-border social inclusion, equality and reconciliation. This process will be used to determine where further work is required and to ensure that new work will complement work already in progress.

Areas for potential co-operation which could deliver mutual cross-border benefits will be explored. These may include:

- The compilation and sharing of data and information in relation to areas of common interest and/or;
- Specific topics of common interest for research and analysis;
- Areas where joint approaches should be developed.

The findings of such work will inform policy development in both jurisdictions.

The report will also describe how work on the potential areas may be progressed with the agreement of the relevant Ministers in both jurisdictions and within existing institutional structures.

Annex 7

NAPinclusion Consultation Process

The first stage of an extensive consultation process for the development of the NAPinclusion was commenced by the Office for Social Inclusion in September 2005, with newspaper advertisements in the national media seeking written submissions from organisations and individuals on the broad objectives and policy measures to be reflected in the Plan. In total, 81 submissions were received from both individuals and organisations; these are listed below.

The written stage of the consultation process was followed by a series of seven regional and national seminars organised by the Office during November and December 2005 in Dublin, Carlow, Cork, Limerick, Mullingar, Carrick-on-Shannon and Donegal. The seminars were designed to support the participation within the NAPinclusion process of those with direct experience of poverty and social exclusion and those who work with individuals, groups or communities affected by this problem. In excess of 500 people attended the seminars countrywide, including representatives from government departments, local authorities, state agencies, the community and voluntary sector, as well as members of the general public.

The seminars sought participants' views on the local, regional and national implementation of the NAPinclusion policies and measures. Policy areas covered included employment, education and training, health and care, housing and income supports. Seminars also sought to explore the urban and rural dimensions of poverty and gender issues.

The subsequent report of both stages of the consultation process formed an important input to the third Social Inclusion Forum which took place in Dublin on 15 February 2006. The Forum provides people who are affected by poverty and social exclusion and their representatives with an opportunity to contribute their views on, and experiences of, the implementation of the NAPinclusion. The consultation report was also an important resource for negotiations on the social inclusion aspects of the new national partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*.

An additional seminar was held with local authority representatives in March 2006. The seminar sought to obtain views from local authorities on issues relating to poverty and social exclusion at local level, to feed into the NAPinclusion and, as appropriate, into the National Development Plan and *Towards 2016*.

In addition to the seminars hosted by the Office for Social Inclusion, a series of seminars was also organised by the Combat Poverty Agency and a number of other consultation events was organised by stakeholder organisations.

List of those who made written submissions on the Plan

Age Action Ireland
 Area Development Management Ltd (Pobal)
 ATD Fourth World
 Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force
 Barnardos
 Belcamp Estate Steering Committee
 Border, Midland and Western Regional Assembly
 Bray Partnership (Marginalised, Disadvantaged and Unemployed Cluster Group)
 Bray Partnership (Community Development Team)
 Care Alliance Ireland
 Centre for Community Inclusion, St Angela's College, Sligo
 Clara Family Resource Centre
 Combat Poverty Agency
 Comhairle
 Community Development Department, (HSE), Wexford Community Services
 Consumers' Association of Ireland
 CORI Justice Commission
 Cork City Council
 Crosscare
 Cúram
 Dalton, G
 Dublin City Council Social Inclusion Unit
 Emigrant Advice
 Exchange House Travellers Service
 Family Support Agency
 Ferdia
 Financial Regulator
 Free Legal Aid Centres
 Gay and Lesbian Equality Network
 Hallissey, M&M
 Headway Ireland
 Irish Congress of Trade Unions
 Irish Rural Link
 Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
 Irish Traveller Movement
 Irish Wheelchair Association
 Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social and Family Affairs
 Joint Submission by Focus Ireland, Irish Traveller Movement, Simon Communities of Ireland, Society of St. Vincent de Paul and Threshold
 Joint Submission by the Eight Local Government Social Inclusion Units
 KWCD Partnership
 Lakelands Football Club
 McCarthy, P.J.
 Meehan, R
 Migrant Rights Centre
 National Adult Literacy Agency
 National Women's Council of Ireland
 Network of Service Providers to One Parent Families in Tralee
 Neylon, R
 O'Cleirigh, P
 O'Neill, T
 O'Shea, S
 One Parent Exchange and Network
 One Family
 Pavee Point
 People with Disabilities in Ireland
 Presentation Centre for Policy and Systemic Change
 REHAB
 RGDATA
 Ringsend Action Project Limited
 Roscommon County Council
 Schizophrenia Ireland
 School of Applied Social Science, UCD
 Simon Communities of Ireland
 Society of St Vincent de Paul
 South Dublin County Council Social Inclusion Unit
 South and Mid-West Community Development and Family Resource Centre Programmes
 South West Inner City Cluster
 Students, Diploma in Community Rehabilitation, UCD
 Summerhill Active Retirement Group
 Tallaght Partnership
 The Donahies Community School (Adult Students)
 The Dublin 12 Active Citizens
 Threshold
 Tralee Community Development Project
 Traveller Health Unit, Health Services Executive, Southern Area
 Treoir
 UCD and UCD Students Union
 Vincentian Partnership for Justice
 Wicklow County Council, Social Inclusion Unit
 Women's Aid
 Women's Education and Resource Centre, UCD
 Women's Equality in Bray
 Women's Human Rights Alliance

Abbreviations

CDBs	County/City Development Boards
CIT	Community Intervention Team
CLÁR	Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais
CMHTs	Community Mental Health Teams
CPA	Combat Poverty Agency
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CTCs	Community Training Centres
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
EU 15	Member States of the EU prior to accession of 10 new member states on 1 May 2004
EU-SILC	EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair
GP	General Practice
HIQA	Health Information and Quality Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information & Communications Technology
LIIS	Living in Ireland Survey
LSP	Local Sports Partnership
MABS	Money Advice & Budgeting Service
MANs	Metropolitan Area Networks
NAPinclusion	National Action Plan for Social Inclusion
NAPS	National Anti-Poverty Strategy
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NPAR	National Action Plan against Racism
NRP	National Reform Programme
NSSPI	National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMC	Office of the Minister for Children
OSI	Office for Social Inclusion
QNHS	Quarterly National Household Survey
RAPID	Revitalising Areas by Planning Investment and Development Programme
RTI	Rural Transport Initiative
SEI	Sustainable Energy Ireland
SWA	Supplementary Welfare Allowance
UN	United Nations



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