

SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

2000/2001 ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE INTER-DEPARTMENTAL POLICY COMMITTEE

PROGRAMME FOR PROSPERITY AND FAIRNESS

*“This Programme for Prosperity and Fairness... - will enable Ireland to:
maintain our international competitiveness through policies that encourage enterprise and investment,

ensure that those in work have a fair share in our increased national prosperity,

substantially increase the resources allocated to social inclusion, and

enable us to become a learning, knowledge-based society, with the capacity to embrace with confidence the opportunities offered by technological change.*

*I believe that if we can go forward with this Programme, we can give everybody in this country a fresh start, fit for the challenges and opportunities of the opening years of the new Millennium”
(extract from Taoiseach’s foreword to PPF)*

ACTION PROGRAMME FOR THE MILLENNIUM

“Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats in Government will seek to establish an inclusive society where all citizens have the opportunity and the incentive to participate fully in the social and economic life of the country. We want everyone to have a chance to contribute to the wealth of the nation and to share the benefits of economic growth.

We will address urgently the issues of exclusion, marginalisation and poverty, and we will halt the continuing drift towards the development of a two-tier society.”

NATIONAL ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

“Tackling poverty and social exclusion is one of the major challenges facing Irish society. It will involve ensuring that the impact of very rapid economic, social and demographic change reduces social inequalities and social polarisation. It will mean ensuring that the benefits of sound economic management and growth are distributed fairly and, in particular, are used to tackle the underlying causes of poverty and social exclusion.”

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

“The objective is that employment is opened up to all sectors of society as this is the best way to counter poverty and social exclusion. However, the Plan also recognises that ensuring the correct overall economic environment for job creation is not sufficient on its own to alleviate poverty in areas and groups throughout the community. Targeted interventions are therefore provided for, primarily in the Regional Operational Programmes, to deal with these problems. ”

FOREWORD BY AN TAOISEACH, MR BERTIE AHERN, T.D.

Since the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) launched in 1997 there is a decline in consistent poverty and in the depth of poverty. Overall unemployment has been reduced from almost 12% in 1996 to 3.7% and long-term unemployment from almost 7% to 1.2%. This has been made possible by our model of social partnership, sound fiscal policies and an outward looking, knowledge based industrial policy.



Fairness and inclusion are equal on our agenda to growth and competitiveness. Our work is to build a society where every individual and community has the opportunity and incentive to participate fully in the economic and social life of this country. There can be no greater challenge to everybody involved in the formulation, implementation and review of public policy. It particularly requires an integrated and interagency approach which is reflected in the institutional arrangements to support the NAPS. As well as the framework set out in the NAPS the provisions of the National Development Plan, the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and budgetary policy over the last few years have put in place the foundations and way forward for prosperity and inclusion. This Annual Report sets out the great range and depth of the Government's response to the issues of poverty and exclusion.

Looking to the future, the outcome of the NAPS review and of the work to examine the issues involved in developing a benchmark for adequacy of adult and child social welfare payments will be informative. All are being undertaken in consultation with the Social Partners.

I look forward to the outcome of the review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and the challenges and opportunities that it will present.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bertie Ahern'.

Mr. Bertie Ahern, T.D.

An Taoiseach

BROLLACH AG AN TAOISEACH, AN tUAS. BERTIE AHERN, T.D.

Ó bunaíodh an Stráitéis Náisiúnta Frithbhochtaine sa bhliain 1997, tá laghdú tagtha ar bhochtaine leanúnach agus ar fhorleithne na bochtaine. Tá an difhostaíocht ar an iomlán laghdaithe ó geall le 12% i 1996 go dtí 3.7% agus difhostaíocht fadréimhseach laghdaithe ó geall le 7% go dtí 1.2%. Tharla sé seo de thoradh an struchtúr páirtíocht shóisialta atá againn, ár bpolasaithe fíoscacha ciallmhara agus polasaithe tionsclaíoch atá bunaithe ar eolas agus a fhéachann chun an todhcháí.



Tá cothroime agus uilechuimsitheacht ar chomhchéim le forás agus iomaíocht ar ár gclár oibre. Tá sé de dhualgas orainn sochaí a thógáil ina bhfuil deis ag gach duine agus gach pobal bheith iomlán páirteach i saol eacnamaíochta agus sóisialta na tíre seo. Ní fhéadfadh dúshlán ní ba mhó a bheith ag gach duine atá páirteach in eagrú, tabhairt chun críche agus athbhreithniú polasaí poiblí. Tá sé riachtanach go háirithe go ndéanfaí gníomhú ar bhealach a spreagann an comhtháthú agus an idirghníomhaíocht atá léirithe sna forais cóiriúcháin a thaobhaíonn leis an Stráitéis Náisiúnta Frithbhochtaine. Chomh maith leis an bhfráma oibre atá leagtha síos sa Stráitéis Náisiúnta Frithbhochtaine tá forálacha an phlean Náisiúnta Forbartha, an Clár um Rathúnas agus Cothroime agus polasaithe na gcáinainneisí le blianta anuas tar éis an bhunchloch a leagadh síos agus an bealach a ullmhú le haghaidh ráthúnais agus uilechuimsitheacht. Tugann an Tuairisc Bhliantúil seo cuntas ar an raon leathan freagraí a thug an Rialtais chun dul i ngleic le fadhbanna bochtaine agus eisiamh.

Ag breathnú i dtreo an todhcháí, beidh toradh faisnéiseach le fáil ón athbhreithniú ar an Stráitéis Náisiúnta Frithbhochtaine agus ón iniúchadh a dhéanfar ar an obair atá i gceist chun tagarmharc a fhorbairt le íocaíochtaí oiriúnacha leasa shóisialaigh d'aosaigh agus do pháistí a shocrú. Táthar á ndéanamh ar fad i gcomhairle leis na Páirtithe Sóisialta.

Tá mé ag súil leis an toradh a bheidh ar an athbhreithniú ar an Stráitéis Náisiúnta Frithbhochtaine agus leis na dúshláin agus na deiseanna a nochtfaidh an toradh sin.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bertie Ahern". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

An tUasal Bertie Ahern, T.D.

An Taoiseach

FOREWORD BY MR. DERMOT AHERN, T.D. MINISTER FOR SOCIAL,
COMMUNITY AND FAMILY AFFAIRS

This report comes at a critical time in the development of social inclusion policy in Ireland. It coincides with the publication of the first EU National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPincl). The Irish Government strongly supported the enhancement of EU activity in this area and the recognition that social policy - together with employment and economic policy - form three sides of the 'policy triangle'. The EU NAPincl will play an important role in developing social inclusion policy in the EU and Ireland will play a highly supportive role in this regard.



We are also, together with the Social Partners, in the middle of finalising the review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy which will be published later this year. The revised NAPS will have a crucial role to play in shaping future social inclusion policy and it is vital that we get it right. I would like to pay tribute to the energy and commitment that all the Social Partners have put into the process to date.

This report sets out the policies which the Government has established to build an inclusive society. It also provides the first ever data on the dynamics of poverty in Ireland.

Recent years have seen a dramatic change in Irish society and this has had a major impact on poverty. The NAPS poverty target, set in 1997, is based on the ESRI measure of poverty, known as consistent poverty, which takes into account not only the household's income (which can vary from period to period in some cases) but also a range of 'deprivation indicators'. The ESRI have argued convincingly that this measurement of poverty 'continues to identify a set of households experiencing a generalised level of deprivation, a degree of economic strain and psychological distress and exposure to a risk of persistent income poverty that marks them out from the rest of the population'.

In the period of Ireland's economic stabilisation from 1987 to 1994, there was little change in the level of consistent poverty which declined only marginally from 16% to 15%. However, since 1994, consistent poverty has almost halved to 8% in 1998 (most recent data).

The challenge now for us all is to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are fairly shared amongst all the community.

This will involve measures such as:

- increasing the employment rate in line with the decision of the Lisbon EU Council;
- putting in place an adequate system of income replacement for retired people in line with the PPF commitments; and
- developing the structure of the tax system to deliver benefits and focus resources in an equitable manner as promised in the PPF.

All these issues can and will be addressed in the ongoing review of the NAPS. Working together we can ensure that we use the benefits of our economic growth to end poverty.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Dermot Ahern'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Mr. Dermot Ahern, T.D.

Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs

BROLLACH AG AN tUASAL DERMOT AHERN, T.D. AIRE GNÓTHAÍ
SÓISIALACHA, POBAIL AGUS TEAGHLAIGH



Tagann an tuairisc seo ag am criticiúil i bhforbairt polasaí sóisialta uilechuimsitheachta in Éirinn. Tagann sí ag an am céanna a bhfuiltear ag foilsiú an chéad Plean Oibre Náisiúnta AE i gcoinne Bochtaine agus Eisiamh Sóisialta. Thug Rialtas na hÉireann tacaíocht láidir chun go méadófaí ar ghníomhaíocht an AE sa limistéir seo agus go n-aithneofaí polasaí sóisialta – in éineacht le fostaíocht agus polasaí eacnamaíochta – mar na trí shleasa ar thriantán an pholasaí. Beidh ról tábhachtach ag Plean Oibre Náisiúnta an AE i gcoinne Bochtaine agus Eisiamh Sóisialta i bhforbairt polasaí sóisialta uilechuimsitheachta san AE agus tabharfaidh Éire an-tacaíocht don phróiseas seo.

Táimid féin, in éineacht leis na páirtithe sóisialta, ag críochnú an athbhreithniú ar an Stráitéis Náisiúnta Frithbhochtaine a fhoilseofar níos déanaí i mbliana. Beidh an Stráitéis Náisiúnta Frithbhochtaine athbhreithnithe tábhachtach i bhforbairt polasaí sóisialta uilechuimsitheachta sa todhchaí agus tá sé ríthabachtach go bhfaighimid i gceart é. Ba mhaith liom m'ardmheas a chur in iúl don bhfuinneamh agus don gcúram atá na páirtithe sóisialta go léir ag léiriú i leith an phróiséis chuig dáta.

Léiríonn an tuairisc seo na polasaithe i leith tógáil sochaí uilechuimsitheach atá leagtha síos ag an Rialtas. Tugtar na céad sonraí riamh ar dinimic na bochtaine in Éirinn.

Tá athruithe móra tagtha ar an sochaí in Éirinn le blianta anuas agus tá tionchar ollmhór aige seo ar an mbochtaine. Tá sprioc bochtaine an Stráitéis Náisiúnta Frithbhochtaine, a leagadh síos i 1997, bunaithe ar mhiosúr bochtaine an Institiúid Taighde Eacnamaíochta agus Sóisialta, ar an dtugtar bochtaine leanúnach, a áiríonn teacht isteach an teaghlaigh, (a athraíonn ó am go chéile i gcásanna áirithe) agus freisin raon 'comharthaí easnaimh.' Thaispeáin an Institiúid Taighde Eacnamaíochta agus Sóisialta go bhfuil an miosúr bochtaine seo 'ag aithint go bhfuil méid áirithe teaghlaigh ann atá ag fulaingt leibhéal ginearálta easnaimh, cruatan eacnamaíochta agus buaireamh siceolaíoch agus atá i mbaol bheith ag maireachtaint i síorbhochtaine ioncaim a scarann amach iad ón gcuid eile den daonra'.

I rith an tréimhse comhsaithe eacnamaíochta in Éirinn ó 1987 go dtí 1994, ní raibh mórán athrú ar an leibhéal bochtaine leanúnach nár ísligh ach beagán ó 16% go dtí 15%. Ó 1994 áfach, íslíodh bochtaine leanúnach go dtí a leath, anuas go dtí 8% i 1998 (na sonraí is deireanaí).

Tá sé de dhúshlán orainn ar fad anois a chinntiú go roinntear sochair an fhoráis eacnamaíochta go cothrom ar an bpobal ar fad.

Déanfar é seo trí mhiosúir ar nós;

- méadú ar an ráta fostaíochta ag teacht le cinneadh Chomhairle AE Liospóin;
- ag leagadh síos córas athsholáthar ioncaim oiriúnach do dhaoine atá éirithe as obair ag teacht le gealltanais an Chláir um Rathúnas agus Cothroime; agus
- ag forbairt struchtúr an chórais ioncaim chun go roinnfí sochair agus acmhainní go cothrom mar a gheall an Clár um Rathúnas agus Cothroime.

Pléifear na ceisteanna seo go léir trí athbhreithniú leanúnach a dhéanamh ar an Stráitéis Náisiúnta Frithbhochtaine. Má oibrimid le chéile, déanfaimid a chinntiú go n-úsáidfimid sochair ár bhforás eacnamaíochta chun deireadh a chur le bochtaine.



An tUasal Dermot Ahern, T.D.

Aire Gnóthaí Sóisialacha, Pobail agus Teaghlaigh.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1:	Introduction And Background	
1.1	Introduction and Context	2
1.2	NAPS Targets, Themes and Principles	2
1.3	The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness	3
1.4	Involvement of the Community and Voluntary Sector	3
1.5	Institutional Mechanisms to Support the NAPS	3
Chapter 2:	National And International Context	
2.1.	Introduction	6
2.2	Ireland's Economy	6
2.3	Poverty in Ireland: Data from the 1998 Living in Ireland Survey	6
2.4	The International Context	8
2.5	Conclusion	11
Chapter 3:	Progress in 2000 – 2001	
3.1	Introduction	14
3.2	The Global Target: Reducing Consistent Poverty	14
3.3	Unemployment	14
3.4	Income Adequacy	19
3.5	Educational Disadvantage	24
3.6	Urban Disadvantage	29
3.7	Rural Poverty	38
3.8	Other Developments	42
3.9	Conclusion	50
Chapter 4:	The Future Direction of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy	
4.1	Introduction	52
4.2	Review of the NAPS	52
4.3	The Global Target: Measuring Consistent Poverty	54
4.4	Unemployment	55
4.5	Income Adequacy	57
4.6	Educational Disadvantage	57
4.7	Urban Disadvantage and Rural Poverty	57
4.8	NAPS Review Working Group on Health	58
4.9	NAPS Review Working Group on Housing and Accommodation	58
4.10	Women, Children, Older People and Ethnic Minorities	59
4.11	Review of Poverty Proofing	59
4.12	Extending NAPS to Local Authorities	60
4.13	Data Issues	60
4.14	Conclusion	61

TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

Conclusion		64
Appendix A	Senior Officials Social Inclusion Group	66
Appendix B	NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee	67
Appendix C	Poverty Proofing Guidelines	68
Appendix D	Explanation of Terms	71
Appendix E	Key to Abbreviations	73

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background



1.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

At the United Nations (UN) World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995, the Irish Government, together with other Governments, endorsed a Programme of Action aimed at reducing overall poverty and inequality throughout the world. On foot of this commitment, the Irish Government developed a ten-year National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) setting out the extent, underlying causes and consequences of poverty in Ireland and identifying key areas for attention and the strategic directions for policy in relation to these. The NAPS was launched in 1997 and is now in its fourth year. The Strategy was developed by an Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (IDPC), comprising high level officials from relevant Government Departments and Agencies including the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA), and following wide-ranging consultation and participation with the Community and Voluntary Sector.

A follow-up summit to the World Summit for Social Development was held in Geneva in June 2000. At this, the representatives of Governments confirmed the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action as the basic framework for social development in the years to come. This summit provided an opportunity to identify progress made since 1995 in implementing the Copenhagen commitments.

1.2 NAPS TARGETS, THEMES AND PRINCIPLES

Targets

One of the most important features of the NAPS is that it sets out, for the first time in Ireland, specific targets for poverty reduction. The original global target of the NAPS was:

"Over the period 1997-2007, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy will aim at considerably reducing the numbers of those who are "consistently poor"

from 9% - 15% of the population to less than 5% - 10%, as measured by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)".¹

Data published in the 1999 ESRI report "*Monitoring Trends in Poverty for the National Anti-Poverty Strategy*" showed that, by 1997, the numbers of 'consistently poor' had shown a sharp fall to between 7% and 10%. In light of this, and in view of the rapid economic and social progress achieved over the previous two years, the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs announced the following new global target at the launch of the 1998/1999 IDPC Report:

Consistent poverty² to be reduced to below 5% by 2004.

Themes

While the NAPS considers poverty in a global context, it currently examines specific poverty issues within five key themes, each with its own subsidiary targets and timeframes. These themes are unemployment, income adequacy, educational disadvantage, urban disadvantage and rural poverty. Further details on the goals and targets in each of these areas is set out in Chapter 3.

Principles

The NAPS is underpinned by a number of principles. These are:

- ensuring equal access and encouraging participation for all;
- guaranteeing the rights of minorities, especially through anti-discrimination measures;
- the reduction of inequalities and in particular, addressing the gender dimensions of poverty;
- the development of the partnership approach building on national and local partnership processes;
- actively involving the Community and Voluntary Sector;

1 Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 1997, **Sharing in Progress**; National Anti-Poverty Strategy, Dublin, Stationary Office

2 Consistent poverty is defined as being below 50%-60% of average household disposable income and experiencing enforced basic deprivation. Basic deprivation refers to a set of eight indicators, which were regarded as necessities and possessed by a majority of those in the ESRI's Living in Ireland Survey. Examples include having 2 pairs of strong shoes, having a warm waterproof overcoat and having a roast meal (or its equivalent) at least once a week.

- encouraging self reliance through respecting individual dignity and promoting empowerment; and
- engaging in appropriate consultative processes, especially with users of services.

1.3 THE PROGRAMME FOR PROSPERITY AND FAIRNESS

In the period since 1997, the NAPS has been a central focus of the national partnership agreements. The current national agreement, the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF), recognises that, for many people, poverty and social exclusion are still a stark reality. It aims to address this challenge in a number of ways, including substantially increasing the resources allocated to social inclusion measures to £1.5 / 1.9 billion over the next three years. A key objective within the fiscal framework underpinning the PPF is the pursuit of policies which reduce poverty and social exclusion, build an inclusive society, reduce marginalisation and strengthen recognition of citizenship obligations in those contexts. In relation to the NAPS, the PPF provides for a review of the NAPS to be undertaken over 2000 – 2001 and a review of the poverty proofing process, which was initiated on a pilot basis in 1999. Following the review, the next step, as envisaged in the PPF is the extension of poverty proofing on a phased basis to local level through the Local Authorities and Health Boards. More details on these reviews are contained in Chapter 4.

1.4 INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The involvement of all the Social Partners in developing the NAPS is acknowledged. In developing a coherent strategy, the experience and perspectives of the Community and Voluntary Sector are invaluable and ways of enhancing the

involvement of the sector as the Strategy progresses are being explored. The White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector, published in 2000, marked a fundamental change in attitude to the provision of support for Community and Voluntary Groups. It sets out a cohesive framework of support and addresses issues relevant to the future development of the relationship between the two sectors. The White Paper, acknowledges the role of the Community and Voluntary Sector in inputting to policy making and the pursuit of common objectives and, provides a framework for more cohesive support by the State for the Community and Voluntary Sector.

1.5 INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT THE NAPS

It was recognised from the outset that the NAPS would need strong institutional supporting mechanisms to facilitate its implementation. Co-ordination of cross-Departmental activity on a constant basis, with consultative mechanisms where appropriate with State Agencies, Social Partners, and NGOs, is an important element of a strategy which seeks to focus anti-poverty policy on those most in need as efficiently, and effectively, as possible.

In line with the principles of the Civil Service Strategic Management Initiative, the NAPS recognises the multi-faceted nature of the problem of social exclusion and, as such, the focus at all times is on a cross-Departmental and integrated approach to tackling disadvantage. While each Department retains the lead role in progressing policies in its own areas of responsibility, Departments work together to pursue a co-ordinated approach, where possible. The establishment in 1998 of two cross-Departmental groups – one dealing with homelessness and another dealing with

literacy among the unemployed - is an example of such co-operation between Departments to provide strategic responses to specific issues. This approach is evident in the process now underway for the review of NAPS in which various Government Departments are working together with the Social Partners, various State Agencies and other interest groups (see Chapter 4 below). The cross-Departmental approach is also reflected in the mechanisms, put in place to oversee the Strategy, which are detailed below.

Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion

The Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Taoiseach and including Ministers from eight relevant Departments, meets on a monthly basis. It provides an integrated basis for the Government's activities in the social exclusion area in general, ensuring that the strategic priorities are being pursued and that effective co-ordination takes place. As such, it provides the essential political leadership necessary to advance the goals of the NAPS.

Senior Officials Social Inclusion Group

This group, comprising high level civil servants from relevant Departments, meets on a monthly basis to prepare the agenda and make recommendations to the Cabinet Committee. It maintains a broad overview of social inclusion issues and ensures that emerging topics are brought to the attention of the Cabinet Committee. It is chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach. Membership of this Group is set out at Appendix A.

Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (IDPC)

This Committee, originally established to develop the NAPS, continues to meet regularly and provides the principal strategic focus for the NAPS. It comprises senior civil servants as well as

representatives of FÁS, Area Development Management Ltd. (ADM) and the CPA. It considers the ongoing progress on implementation of the Strategy as well as progress towards achieving the NAPS targets. This Committee remains the key agent for addressing central NAPS issues and agreeing future plans and programmes of activity. The Committee is co-chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The current membership is set out in Appendix B.

NAPS Liaison Officers

Each relevant Department has appointed a NAPS Liaison Officer who fulfils an important communication and co-ordination role within Departments. They act as a first point of contact in relation to NAPS issues within Departments and are supported by each Department's IDPC representative as well as the Senior Officials Group representative, where applicable.

NAPS Unit

A dedicated NAPS Unit has been established in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs with responsibility for co-ordinating and developing cross-Departmental action in support of social inclusion initiatives. The Unit also acts as a secretariat to the IDPC and liaises with all Government Departments, other Agencies, both national and international, and the Social Partners in promoting and progressing the Strategy.

Combat Poverty Agency

The CPA are assigned a specific role in the NAPS in monitoring and evaluating the Strategy. The NAPS is accorded a high priority in the Agency's Strategic Plan 1999 - 2001. The CPA also plays a role in the extension of the NAPS to local level, as discussed further in Chapter 4.

Chapter 2 National and International Context



2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out the background against which the NAPS operates. In the first section, a brief overview of the recent performance of the Irish economy is presented. New data on poverty from the Living in Ireland Survey is then set out, with the focus on an analysis of the dynamics of poverty. Following this, some of the key social policy challenges facing Ireland are identified. In looking at the international context, section 2.4 draws attention to the main developments in the European Union (EU) on poverty and social inclusion and focuses in particular on the new National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2001-2003 (NAPincl).

2.2 Ireland's Economy

The story of Ireland's economic growth over the late 1990s is by now well documented. Gross National Product (GNP) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have grown rapidly and at rates well above the EU or Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average. Although growth rates are now moderating somewhat, growth rates of approximately 6.7% in GDP and 6.1% in GNP terms have been projected for 2001. In addition, unemployment has continued to fall, the numbers employed continue to rise and labour market participation, particularly among women, is increasing. All of these go to support Ireland's continued competitiveness in an increasingly global economy. However, a number of changes in the economy in the past 12 months or so have signalled the need for caution and have clearly indicated the potential fragility of growth at the predicted levels. Among these the most noteworthy here are the increases in the rate of inflation and consumer prices, and the slowing of the United States economy.

2.3 POVERTY IN IRELAND: DATA FROM THE 1998 LIVING IN IRELAND SURVEY³

2.3.1 Consistent and Relative Poverty in 1998

The consistent poverty measure combines income and enforced lack of at least one item on a list of eight indicators. The downward trend in consistent poverty already seen between 1994 and 1997 was continued in 1998. The percentage of households experiencing consistent poverty measured at the 50% and 60% relative income lines fell from between 7% and 10% in 1997 to between 6% and 8% in 1998. However, consistent poverty at the 40% relative income line continued to increase marginally from 3.1% in 1997 to 3.5% in 1998. It is particularly significant that consistent poverty among children declined substantially from 17% in 1997 to 12% in 1998. This latter figure marks a halving of the 1987 rate, which stood at 25%.

The number of people and households below the 60% relative income line has, in the case of the majority of statistical measures, fallen over the period 1994 to 1998. Meanwhile, the proportion below the 40% and 50% relative income lines had risen.

2.3.2 The Dynamics of Poverty

The ESRI longitudinal analysis of the Living in Ireland Survey data from 1994 to 1998 presents important cross-sectional figures on the extent of poverty using various statistical measures and it also includes the first research into the dynamics of poverty in the Irish context. The analysis shows that the number of people who experienced relative income poverty at some point in time over the 5 year period is substantially higher than the numbers who experienced relative income poverty in any one year. For example, while approximately 1 in 5 people fell below the 50% relative income line in 1998, 2 in 5 people fell below this line on at least one occasion between 1994 and 1998. The higher the

³ This section draws on Layte, R. et al (2001) *Monitoring Poverty Trends and Exploring Poverty Dynamics in Ireland*, ESRI

relative income line, the higher the proportion of people who had some experience of relative income poverty (Table 2.1). While 81% of people didn't experience relative income poverty at the 40% line, 50% didn't experience relative income poverty at the 60% line. Almost 15% of persons experienced relative income poverty at the 60% line in all five years covered by the analysis. Further analysis shows that this 15% of persons accounts for 46% of all years spent below the 40% to 60% relative income lines between 1994 and 1998.

TABLE 2.1

Number of Years Poor by Mean Relative Income Poverty Line

	40% Line	50% Line	60% Line
0 Years	80.9	62.0	50.4
1 Year	10.4	12.8	10.2
2 Years	4.9	7.7	8.6
3 Years	2.4	6.7	8.0
4 Years	0.9	5.3	8.2
5 Years	0.6	5.6	14.6
Total	100	100	100

The analysis found that, the longer the experience of poverty, the lower the probability of exiting this state. Conversely, if one escaped from relative income poverty, then the longer one remained non-poor the higher the chance of not re-entering income poverty. In addition, the relationship between relative income poverty and deprivation increased as the period of relative income poverty continued over a number of years.

In disaggregating the data on poverty dynamics, the ESRI have clearly identified a number of groups that are at risk of experiencing longer periods of poverty than others. Three primary household types – single parents, single persons and households with three or more children – all had a higher risk of experiencing multiple years under the 40% to 60% relative income lines. In terms of labour force

status, households headed by unskilled manual workers, the unemployed and those without educational qualifications all had lower probabilities of escaping poverty, even after just one year in poverty. In looking at the outcomes of persistent poverty, higher levels of economic strain, dissatisfaction with one's financial situation and sense of having no control over one's life were all found to be predictably associated with longer experiences of poverty.

2.3.3 Challenges in the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion

Our economic success has generated revenue surpluses and has provided an opportunity, in terms of financial resources, for much to be achieved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. One of the main challenges facing Ireland is the translation of economic success into a fairer and more just society in which the needs of the most vulnerable are addressed and met. Economic success has, to an extent, had a positive impact on poverty and social exclusion. Nonetheless, much remains to be done. The future challenge can be categorised as one of optimising the current employment and labour market policy mix in Ireland consistent with maintaining a sustainable rate of economic and employment growth, and combining this approach with policies aimed at tackling social exclusion, poverty and inequality. The more traditional aspects of social exclusion such as unemployment (particularly long-term unemployment) and educational disadvantage must continue to be vigorously tackled. In addition, the PPF affords the opportunity to focus on other areas of potential exclusion (such as housing and health) with renewed emphasis. Finding effective and sustainable ways to tackle poverty and social exclusion is not a simple challenge. One of the core strengths of the NAPS is that it focuses attention on long-term solutions and moves debate away from short-term and reactive responses.

It is accepted that inequalities can cause and perpetuate poverty and increased attention is being given to the promotion of equality as a strategy for eliminating poverty. The new legislative framework, which is in place for equality of opportunity, mediated particularly through the Employment Equality Act, 1998; the National Disability Authority Act, 1999 and the Equal Status Act, 2000 and the new organisations, established under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, to advance employment equality, equal status and disability related services and policy, namely the Equality Authority, the Office of Director of Equality Investigations and the National Disability Authority, highlight an increased emphasis on equality objectives in Irish social policy. The NDP will provide a structured framework, with funding over a seven-year period, where childcare and equality issues can be addressed. The goal is to bring about a more equal society, by promoting, monitoring and implementing the right to equal treatment and the accommodation of diversity, having regard to gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community, through institutional, administrative and legal reforms and through programmes targeted at particular needs. A gender equality perspective has also been incorporated across the NDP through the strategy of gender mainstreaming, by which all programmes and measures must actively and openly be assessed at the planning stage for their possible effects on the respective situation of women and men.

One of the on-going challenges in relation to target and indicator setting is the need for timely data. This issue is being addressed in a number of fora, including the NAPS review Working Groups. Each of these Working Groups are considering targets and indicators for their theme areas and the revised NAPS will have a data strategy to be progressed over a two year timeframe. Work on the development of relevant

indicators, being undertaken by the New Policy Institute, in the U.K., for the CPA, is informing the deliberations of the Working Groups.

2.4 THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

2.4.1 The Council of Lisbon

The Council of Lisbon, which took place in March 2000, was significant in placing a substantial emphasis on social policy and, within this, on combating poverty and promoting social inclusion. The broad view adopted on these matters was that economic growth and increasing European competitiveness should not compound existing social problems. The Council proposed a policy triangle of economic, employment and social policy in order to achieve this outcome. In addition, a Social Protection Committee was established to co-ordinate co-operation between Member States in the development of social protection policy. Following proposals by Ireland, it was agreed to provide a clear legal basis for this Committee in the Treaty of Nice and to provide a specific mandate for co-operation on modernising social protection, as well as on combating social exclusion, which had been previously provided for in the Treaty of Amsterdam. The new Committee held its first meeting on 12th December 2000, following on from the ad hoc High Level Group on Social Protection, which had been co-ordinating co-operation on social protection policy during the course of the previous year.

2.4.2 The Nice Summit

The EU Summit in Nice in December 2000 reinforced a number of the proposals made in Lisbon. The most significant of these in relation to combating poverty and social exclusion is the approval of a new Social Policy Agenda that advances the proposals made in Lisbon. In setting out priorities for action in social policy over the next five years, six strategic guidelines were identified as follows, all of which have a bearing on anti-poverty policy:

- more and better jobs;
- anticipating and capitalising on change in the working environment by creating a new balance between flexibility and security;
- combating poverty, exclusion and discrimination in order to promote social integration, mainstreaming anti-exclusion into all policy areas and promoting dialogue and partnership between all relevant actors.
- modernising social protection;
- promoting gender equality; and,
- strengthening the social policy aspects of enlargement and the EU's external relations.

2.4.3 National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPIncl)

One of the most significant developments arising from the Lisbon European Council meeting and the Nice Summit has been the approval of the proposal for a National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPIncl). The NAPIncl, covering the period July 2001 to June 2003, is intended to develop a common EU wide basis for national actions against poverty and social exclusion. The NAPIncl has four main objectives, which have been summarised by the EU Commission as follows:

- to facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services;
- to prevent the risks of exclusion;
- to help the most vulnerable; and
- to mobilise all relevant bodies.

The NAPIncl builds on the model provided by the EAPs. It also is intended to bring social and employment policies closer together at both the national and EU level. An increased emphasis on indicators and monitoring of progress is evident in relation to the NAPIncl.

A bilateral meeting to discuss the Irish NAPIncl took place between Irish representatives (including Government Departments, the Social Partners and relevant Agencies) and the European Commission in March of this year. Written submissions were also received from interested parties. Responses to the advertisement placed in national newspapers in February 2001, calling for submissions on anti-poverty policies in the context of the NAPS review, were also considered as part of the NAPIncl preparations. A Round Table on the integration of equality and poverty perspectives in the NAPIncl was held in May 2001. A draft of the NAPIncl was circulated to Government Departments and Agencies and the Social Partners for consideration before being submitted to Government for approval. The NAPIncl process will facilitate reviews, every two years, of national anti-poverty policies and stakeholders will continue to play an active part in this process.

Ireland's NAPIncl was submitted on 1st June 2001, as required, following which it is in a process of examination by the EU Commission, with a key role being played in this process by the EU Social Protection Committee. A bilateral meeting with each Member State will take place in August/September 2001 with a joint report to be finalised before the Council of Employment and Social Affairs in December 2001.

Ireland's NAPIncl provides an overview of a wide variety of initiatives, being worked on by the Irish Government, to drive forward the social inclusion agenda, touching every aspect of Government. The Plan is primarily grounded in the PPF and the NDP and the actions ensuing from these programmes. In particular, the Plan reflects the state of the NAPS at present, as a work-in-progress. Future plans submitted to the EU will be consistent with, and contingent upon, the findings of the NAPS review and will also reflect EU developments in this area.

The key issues that form the basis of the Plan have emerged from the consultation process and from EU guidelines regarding the contents of the Plan. The Plan;

- reflects the relevant contents of the Employment Action Plan 2001. One of the four key policy objectives, as agreed by the Nice European Council emphasises the fundamental importance of promoting employment opportunities and participation in the labour market as the best protection against poverty and social exclusion;
- sets out the Government's family-friendly policies in relation to income support, families' nurturing and educative roles, family-friendly initiatives in the workplace and protection for workers and their families;
- sets out the Government's policies and developments in relation to ensuring access for all to an adequate income and an appropriate standard of housing, health care, education, transport and other services.
- shows developments and plans for exploiting the knowledge-based society and new information and communication technologies to ensure that no one is excluded. These include the 'Universal Participation' initiative which will help address the digital divide;
- highlights initiatives which, through targeted interventions, deal with life crises such as indebtedness and homelessness. This includes material on the Government's Homeless Strategy, the recently launched new National Drugs Strategy and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service;
- identifies Government policies for the promotion of the social integration of groups at risk of social exclusion, such as people with

disabilities, children and women. The Plan provides an important opportunity to focus on equality / anti-discrimination measures. It includes material on the equality infrastructure and initiatives (including the Equality for Women Measure of the NDP) and the National Children's Strategy;

- outlines the Government's actions in favour of areas marked by exclusion and sets out arrangements for the active involvement and participation of organisations and citizens in society. Material, on the County and City Development Board Process, Integrated Services Process (ISP), Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development (RAPID) Programme, White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity, initiatives for the International Year of Volunteers, and Corporate Social Responsibility, is included.

In keeping with the EU template, the Plan outlines measures under a number of themes not previously emphasised in the NAPS, including the digital divide, access to justice and culture and family supports. It outlines the direction of the revised Strategy, in terms of some of the indicators being considered. In particular, the focus on the interaction between inequality and poverty is strengthened in the Plan. The Plan also outlines a new proposal for research on migrants.

2.4.4 Other European Initiatives

The Community Initiatives Programme

The four EU Community Initiative Programmes are expected to be fully operational by the end of 2001. These are: the rural development programme LEADER+ (managed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development), EQUAL (aimed at addressing discrimination and inequality in the labour market and managed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment), INTERREG (the cross-border programme managed by

the Department of Finance) and the URBAN programme (which aims to address urban disadvantage and is managed in Ireland by the Department of the Environment and Local Government). Further details of these are included in the relevant sections of Chapter 3 below.

5 Year Action Programme Against Poverty

The EU's 5 Year Action Programme Against Poverty was announced in 2000 with the first call for proposals in May 2001. The Programme has three strands. The first is conducting and disseminating research making for a better understanding of social exclusion. This strand aims to promote analytical studies, including devising indicators, so as to better characterise and measure social exclusion phenomena and has a total budget of £1.6 / 2 million. The second strand is action to help the most vulnerable. This strand is meant to foster the social integration of the most vulnerable within society, especially children, dependent elderly people, and women and men at risk of encountering particular integration problems due to their having a disability, their age or belonging to a particular social group or region. This strand has a total budget of £2.4 / 3 million. The third strand is concerned with promoting innovative approaches in policies for combating exclusion through the exchange of good

practices and has a budget of £3.2 / 4 million. This strand aims to support the identification of innovative approaches, the exchange and dissemination of good practices at all levels with a view to improving the effectiveness of social integration policies and facilitating access for all to resources, goods and services, such as housing, health, education, the labour market, social protection, culture, etc. In order to be considered for funding, proposals will have to meet a range of eligibility criteria, including the involvement of partners from at least three Member States (including the State of the proposing organisation), have a total budget exceeding £78,750 / 100,000 with a maximum EU subsidy rate of 80%, start before 31st December 2001 and last no longer than 18 months.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Ireland's economic growth is expected to continue in the medium term at least, although at a more moderate pace than experienced in the late 1990's. This continues to afford us an opportunity to address poverty and social exclusion in a robust manner. The development of a European social agenda that more explicitly and forcefully recognises the need for action in this area is to be welcomed and provides a new and wider context for national actions and progress in this arena.

Chapter 3
Progress in 2000 – 2001



3.1 INTRODUCTION

As outlined in Chapter 1 above, the NAPS has five key themes: unemployment, income adequacy, educational disadvantage, urban disadvantage and rural poverty. This chapter sets out progress made towards achieving the objectives and targets set under each of these themes in the latter half of 2000 and the early part of 2001. In addition, some initiatives that address issues that currently fall outside the parameters of these themes are included in section 3.8 below. This Chapter concentrates on the major programmes and measures introduced or progressed during this time. It is acknowledged that not every initiative and measure undertaken by every Government Department, that has the potential to impact on poverty or social inclusion, is detailed here.

3.2 THE GLOBAL TARGET: REDUCING CONSISTENT POVERTY

The NAPS global target was revised in 1999 and focuses on the reduction of consistent poverty to below 5% by 2004. Consistent poverty is defined as the proportion of households below 50% to 60% of average disposable household income **and** experiencing enforced deprivation of at least one item on a list of eight that are widely regarded as necessities. This measure is based on data from the Living in Ireland Survey conducted annually by the ESRI.

Table 3.1
Percentage of Households Below the 50% and 60% Relative Income Thresholds and Experiencing Basic Deprivation, 1994, 1997 and 1998⁴

	1994	1997	1998
50% Line	9.0%	6.7%	6.2%
60% Line	15.1%	9.7%	8.2%

As Table 3.1 shows, consistent poverty has been

⁴ Layte, R. et al (2001) *Monitoring Poverty Trends and Exploring Poverty Dynamics in Ireland*, ESRI

falling over the mid- and late-1990s. The most recent figures available relate to 1998 and show that consistent poverty has fallen from between 9% - 15% in 1994 to 6% - 8% by 1998. Significantly, the rate of consistent poverty among children has fallen dramatically. In 1987, 25% of Irish children experienced consistent poverty. This had fallen to 17% by 1997 and to 12% by 1998.

3.3 UNEMPLOYMENT

3.3.1 NAPS Objective and Target

Overall Objective: *"Paid employment should be available to all men and women currently in poverty who are seeking employment. This should be capable of providing adequate income, either on its own or when combined with other forms of support, sufficient to lift them out of poverty and should be available without barriers of discrimination."*

Overall Target: (Employment Action Plan, 1999) *"To reduce the rate of unemployment, as measured on an internationally standardised basis (International Labour Organisation) by the Labour Force Survey, from 11.9% in April, 1996 to below 5% by end 2000; and to reduce the rate of long-term unemployment from 7% to below 2% by end 2000."*

3.3.2 Recent Labour Market Trends

Labour market conditions continue to improve, with strong economic growth resulting in substantial employment growth and a further substantial reduction in unemployment that has far exceeded the original NAPS targets for unemployment and long-term unemployment. Key data from the most recent Quarterly National Household Survey shows that in the year to quarter one of 2001:

- employment increased by 3.6%, equivalent to an additional 59,300 persons at work;
- the Labour Force increased by 43,400;
- the number of people unemployed fell by 15,900. This was split evenly between long-term and short-term unemployment;

- the unemployment rate declined to 3.7% from 4.7% one year previously. Structural unemployment continues to decline significantly with the long-term unemployment rate falling to 1.2%.

3.3.3 Active Labour Market Programmes

Both the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs play a central role in Active Labour Market Programmes. It is noteworthy that while the principal function of these Programmes is to reduce unemployment, their coverage extends beyond those on the Live Register and includes lone parents and people with disabilities.

The Social Economy

The Social Economy Programme was formally launched in September 2000. The key aims of the Programme are to support the regeneration and quality of life of local disadvantaged areas and to maximise employment opportunities for long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged persons. The Programme supports the development and operation of Social Economy Enterprises that provide social services and employment opportunities in and for disadvantaged communities. Financial grants and technical supports are provided for the development of Social Economy businesses for up to three years. This includes grant support for the development of a Business Plan.

The NDP provides for expenditure of £213 / 270.4 million on the Social Economy Programme over the period 2000-2006. £17 / 21.6 million has been allocated to the Programme in 2001 and expenditure is forecast to rise to £41 / 52 million per annum as the demand for the programme increases. The objective is to create employment for 2,500 people by the end of 2003. The Programme will be phased in over the coming years through the

reallocation of funding from Community Employment and from the remodelling of the FÁS Community Enterprise Programme.

Local Working Groups have been established by FÁS in consultation with Area Partnership Companies in the thirty-eight designated disadvantaged areas to draw up an agreed local strategy for the development of the Programme. This includes the identification and prioritisation of new and innovative sectors of work activity where social economy enterprises will support the economic and social regeneration of the locality. The main partners represented on the Local Working Groups include the trade unions and employer organisations, Area Partnership Companies, Community and Voluntary Groups, Local Authorities, Health Boards, County Enterprise Boards and farmer's interests. Local Working Groups have also been set up by FÁS in areas not covered by Area Partnership Companies.

A national advertisement campaign in regional and local newspapers has been run to promote the Programme to Community and Voluntary Groups. A Social Economy Framework Document and Brochure has been distributed to local FÁS Offices. Applications for Social Economy Programme supports are being encouraged at a local level.

Community Employment

In accordance with the Government's decision in 1999 to restructure the Community Employment programme (CE), the average number of participants on the programme was further reduced in 2000 to an average participation rate of 35,500 as part of a phased reduction to 28,000 by 2003. The restructuring takes account of falling unemployment levels and the need to better target available places at older long-term unemployed people as part of an overall strategic shift in funding on Active Labour Market Programmes towards training that better

reflects market and individual needs. A total of 33,500 people are expected to participate on CE in 2001.

Job Initiative

The Job Initiative Programme is aimed at long-term unemployed persons over 35 years of age in receipt of an appropriate social welfare payment for over 5 years. The Tanaiste announced new guidelines for the future operation of the Job Initiative Programme in May 2000, following a consultancy review of the programme. The new guidelines place increased emphasis on progression, work experience, training and core personal skills development, as well as enhanced Employment Services assistance to help participants to get jobs in the open labour market. Other changes introduced in the programme in 2000 include allowing participants to retain their secondary benefits, and to avail of the Back to Work Allowance when they take up a job in the open labour market. In addition, eligibility was extended to adult dependents of long-term unemployed persons.

Local Employment Service

The management of the Local Employment Service at national level was integrated into FÁS in July 2000. A new Employment Service Advisory Committee will be established in the very near future by FÁS.

The preventative strategy under Guidelines 1 and 2 of the Employment Action Plan (EAP) was extended in 2000 to the remaining cohorts of unemployed adults as follows: 35-44 year olds as they cross 12 months unemployed (effective from February, 2000); 45-55 year olds as they cross 12 months unemployed (effective from February, 2000); all unemployed adults as they cross 9 months unemployed (effective from July, 2000). Opportunities for increasing access by the unemployed to higher skills training and in the

software and electronics area continue to be explored. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is supporting directly and through the Local Employment Service networks the operation of the FIT Programme.

Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs' Employment Support Services

The Back to Work Allowance Scheme, the Back to Education Allowance Scheme and the proactive engagement with the unemployed by the locally based Jobs Facilitators continued to be the pillars of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs' Employment Support Services in 2000. These schemes are key elements in the drive to achieve social inclusion and are designed to help those who have not worked for a long time to take their place in today's expanding work force. The Back to Work Allowance Scheme encourages long-term unemployed people, lone parents and people who have been ill or incapacitated to take up either employment or self-employment. People getting Carer's Allowance who have ceased caring responsibilities are also eligible. Under this programme, participants are guaranteed a weekly payment for 3/4 years, which is not affected by any other income from employment or self-employment. Special measures aimed at those more than five years unemployed were introduced in August 2000 and by the end of December 60 people had availed of this opportunity.

The Back to Education Allowance Scheme is a second chance educational opportunities scheme designed to encourage unemployed people and other disadvantaged groups to improve their skills and qualifications and, therefore, their prospects of returning to the active work force. There are two study options available under this scheme, namely the second level option under which a person may attend a second level full-time course leading to a recognised certificate, and the third-level option

under which a person can attend an approved full-time third level course at a university or third level institution. In 2001, the age qualification for the Back to Education Allowance Scheme is being reduced to 18 years for persons who have been out of the formal education system for two years and are receiving unemployment payments or a One-Parent Family Payment for six months. At the end of 2000 some 39,000 people were participating in the Back to Work Allowance Scheme and some 5,500 people were availing of the Back to Education Allowance Scheme. Growth in the Back to Work Allowance Scheme was slightly lower than expected in 2000 due to the surging labour market. The Jobs Facilitators began to adopt a more proactive individual case management approach to the problems of the long-term unemployed in 2000.

The year 2000 saw an enhanced focus within the Employment Support Services on the longer-term unemployed, lone parents and people with disabilities. It also saw a growth in supports for training and retraining for those who have not worked for a long time. For example, the Very Long-Term Unemployed Scheme was launched in mid-August 2000. This provides training bonuses and work incentives to those who have not worked in over five years and who may need extra support and encouragement when attempting to gain a foothold in the labour market.

3.3.4 Development of Family Friendly Policies

A National Framework Committee for the Development of Family Friendly Policies at the level of the enterprise has been established in accordance with the PPF. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment chairs this Committee. Initiatives on family friendly workplace arrangements are being promoted during 2001. Some initiatives introduced in Budget 2001 will contribute to family friendly policies, including the new Carer's Benefit (see 3.4.3 below) and the increase in Maternity Leave from 14 to 18 weeks.

3.3.5 The National Development Plan

Employment & Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2000-2006 (EHRD-OP)

The European Commission formally approved the EHRD-OP in October 2000. This sets out a wide range of education, training and other employment related measures – many of which will have significant social inclusion as well as employment benefits - for implementation in Ireland over the years to 2006. The European Social Fund (ESF) support, provided, allows for retrospection where needed to January 2000. The Programme Complement, which details the operational and other arrangements for the implementation and monitoring of these measures was approved, subject to various modifications made by the EHRD-OP Monitoring Committee in November 2000. The Complement text has been notified to the Commission and the programme became fully operational in early 2001.

Local Enterprise Development Sub-Programme

Provision has been made in the micro-enterprise measure of both the Border/Midland/West and Southern & Eastern Regional Operational Programmes for the County and City Enterprise Boards to provide grant assistance to worthwhile commercial ventures promoted by the long-term unemployed or those made redundant. In the year 2000, grant assistance approved for projects in this category amounted to £931,730 / 1.2 million leading to the creation of 301 full-time and 30 part-time jobs. This constitutes 7% of total grant assistance approved in 2000.

3.3.6 Lifelong Learning

A Lifelong Learning Task Force was established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in the first quarter of 2000 in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science, the Social Partners and relevant implementation bodies. There was a focus on developing, as a key aim of the Lifelong Learning

Task Force, specific initiatives to upgrade the skills of workers in low-paid work and those with low or obsolescent skills. Such initiatives would be based around promoting and enhancing access to training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher level qualifications. It is hoped that the Report of the Task Force will be available later in 2001.

3.3.7 People with Disabilities

The Tanaiste launched a new national initiative for people with disabilities, the Supported Employment Programme, in 2000. Following a public call for proposals, 20 projects were approved for funding by FÁS under the new Programme. These projects are now getting under way throughout the country with the potential to place up to 800 people with disabilities in open employment in 2001. The transfer of responsibility for the vocational training and employment of people with disabilities from the National Rehabilitation Board to FÁS took place in June 2000. Extra funding provided in Budget 2001 will allow for increases in funding to specialist training agencies that provide vocational training to people with disabilities on behalf of FÁS. Funding was also provided in Budget 2001 to improve training allowances to people with disabilities in vocational training within the FÁS system. A pilot Back to Work Allowance Scheme, with 200 places ring fenced for recipients of Disability Benefit for more than 5 years will be introduced in July 2001. Access to the Back to Education Allowance is being extended to people with disabilities coming off Community Employment schemes without their having to fulfil the requirement of being in receipt of a relevant qualifying payment.

3.3.8 High Supports

Work on the development of a new High Supports process, as envisaged in the PPF, was commenced in 2000 in consultation with the Social Partners. This is aimed at addressing the needs of people who are unable to either get, or keep, a job in the

open labour market due to personal barriers such as age, health, literacy and numeracy factors. The new High Supports process is expected to be finalised in mid-2001 and will target participants currently on the Job Initiative programme identified as unlikely to progress to open employment, and other long-term unemployed people on the Live Register who require intensive supports to progress to open employment.

3.3.9 Study on Employability

With the continuing fall in registered unemployment, there is increasing awareness of the problems faced by people with the greatest difficulties in securing employment. In this context, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs has engaged consultants to conduct research into employability and its relevance for the management of the Live Register. The study, which has been published recently, recognises the effectiveness of guidance and counselling in addressing employability issues and makes a number of recommendations including the continued provision of training and employment schemes, continued support and assistance from the Departments of Health and Children and Education and Science for those who require it, and greater co-ordination between the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and FÁS. The findings of the study should inform the development of the High Supports process referred to under 3.3.8 above.

3.3.10 EQUAL Initiative

Funding will be provided through the new EU EQUAL Initiative for innovative projects that test new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those in work and those looking for a job. The Initiative will provide the scope to try out new ideas that have the potential to change future policy and practice in human resources mobilisation, development, employment and training. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will manage this initiative. A mainstreaming platform

with a North/South dimension will be established in 2001 for the EQUAL Initiative, which will be implemented by each of the Equality Authorities, North and South, and encompass all relevant actors, including Government Departments and the Social Partners.

3.3.11 Forthcoming Reviews

A number of reviews in relation to the various employment initiatives are planned by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment for 2001 and into 2002. These include:

- a review of the Positive to Disability Scheme, which recognises enterprises that take a positive approach to the employment of people with disabilities;
- a review of sheltered employment models from the point of view of their role and potential for enhancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities; and
- an overall appraisal of active labour market programmes under the auspices of the PPF Standing Committee on the Labour Market on the broad basis of shifting spending on these programmes to training to better reflect market and individual needs.

In addition, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs intend to commission an independent comprehensive evaluation of the Back to Education Allowance in 2001. This will cover all aspects of the current scheme and form the basis for the future development of the scheme. A review of the Job Facilitation Programme will also be undertaken in 2001.

3.3.12 Employment Action Plan (EAP)

Since 1997 the production of an annual National Employment Action Plan has been required of all EU Member States. Implementation of the preventative strategy under Guidelines 1 and 2 of the EAP will be continued in 2001 (see 3.3.3 above). A decision on full extension of the process to the stock of long-

term unemployed people will be taken in the light of the findings of a qualitative evaluation of the impact of the plan that has just commenced.

3.4 INCOME ADEQUACY

3.4.1 NAPS Objective and Target

Overall Objective: *"Policies in relation to income support, whether these policies relate to employment, tax, social welfare, occupational pensions or otherwise should aim to provide sufficient income for all those concerned to move out of poverty and to live in a manner compatible with human dignity."*

Overall Target: *"Policy actions in relation to income adequacy will be targeted at contributing to the overall reduction in the percentage of the population whom the ESRI have identified as being "consistently poor" from 6% to 8% (1998 figures) to below 5% by 2004."*

All social welfare payments will be increased to the minimum of the lower range recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare, in line with the commitment set out in Partnership 2000."

3.4.2

Table 3.1 above shows the continued fall in consistent poverty at the 50% and 60% relative income poverty lines between 1994 and 1998. These figures demonstrate that real progress is being made towards achieving the NAPS target of reducing consistent poverty to below 5% by 2004. In addition, a decline in the numbers experiencing relative income poverty at the 60% relative income line has also occurred. However, the percentage of persons below the 40% and 50% relative income lines was generally higher in 1998 than in 1997, with about one in four persons falling below the 50% relative income line. Looked at over the longer 1994 to 1998 period, decreases can again be seen at the higher 60% line, with the proportion of people

below the 40% and 50% relative income lines showing increases.

3.4.3 Recent Social Welfare and Taxation Changes

The 2001 Budget

A specific target of both the NAPS and Partnership 2000 (the previous national agreement) was that the minimum rates of payment recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare (CSW) would be achieved before the end of 1999. The increases announced in the 1999 Budget mean that this key target was met, with rates of payment ranging from 101% to 124% of the minimum rate recommended by the CSW. Building on the achievement of this target, the PPF commits the Government to increases in all social welfare rates in real terms and, in particular, to real progress towards a target of £100 / 127 per week for the lowest rates of social welfare and to substantial increases in Child Benefit over the period of the programme, with a priority focus towards £100 / 127 per month for the third and subsequent children. Budget 2001 (announced in December 2000) made real progress towards these objectives and provided for significant expenditure in respect of a range of social welfare measures with a full year cost of £850 / 1,079 million compared to £403.38 / 512.19 million in the previous year. In conjunction with taxation reforms, some of which will benefit those on lower earnings, Budget 2001 should have a significant impact on those experiencing poverty.

Rates of Social Welfare Payments

In general, personal social welfare payments were increased from the beginning of April 2001. With the exception of Old Age Pensions, personal welfare payments were increased by £8 / 10.20 or approximately 7.9% to 10.3% in relation to insurance-based payments and 9.9% to 10.5% per week in relation to assistance payments. Rates for old age and related pensions were increased by £10 / 12.70 per week, or between 10.4% and

11.7%, while rates for Widow/er's (Contributory) Pensioners and recipients of Deserted Wife's Benefit aged 66 years and over were increased by £12.90 / 16.40 or 14.5%. These increases are ahead of both wage increases due under the PPF for 2001 and the projected inflation rate of 4.5%. In addition to these increases, further progress was made in bringing the Qualified Adult Rates, paid in respect of adults who are dependent upon a social welfare recipient, up to the recommended level of 70% of the personal welfare rate. Qualified Adult payments have, in general, been increased by between £7 / 8.90 and £9 / 11.40 per week, bringing the level of these payments to approximately 64% of the corresponding adult rates. As part of the process of progressively increasing them to the level of the Old Age Non-Contributory Pension, Qualified Adult payments for Old Age Contributory, Retirement and Invalidity Pensioners have been increased by £15 / 19 per week where the qualified adult is aged 66 years or over. This brings the level of these payments to between 69% and 75% of the corresponding adult rates. In addition, the payment of social welfare increases was brought forward by four weeks to the beginning of April as opposed to the 2000 date of May. There is also a commitment to pay future social welfare increases at the beginning of January from 2002 on. The issue of future increases in social welfare payments will be considered by the Social Welfare Benchmarking and Indexation Working Group (see 3.4.4 below).

Child Benefit

Budget 2001 provided for very substantial increases in Child Benefit. The lower rate, paid in respect of the first and second child, was increased by £25 / 31.74 per month or 59%, while the higher rate, paid in respect of the third and subsequent children, was increased by £30 / 38.09 per month or 54%. These increases bring the lower rate of Child Benefit to £67.50 / 85.71 and the higher rate to £86 / 109.20 per month.

The payment date for these increases was brought forward by three months from September to June 2001. Over the next three years, an additional £1 / 1.27 billion will be invested in Child Benefit.

Family Income Supplement

Numbers on Family Income Supplement (FIS) fell in 2000 from 14,686 at the end of December 1999 to 13,181 at the end of December 2000. While the reasons are not clear, it is likely that the growth in wages (in particular the introduction of the National Minimum Wage in April 2000) is a contributory factor. In May 2000, the FIS income thresholds were increased by £13 / 16.51 per week. In addition, the minimum payment was increased from £5 / 6.35 to £10 / 12.70. Budget 2001 provided for an increase of £25 / 31.74 in the income threshold for FIS, which was introduced in April 2001. Under the PPF, a Working Group was established to examine the role that refundable tax credits can play in the tax and welfare system. This examination will include the possibility of paying FIS through the tax system. The Working Group is chaired by the Department of Finance, and includes representatives of other relevant Departments and the Social Partners. The Group met twice in 2000, and its work is ongoing in 2001.

Carer's

The introduction of a Carer's Benefit scheme was announced in Budget 2000 and was launched in October 2000. The purpose of the scheme is to support people who must leave the workforce temporarily to care for someone who is in need of full-time care and attention. The scheme involves two central elements. The first of these is a weekly income support payment, to be operated and paid by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The second entitlement is the protection of the carer's employment rights for the duration of the caring period and legislation in this regard is being progressed by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment. In Budget 2001 the weekly income

disregards for the means-tested Carer's Allowance were increased from £75 / 95.23 to £125 / 158.72 for an individual and from £150 / 190.46 to £250 / 317.43 for a couple. In addition, the Respite Care Grant was increased from £300 / 380.92 to £400 / 507.90 per annum, and two such annual grants will be paid instead of one to a Carer looking after more than one person.

Personal Taxation

Personal taxation measures introduced in Budget 2001 will benefit those in work and on lower incomes. For example, increases in the personal tax allowances and tax exemption limits for the elderly will remove 133,000 people from the tax net and 106,600 from the top tax rate in 2001. In conjunction with these tax changes, the National Minimum Wage is set to rise from £4.40 / 5.60 per hour to £4.70 / 6.00 per hour in July 2001. In addition, a number of changes introduced in the Budget, including those relating to personal income tax, Child Benefit and FIS, also provide increased incentives to take up employment.

3.4.4 Social Welfare Benchmarking and Indexation Working Group

Under the terms of the PPF, a Social Welfare Benchmarking and Indexation Working Group was established in late 2000. It is comprised of representatives of the Social Partners and Government Departments and is chaired by an independent Chairperson. The Group's Secretariat is provided by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The terms of reference of the Group are drawn from the PPF and require it to: (i) examine the issues involved in developing a benchmark for adequacy of adult and child social welfare payments, including the implications of adopting a specific approach to the ongoing uprating or indexation of payments, having regard to their long-term economic, budgetary, PRSI contribution, distributive and incentive implications, in light of trends in economic, demographic and labour market

patterns; and (ii) examine the issue of relative income poverty. The Working Group meets on a fortnightly basis and produced an interim report in April 2001. It is intended that the Group will complete its work by end-July and that a final report will be available in time to feed into the Budgetary process later this year.

3.4.5 Review of the One-Parent Family Payment

The Review of the One-Parent Family Payment (OPF) was published in September 2000. The main focus of the Review was the extent to which the OPF achieves its objectives. Arising from the Review a number of measures are being put in place. An information campaign was undertaken and administrative measures are being put in place to improve engagement with lone parents to ensure they are aware of the various education, training and employment supports that are available to them, which will include over time the localisation of services to recipients of OPF.

Changes are also proposed (included in Social Welfare Act 2001) in the way maintenance is assessed under the OPF means test. Currently all maintenance received, apart from £75 / 95.23 per week, in respect of housing costs, is assessed for the purposes of the means test. In future only 50% of maintenance received will be assessed. As a result lone parents will make clear gains from any maintenance they receive. It is hoped that the proposed changes will also act as an incentive to lone parents to seek maintenance payments and for the other parent to pay maintenance as their children will benefit directly from any support offered.

3.4.6 Review of the Qualification Conditions for Old Age Contributory and Retirement Pensions

Phase 1 of the Review of the Qualification Conditions for Old Age Contributory and Retirement Pensions was published in August 2000. This identified the key issues in relation to qualification

conditions and set out possible guiding principles and a framework for reform. Arising from the Review two new measures were introduced: a rationalisation of the number of rates of payment from 6 to 4, which saw some 38,000 pensioners improve their position, and the introduction of a special pension for people with pre-1953 social insurance. The latter was designed to benefit people who could not qualify for a pension in the normal way and who now receive a payment at 50% of the maximum personal rate. Approximately 14,325 pensioners are in receipt of the new payment including a significant number who had been receiving pro-rata pensions at less than 50% of the main rate. The Review also proposed that the basis on which contributions are assessed for qualification purposes should change to a system where the actual number of contributions is counted rather than the current system where contributions are averaged out over a person's working life. A review of the Homemakers Scheme, which currently operates from 1994, was also recommended to look in particular at the appropriate operative date for the scheme and the award of credited contributions - the scheme currently operates by disregarding periods spent caring for children etc. when average contributions are being assessed for pension purposes. Both these issues are being examined in detail in Phase 2 of the Review, a report of which is expected later in 2001.

3.4.7 Occupational Pensions – the Pensions (Amendment) Bill and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts

Under the PPF, the Social Partners are committed to improvements in the coverage rate of occupational pensions. The main vehicle for achieving this commitment is the Personal Retirement Savings Account (PSRA). This will be provided for under the forthcoming Pensions (Amendment) Bill, 2001, which is expected to be enacted before the end of 2001, with PRSAs being introduced in early 2002. The PRSA is intended to address the issue of

extended supplementary pensions coverage and will be a low-cost, easy-access personal investment account designed to allow people, regardless of their employment status, to save for retirement in a flexible manner to complement the Social Welfare pension. Other aspects of the legislation, the broad objective of which is to improve the position of occupational pension members, include the treatment of pension scheme surpluses, the establishment of a Pensions Ombudsman and the indexation of occupational pension schemes.

3.4.8 Review of the Financing of Long-Term Care

In November 2000, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs appointed consultants to examine the strategic issues involved in the future financing of long-term care. The study, which involves an assessment of alternative financing and funding approaches and their feasibility in the Irish context, is expected to be completed later in 2001. The study, which also involves the Department of Health and Children and the Department of Finance, will encompass the financing of personal long-term care needs both in the community and in institutional care and the potential of the private sector or a combined public/private sector approach to develop new initiatives in this area.

3.4.9 Non-Cash Benefits and Poverty in Ireland

A report on non-cash benefits and their impact on poverty, commissioned by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs from the ESRI, was published in early 2001. The report, which is based on data from the 1997 Living in Ireland Survey, focuses on the distribution of benefits from the Free Schemes and Medical Card and their impact on poverty. Therefore, it does not reflect budgetary changes in 2000 that extended the Free Schemes to carers and the over 75s and the most recent Budget that extended the Free Schemes and medical card to those aged 70 and over. The study finds that the benefits of the Free Schemes and the

Medical Card are heavily concentrated towards low income households; the poorest 30% of households receive 62% of the benefits whereas the wealthiest 30% receive only 4%. This is a more concentrated redistribution than cash transfers where the poorest 30% of households receive 52% of cash payments while the wealthiest 30% of households receive 8%.

Due to the eligibility criteria, the benefits are more effective in assisting some low income households than others, with the elderly population benefiting to a much greater extent than those in employment on low incomes, the unemployed and large families. Accordingly, the benefits have a very substantial effect on relative income poverty levels for the elderly, leading to a reduction of between one-sixth and one-third in the proportion of households below relative income poverty lines. However, the impact is much less when viewed in terms of consistent poverty.

3.4.10 Supplementary Welfare Allowance

A fundamental review of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) scheme and the role of the Community Welfare Officer (CWO) is currently underway.

The Government has decided, in principle, to introduce a new scheme of private sector rent assistance. The new scheme will be operated by the Local Authorities. One of the objectives of the new scheme will be to ensure that a full range of housing options is available to people with long-term housing needs, including those on local authority waiting lists who are renting in the private rented sector and who currently rely on SWA Rent Supplement. The new scheme will give the Local Authorities the extra option of private rented accommodation. In that regard, the Minister for the Environment and Local Government, will shortly be bringing detailed proposals for consideration by the Government.

3.4.11 Review of the School Meals Scheme

The School Meals Scheme provides financial assistance to Local Authorities in urban areas for the provision of school meals for national school children that are "unable by reason of lack of food to take full advantage of the education provided for them." The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs funds 50% of the food costs, with the relevant Local Authority funding the remaining 50% of food costs and all administration costs. An Inter-Departmental Working Group has been established to review the existing Scheme with a view to developing proposals for the future of school meals provision. The Working Group is expected to report later in 2001, following which it is intended to bring proposals to Government regarding a reformed School Meals Scheme.

3.4.12 Review of the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme, administered by the Health Boards, assists recipients of social welfare and Health Board payments with the cost of children's school uniforms and footwear. People on low incomes who are in receipt of FIS may also qualify for assistance, subject to a means test. Some 160,000 children benefited from the Scheme in 2000. Currently a payment of £63 / 78 is made in respect of qualified children aged up to 11 years while £78 / 99 is paid in respect of qualified children aged 12 years and more. These rates represent significant increases on those paid in previous years. However, it is clear that low income households face great difficulty in meeting clothing and footwear costs and these represent a barrier to participation in education on the part of children in disadvantaged households. A review of the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance scheme is currently underway as part of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs series of Programme Evaluations. A significant amount of new information was gathered in surveys undertaken as

part of the review, including details of uniform composition and cost. This provides a basis for benchmarking the payment rate for the first time. The review will be finalised later in 2001.

3.4.13 Cost of Disability

A Working Group on the Cost of Disability was established in October 2000. This Working Group is chaired by the Department of Health and Children and has members from the Departments of Finance, Social, Community and Family Affairs, Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Working Group has met a number of times since its inception and is tasked, in consultation with the Social Partners, with examining the feasibility of the introduction of a Cost of Disability Payment.

3.5 EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

NAPS Objective and Target

Overall Objective: *"To ensure that children, men and women living in poverty are able to gain access to, participate in and benefit from education of sufficient quality to allow them to move out of poverty, and to prevent others from becoming poor."*

Overall Target: *"To eliminate the problem of early school leaving before the Junior Certificate, and to reduce early school leaving such that the percentage of those completing the senior cycle will increase to at least 90% by the year 2000 and 98% by the year 2007, and having regard to the assessment of their intrinsic abilities, there are no students with serious literacy or numeracy problems in early primary education within the next five years."*

3.5.1 Recent Trends in Education

The most recent figures available in respect of this NAPS target are for 1999 and show that 82% of young people completed the senior cycle of education⁵. This marks a slight increase on the

⁵ Selina McCoy and James Williams (2001, forthcoming) 1999 Annual School Leaver's Survey: Survey of 1997/1998 Leavers, ESRI, Department of Education and Science and Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

1998 figure of 81%. The proportion leaving without qualifications has remained relatively static, falling only marginally from 3.5% in 1998 to 3.2% in 1999. Although increasing gradually over the NAPS period, progress in this area has been slow with the 2000 target being missed. Somewhat ironically, this is, in part at least, a function of Ireland's economic success and resultant labour shortages, with many students being attracted into the labour market before the completion of the senior cycle. Although a number of these leavers will also have entered alternative provision, such as Youthreach and apprenticeships, no firm data is as yet available on the proportions transferring to such programmes. This data gap is an area that the Department of Education and Science are continuing to address.

3.5.2 Education Act (1998): Educational Disadvantage Committee and Forum to Address Educational Disadvantage

Under the provisions of this Act, in February 2001 the Minister for Education and Science launched a sweeping strategy to tackle educational disadvantage. The strategy includes the establishment of a new statutory Educational Disadvantage Committee, a larger Forum to Address Educational Disadvantage and a support team to tackle disadvantage in the country's 3,200 primary schools. The Educational Disadvantage Committee will advise the Minister on policies and strategies to be adopted to identify and correct educational disadvantage. Dr. Áine Hyland, Vice President and Director of Education in University College, Cork has agreed to chair the Committee and a wide consultation process, involving all of the relevant actors involved in education, has commenced.

3.5.3 National Educational Welfare Board

A new National Educational Welfare Board has been established in 2001 under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. This Board includes representatives from the education partners and State Agencies with the emphasis on assistance to schools, families and

children rather than penalties. It is a single national authority with a remit, to monitor school attendance, to assist children at risk and those who experience difficulties in or out of school, and, in co-operation with schools, to provide a range of supports and strategies to discourage absenteeism and early school leaving. The Board will appoint Education Welfare Officers to work in close co-operation with schools, teachers, parents, community/voluntary bodies and relevant statutory authorities with a view to encouraging regular school attendance and developing strategies to reduce absenteeism and early school leaving. The Education Welfare Officers will focus in particular on children at risk and those who are experiencing difficulties in school attendance, to resolve any impediments to their regular attendance at school. A total of £4.25 / 5.4 million is being allocated over the next three years to facilitate the establishment of the Board and the enactment of the provisions of the Act.

3.5.4 Early Education

The early years are crucial in helping children to acquire the learning skills that will allow them to develop to their full potential. Studies have consistently shown that educational disadvantage can already be entrenched by the time children go to school, if they have not been exposed to an environment that helps them to become ready to learn in a more structured fashion. Action to help children achieve high standards of literacy and numeracy must start as early as possible. The White Paper on Early Childhood Education sets out a comprehensive strategy for the development of early education for all children aged up to six years with particular focus on disadvantaged children and children with special needs. Action is proposed on a wide range of issues, including the promotion of quality of provision, measures to facilitate and encourage parental involvement in their children's early education and the development of a system of evaluation to determine whether providers meet quality standards and to assist them in doing so.

Implementing the White Paper on Early Education, Ready to Learn

As a first step in the process of implementing the policies set out in the White Paper, the Department of Education and Science invited the various third level institutions to submit proposals for the operation of a pilot project to develop and co-ordinate early childhood education provision. Proposals are currently being assessed. The successful institution will be responsible for the management of the pilot project subject to an overall budget and appropriate reporting arrangements to be agreed with the Department.

Early Start

Early Start is a one-year pre-school intervention programme for pupils aged 3 to 4 years who are most at risk in areas of social disadvantage. In 2000, £3.09 / 3.92 million (inclusive of teacher salaries) was spent on this programme benefiting 1,619 pupils in 56 classes in 40 schools. There are 1,680 places in 16 full units and 24 half units with 56 teachers and 56 childcare workers.

Targeted Early Education Provision

The Department of Education and Science supported 52 pre-school classes for up to 550 Traveller children, managed by local voluntary bodies and the Traveller community. The Department pays 98% of teaching and transport costs, plus grants for equipment and materials. In 2000, the Department spent £861,000 / 1.1 million on this programme. The Department also funds the Rutland St. Project catering for 95 pupils aged 3 to 5 years; the pre-school centre has a special staff teaching allocation, classroom assistants, secretarial services and cooks, together with the provision of school meals. In 2000, over £142,000 / 180,303 exclusive of teachers' salaries was spent on this programme. The Department also supports Cork Applied Behavioural Analysis Scheme (CABAS), which provides early childhood services for those with special needs.

In addition, some 1,308 pre-school children and 1,050 parents avail of all-day childcare under the Childcare measures provided by the VECs (Vocational Education Committees) to support access by unemployed and early school leaver parents to the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Youthreach and Traveller Programmes.

A package of measures to address the special educational needs of children with autism has recently been announced. The measures in question include a proposal to introduce a nation wide pre-school service for children with autism. Arrangements to advance this proposal are currently being pursued by the Department. To date three units have been established supporting 18 places at a cost of £710,000 / 901,514 per annum.

3.5.5 Primary and Post-Primary Level

A comprehensive package of measures continues to operate to address disadvantage at the primary and post-primary level. These include Breaking the Cycle (the primary school strand of which is currently being evaluated by the Education Research Centre, with results due in late 2001), the Disadvantaged Area Scheme, the Support Teacher Project (primary), the Home-School Community Liaison Scheme (this has now been extended to all first and second level schools that have disadvantaged area status), the 8-15 Year Olds Early School Leaver Initiative (ESLI) (the pilot phase of which has been extended to 2002), Junior and Senior Traveller Training Workshops, specific provisions for children with special needs, Stay in School Retention Initiative (SSRI), National Psychological Service (NEPS) and Learning support teachers.

Giving Children an Even Break

A new programme called Giving Children an Even Break was announced in January 2001 to tackle educational disadvantage in primary schools. This programme will benefit 2,276 primary schools, involve the appointment of 204 extra teachers and

extra funding of over £3.9 / 4.95 million in grants to the participating schools this year and in the next two years. £26 / 33 million will be spent over a three-year period on children who are most at risk of not reaching their potential in education. These children were identified in a survey carried out by the Educational Research Centre. The Programme will have distinct urban and rural elements. A support team will be put in place to assist schools and teachers in the implementation of the programme. Schools with the highest concentrations of educationally disadvantaged pupils have been invited to participate in the new Programme, a key condition of participation being that the additional resources must be used for the provision of holistic supports for pupils from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

Evaluating the Breaking the Cycle Scheme (Primary)

Breaking the Cycle Scheme (Primary), which aims to effect improvements in attainment, attendance and participation in education for the pupils identified in the targeted schools, will be continued in 2001. The future of the scheme as a model for addressing educational disadvantage in urban and rural settings will be considered in the light of an evaluation report being prepared by the Educational Research Centre. The Centre carried out a programme of testing in English and Mathematics in third and sixth class in 1997 to establish baselines against which future test results would be compared. Pupils' attainment was measured again in April 2000 and the initial impact of the initiative on pupil achievement will be measured in this context. Work is in progress on a final evaluation report, which will be submitted to the Department of Education and Science in late 2001.

Educational Disadvantage Demonstration Programme

A four-year CPA pilot demonstration programme on tackling educational disadvantage at local level

concluded in December 2000. Under the programme the formal and informal education sectors came together in local networks in Drogheda, Killinarden (West Tallaght), Tralee and Tuam and developed integrated responses to educational disadvantage within their areas. As a result of a detailed evaluation of the programme, an accompanying research programme and liaison with other educational disadvantage initiatives, a number of important policy issues and proposals have been identified to inform future initiatives to tackle educational disadvantage. These include the need to: (i) establish local networks serviced and supported by an independent co-ordinator; (ii) build awareness of the nature, causes and extent of educational disadvantage amongst teachers as a core part of initial and in-service teaching training; (iii) affirm and resource informal education providers to complement in-school provision; (iv) resource and develop models of parental involvement which support parents as equal partners in tackling educational disadvantage; (v) match local integrated structures and processes with similar arrangements at national level and to strengthen links between local and national levels to ensure that policy to tackle educational disadvantage at national level is informed by experience on the ground.

3.5.6 Adult Education

The White Paper on Adult Education, "Learning for Life", sets out a comprehensive strategy to broaden access and participation in adult education as a key component in a continuum of lifelong learning. The key aims of the White Paper are:

- to expand and promote adult access to further and higher education;
- to develop the role of community education;
- to enhance workplace learning;
- to strengthen quality and supporting services, such as childcare and guidance and counselling and certification and accreditation structures; and

- to provide a framework for national and local co-ordination and a complementary fit between education and training provision.

The recommendations embrace

- the implementation of an adult literacy strategy as the top priority in adult education; and
- a major expansion of part time options across Post Leaving Certificate courses (PLCs), VTOS and Youthreach/Traveller programmes under a Back to Education Initiative aimed primarily at those with less than upper second level qualifications, in the workforce, unemployed or not in the labour force. £1.027 / 1.3 billion is being invested in this measure over the period of the NDP so that by 2006 some 20,000 extra participants per annum will be availing of adult education. An Adult Information Communication Technology (ICT) Skills strategy will be implemented as part of the initiative. Ten per cent of all expansion will be earmarked exclusively for community education providers. A key objective will be to expand the flexibility of the system so that work, family responsibilities and access to learning can be combined, and to provide increased options at Foundation Level and Level 1 or equivalent to provide a bridge for students progressing from the literacy service.

The National Reading Initiative was launched on 21st January 2000 as a one year initiative with two briefs: to raise awareness in the general public of the importance of reading; and to lay the foundation to improving the quality of the teaching of reading in the formal and non-formal sectors. The Initiative was a community-wide one, collaborating with schools, libraries and Community and Voluntary Groups. Opportunity was given to local groups across all sectors to apply for funding to design, organise and run community-based projects aimed at increasing reading use and/or improving reading standards.

Literacy programmes on radio were piloted during 2000. As a result, the Department of Education and Science is funding a radio literacy initiative. Developed by RTE radio in consultation with the National Adult Literacy Agency, this consists of 10 half-hour programmes featuring literacy tuition followed by 10 half-hour programmes in numeracy. It commenced in March 2001.

The work of the Inter-Departmental Group on Literacy for the Unemployed is continuing in 2001. This Group has already made an interim report to Government and its recommendations are being implemented as part of the White Paper and with funding from the NDP.

In 2001 the adult literacy budget will be £10.7 / 13.6 million. There will also be provision, for the first time, of £0.96 / 1.22 million for programme development in adult education. The National Adult Literacy Strategy will promote a rapid increase in participation, rising to 18,200 annually by the end of the NDP. It is anticipated that upwards of 113,000 people will participate in the programme during the period of the Plan. Over the coming years funds will be used to promote innovative approaches in critical areas that will inform the development of a National Literacy Strategy.

Education Equality Initiative

An Education Equality Initiative, from which disadvantaged men's and women's groups will benefit, commenced in 2000. This initiative seeks to address educational disadvantage through the strategic allocation of £3.5 / 4.4 million under the NDP with the support of the ESF. Eighteen projects were selected for the first phase, with five of these located in the "less advantaged" Border/Midland/Western region of the country. This programme is based on and replaces the Women's Education Initiative.

Adult Guidance

A total of £1.042 / 1.32 million was provided during 2000 for 11 projects to pilot the development of an adult education guidance service to support participation on adult education and adult literacy programmes. The pilots started in 2000 and will operate over a two-year period at a cost of £0.5 / 0.63 million in 2000 and £0.542 / 0.69 million in 2001. The scheme will be expanded to further areas in 2001 and subsequent years, as further resources become available. The pilots are a vital step in progressing the strategic development and expansion of adult guidance services and are being overseen by an inter-agency consortium led by the National Centre for Guidance in Education.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)

Support will continue for this second chance education and training programme for adults aged 21 and over who are at least 6 months unemployed. A total of 5,000 places will continue to be offered in 2001 at a cost of approximately £31.47 / 39.96 million. In recognition of the need to ensure systematic participation and benefit of those most affected by prolonged periods of unemployment, a study was commissioned by the Department of Education and Science to identify and report on the outreach, recruitment, delivery and support strategies which are most effective in catering for those most in need. The draft report highlights a range of factors which have contributed in part to a decrease in participation in VTOS among those hardest to reach, including rapid growth in emphasis on employment programmes as opposed to education and training in active labour market policies, and transition to earning rather than learning.

The recommendations focus on a re-balancing of policies towards transition to learning, a concerted effort to incentivise educational programmes,

a re-focusing of programmes towards basic education levels, with greater flexibility, improved outreach, the capacity to offer one-to-one professional guidance, and more co-operation with other statutory and voluntary bodies.

A childcare support service was introduced in 1998 for participants on VTOS, Youthreach and Traveller programmes.

3.5.7 North/ South Co-operation

The North / South Ministerial Council held its first sectoral meeting on education in Dublin in February 2000 and subsequently met in Co. Down in July 2000. In its discussions, the Council has examined proposals on how best to take forward matters for co-operation, having regard to common concerns and interests in both jurisdictions. The Council has agreed the establishment of a number of Joint Working/Co-ordination Groups, which are charged with delivering concrete proposals in each of the areas identified for co-operation. These include Special Education Needs Provision, Educational Underachievement, Teacher Qualifications, School, and Youth and Teacher Exchanges. It is envisaged that these groups will bring proposals to future meetings of the Council on the priorities they identify and the delivery measures they propose to put in place.

3.6 URBAN DISADVANTAGE

NAPS Objective and Target

Overall Objective: *"The overall objective in relation to urban disadvantage is to bring about sustained social and economic development in disadvantaged areas in order to improve the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas, by empowering them to become effective citizens, improving the quality of their lives, helping them acquire the skills and education necessary to gain employment and providing them with employment opportunities."*

Overall Target: *"To reduce the numbers of people suffering the greatest deprivation in disadvantaged urban areas by increasing their standard of living and providing opportunities for participation thus significantly reducing the measured indicators of disadvantage in the area, especially the rate of unemployment and particularly the rate of long-term unemployment over the period 1997 - 2007."*

3.6.1 Tackling Urban Disadvantage

Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development 1994-1999 (OPLURD)

In 2000, attention at Programme level, was increasingly focused on the EU reporting and auditing requirements for closure of Operational Programmes. Area Based Partnership Companies and ADM Community Groups completed the majority of actions funded under LURD during 2000. 38,800 people either set up their own businesses or were placed in employment through the actions of Partnerships and ADM Community Groups over the period 1994 – 2000. Almost all those who set up their own business were sole traders. They received mentoring support and advice from the Partnership/Community Group and then registered with the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs under the Area Allowance Enterprise Scheme. In 1999, 49% of the adult clients of Partnerships and Community Groups were long-term unemployed with the remainder from categories such as Travellers, lone parents, spouses of people who are long-term unemployed or with disabilities. A further 32,500 adults on low incomes participated in complementary education or employment training. 79,000 young people participated in some form of educational initiative to help prevent early school leaving. In addition over 3,000 Community Groups received financial or other support from Partnerships.

The Local Development/Social Inclusion Programme

Area Based Partnerships were established in areas designated by the Government as disadvantaged.

Partnerships are Private Companies, which focus on combating disadvantage and social exclusion. The Board of each Partnership consists of representatives from the community and voluntary organisations active in economic and social development in their areas, state agencies, the social partners at local level and elected public representatives. These Partnerships and a further 33 Community Groups which operate in areas which are not designated as disadvantaged are supported under the Local Development Measure of the Social Inclusion Programme of the Regional Operational Programmes. The funding amounts to £220 / 279.3 million over the life of the NDP. It was allocated by ADM to these Area Based Partnership Companies and Community Groups that adopted a partnership approach to tackling local issues on the basis of comprehensive integrated local action plans designed to counter social exclusion. Services for the Unemployed, Community Development and Community based Youth Initiatives form the three key action areas in each integrated action plan. Actions are targeted at the areas within the catchment of the Partnership which are most in need and at the people who are most excluded. This includes those who are long-term unemployed, young people at risk, lone parents, Travellers, asylum seekers etc. During 2000, plans were prepared by each local group and appraised by ADM. Funding was committed for the period from 2000-2003 inclusive.

URBAN Initiative

The URBAN Programme Management Group continued to monitor progress on a monthly basis in 2000. Of particular note is the significant progress made in terms of the number of capital projects in Dublin, for example, the Darndale Belcamp Village Centre, Ballymun Arts and Community Resource Centre and the Killinarden Enterprise Centre and Bawnogue Enterprise Centre. In Cork City the completion of the Enterprise Centre at Ballyvolane, the Glen Community and Recreation Centre and the

newly refurbished and extended Community Centre in Farranree are also significant achievements. Allied to the programme of capital projects, a range of actions were also implemented that had been designed to maximise local participation in the implementation of the plan, to address gaps in work-related and personal development skills and to meet the social needs of people requiring special support.

URBAN II

Announced by the Commission in May 2000, URBAN II is an EU Programme that seeks to respond to the problems of deprived urban neighbourhoods in crisis through supporting economic and social regeneration. Under the URBAN II Initiative, £8.4 / 10.6 million (EU and Exchequer funding) will be focused on Ballyfermot, the priority area selected by the Government, over the period 2000 to 2006. Following extensive local consultations in Ballyfermot, Dublin Corporation drafted the Community Initiative Programme in consultation with the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation. The Programme was submitted to the EU Commission in November 2000. On 11 April 2001, the EU Commission confirmed that the draft Programme was admissible with regard to the relevant EU Regulation. The EU Commission will now proceed with the appraisal process involving detailed discussions with the Managing Authority (URBAN Ballyfermot Ltd.). It is anticipated that the Programme will be approved by mid-summer although expenditure under the Programme is allowable retrospectively to 23 March 2001.

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

The Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development (RAPID) Programme, launched in February 2001, is a focused initiative by the Government to target the most disadvantaged areas in the country for investment, in accordance with a commitment under the PPF. This Programme has

been informed by the success of the ISP (see 3.6.5 below). Strand I targets urban areas while Strand II, which is being lead by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, will target provincial towns. A separate strand to target rural areas, to be known as CLÁR, is being lead by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

For Strand I, which is being lead by the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, an Area Implementation Team will bring together local State Agency personnel (Health Board, Local Authority, VEC, Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, FÁS etc.) the local Partnership Company, residents of the local community, and, where they exist, Local Drugs Task Forces to draw up an implementation plan. A specially appointed Co-ordinator in each area will work with the local community to draw up an audit of local needs, determine how best to tackle the problems and ensure provision and co-ordination of services and investment, involving the kinds of services and facilities that are most urgently needed in the area and can be delivered within the next three years. At city/county level, a Monitoring Group, comprising State Agency personnel, representatives of the local development sector and each pillar of the Social Partners and local public representatives will have an input into devising a plan for the area and ensuring the delivery of services. There will also be a National Monitoring Committee, chaired by an independent chairperson, Ms. Maureen Gaffney, which will report regularly to the Government. This Committee, which will comprise senior representatives of the relevant Government Departments, State Agencies, ADM and the Social Partners, will oversee the operation of RAPID at national level, ensure its effectiveness and efficiency and will report regularly on progress to Government through the Cabinet Committee for Social Inclusion. A National Co-ordinator and team will operate under the auspices of ADM. The

National Co-ordinator and team will provide training and ongoing monitoring and support for the local co-ordinators, a forum for the exchange of information and learning, and report to the National Monitoring Committee.

The 25 urban areas have already been identified and initial work has been undertaken in each to put the delivery structures in place. Factors such as unemployment, income levels, family and social structure, educational disadvantage and high levels of rented Local Authority housing were used to identify the priority areas. The appointment of the local co-ordinators is almost complete and, once the co-ordinators are in place, the Area Implementation Teams will be formally established to begin working on the preparation and delivery of the Area Action Plans. It is anticipated that the Area Implementation Plans will be ready by the end of 2001, and the frontloading of investment under the NDP will be undertaken in 2002 and 2003. The RAPID Programme will ensure that Government and State Agencies dealing with disadvantage and local development under the NDP give priority attention to these 25 areas.

3.6.2 Housing/Accommodation

Local Authority Housing Programme

The multi-annual housing programme provides for a total of 22,000 Local Authority houses for the period 2000 – 2003. This was increased to 25,000 following the announcement in the Government's "Action on Housing" (June 2000) that there would be an extra 1,000 Local Authority houses each year in the period 2001 - 2006. Local Authorities have been notified of the allocation of 3,000 of these extra starts for the period 2001 to 2003.

Expenditure on the Local Authority housing programme in 2000 was £331 / 420.28 million, an increase of £19 / 24.12 million on the original provision of £312 / 396.16 million. The provision for the Local Authority housing programme in 2001 is £448 / 568.84 million, an increase of 44% on

the original provision for 2000. In 2000, 3,207 houses were provided under the Local Authority housing programme and it is projected that some 5,000 houses should be completed or purchased by Local Authorities in 2001 and some 7,000 houses started.

Voluntary Housing Schemes

The potential role of voluntary housing in meeting the needs of those experiencing difficulty in the housing market has been recognised and supported by the Government in its publication "Action on Housing". In 2000, 951 units of accommodation were completed under the voluntary housing schemes - the Capital Assistance Scheme and the Rental Subsidy Scheme. In 1999, 579 units of accommodation were completed. In May 2000, a Working Group, with representatives of the voluntary housing sector, Local Authorities and officials, was established to review the voluntary housing schemes and streamline procedures. A monitoring system was put in place to record project activity and track developments in the voluntary housing sector at Local Authority level. Limits on funding for site acquisition were increased in June 2000 to £30,000 / 38,092 in the larger urban areas and £25,000 / 31,743 in the rest of the country.

Affordability

The issue of affordability of housing and accommodation has come to the fore of Government policy in recent years. The NDP allocated £6 / 7.62 billion for social and affordable housing and this was further increased in "Action on Housing", bringing the total to be provided over the period of the Plan to some £7 / 8.89 billion. In 2000 / 2001 a number of initiatives and programmes operated by the Department of the Environment and Local Government continued to address these issues. In June 2000, the terms and conditions of the Affordable Housing and Shared Ownership Schemes were significantly improved. Under the Shared

Ownership Scheme, 1,190 transactions were completed in 2000 (exceeding the NDP target of 1,000 units per annum) with an additional 1,520 approvals issued under the Scheme. Under the Affordable Housing Scheme, 86 units were provided in 2000. Progress has been slower than anticipated on this latter scheme, in part due to the long lead-in time, but it is anticipated output will increase in 2001. In addition, in June 2000 the maximum Local Authority house purchase loan was increased to £100,000 / 126,974 and income eligibility limits increased to £25,000 / 31,743 for a single income household, with a corresponding increase for two income households. The mortgage allowance available under the Mortgage Allowance Scheme was doubled from £4,500 / 5,713 to £9,000 / 11,427, payable over a five year period.

Traveller Accommodation

Capital investment by Local Authorities in Traveller accommodation amounted to £11.9 / 15.1 million in 2000, and the capital allocation for the provision and improvement of Traveller specific accommodation for 2001 is set at £13 / 16.5 million, with approximately £1 / 1.27 million set aside in respect of expenditure on the management and maintenance of Traveller accommodation. The National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee continued to meet throughout 2000. A review of the operation of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultation Committees was undertaken, and a report will issue in 2001. In addition, in 2000 the Department of the Environment and Local Government issued guidelines on the provision of transient sites and a booklet on 'Accommodation Options for Travellers'.

Local Authority Rent Assistance Scheme

In July 1999, the Government decided in principle to establish a new Local Authority Rent Assistance Scheme to replace, in the main, the current rent supplementation arrangements under the SWA

system. This major development provides an opportunity to rationalise the administration of housing supports and to achieve greater effectiveness in meeting housing needs. A Planning Group was established to prepare a report which will enable Government to take definitive decisions on future rent assistance arrangements.

Private Rented Sector

The Report of the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector, which was published in July 2000, will have a direct bearing on people on low incomes. The Commission, which operates under the aegis of the Department of the Environment and Local Government, proposed a package of measures designed to put in place a new framework for the private rented sector. Following consideration of the recommendations set out in the report, the Government has decided to implement major reforms in the private rented sector. These include the establishment of a Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB), initially on an ad hoc basis pending enactment of legislation to give it a statutory basis, to deal primarily with disputes between landlords and tenants; improved security of tenure for tenants and graduated notice to quit periods; rent levels to be no greater than the market rate and reviews no more frequently than once a year (unless there is a substantial change to the nature of the accommodation before the review date); implementation of a range of tax and supply incentives to encourage greater investment in the private rented sector; and, following establishment of the PRTB on a statutory basis, replacement of the Local Authority registration system by the registration of tenancies with the Board. As a significant proportion of tenants in the private rented sector receive SWA Rent Supplement and are on low incomes, these changes have a particular relevance to those experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

Homelessness

The Government's Integrated Strategy on Homelessness was launched in May 2000. As part of the Strategy, Local Authorities were asked to establish homeless fora, where they were not already in place, and develop three-year action plans jointly with Health Boards and voluntary bodies. These action plans will set out clear aims and actions on how accommodation, health, settlement and welfare services will be provided to homeless persons by all of the Agencies involved. The plans for Dublin and Cork Corporations are now completed, with the former being launched in May 2001. Other areas are currently in the final stages of completing their plans. Substantial additional funding has been made available to ensure that the recommendations of the Government's Strategy are implemented. Capital funding for the direct provision by Local Authorities of accommodation for homeless persons is being doubled from £20 / 25.4 million to £40 / 50.8 million over the next five years and current funding is being increased by £6 / 7.6 million per annum to increase bednight contribution rates to voluntary bodies and to fund other support services such as settlement and outreach services. Additional funding of £6 / 7.62 million will also be available from the Department of Health and Children to fund the provision of in-house care in hostels providing accommodation for homeless people.

Funding of £47.5 / 60.3 million was provided in 2000 for expenditure on the homeless, of which £35 / 44.4 million was in respect of emergency accommodation for asylum seekers. In addition, a special provision of £5 / 6.4 million over 2000-2001 was announced in Budget 2000 for the provision of two high support hostels for alcohol and drug users in Dublin. Dublin Corporation is currently sourcing suitable premises.

3.6.3 Action Against Drug Misuse

Local Drugs Task Forces (LDTF)

Since 1997, 14 Local Drugs Task Forces (LDTF) have been set up in areas experiencing the highest levels

of drug misuse, particularly heroin. The LDTF provide a mechanism for the co-ordination of services in these areas while at the same time allowing the local Community and Voluntary Organisations to participate in the planning, design and delivery of those services. Most of the projects under the original Drug Task Force plans have been completed. All the projects have recently been or are currently being evaluated. So far, 134 projects, developed on foot of the original LDTF plans, have been evaluated and 122 projects, including some amalgamation of projects, have been mainstreamed, thereby guaranteeing their continued funding. A further 31 projects are currently being evaluated.

The Task Forces are up-dating their action plans and the Government has committed £15 / 19.5 million per annum to support the measures to be implemented under the new plans. The measures cover a range of areas, for example, treatment, education/prevention/awareness, rehabilitation, and curbing local supply. It is expected that the measures contained in the new plans will become operational in mid to late 2001 and will be evaluated within the next three years to allow for decisions to be made as to mainstreaming. Broadly speaking, the main aims and objectives of the new plans are to: increase the numbers in treatment/rehabilitation programmes; increase awareness among young people/parents of the dangers of drugs; reduce the numbers becoming drug misusers; reduce the numbers experimenting with drugs; and, reduce the supply of illicit drugs. In general, the measures contained in the new plans are aimed at both men and women though some may be gender specific, such as rehabilitation programmes aimed specifically at female drug misusers. To date, 11 of the 14 LDTF new action plans have been approved and allocated a total of £6.9 / 8.76 million initial funding for their implementation. A total of £10 / 12.7 million has been set aside for the purpose of addressing the accommodation requirements of the LDTFs over the

next 3 years. Just over £3.7 / 4.7 million has been allocated to date to 19 community projects in the LDTF areas.

The National Drug Strategy Team reviewed the operation of Task Forces generally in 1999 and this resulted in the development and publication of a handbook on their operation. The Team is now arranging facilitated reviews of individual LDTFs to ensure, insofar as is possible, that they all achieve an appropriate and equal level of development having regard to the guidelines set out in the handbook. It is envisaged that the reviews will be completed in 2001.

New National Drugs Strategy

The new National Drugs Strategy (NDS) 2001-2008 was launched on 10 May, 2001. The review of the previous NDS, initiated in 2000, was managed by a review Group comprising members of the Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) on Drugs and the National Drugs Strategy Team (NDST). Independent consultants were commissioned to assist with the review process which included a nation-wide consultation process over the Summer months in 2000. The objective was to review the current National Drugs Strategy, identify any gaps and deficiencies, develop revised strategies and, if necessary, new structures through which to deliver them. The new Strategy contains a number of objectives with appropriate performance indicators around the four pillars of supply reduction; education/prevention/awareness; treatment and rehabilitation (including risk reduction) and research and information. The resource implications will be the subject of discussions with the Department of Finance in the coming months. The new Strategy recommends that six monthly progress reports be made to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion on progress on implementing the Strategy and that the overall Strategy be independently evaluated by 2004.

Young People's Facilities and Services Fund

The Government has committed itself to a

contribution of almost £46 / 58.4 million to the Fund over a three-year period (1999-2001) to support some 97 facilities projects and 168 services projects in disadvantaged areas where a significant drug problem exists or has the potential to develop. These areas include the 14 Local Drugs Task Force areas as well as Carlow, Limerick, Waterford and Galway. The Fund is currently being evaluated.

Educational and Preventative Measures

The second level substance misuse prevention programme, "On My Own Two Feet", has been introduced in approximately 75% of post-primary schools. This programme has now been subsumed into the social, personal and health education (SPHE) programme and by the end of 2003 every school is expected to have SPHE as an integral part of its programme at junior cycle level. It is proposed that the primary school "Walk Tall" programme will also become part of SPHE. The 2001 Budget includes provision of £500,000 / 634,869 for the phased implementation of the drug misuse prevention programme (including provision of in-service training for teachers) to all primary schools by the end of 2001. A support team has been put in place consisting of a national project officer and five teacher trainers who are responsible for organising and delivering staff seminars. All Youthreach centres provide a substance misuse prevention programme and, in co-operation with other State Agencies, a crime awareness programme "Copping On".

3.6.4 Initiatives to Reduce Crime Levels and for Ex-Offenders

Probation and Welfare Service

Crime is a particular issue of concern to urban dwellers. The Probation and Welfare Service of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, many of whose clients are from disadvantaged urban backgrounds, seeks to respond to the needs of offenders by providing a number of facilities for ex-offenders and people at risk of offending.

The service received an allocation of £24 / 30.47 million under the NDP, for a range of initiatives aimed at combating social exclusion, mainly in large urban centres. The financial allocation for 2000 included provision of £8.6 / 10.92 million for projects that promote social inclusion in areas of disadvantage.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform continued to fund Garda Youth Diversion Projects for young people in a number of urban centres involved, or at risk of getting involved, in crime. Government approval has been obtained for the expenditure of £16 / 20.32 million under the NDP for the expansion of the scheme. The year 2000 saw the first two phases of this expansion, with 10 projects being added in May and a further 12 in October.

CONNECT Programme

Within the community, crime affects areas of disadvantage disproportionately and can diminish the quality of life significantly for the whole neighbourhood, as well as impacting seriously on the individual victims of crime and their families. The NDP makes provision on behalf of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform for an integrated programme to combat crime by promoting social inclusion through employment. The programme is being delivered by the Prison Service, the Probation and Welfare Service and the Garda Síochána (police service).

The prisons element of the programme is called CONNECT and is conducted through a collaboration of the Irish Prison Service and the National Training and Development Institute of the Rehab Group. It provides a comprehensive programme of vocational preparation for people in prisons to follow and pathways to labour market participation after their release. The programme is planned to cater for an average of 1,150 participants per year. A detailed pilot study indicated that 25% of these may expect

to achieve labour market participation after they leave prison given the strength of the economy at present. Research is showing that many of the people who are committing crime and who are being dealt with by the criminal justice system are themselves from areas of disadvantage and are following a cycle of crime which, may begin with dropping out of school, frequently involves substance abuse and leads on to successive periods spent in prison. The cycle of crime is often generational, with children following the patterns of their parents. The NDP programme to combat crime is preventative and aims to break the cycle of crime. Its innovative character is that it is located within a policy of social inclusion where it may better relate with the causal factors of the problem and provide a service that can benefit all those affected by crime, both the victims and also those who will chose to break from crime.

3.6.5 Integrated Services Process (ISP)

A third Progress Report on the ISP was submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion in December 2000. This highlighted that significant progress has been made to date in improving the co-ordination and targeting of State service provision. This, in turn, has resulted in tangible benefits for the communities concerned and a significant improvement in the services provided by State Agencies. The Report also highlighted that implementing the process has placed considerable demands on Departments and Agencies in terms of resources. Notwithstanding this, it was found that the pilot phase has demonstrated that the fundamental principles on which the ISP is based are sound and provide a framework through which the State can better deliver its services in the most disadvantaged urban areas. The final evaluation report was submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion in March 2001. The ISP will now be used as a model of best practice in the new RAPID Programme (see 3.6.1 above).

3.6.6 Improving Access to Information for Families

Family Services Pilot Projects

The development of the ISP is complemented by Family Services Pilot Projects being developed by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. Pilot projects to enhance information services for families are underway in Waterford, Cork and Dublin (Finglas). The aim of the pilot projects is to provide enhanced access to information services for families in their own locations through development of the one-stop-shop concept. Within the pilot projects an enhanced programme of support is available to a small group of families with complex needs, for example, very young lone mothers, other parents rearing children alone, dependent spouses in households depending on social welfare and (in Cork) carers. An evaluation of the first phase of the pilot period was completed in 2000 and is under consideration by the Department. The Government have provided £12 / 15.2 million in the NDP for the development of the successful aspects of the pilot project. Total funding for the Family Service Project in 2000 was £1.2 / 1.5 million and £1 / 1.27 million has been allocated to this project in 2001.

An emerging approach to results accountability is being used in the Waterford Family Services Project. This results driven methodology analyses trends in a locality and mobilises local statutory and community organisations to take action to 'turn the curve'. There becomes, therefore, a cross-community accountability for results. Waterford City Development Board has adopted the methodology and research on trends has been undertaken into areas such as social deprivation, demographics, labour force levels, educational attainment, housing, childcare, health, crime, marriage breakdown, indebtedness, lone parenthood and minority / ethnic groups. Application of results accountability forges a sense of common purpose amongst all of the stakeholders around universally accepted

bottom line conditions of social well being. It provides a framework for all of the various stakeholders to deploy "what works" for the benefit of children, families and communities. It also helps to shift focus onto proactive positive prevention strategies as well as strengthening existing remediation programmes.

Family Mediation Service

The Family Mediation Service is a free, professional confidential service that enables couples who have decided to separate to reach agreement on all issues related to their separation. In the review of the Action Programme for the Millennium, the Government stated its commitment to put the Family Mediation Service on a statutory basis and Government approval for this has now been obtained. This new body will be called the Family Support Agency. The initiative marks a major step forward in the Government's Families First approach which is designed to make families central to policy making.

Family Services Information Fora

Over the past two years a series of Family Services Information Fora have taken place. These fora are designed to promote awareness about the State funded Family Mediation Service, which is now available on a nation-wide basis and to provide information about new services available in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The fora provided the Community and Voluntary Groups, that work with families at a local level, with the opportunity to discuss the issues which they encounter in the course of their work with the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs and officials. Up to the end of 2000 over 1,000 people had attended the fora in 11 locations throughout the country.

Grants for Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services

The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs administers a scheme of grants to voluntary

organisations providing marriage counselling services, marriage preparation courses, child counselling services in relation to parental separation and bereavement counselling and support services. Some £4.7 / 5.97 million has been made available for the further development of this programme in 2001.

3.6.7 Community Development Support Programmes

Under the Community Development Support Programmes (CDSPs), operated by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, support is provided on a three-year renewable contract basis to locally-based groups involved in identifying and addressing poverty and social exclusion in their own communities. The CDSPs include the following three programmes;

- Community Development Programme: under the Community Development Programme some 130 projects/areas countrywide are in receipt of funding or have been approved for inclusion in the programme. Expansion of the programme continued in 2000 in line with commitments set out in Partnership 2000.
- Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme: some 70 projects/areas country-wide were in receipt of funding or have been approved for inclusion under this Programme at the end of 2000, with expansion of the programme continuing in line with the recommendations of the Commission on the Family. This Programme will be supported by the new Family Support Agency.
- Programme of Core-funding to locally based Community and Family Support Groups: some 40 projects/areas countrywide were in receipt of funding or have been approved for inclusion in this Programme at the end of 2000.

These three programmes are now administered under the Community Development and Family Support Measure of the NDP. Funding of £110 / 139.7 million has been made available to these

programmes over the lifetime of the plan with funding of £14.725 / 18.7 million allocated in 2000 and £17.02 / 21.6 million in 2001 to support these programmes.

3.7 RURAL POVERTY

NAPS Objective and Target

Overall Objective: *"The problems of poverty and social exclusion have a distinct impact in a rural context as they are compounded by aspects of physical isolation and demographic dependence. The overall objective is to tackle poverty and social exclusion in rural areas in a comprehensive and sustained manner by ensuring the provision of an adequate income, through employment and/or income support, and access to adequate services and infrastructure, co-ordination of responses and empowerment of local people and communities."*

Overall Target: *"The overall target is to ensure that strategies are developed with regard to provision of services in rural areas, especially those concerned with educational disadvantage, unemployment and income adequacy, so that the overall targets of the NAPS as already stated are achieved in rural areas."*

3.7.1 Overlapping Initiatives

Given the spatially pervasive nature of poverty, many of the developments in combating rural poverty are similar in many respects to those identified in the previous section regarding urban disadvantage insofar as policies seek to tackle social exclusion nationally while taking into consideration the particular characteristics of different areas. Therefore the activities carried out under programmes and initiatives such as the Social Inclusion Sub-Programme of the Regional Operational Programme, the RAPID initiative, the ISP and the Community Development Programme can be expected to have relevance in combating rural poverty and disadvantage also. There are 18

Partnerships and 30 ADM Community Groups in rural areas. While the activities of these Groups overlap with those in urban areas they focus on the particular issues of rural areas and in particular on rural regeneration, rural transport issues and support for smallholder farmers and their families.

3.7.2 The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the White Paper on Rural Development

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has traditionally focused on agricultural production and until recent years the contribution to social and economic development has largely been in terms of support for the agriculture and food sector (responsibility for the forestry sector was transferred from the Department in July 1997). This situation has been changing over the past decade or so and, as well as continuing to focus on the farming community, the Department's rural development responsibility now extends to supporting rural communities in general in their efforts to improve their economic and social well being. The Department is committed to a broad view of rural development, facing the growing challenge of supporting a vibrant rural economy encompassing both farm and other enterprises in rural areas and to addressing rural poverty. This commitment is given expression in the White Paper on Rural Development, "Ensuring the Future", published in August 1999, which represents a comprehensive and coherent approach to rural development in Ireland in the future. The NDP is the vehicle through which the commitments will be delivered.

3.7.3 Rural Proofing

Procedures for rural proofing of all national policies are in place since November 1999. In bringing forward proposals for Government approval, Ministers and Departments are now obliged to indicate the extent to which those proposals are likely to impact on the physical, economic and social conditions of the rural population. This will

ensure that policy implementation is attentive to the needs of rural communities. The effect should be that strategies for economic and social development of rural areas dovetail with other policy initiatives including the NAPS. In line with the commitment in the PPF, detailed guidelines are currently being prepared for Departments in support of the rural proofing process and are expected to be completed by mid-2001.

3.7.4 The Disadvantaged Areas Scheme

The Disadvantaged Areas Compensatory Allowance Scheme will be significantly different in 2001 than in previous years in that payment will be based on area rather than on animals. The main objectives of the Scheme are to ensure continued agricultural land use in disadvantaged areas and thereby contribute to the maintenance of viable rural communities, to maintain the countryside and to maintain and promote sustainable farming systems which in particular take account of environmental protection requirements. The Scheme, which applies to 75% of the country, will involve payments in 2001 of about £180 / 228.6 million (an increase of approx. £58 / 73.6 million on 2000) to 109,000 farmers.

3.7.5 RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development)

As part of the RAPID initiative (see 3.6.1 above) the Government decided to extend the programme to rural areas and provincial towns. The identification of these locations is the responsibility of the Departments of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and of the Environment and Local Government respectively. The process of identification of a combined total of 25 areas in these categories is currently ongoing. The Social Partners are being consulted during the process.

3.7.6 INTERREG

This cross-border EU initiative aims to address the specific problems encountered by border regions and operates a number of measures specifically

aimed at economic regeneration, tourism and general improvements in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The joint INTERREG programme for Ireland-Northern Ireland covers all the border counties (including Sligo) and all of Northern Ireland (excluding Belfast) and is designed to address the peripherality of these areas and to encourage cross border co-operation. To the end of 2000, some 32 projects had been approved under the Agriculture measure, with a total grant aid provision of £2.2 / 2.8 million and at a total cost of £8 / 10.2 million. A total of 90 full-time equivalent jobs were provided. It is proposed that under INTERREG II, the Agriculture Measure will be renewed towards the middle of 2001. It is also proposed that a rural development measure will be included under the Ireland-Wales INTERREG programme. Estimated expenditure in 2001 is £0.4 million / 0.51.

3.7.7 LEADER+

LEADER is the EU initiative for Rural Development and enables rural communities to involve themselves directly in the local development process. In the period to the end of 2006 LEADER will be delivered in two ways, the new EU Initiative, LEADER+ and a new mainstream LEADER type National Rural Development Programme. Funding of over £117 / 148.6 million has been allocated to the new LEADER Programmes over the period. LEADER+ will have public funding of some £58 / 73.6 million. The European Commission's intention is that LEADER+ will be confined to a limited number of rural areas. The National Rural Development Programme, with a public contribution of some £59 / 74.9 million, will complement the LEADER+ Programme but conditions will be less restrictive. The programme, which will be finalised in 2001, will complement other programmes and measures under the Structural Funds and, in particular, promote the bottom-up process of local development. Although not specifically directed at addressing the problems of social exclusion, the programme can make a significant impact in this

area by contributing to the general economic and social development of rural areas.

3.7.8 The EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and PEACE 2

The EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties (Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal) is delivered through intermediary funding bodies as well as Government Departments, District Partnerships (Northern Ireland) and County Council led Task Forces (Republic of Ireland). The aim of the Programme is to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation. There are five priorities or sub-programmes namely, employment, urban and rural regeneration, cross border development, social inclusion and productive investment and industrial development. As well as promoting peace building and reconciliation the theme of social inclusion, including targeting disadvantage and combating poverty, has been central to the activities of ADM and the CPA, which are the intermediary bodies, operating in partnership in the border counties.

In March 1999 the European Council decided to continue the Peace Programme for a further five years (2000-2004). The Peace 2 programme takes place in the new political and institutional context created by the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and within the new round of Structural Funds 2000-2006. The newly established EU Programmes Body is the managing authority for the Peace 2 Programme. £500 / 634 million has been committed of which £100 / 127 million has been allocated to the border region. The overall aim of the new programme is to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation. The two objectives of the programme are to address the legacy of the conflict and to take the opportunities arising from peace. In light of the above objectives the priorities of the programme are economic renewal, social

integration, inclusion and reconciliation, locally based regeneration and development strategies, an outward and a forward looking region and cross border co-operation. The Operational Programme was agreed in 2001 and in the border counties will be implemented by the same intermediary funding bodies as in Peace 1.

3.7.9 Pilot Programme for the Provision of Integrated Public Services in Rural Areas

Areas

The objective of this pilot programme was to test community-based models for the delivery of essential public services in rural areas of low and dispersed populations. Under it, a number of pilot projects were operated by local project committees in partnership with State Agencies, local development and community organisations. An evaluation of the programme will be published in 2001.

3.7.10 Rural Transport Initiatives

The Public Transport Partnership Forum, established under the PPF, will determine a policy approach and processes for the award of grants for pilot rural transport projects from the £3.5 / 4.4 million provision in the NDP. An Inter-departmental Committee, to be established under the chairmanship of the Department of Public Enterprise, will bring forward proposals to Government for a new policy on rural public transport during 2001. In addition, Bus Eireann has purchased twenty low floor wheelchair accessible buses for evaluation trials on a number of rural routes throughout the country.

3.7.11 National Rural Development Forum

The establishment of the National Rural Development Forum was one of the key institutional mechanisms to arise from the White Paper on Rural Development. This Forum has a broadly representative membership from Government Departments and State Agencies, the Social Partners and the wider Community and Voluntary

Sector. It provides an opportunity for issues relevant to rural development to be debated. The Forum met on two occasions during 2000 (in May and December). Among the topics discussed were progress on the implementation of the White Paper, covering developments in relation to rural infrastructure, access to services in rural areas, information and communications technology, post offices, rural transport, housing, childcare and healthcare, the spatial spread of development and rural tourism. The Forum is intended to meet twice yearly.

3.7.12 Rural Development Fund

A Rural Development Fund, promised in the White Paper, is provided for in the NDP with an allocation of some £6 / 7.62 million. The Fund will finance research, evaluations and pilot actions, where appropriate, to provide information and advice to policy makers. The research should provide critical feedback in relation to such issues as assessing the impact of sectoral policies and institutional arrangements, quantifying and gathering data on trends, examining structural change and issues impacting on the rural community, identifying income and employment opportunities, and examining gender issues and issues relating to rural inclusion. To date a commitment of some £100,000 / 127,000 has been made from the Fund to assist with in-depth research on consumer needs in rural tourism. In 2001 it is expected that further projects will be approved for funding.

3.7.13 The Department of the Marine and Natural Resources

Measures and programmes for which the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources is responsible have a key role in improving the economic and social well being of rural and coastal communities. Investment under the NDP will build on the significant development achieved in recent years in key sectors including forestry, sea fisheries and aquaculture and related industries, angling

tourism, marine tourism and leisure generally. These initiatives will be complemented by a focused programme for expansion and improvement of coastal infrastructure, which will underpin the sustainable development of the seafood sector as a central element in the economic life of coastal regions.

3.8 OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

A number of other initiatives took place in 2000-2001 that impact on poverty and social exclusion and are therefore of relevance to the NAPS.

3.8.1 EU Project: Involving People in Anti-Poverty Policies

During 2000, the CPA, the NAPS Unit of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, and the National Anti-Poverty Networks were partners in an EU-funded transnational study to develop ways to involve excluded persons in the development, implementation and evaluation of national anti-poverty strategies. Representatives from Portugal, Finland, the Netherlands and from the North and South of Ireland shared their experiences in this regard in order to develop practical guidelines for involvement, and thereby to contribute to and inform future policy development in this area. Over the year, two national seminars were held in each of the participating Member States and one transnational seminar was held in Dublin. The project produced a series of publications, including a report of the national seminars, a joint report of all of the national seminars, the proceedings of the transnational conference and guidelines for the involvement of people experiencing poverty and their organisations in developing anti-poverty strategies. A final evaluation of the project will be available in 2001.

3.8.2 The Springboard Initiatives - Family Support Projects for Children at Risk

The objective of the Springboard projects is to establish a pilot Family Support Project in a number

of identified communities throughout the country. These projects will work intensively with children, mainly in the 7-12 year age group, who are at risk and their families. By 2000 the Springboard Initiative had a reasonably well-established public profile. Coherence in terms of focus and target groups was maintained with all of the projects committed to directly working with children and families at risk, inter-agency collaboration, and the involvement of local structures for consultation with communities and partnerships with families. Within that framework there was, of necessity, considerable local diversity in the manner and content of service provision between the individual pilot project areas. The 'Interim Evaluation of Springboard' and the first policy paper 'A Guide to What Works in Family Support Services for Vulnerable Families' were launched in October 2000. The findings are broadly supportive of the work of Springboard, of the evaluation system and its capacity to yield useful insights into the dynamics of families and how to support them. The evaluation covers a relatively brief period of five months between January and May 2000 during which projects were fully operational. Overall, the evaluation concludes that Springboard successfully engaged with families.

3.8.3 National Children's Strategy

The National Children's Strategy was published in November 2000. An executive summary of the Strategy and a special version of the Strategy for children were also published. The Strategy was developed by an Inter-Departmental Group comprising senior officials from the Departments of Health and Children, Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Social, Community and Family Affairs, Education and Science, Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Environment and Local Government, Finance, and An Taoiseach, as well as the Attorney General's Office.

Based on a comprehensive consultation process, which included consultation with children

themselves and with groups dealing with children affected by poverty and social exclusion, the Strategy includes a reform of how the Government manages services for children. The Strategy includes the establishment of a Cabinet Committee for Children, an expanded role for the Minister of State with Special Responsibility for Children, and the establishment of a National Children's Office, a National Children's Advisory Council, a Research Dissemination Unit and a Research Development Advisory Group.

The National Children's Strategy identifies three National Goals and implementation measures: (i) children will have a voice - new opportunities will be provided at national and local level for children to voice their opinions. Special arrangements will be put in place to ensure that children suffering from poverty and social exclusion are included; (ii) children's lives will be better understood - new research on children's lives will be undertaken and improved information will be made available for planning more effective services for children. This will include research on children suffering from social exclusion; (iii) children will receive quality supports and services - 14 objectives have been identified to improve the quality of supports and services for children. One of the key objectives is 'Children will be provided with the financial supports necessary to eliminate child poverty'.

Five seminars have taken place so far during 2001 to discuss the implementation of the National Children's Strategy; six more seminars will take place, recommencing in the Autumn. Statutory and non-statutory organisations dealing with children, including organisations dealing with children who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, are being invited to attend. The National Children's Strategy contains many objectives and measures relevant to the NAPS. The National Children's Office will oversee the implementation of these objectives and measures over the next ten years, commencing in 2001.

3.8.4 Childcare

The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme

Childcare has been identified by the Government as a priority under the NDP. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform has overall responsibility for the implementation of the childcare measures in the NDP. The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) was launched in April 2000 by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The objective of the Programme is to increase the number of childcare places and improve the quality of childcare. A key element of the Programme is to enable parents to reconcile their childcare needs with their participation in employment, training or education.

Since April 2000 developments under the EOCP include the availability of funding options and the establishment of a number of co-ordination structures. The funding options available include capital grants for community based/not for profit and self-employed childcare providers, staffing grants for community-based/not for profit groups and quality improvement measures including funding for National Voluntary Childcare Organisations, training initiatives, innovative projects and local childcare networks. Up to April 2001, over £45 / 57.1 million has been allocated for childcare projects under the EOCP. Of that £45 / 57.1 million, approximately £35 / 44.4 million has been allocated under the capital and staffing measures which will support over 12,000 new and existing childcare places nationwide. A further £10 / 12.7 million has been allocated under the quality improvement measure which would include grants for local networks, innovative projects and training initiatives.

Co-ordination Structures for the Delivery of Childcare Services

An Inter-Departmental Policy Committee on Childcare and the National Co-ordinating Childcare Committee (NCCC) were established in 1999 and continue to meet. These committees oversee the

development of a childcare infrastructure in Ireland. The NCCC has two sub-groups under its remit as of April 2001: the Certifying Bodies Sub-group, which will consider an agreed framework for all levels of childcare training, and an Advisory Sub-group on Diversity to examine the work of the NCCC with regard to children with special requirements and children of minority ethnic origin. A third sub-group is to be established to progress the development of school age childcare services.

As at end May 2001, 28 out of 33 County and City Childcare Committees, which have the role of developing childcare plans at local level, have held their inaugural meetings. The County Childcare Committees will work closely with the County and City Development Boards to formulate a county childcare strategy.

Further Government Funding for Childcare

In October 2000 the allocation of £250 / 317.43 million for the Childcare Measure in the NDP was supplemented by Exchequer funding of £40 / 50.8 million for childcare under an anti-inflationary package. This funding was allocated to the Departments of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Health and Children, Environment and Local Government and Enterprise, Trade and Employment. In March 2001, following a Government decision to rationalise childcare funding measures, measures previously operated by the Departments of Education and Science and Social, Community and Family Affairs were transferred to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. As a result the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform now has funding available for pre-school and school age childcare in the community based/not-for-profit and the private sectors. As a result of this consolidation of funding the total allocation for childcare for the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform for the period 2000 to 2006 is £344 / 436.8 million.

3.8.5 Longitudinal Study on Children

In November 2000, the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs and the Department of Health and Children jointly advertised for tenders to carry out a feasibility study for a longitudinal study on children in Ireland. A consortium has been appointed to conduct this feasibility study and is expected to report in mid-2001. A report will be prepared and submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion for their consideration.

3.8.6 Families Research Programme

The Families Research Programme was established to support innovative, original research in the field of family policy and family services and in areas highlighted by the Commission on the Family in their report 'Strengthening Families for Life' as being in need of further investigation. The Programme is run by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. Thirteen proposals submitted under the Families Research Programme have been selected for funding. These research proposals were selected on the basis of their potential to inform the future development of aspects of policy relating to families and family services and cover a range of family-related topics including marriage and marriage counselling, grandparents, children and parental separation, parenting needs, fathers, and processes of family formation in modern Ireland. The first project to be completed under the Families Research Programme entitled "Balancing Work and Family Life: The Role of Flexible Working Arrangements" was published in December 2000. The remaining research projects funded under this Programme will be completed in 2001 and 2002 and a framework developed to follow up on the recommendations of the completed research projects. The Programme will be relaunched in 2001.

3.8.7 Corporate Social Responsibility and the Foundation For Investing In Communities

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has gained increasing support in the past few

years, with the European Commission currently preparing a Green Paper in this area. The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs is also part of an informal Government Network on CSR. This network comprises Ireland, Denmark, the Netherlands and the U.K. thus far. The Department organises and submits Irish contributions to the European Commission and the network. The Department is at present preparing its participation in the forthcoming conference on CSR being organised by The Copenhagen Centre in June.

In encouraging CSR in Ireland, the Foundation for Investing in Communities was established in November 1998 as a joint venture between Government and employers to provide a focus and increased recognition of businesses that are making CSR a part of their business practice. A unique feature of this Foundation is the building of an Endowment Fund to help disadvantaged groups/communities with a particular focus on children's needs. The Foundation has two main focuses. The first is to encourage businesses to make CSR and community involvement part of their mainstream business practice. This work is carried out by Business in the Community. The second focus of the Endowment Fund is to encourage philanthropy and build an independent civic endowment fund to serve the Irish community. The permanent civic endowment fund is being raised through the Community Foundation for Ireland and The National Children's Trust. During 2000, twenty founder members joined the Foundation and grants were made available to approximately thirty groups, organisations and societies.

3.8.8 Equality Measures

The ongoing development of an equality agenda, supported by appropriate measures and initiatives, complements and supports the NAPS. The following are some of the advances made or expected in this area in 2000-2001.

Equality Infrastructure

The Employment Equality Act, 1998, prohibits discrimination in relation to employment on grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, race and membership of the Traveller community. The Equal Status Act, 2000, prohibits discrimination outside the employment context, including education, provision of goods, services and accommodation and disposal of property on the same nine grounds. The Equality Authority and the Office of the Director of Equality Investigations were established in October, 1999, under the Employment Equality Act, 1998. The role of these bodies was extended, from 25 October, 2000 on the implementation of the Equal Status Act, 2000. The Equality Authority has a mandate to combat discrimination and to promote equality in relation to the areas covered by the Equal Status Act, 2000 and the Employment Equality Act, 1998. The Equality Authority is an independent body with a Board appointed by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The Equality Authority is currently working to three objectives:

- to promote and defend the rights established in equality legislation;
- to support the development of a capacity to realise equality outcomes in the workplace and in the provision of goods, facilities, services, education and accommodation;
- to contribute to a focus on equality considerations within the private and public sectors and across society.

The Office of the Director of Equality Investigations is an integral part of the equality infrastructure which is designed to promote equality and eliminate discrimination. It is an independent Statutory body under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform which contributes to achievement of equality by investigating or mediating complaints of discrimination contrary to

the Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000.

Equality Proofing

As recommended by the Partnership 2000 Report on Equality Proofing, a Working Group was convened in October 2000 to provide an ongoing focus on equality proofing issues. This Group will oversee the implementation of equality proofing action. The first phase or 'learning phase' of the Group's work includes the organisation, by the Group, of two pilot projects, from programmes run by FÁS and the Department of Education and Science, in order to test the feasibility of 'equality proofing'.

Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Co-ordinating Committee

The NDP provides for an Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Co-ordinating Committee to support the maximum application of commitments on equal opportunities, particularly gender equality, and social inclusion. This Committee, which is chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, will act as an advisory body to the NDP/Community Support Framework (CSF) Monitoring Committee and will report on: the review of the equal opportunities and social inclusion impacts of the measures in the NDP; the promotion of a mainstream approach to equal opportunities, particularly gender equality, and social inclusion issues across the NDP/CSF expenditure areas; and, the identification of best practice for the promotion of equal opportunities and social inclusion and provide advice on the realisation of equality and social inclusion outcomes. Government Departments and State Agencies with responsibility for delivering Measures under the NDP are represented on the Committee together with the four pillars of Social Partnership. The first meeting of the Committee took place on 30 April, 2001 and a further meeting is planned for later in the year.

The Equality Authority will analyse monitoring data and carry out research to ensure that the labour market needs of groups experiencing inequality are addressed. There will be a particular focus on people with disabilities, members of the Traveller Community and refugees. In addition, the Gender Equality Promotion and Monitoring Unit of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will build up the staff complement of their Unit in the course of 2001.

Equality for Women Measure

The NDP provides for a new budget of £23.2 / 29.5 million for an Equality for Women Measure in the Regional Operational Programmes. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is responsible for this Measure and for reporting on its implementation to the Monitoring Committees for the Regional Operational Programmes. The Measure will fund projects designed to enhance women's participation in economic and social life. Of particular relevance from the point of view of social inclusion is the fact that the project selection criteria for the measure include a focus on women who experience multiple forms of discrimination. The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform announced details of the Measure in October 2000 and invited project proposals for particular strands. A public tender seeking technical support for the Measure was also advertised. Applications have now been assessed and successful projects are due to be announced in June 2001. These will be then become operational in the latter half of the year. The Equality Authority has now established a panel of experts to carry out the gender proofing of personnel practices under the Measure.

National Plan for Women 2001-2005

A National Plan for Women is being developed in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Following finalisation of a draft Plan, the Department will engage in a widespread

consultation process. The Department envisages completion of the Plan by end 2001. The Plan will use as a framework the 12 critical areas of concern headings as set out in the Beijing Platform for Action. The National Plan for Women will include a focus on women in poverty, which is one of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action.

3.8.9 The Traveller Community

In June 1998, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform established a Committee to Monitor and Co-ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, which was published in July 1995. The Committee, which is chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, is representative of Traveller interests, the four Social Partner pillars and relevant Government Departments. The First Progress Report on the implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force was submitted to Government in December 2000 and was published in April 2001.

The Government allocated a sum of £900,000 / 1.1 to fund a Traveller Communication Programme, entitled "Citizen Traveller", over the three-year period from 1999 to 2001. The objective of the programme is to address the underlying causes of mistrust between Travellers and the settled community and to promote a greater understanding between both communities. The Traveller Communications Committee is managing the programme. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme will be carried out at the end of 2001.

3.8.10 People with Disabilities

Comhairle

Comhairle, launched in June 2000, replaced the National Social Services Board and the information service provided by the National Rehabilitation Board with a new mainstream information and support service from a network of local centres. The

improvement of information and support services for people with disabilities was among the key recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities. Building on the expertise and resources of both the NSSB and the NRB at local, regional and national levels, Comhairle ensures that services for people with disabilities has become an integral part of mainstream information, advice and advocacy services for all using social services. People with disabilities have the services relevant to them delivered by Comhairle in the same way as their fellow citizens rather than through a separate agency. Comhairle currently supports some 85 independent locally based Citizens Information Centres.

National Disability Information Day

The fourth Irish National Disability Information Day was co-hosted by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the European Commission on the 27th November 2000 at venues in Dublin, Sligo and Ennis. The general theme of the day was "Information Technology - Access for All". Representatives from disability organisations, Local Authorities, educational institutions, IT companies as well as people with disabilities attended seminars on the day. Conscious of the potential of raising awareness of discrimination in, and through, school children, a teaching module was developed for distribution to schools on request. Building on the success of the fourth Irish National Disability Awareness Day, a fifth day is now being planned for October 2001.

Disabilities Bill

In order to further strengthen the basis of positive action in respect of people with disabilities, work is in progress, in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, on a Disabilities Bill to provide a statutory basis for positive action measures to advance and underpin equal participation by people with disabilities in society.

The National Disability Authority

The National Disability Authority, established under the National Disability Authority Act in 1999, launched its strategic plan for 2001-2003, "A Matter of Rights" in 2001.

Public Transport

The Department of Public Enterprise are involved in a number of initiatives aimed at increasing access to public transport by people with disabilities. All three of the CIE operating companies have established consultative groups composed of people with disabilities from a range of disability organisations and designated staff from the three companies have been assigned responsibility for accessibility matters. In addition, the Public Transport Accessibility Committee, first announced in the NDP, was inaugurated by the Minister for Public Enterprise in July 2000. The committee is comprised of representatives of organisations representing the disabled and mobility impaired, the elderly, the Light Rail Project Office the CIE operating subsidiaries and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and is chaired by an official of the Department of Public Enterprise. It will advise the Minister of public transport accessibility in general and will prepare a prioritised list of projects which could be funded from the special provision of £10 / 12.7 million in the NDP to part-finance accessibility improvements to existing public transport infrastructure and facilities.

From 2000 onwards, all buses purchased by CIE for use on urban services will be low floor. Regeneration of Public Transport Services in Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford has resulted in 66 new low floor wheelchair accessible city buses being introduced into service in 2000. It is intended that further buses will be added in the period 2001-2006. All new and upgraded rail and bus stations financed under the NDP will be accessible to mobility impaired and people with disabilities. All light rail vehicles and suburban railcars financed under the NDP will also be accessible.

3.8.11 Anti-Racism Measures

An Anti-Racist Workplace week took place from 6th to 10th November 2000. The week was a joint initiative between the Equality Authority, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) and the Construction Industry Federation (CIF). As part of the event, the participating parties made a commitment to play an active role in eliminating racism through the promotion of anti-racist workplaces. In October 2000, the Government approved proposals from the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform for a comprehensive Public Awareness Programme to address racism. The proposed programme is based on an evaluation carried out by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, which meets monthly. A core budget of £1.5 / 1.9 million per annum over a three-year period has been approved to implement the Programme, which it is expected will be officially launched in autumn of 2001.

3.8.12 Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The arrival of over 10,900 asylum seekers in 2000 and the continuing presence of significant numbers of asylum seekers who had arrived in earlier years posed a particular challenge for the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. Most arrive without resources and are both reliant on and entitled to SWA. This scheme is administered by the Health Boards under the general direction and control of the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs. Responding to the needs of asylum seekers now comprises a significant proportion of the overall workload of the Community Welfare Officers who operate the SWA scheme. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform introduced a system of Direct Provision in April 2000, under which newly arrived asylum seekers have their basic needs met in-kind at accommodation centres providing full board. A reduced rate of SWA is payable in these circumstances.

Unaccompanied Minors

The Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) came into operation on 20th November 2000. Section 8(5) of the Act provides that where a child aged under 18 years arrives and enters the country alone, the Immigration/Authorised officer must inform the relevant Health Board/Authority. All Health Boards have nominated liaison officers to liaise with the Immigration Officers. Draft guidelines prepared by a Working Group established by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in respect of these provisions of the Act were circulated to Health Boards/Authority. The Act empowers the Health Boards/Authority to act in the best interest of the child including making an application for refugee status. The Departments of Health and Children and Justice, Equality and Law Reform are considering the planning of specific reception accommodation facilities to cater for unaccompanied minors in the Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA) in conjunction with the Directorate for Asylum Support Services (DASS). An accommodation centre is also required for people who claim unaccompanied minor status but are obviously over 18. The DASS will source and pay for a reception/accommodation centre for this category of asylum seeker on the understanding that the ERHA and its Area Boards provide the necessary social work and support services.

Approximately 505 applications for unaccompanied minor status were received in the ERHA area in 2000. Of these 244 were 17 year olds and 113 were 16 year old. 324 of the 505 were placed in Bed and Breakfast or hostel accommodation, 108 were placed with relatives, with the remainder going mainly to care, private rented accommodation or direct provision.

3.8.13 Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) operates nationwide through 50 local service providers. The service is designed to target families and individuals identified as having problems with debt and money lending. Each MABS is an independent information and service provider, deeply rooted in the local community. Management Committees are drawn from local voluntary and statutory services and community groups and often include Credit Union representatives. Work commenced in 2000 on the drafting of legislation to give effect to the decision to put MABS on a statutory basis. An evaluation of the Service, which commenced in 1998, continued, with the second and third phase being completed in 2000. Phase four of the evaluation is ongoing in 2001 and will pull together the various strands of the evaluation process and reach final conclusions. The Budget allocation for MABS for 2000 was £4.542 / 5.8 million and for 2001 is £6.667 / 8.5 million, with 50 projects included at present and two more likely to come on stream in 2001.

3.8.14 UN International Year on Volunteering

In December 2000, the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs launched a National Committee on Volunteering to mark 2001 as the UN International Year of Volunteers. Membership of the National Committee on Volunteering is drawn from relevant Government Departments and stakeholders. A budget of £1 / 1.3 million has been allocated by the Government to the workings of the Committee. £350,000 / 444,410 (from the £1 / 1.3 million) is being made available for a grant scheme to mark the UN International Year of Volunteers. The National Committee on Volunteering will run until the end of 2002 and will report to the Government at that time.

3.8.15 Addressing the Digital Divide

In an information society one of the key challenges is to ensure that those experiencing exclusion are not left behind. A number of key initiatives that will help address the digital divide and also improve access for excluded individuals to State services are currently underway. The *Community Application of Information Technology* (CAIT) Initiative, which commenced in June 2001 aims to encourage and assist late adopters, such as older people, manual workers, homemakers and the farming community to utilise the new technologies in their everyday lives. The *Universal Participation Initiative* is designed to stimulate a demand for access and participation in the information age, and will focus on locally based community workers or 'champions'. *Fastrack to Information Technology* (FIT) aims to meet labour shortages in the IT industry while creating job opportunities for the long-term unemployed. *Skillnet College*, an internet based learning system which has the potential to deliver computer based learning programmes to multiple users in their locality, has been established by FÁS who will co-operate with the Director of Homeless Services in Dublin to provide complementary training/development supports to homeless persons who have been afforded access to accommodation and health services. *REACH* is a cross-departmental Agency launched in September 2000 to improve the quality of service to customers of the Irish Public Service by developing a framework to integrate public services and to specify and establish a single gateway to Government - the Public Services Broker. The Broker will provide customers with information about services as well as access to online public services, thereby reducing the bureaucratic process. The *e-Europe Action Plan*

has been adopted to advance the development of the Information Society at European level. As part of this a set of benchmarking targets have been adopted to permit progress in each of the Member States to be measured. *On-line Access to Services, Information and Support* (OASIS) is a new public service information system provided over the Internet. It works by structuring information around key life events, e.g. birth, education, housing, work and retirement, and provides an electronic one-stop-shop by gathering information from all relevant sources for each event. *Technology in Schools* is an investment programme aimed at augmenting existing technology introduced under the Schools IT 2000 programme to develop an advanced curriculum support programme.

3.9 CONCLUSION

The very comprehensive range of actions being undertaken by various Government Departments outlined above, show that significant effort is being put into combating poverty and promoting social inclusion in Ireland, particularly in the five key areas identified in the original NAPS. Progress is particularly notable in respect of the continued decline in consistent poverty and unemployment. However, less progress is being made in a number of areas, in particular in relation to the education target concerning retention to the end of the senior cycle. It has been increasingly recognised that areas that currently lie outside the NAPS themes are playing an increasingly important role in people's quality of life and experience of poverty and social exclusion. A number of these are the subject of the Working Groups established under the NAPS review and are detailed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4
The Future Direction of the
National Anti-Poverty Strategy



4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight some of the activities under the NAPS that will be ongoing during 2001 and beyond and will have a significant impact on the future progress and development of the Strategy. Key among these is the review of the NAPS, the review of poverty proofing and the extension of NAPS to the Local Authorities.

One of the central and most often cited advantages of the NAPS is that, for the first time, targets were set for progress in relation to key areas of social policy. While there has been criticism of the targets since, the fact that targets were included has remained one of the key defining characteristics of the NAPS. Much discussion has taken place in relation to revising the NAPS targets. The consistent poverty target was revised in 1999, as was the target in relation to unemployment. In addition to revising the existing NAPS targets, consideration is now also being given to the inclusion of new targets in relation to housing/accommodation, health, women in poverty, child poverty, older people and ethnic minority groups.

The 1999/2000 Social Inclusion Strategy detailed much of the discussion in relation to the revision of existing targets and the determination of new ones. This chapter draws and builds on this discussion. As the consideration of targets and indicators is central to the Review of the NAPS, details of the Working Groups established to consider these issues are provided in the relevant sections below.

4.2 REVIEW OF THE NAPS

The PPF provides for a comprehensive review of the NAPS. Framework III of the PPF states that: *"In consultation with the relevant actors, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) will be updated, the underlying methodology reviewed, the existing*

targets reviewed and revised where appropriate, and possible new targets will be considered in consultation with the Social Partners, under the themes of child poverty, women's poverty, health, older people and housing/accommodation."

This review is now underway. Following the deliberations of the IDPC and the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, a meeting was held with the Social Partners on 4th July 2000 to agree the review process. It was agreed that the issues to be examined as part of the review should be considered initially by Working Groups under six themes. These include four of the five original themes of the NAPS - Educational Disadvantage, Employment, Rural Poverty, and Urban Disadvantage. Recognising that the priority dimensions of poverty and social exclusion change over time, Working Groups on Housing/Accommodation and Health have also been established to consider objectives and targets in these areas. In addition, each Working Group will consider the areas of child poverty, women's poverty, the needs of older people and ethnic minority groups as cross-cutting issues. The Social Partners are represented on all of the NAPS review Working Groups. As provided in the PPF, a Social Welfare Benchmarking and Indexation Working Group has been established to examine the issues of developing a benchmark for adequacy of adult and child social welfare payments, including the implications of adopting a specific approach to the ongoing up-rating or indexation of payments. This group produced an interim report in April, with a final report due in the latter half of 2001.

Timetable and Process

The NAPS review is based on a two-phase process. Phase 1 involves the following activities.

- the establishment of thematic NAPS review Working Groups;

- a call for submissions on the NAPS review for consideration by the relevant Working Groups advertised in the national newspapers. The closing date for receipt of submissions was 16th March 2001;
- each lead Department involved in the Working Groups, in collaboration with other relevant Agencies, hosted thematic consultation seminars on the review of NAPS. The purpose of these seminars was to facilitate analysis of issues and directions for the review of NAPS. Seminars, held during May and June 2001, were attended by Social Partner and statutory representatives. Feedback from these seminars contributed to each thematic Working Group as part of the deliberative process;
- each lead Department is to prepare a report based on the consultation process and the outcome of the Working Group deliberations. These reports are to include a range of possible targets and indicators and suggested strategies to achieve these.

Phase 2 of the review process will involve the following activities.

- establishment of a Steering Committee in July 2001. Following from the conclusion of the NAPS review Working Groups, a Steering Committee will be brought together to advise on issues and directions for the review of NAPS. The members of the Group will include the convenors from the NAPS review Working Groups, representatives from the Departments of An Taoiseach, Social, Community and Family Affairs and Finance and representatives of the Social Partners and relevant Agencies. The Group's main terms of reference will be to advise on issues and directions for the revised NAPS, and in particular on any gaps arising;

- the reports of each Working Group will be summarised by external consultants and a draft revised NAPS presented to the Steering Committee for discussion. A National Seminar on the draft revised NAPS is to be held in September. The final format of the draft revised NAPS will reflect the template specifications of the EU in relation to the NAPIncl, as far as possible;
- the draft revised NAPS will be submitted to Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion in October for consideration. Following this, the revised NAPS will be presented to Government, which will make final decisions in relation to the proposed targets.

The review of the NAPS is highly significant in its own right. In particular, it allows for the consideration and inclusion of new themes that have emerged as national priorities over the past number of years. In addition, the review will dovetail with the NAPIncl, which provides a new template and context for the consideration of anti-poverty and social inclusion measures. This European dimension can only strengthen the basis of the revised NAPS, providing as it does, not only the opportunity to share our learning and concerns with our EU counterparts, but also to learn from their experiences.

The NAPS Review Working Groups

The NAPS review Working Groups have a number of common members. These include representatives from the Departments of Social, Community and Family Affairs, An Taoiseach, Finance, Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Department of Health and Children, as well as from the CPA and Social Partners.

Four cross-cutting themes – women's poverty, child poverty, the needs of older people and ethnic minorities - are to inform the considerations of each of the Working Groups. It is proposed to address the concerns of these groups by;

- (i) the terms of reference of each Working Group stating that possible indicators in relation to these categories must be specified, and the needs of these groups explicitly dealt with, as part of each Working Group report, and
- (ii) the Departments of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Health and Children being invited to provide representatives for each of the Working Groups.

While each Working Group has its own specific terms of reference determined by its members, a Common Terms of Reference has been laid down. These are:

- gathering /analysis of available information;
- review of key issues;
- analysis of key State programmes involved - objectives and effectiveness of policies and programmes and constraints;
- implications of progress since the beginning of the NAPS;
- identification of gaps in provision and data;
- analysis of Departmental cross-cutting issues;
- outline of an action plan with identification of priorities;
- types of targets and indicators which could be set, including specific targets and indicators in relation to the needs of women, children, older people and ethnic minorities (dependent on available information, within the parameters of resource limits agreed in the PPF and taking into account relevant international benchmarks, where appropriate.);
- consideration of practical ways to include the Social Partners in the implementation process; and,
- as the Strategy will be evaluated in terms of "outcomes" – the impact on poverty reduction

etc. – the deliberations of the Working Groups should be conducted with this in mind as the main priority, rather than the process itself.

The various Working Groups provide an opportunity for a range of stakeholders to contribute to the target-setting process. A meeting between the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Social Partners was held on 14th February 2001 to discuss the NAPS review. In addition, a meeting was held with the Social Partners to review progress on 21st March 2001. Each of the Working Groups held at least one national consultative seminar. The final decision in relation to the targets will be for Government to make. Details of each of the Working Groups are included under the relevant section below.

4.3 THE GLOBAL TARGET: MEASURING CONSISTENT POVERTY

The NAPS global target, as revised in June 1999, is to reduce the numbers of "consistently poor" as defined by the ESRI from 9% to 15% of the population in 1994 to below 5% by 2004.

When the Strategy was initiated in 1997, the extent of poverty used as the baseline for the target was taken from the 1994 Living in Ireland Survey, the most recent then available. New data from the 1998 round of that survey, *"Monitoring Poverty Trends Results from the 1998 Living in Ireland Survey"*, showed that, by 1998, consistent poverty had decreased significantly and was then down to approximately 6-8% of the population (having decreased from 9-15% in 1994 to 7-10% in 1997). These figures demonstrate that real progress has been made towards achieving the NAPS target of reducing consistent poverty to below 5% by 2004.

Data for 1998 indicate that the numbers falling below the 40% and 50% relative income poverty lines, without reference to basic deprivation, have

increased slightly, while there was a general decrease in the numbers below 60% of mean income. Consistent poverty levels, i.e. combined relative income and basic deprivation, which fell markedly between 1994 and 1997, also fell from 1997 to 1998.

Reviewing the Indicators of Basic Deprivation⁶

The deprivation component of the combined poverty measure is not designed to include all socially perceived necessities, but only those tapping underlying generalised deprivation. Factor analysis showed the structure of deprivation to be remarkably stable over time, supporting the argument for continuing to distinguish basic deprivation from additional deprivation indicators (i.e. absence of central heating, a telephone, a car, a colour television and presents for friends and family at least once a year) at this point. This conclusion was supported by an examination of the additional households who would be included among the poor, if the existing basic deprivation indicators were expanded to include those additional indicators. They were found to be little different from the non-poor, and quite different to the consistently poor, in terms of level of (self-assessed) economic strain, psychological distress and fatalism. This provided some reassurance that the original set of basic deprivation indicators was more successful in capturing generalised deprivation than an expanded set would be at this point in time. Combining low income with basic deprivation succeeds in identifying a set of households experiencing generalised deprivation as a result of prolonged constraints in terms of command over resources. This measure is reviewed regularly to assess its continued relevance.

Non-Cash Benefits

It has been suggested that the poverty measure should not focus solely on cash income and transfers, but also take account of the range of free or subsidised services and other benefits to households provided by the State,

which affect their living standards, and the resources they can devote to other uses. As outlined in 3.4.5 above, an ESRI study has examined the impact that Free Schemes and the medical card have on poverty. The study suggests that broadening the income element of the consistent poverty measure to include the Free Schemes and the medical card results in only a modest reduction in poverty.

4.4 UNEMPLOYMENT

The NAPS unemployment target was re-set by the Government in June 1999 in the Employment Action Plan. This target was to reduce the rate of unemployment to below 5% by end 2000 and to reduce the rate of long-term unemployment to below 2% over the same period. Progress in achieving the targets in this area of NAPS has been very marked. Figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) show that the unemployment rate fell to 3.9% at the end of 2000, compared to 6.4% two years earlier and 11.9% in 1996. Progress on reducing long-term unemployment is particularly significant, with the rate standing at approximately 1.4% for the period in the last quarter of 2000. Equivalent rates for end quarter one 2001 were 3.7% (unemployment) and 1.2% (long-term unemployment).

For the period 2001-2003, employment growth of 60,000, 37,000 and 31,000 (respectively), average annual labour force growth of 2.2% over the three-year period, and a further fall in the unemployment rate to 3.2%, is predicted. On this basis, it is estimated that the economy could sustain growth of between 5.0%-5.5%. Thus, after a further year of rapid growth in 2001 the economy is projected to slow appreciably from the recent highs, while unemployment is projected to remain around 3%. The Lisbon European Council stated that the overall aim of employment, social and economic policies (outlined in the Lisbon conclusions) should be, "on the basis of the available statistics, to raise the employment rate from an average of 61% today to

6 Drawn from Layte, R. et al (2001) *Monitoring Poverty Trends and Exploring Poverty Dynamics in Ireland*, ESRI

as close as possible to 70% by 2010 and to increase the number of women in employment from an average of 51% today to more than 60% by 2010. Recognising their different starting points, Member States should consider setting national targets for an increased employment rate. This, by enlarging the labour force, will reinforce the sustainability of social protection systems."

The Stockholm Council has added a number of new targets to the Lisbon injunction to Member States to consider setting national targets in line with the overall EU targets:

- an intermediate employment rate target of 67% overall and 57% for women in 2005;
- an employment rate of 50% for people aged 55-64 in 2010.

The average EU-wide employment rate targets to be reached by 2010, and the interim targets set at Stockholm, mean that steady progress has to be made over the period. A critical element underpinning the employment scenario for the Union as a whole centres on likely future average annual growth in GDP (which in turn is dependant on the successful implementation of the employment and labour market structural strategies identified in the Lisbon conclusions).

Ireland, on the basis of the employment and labour market policies being pursued, is fully committed to the goal of full employment. This goal, has been clearly articulated commencing with the first national Employment Action Plan in April 1998, and underpins the policies, strategies and actions notified in all subsequent annual Employment Action Plans to date. Strong economic growth in Ireland has translated into substantial and sustained employment growth in recent years. Significant improvements in the employment rate are being achieved with both male and female employment rates increasing by 8 percentage and almost 9

percentage points, respectively, since 1997. The result is that substantial progress on the path towards the Lisbon goal is proceeding apace and the ambition is for the upward trajectory in the employment rate into the future to be maintained.

NAPS Review Working Group on Employment/Unemployment

The Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment chair this Working Group. The Working Group had its inaugural meeting in February, 2001 and has had further meetings to progress its work. The Working Group on Employment/Unemployment has agreed to focus on the following Terms of Reference:

Low Paid Employment

To assess and make recommendations from the NAPS perspective on how best to improve progression prospects at the lower end of the employment scale, having regard to work being carried out by the Lifelong Learning Taskforce, the priority accorded to adult learning in the Department of Education and Science, and to the outcome of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs Employability Study and other relevant information.

Disincentives to employment/training

To examine the extent to which there may still be disincentives to employment and training, including Secondary Benefits, having regard to work already carried out, and to make recommendations.

Cross Cutting Issues

To address the cross cutting poverty issues relating to children, women and older people, and ethnic minorities, to the extent that such are considered by the Working Group to be germane to the above mentioned issues relating to low paid employment and disincentives to employment/training.

In relation to these themes, appropriate indicators and monitoring mechanisms will be identified or

developed as required under the common terms of reference of the Working Groups.

4.5 INCOME ADEQUACY

Progress under this target is clearly related to the global target of reducing consistent poverty. The target set in Partnership 2000 of increasing minimum social welfare rates to those recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare was achieved by the end of 1999, with all social welfare recipients receiving, since June 1999, between 100% and 124% of the recommended rates.

The issue of income adequacy is being considered initially by the Social Welfare Benchmarking and Indexation Working Group (see 3.4.4. above) which is due to complete its work by end-July. A commitment has been given to the Social Partners to consider the need for a further process to address income adequacy issues, should the need arise, following the deliberations of this Group.

4.6 EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

The NAPS target, as already stated, is to eliminate early school leaving before the Junior Certificate and to increase the retention rates to Leaving Certificate level to at least 90% by 2000 and 98% by 2007.

The latest figures from the 1999 Annual School Leavers' Survey show that a total of 82% of students left second-level school having completed the Leaving Certificate, 15% completed the Junior Certificate and 3% left without any qualification in that year. The numbers leaving at all three levels have now levelled out to a large extent, with only minor advances being made towards the achievement of the NAPS targets over the past three to four years. This is an area where the need for consideration of gender is of particular importance as a substantially higher proportion of

boys than girls leave school without qualifications or at Junior Certificate level.

NAPS Review Working Group on Educational Disadvantage

As with the other key themes of the NAPS, the setting of future targets in this area has been considered in the review of the NAPS by the Working Group on Educational Disadvantage.

While it would not be appropriate to lower or change a target simply because progress is slower than expected, it may be appropriate to restructure future targets to give due regard to other, less formal education and training opportunities and to interventions outside the mainstream setting. The question of including targets in relation to adult literacy and life-long learning will also need to be considered here and the final report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning should inform this.

4.7 URBAN DISADVANTAGE AND RURAL POVERTY

Despite much work in both urban and rural areas, it is clear that poverty, deprivation and exclusion remains in both urban and rural areas. The setting of targets for these themes is not an easy task due to the complexity of the underlying causes of poverty and exclusion in each of these types of areas and the very wide range of issues that shape people's experience of social exclusion in different locations. These include access to public services such as housing, health and transport, unemployment and under-employment, population depletion and imbalances and crime. The consideration of targets and indicators formed part of the deliberations of the two Working Groups considering these issues.

NAPS Review Working Group on Rural Poverty

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development lead this Working Group. The Group's

work was informed by the NDP, the White Paper on Rural Development, the Agri-Food 2010 Action Plan, CPA assessment of the NAPS and the CPA/Teagasc study on Low Income Farm Households. Two consultative seminars were held, one in the Border Midland Western region and one in the South and East region.

NAPS Review Working Group on Urban

Disadvantage

The Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation has been designated as the lead Department for Urban Disadvantage under the NAPS. Given that urban disadvantage impacts on and is influenced by almost all of the other Working Groups that have been established under the NAPS, it was agreed that the Working Group on Urban Disadvantage would not commence its work until a number of the other groups made substantial progress in their reviews.

The terms of reference for the Group were agreed and a number of meetings held. In drawing up targets, the Working Group took account of other on-going developments in the broader social inclusion area, which impact on urban disadvantage. The Group's public consultative seminar took place on 29th June.

4.8 NAPS REVIEW WORKING GROUP ON HEALTH

It is now widely recognised that people living in poverty are at increased risk of experiencing ill health. Taking account of this, the review of the NAPS allows for the inclusion of new targets in this area. The Working Group on NAPS and Health is chaired by the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Health and Children. It is expected that the Group's final report will identify potential health targets relating to reducing health inequalities and associated poverty and social exclusion.

- The Working Group agreed a work plan and established three sub-groups from among its members: Information and Research; Equity of Access to Health Services; Impact of Public Policy on Health. All sub-groups have exercised their option to co-opt expert assistance as necessary. The Work Plan sets out the Working Group's principles, objectives, the sub-groups and their proposed mechanisms and processes. The Working Group aims to set targets which will improve health for people living in poverty or experiencing social exclusion, reduce poverty arising from or contributing to poor health, increase equity of access to health and personal social services, ensure that Government policies in other areas support these goals and be based on relevant information and research. The Institute of Public Health has been commissioned by the Department of Health and Children to assist the Working Group in its work, in the consultation process and research aspects of the process.

4.9 NAPS REVIEW WORKING GROUP ON HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION

The issue of housing has come to the forefront of national policy in recent years. Within the many debates that emerged in this area, the issues of affordable and social housing and homelessness have emerged as key concerns in the social inclusion arena. In order to address this issue, consideration is being given in the NAPS review to the inclusion of a target or targets in this area. This has been progressed by a Working Group chaired by the Department of the Environment and Local Government on Housing and Accommodation. Members of the Working Group, concerned voluntary Agencies and members of the public have made written submissions indicating the housing areas of concern to their Departments/Agencies in respect of which targets might be considered. While there is

a large degree of commonality in the main priority areas raised by members and in the submissions, the issues raised are very broad. As such, the Group considered that the best approach might be to select a small number of these broad areas and set a number of targets within those areas. Initially, the broad areas that have been identified are Access to Housing, Homelessness, Standards (including improvements to existing housing, Private Rented Sector) and Affordability.

4.10 WOMEN, CHILDREN, OLDER PEOPLE AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

Gender and age are key factors in determining people's experience of poverty. In general, women, children and the elderly have higher than average risks of poverty. Within these three broad groups, specific sub-groups have been identified on the basis of research to have particularly high risks. These are female lone parents, children living in households in which there are three or more children and elderly women living alone. The PPF recognises racism as one of the emerging causes of poverty in Ireland. Although relatively little research has been carried out in respect of the experience and needs of ethnic minorities in Ireland, the experience of the Traveller community, anecdotal evidence and administrative data point to high degree of poverty and social exclusion among these groups. Women's poverty, child poverty and the needs of older people and ethnic minorities are included as cross-cutting themes in the NAPS review and consideration is being given to the setting of targets and indicators for them, as appropriate.

4.11 REVIEW OF POVERTY PROOFING

Poverty Proofing, is defined in the context of the NAPS as "the process by which Government Departments, Local Authorities and State Agencies assess policies and programmes at design and review stages in relation to the likely impact that

they will have or have had on poverty and on inequalities which are likely to lead to poverty, with a view to poverty reduction."

Poverty proofing was introduced on a pilot basis in 1998 with a commitment to review the process after one year (see guidelines at Appendix C). This review is now being carried out by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), and it is intended that the outcome of this review will enhance the current process and help address any difficulties that may constrain its effective implementation. The terms of reference for the review are:

- to review the implementation of the pilot Poverty Proofing process which is in place in Government Departments;
- to assess the extent to which the agreed framework supports the achievement of the stated objectives;
- to identify any barriers to full implementation of the agreed process and make recommendations as to how these might be overcome;
- to assess the potential for extending the Poverty Proofing arrangement to other areas of the public services, such as Local Authorities and State Agencies;
- to examine how the Poverty Proofing process might distinguish between large integrated programmes (e.g., the NDP and the Budget) which consist of proposals from various Departments and other more self-contained proposals and, in the case of large one-off proposals, how this might be managed; and
- to briefly assess how the on-going implementation of the Poverty Proofing process might be integrated with broader policy proofing requirements, including equality proofing, rural proofing and eco-auditing.

The review is taking account of officials' experiences in implementing poverty proofing, as well as the views

of other relevant parties including State Agencies, Social Partners and the wider Community and Voluntary Sector. The review findings are expected to become available in mid – late 2001. These will inform the future development of poverty proofing and the supports required to make this an effective policy tool. The lessons emerging from the review are expected to both draw on and inform other proofing mechanisms and will inform considerations on the introduction of an appropriate training module for officials on the NAPS and poverty proofing. In addition, it will inform the achievement of the 'next step' proposed in PPF, that is, the extension of poverty proofing on a phased basis to local level through the Local Authorities and Health Boards.

4.12 EXTENDING NAPS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The PPF includes a commitment to introduce the NAPS initiative, including poverty proofing, in Local Authorities. In supporting Local Authorities to meet the challenges that this poses, the Department of the Environment and Local Government and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs are working with the CPA on a number of projects. Of particular note in this regard is the Local Government Learning Network, launched in October 2000, which is a joint initiative between these organisations to support the development of a strong anti-poverty focus within local government. Twenty-seven Local Authorities have joined the Learning Network to date. The Learning Network will provide education and training for Local Authority personnel on a range of issues, including the extent and nature of poverty, poverty trends, research and data, and local, national and international policy responses. It will publish a newsletter and run information seminars to allow members to share their experiences. It will provide technical support for Local Authorities to facilitate and support them in the collection of local data on poverty and to develop public awareness and information strategies. The Network will also provide a small level

of resources to Local Authorities to develop, in partnership with other State Agencies, innovative projects aimed at tackling poverty, deprivation and social exclusion.

Of central importance in extending NAPS to Local Authorities is the commitment in the PPF to the establishment of Social Inclusion Units in five Local Authorities. This has now been increased to nine. The establishment of these Units will be supported by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, with additional support from the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the CPA. These Units will be in place by the end of 2001.

The CPA has also been involved in developing a model for Local Poverty Profiles and the development of poverty related training materials for Local Authorities. With regard to the former, a method of developing local poverty profiles was piloted in three Local Authority areas and a guidebook on this will be available in mid-late 2001. A draft of the training materials will be discussed with the Local Authorities at a workshop in May and finalised following that. In addition, the CPA has recruited four consultants – one each in the areas of Community Development and Involving the Community and Voluntary Sector, Information and Awareness, Research and Evaluation and Training – to support the Local Authorities in developing their anti-poverty role. A leaflet on linking the NAPS to local government was published during the year and an audit of local government anti-poverty work was completed.

4.13 DATA ISSUES

In considering both indicators and targets for the NAPS, and the need for ongoing monitoring of these, the question of the availability or otherwise of appropriate and timely data needs to be considered. Each NAPS review Working Group will

include in their report a statement in respect of an agenda for data required to support the indicators and targets identified. In addition, the PPF commitment to the collection of data on groups not currently included in the LIIS, such as the homeless and members of the Traveller Community, has relevance here.

A range of other Agencies are undertaking work on data issues and indicators of progress in a number of areas relevant to the NAPS. At a national level these include Comhar, the National Competitiveness Council, and the NESO. At the international level they include the EU, the UN, the OECD, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

EU developments are also relevant in this regard. A sub-group of the EU Social Protection Committee (SPC) was established in 2001 charged with improving indicators in the field of poverty and social exclusion, developing indicators capable of illustrating the role of social protection and supporting the process of modernising systems on which Member States are engaged. Within a framework provided by the list of objectives in the fight against poverty and social exclusion agreed at Nice, the task of the sub-group is to develop commonly agreed indicators in order to underpin the policy co-ordination process in view of these common objectives. While difficulties in agreeing a common analytical and statistical framework are acknowledged, the work of the sub-group will provide a basis for progress in developing common measurement approaches in the field of social protection, a process which will be enhanced by the ongoing development of a new household survey, the Survey of Income and Living Conditions. A number of indicators have already been agreed, or are proposed, by the employment indicators sub-group, established in 2000. The work of this group will inform the discussions of the social protection indicators sub-group.

The NAPS review Working Groups will also draw on relevant studies, such as the report commissioned by the CPA from the New Policy Institute in the UK

to undertake a study on poverty indicators. The main aim of this study is to identify relevant indicators of poverty and to consider the data requirements posed by these indicators. This work is ongoing and is due to be completed in 2001.

4.14 CONCLUSION

The future challenge can be categorised as one of optimising the current employment and labour market policy mix in Ireland consistent with maintaining a sustainable rate of economic and employment growth, and combining this approach with policies aimed at tackling social exclusion, poverty and inequality. The more traditional aspects of social exclusion such as unemployment (particularly long-term unemployment) and educational disadvantage must continue to be vigorously tackled. In addition, the PPF affords the opportunity to focus on other areas of potential exclusion (such as housing and health) with renewed emphasis. Finding effective and sustainable ways to tackle poverty and social exclusion is not a simple challenge. One of the core strengths of the NAPS is that it focuses attention on long-term solutions and moves debate away from short-term and reactive responses. The Irish Government is working on a number of levels to drive forward the social inclusion agenda and this Plan outlines a wide variety of initiatives touching every aspect of Government. The NDP and the PPF provide the building blocks for an inclusive Ireland. They also provide the background for the next stage of the NAPS process. The current period of review and consultation will strengthen the Strategy and targets are being reviewed and revised, to ensure that they remain relevant in the years ahead. The development of National Action Plans Against Poverty and Social Exclusion add a further dimension to these developments, identifying new themes to enhance the NAPS (such as the digital divide and family supports) and providing opportunities for regular review and evaluation of the effectiveness of the Strategy and its continuous improvement.

CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

The NAPS has been part of the national policy landscape for four years. These four years have also coincided with the strongest period of economic growth in the history of the State. In this period, the NAPS has provided a framework for action in respect of poverty and social exclusion. Much progress has been made in the past four years. Unemployment has fallen to levels unimaginable in the early 1990s while the numbers in employment have increased considerably. Consistent poverty and child poverty has fallen substantially. Major initiatives to address educational disadvantage, urban disadvantage and rural poverty have been progressing.

While recognising this progress and these achievements, many challenges remain in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Indeed, new challenges have arisen since the launch of the NAPS in 1997. The current issues facing Ireland in relation to housing and accommodation come readily to mind here. Issues in relation to health and access to health care for the most vulnerable in our society are now also now emerging as of increasing importance in Irish social policy. In addition, the needs of asylum seekers, refugees, foreign ethnic minorities and the growing problem of racism are relatively new considerations for Irish policy makers but are ones that now must be addressed.

Given the very rapid change that has occurred in Irish society, both positive and negative, over the past four years it is particularly appropriate that the

NAPS is undergoing its first major review. The review process will allow those involved in influencing and forming policy to consider these changes and to identify achievable, realistic but also ambitious targets for the coming years. While recognising our successes, as a society we should not underestimate the challenges that still face us in achieving the further reduction of consistent poverty and increased social inclusion. The NAPS framework has provided a strong basis on which a future and forward-looking Strategy can be built.

In this context it is important to remember that Ireland is part of a wider international community, and in particular is part of the EU. Recent initiatives at EU level in the fight against poverty will provide a broader context in which we must locate our past successes, present challenges and future plans. This is an exciting and vital phase in the development of a broader international anti-poverty and social exclusion agenda and an opportunity to share our experiences and learn from others.

Ireland's first NAPincl was submitted to the EU on 1 June, 2001. November 2001 will see the publication of the revised NAPS. These will dovetail to a considerable extent and provide an occasion for reflection and forward planning. They signal the end of one phase in the NAPS and an opportunity for a new beginning, building on the sound foundation of the past four years. This poses yet another challenge towards achieving the overall goal of any anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy - a fairer and more equitable society.

Appendices



APPENDIX A

MEMBERSHIP OF THE SENIOR OFFICIALS GROUP ON SOCIAL INCLUSION

Mary Doyle ¹	Department of An Taoiseach
Deirdre Carroll	Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs
Jim Beecher	Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Paul Kelly	Department of Education and Science
John Cullen	Department of the Environment and Local Government
Sean Gorman	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Jim Mc Caffrey	Department of Finance
Frances Spillane	Department of Health and Children
Sylda Langford	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Ken O'Leary	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Con Haugh	Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation

1 Chairperson

APPENDIX B

MEMBERSHIP OF THE NAPS INTER-DEPARTMENTAL POLICY COMMITTEE

Deirdre Carroll ^Y	Mary Doyle ^Y
Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs	Department of An Taoiseach
Patricia O'Connor	Department of Education and Science
Michael Cunniffe	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Mary O'Donoghue	Department of the Environment and Local Government
Frank O'Donnell	Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Charlie Hardy	Department of Health and Children
Joe Mooney	Department of Finance
Joe Ryan	Department of the Marine and Natural Resources
Kathleen Stack	Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation
David Monks	Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands
Niall Mc Cutcheon ^T	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Stephanie O'Donnell ^T	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Gerry Mc Donagh	Department of Public Enterprise
Dermot Mc Gauran	Department of Foreign Affairs
Hugh Frazer ^u	Combat Poverty Agency
Tony Crooks	Area Development Management Ltd
Gerard Walker	FÁS

^Y Co Chairperson

^T Joint Members

^u to be replaced by Helen Johnson in second half of 2001

APPENDIX C

POVERTY PROOFING GUIDELINES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1

Following the Government decision of 23 July 1998, in line with a Partnership 2000 commitment to strengthening of administrative procedures for equality proofing in the context of the NAPS, it is now a requirement in the updated Cabinet Handbook, published in October 1998 (p.19), that Memoranda for the Government involving significant policy proposals "indicate clearly the impact of the proposal on groups in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty in the case of significant policy proposals".

1.2

Although some Departments' remit may not seem to impact directly on poverty, and while some Departments are not involved in direct service delivery, it must be noted that this is an obligatory requirement. While the secondary effects of some proposals (particularly those which are not directly aimed at alleviating disadvantage) may not be immediately apparent, they may still have an impact on the poor, or may, inadvertently, lead to a risk of poverty for some people/groups.

1.3

The statement of impact on poverty should be based on a systematic analysis, using the Framework previously circulated and outlined again in section 4 below.

2. WHAT IS POVERTY?

2.1

Poverty is defined in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (adopted by Government in April 1997) as follows:
"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."

2.2

The NAPS overall target focuses on the 6 - 8% of Irish households that were determined, in the ESRI's 1998 Living in Ireland Survey (2000 data will be available later this year) to be "consistently poor" (based on the 50% and 60% relative income lines combined with the presence of basic deprivation). The target is to reduce this proportion to less than 5% of households by 2004.

There are also subsidiary targets in relation to the five key themes identified in the NAPS: Educational Disadvantage, Unemployment, Income Adequacy, Disadvantaged Urban Areas, and Rural Poverty.

3. WHAT IS POVERTY PROOFING?

3.1

Poverty proofing is defined as follows:

"Poverty proofing is the process by which Government Departments, local authorities and State agencies assess policies and programmes at design and review stages in relation to the likely impact that they will have or have had on poverty and on inequalities which are likely to lead to poverty, with a view to poverty reduction."

3.2

The primary aim of the process is to identify the impact of the policy proposal on the poor so that this can be given proper consideration in designing the policy. It is not intended that Poverty Proofing would require that all policies be fundamentally transformed so that they are explicitly targeted at the disadvantaged. (Attention is drawn to the point made at 3.3 following.)

3.3

The potential effects of some policy proposals may be ambiguous in the sense that the policy may have a positive effect on some poverty risk groups and a negative (or no) effect on others. In such cases, all potential effects should be highlighted. One should consider the varying effects (if applicable) to each of the poverty risk groups as outlined below (4.4) and how any adverse effects on these groups might be counteracted. The possibility of particular groups being inadvertently excluded from the potential benefits of a proposal should also be noted.

4. POVERTY PROOFING PROCEDURE

4.1

The procedure outlined below is as previously circulated in the document, "Policy Proofing in the Context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy".

4.2 Proofing What?

Poverty proofing should be undertaken in the following circumstances:

- in the preparation of SMI Statements of Strategy and Annual Business Plans;
- in designing policies and preparing Memoranda to Government on significant policy proposals;
- in the preparation of the Estimates and Annual Budget proposals this will also include expenditure reviews and programme evaluations;
- in the preparation of the National Development Plan and other relevant EU Plans and Programmes; and
- in the preparation of legislation.

4.3 Proofing How?

In the circumstances outlined above, Departments should individually address the following questions:

- What is the primary objective of this policy / programme / expenditure proposal?

- Does it . . .
 - i) help to prevent people falling into poverty?
 - ii) reduce the level (in terms of numbers and depth) of poverty?
 - iii) ameliorate the effects of poverty?
 - iv) have no effect on poverty?
 - v) increase poverty?
 - vi) contribute to the achievement of the NAPS targets (including subsidiary targets under the five themes)?
 - vii) address inequalities which might lead to poverty? (See 4.5 below)
 - viii) as proposed, reach the target group(s)? (See 4.4 below)

and what is the rationale and basis of the assessment (for example, administrative data sources/household survey data, Working Group or Task Force Reports etc.) behind each of these replies?

- If the proposal has the effect of increasing the level of poverty, what options might be identified to ameliorate this effect? [*this could include proposals to counteract adverse effects which may be identified for certain sub-groups even where the impact on the overall population is positive - see 3.3 above.*]
- If the proposal has no effect on the level of poverty, what options might be identified to produce a positive effect? [*Again this could address any potential for certain social categories to miss out on benefits generally available to the target group.*]

4.4

In answering these questions, particular attention should be paid to those groups which have been identified as being either in persistent poverty or known to be at risk of poverty (in both rural and urban areas), viz.:

- the unemployed, particularly the long-term unemployed;
- children, particularly those living in large families;
- single adult households and households headed by someone working in the home;
- lone parents;
- people with disabilities;
- older people, in particular households headed by a retired person;
- members of the Traveller community;
- the homeless;
- ethnic minorities.

[It should be noted that the extent and composition of these groups are likely to change over time and the focus of proofing would change accordingly over the lifetime of the NAPS.]

4.5

Particular attention should also be paid to inequalities which may lead to poverty. These could arise, for instance, in the context of age, gender, disability, belonging to an ethnic minority (including membership of the Traveller community) or sexual orientation.

5. EVALUATION

5.1

Poverty Proofing is currently in place on a pilot basis. The effectiveness of the process is being reviewed. The findings of that review are expected to be made available in mid 2001.

Should you have any queries on these guidelines, please contact the National Anti-Poverty Strategy Unit in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs at (01) 7043530 or 7043794.

APPENDIX D

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Combat Poverty Agency

The Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) is a Statutory Agency under the aegis of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The CPA constitutes a key element of the monitoring arrangements for the NAPS. It is currently overseeing an evaluation of the NAPS process, including consideration of the views and experience of the voluntary and community sector, and has recently produced an initial assessment of the NAPS.

Commission on Social Welfare

A Commission on Social Welfare reported in 1986. The objective of the Commission was to review and report on the social welfare system and related social services, and to make recommendations for their development having regard to the needs of modern Irish society. The Commission's report has had a major influence on the development of social welfare policy in the period since.

Economic and Social Research Institute

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) is a not-for-profit organisation founded in 1960. Its aim is to bring the latest thinking in economics and the social sciences to bear on the actual and potential problems of Irish society. It is engaged in a broad programme of work covering economic forecasting and modelling, public finance, the labour market, social exclusion, education and health. ESRI research has been a vital constituent in the national debate on economic and social issues over the past 30 years.

FÁS

FÁS - the Training and Employment Authority - provides a wide range of services to the labour market in Ireland

Living in Ireland Survey

The Living in Ireland Survey (LIIS) is the Irish element of the European Community Household Panel, and is carried out by the ESRI (see above). A joint committee of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, the CPA and the ESRI manages the survey.

National Anti-Poverty Strategy

The ten-year National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) sets out the extent of poverty and social exclusion in Ireland as well as identifying the strategic policy direction needed to tackle the issue. Developed by an Inter-Departmental Policy Committee, comprising high level officials from relevant Government Departments and Agencies including the CPA, and following wide-ranging consultation and participation with the voluntary and community sector, the Strategy was launched by the Irish Government in 1997. The NAPS is currently being reviewed and revised, by way of an extensive process of involvement of stakeholders. This process will culminate in the publication of a revised Strategy in November, 2001.

The definition of poverty contained in the NAPS states:

"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."

National Development Plan

The National Development Plan 2000-2006 (NDP) is a strategy document, which lays the foundation for

Ireland's continuing economic and social development. It sets out a strategy, supported by commitments for funding, in the areas of infrastructural development, education and training, the productive sector and the promotion of social inclusion. It also contains a commitment and accompanying framework for the promotion of more balanced regional development. The Plan was framed after an extensive consultation process, including the Social Partners and regional interests and reflects the broad consensus in the consultation process as to the future development needs of the country.

National Economic and Social Council

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) is a key high-level medium-term policy review forum involving senior officials, Social Partners, academics, and researchers.

National Economic and Social Forum

The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) focuses on monitoring and analysing the implementation of specific measures and programmes, especially those concerned with the achievement of equality and social exclusion. Its membership includes members of the Oireachtas (Houses of Parliament), employer/business and farm bodies, the Community and Voluntary Sector, and representatives from central and local government.

National Employment Action Plan

The Employment Action Plan (EAP) is produced annually to respond to the EU's Employment Strategy. This 2001 EAP is the fourth such Action Plan. Under the Employment Strategy the EU issues Employment Guidelines annually reflecting the employment challenges facing the Union as a whole.

The Guidelines are organised under four thematic pillars i.e. Employability, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability and Equal Opportunities between Women and Men. In addition, in 2001, for the first time, five horizontal guidelines were agreed covering aspects which affect employment policies in general. These horizontal guidelines related to:

- meeting EU-wide employment targets;
- life-long learning;
- social partnership;
- balance and integration between the Pillars of the Strategy/Regional Dimension;
- development of Indicators.

The format and contents of this Plan are intended to be consistent with the template proposed by the European Commission so as to facilitate comparisons across the Member States. Under that template, the broad economic and employment contexts and the mix of employment policies are first set out as a backdrop to specific actions taken in 2000 or planned for 2001. It is recognised that certain policies and actions will receive different priority across the Member States reflecting the challenges in the different labour markets. It is also recognised that policies and actions are not static and are constantly evolving in response to changing circumstances.

Programme for Prosperity and Fairness

National Partnership agreements have been in operation since 1987 and are negotiated between Government and the Social Partners (employers, trade unions, farmers, and the Community and Voluntary Sector). The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) is the current three-year national agreement, for the period 2000-2003.

APPENDIX E
KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

ADM	Area Development Management Ltd
CDSP	Community Development Support Programme
CE	Community Employment programme
CSF	Community Support Framework
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CSW	Commission on Social Welfare
EAP	Employment Action Plan
EHRD-OP	Employment & Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2000-2006
ESF	European Social Fund
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
FIS	Family Income Supplement
FIT	Fastrack to Information Technology
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
IDPC	NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee
ISP	Integrated Services Process
NAPincl	National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2001 - 3003
NAPS	National Anti-Poverty Strategy
NDP	National Development Plan 2000-2006
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFF	One-Parent Family Payment
OP-LURD	Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development
PPF	Programme for Prosperity and Fairness
PRSA	Personal Retirement Savings Account
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education programme
SWA	Supplementary Welfare Allowance
UN	United Nations
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

