

National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016

Consolidated Proceedings of Social Inclusion Forum 2015

‘Social Policy Innovation for Social Inclusion’



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí

Department of Social Protection

www.welfare.ie



Consolidated Proceedings of Social Inclusion Forum 2015



Published by

Department of Social Protection

Áras Mhic Dhiarmada

Store Street

Dublin 1

ISBN: 978-1-908109-39-2

Department of Social Protection

Dublin, Ireland

Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction	7
Section 2: Acknowledgements.....	9
Section 3: Key Conclusions and Policy Recommendations	11
Section 4: Welcome and Opening Remarks	16
Opening Remarks.....	17
Setting the Context.....	17
Feedback on the outcomes of Regional Preparatory Workshops	20
Round table discussions on updating and extending the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion for the period 2015-2017	21
Section 5: Workshops	24
5.1 Youth Exclusion.....	25
Presentations.....	25
Participant Discussion: Key points	27
5.2 Children's Services – Prevention and Early Intervention.....	29
Presentations.....	30
Participant Discussion: Key points	31
5.3 Social Housing.....	35
Presentations.....	35
Participant Discussion: Key points	38
5.4 Migrant Integration.....	40
Presentations.....	40
Participant Discussion: Key points	42
Section 6: Concluding Section.....	44
Summary of Workshop Discussions.....	45
Address by the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection	47
Closing Remarks	51
Glossary	52
Appendix 1: The Social Inclusion Innovations Showcase	54
List of Projects.....	54



Section 1

Introduction

Introduction

The Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) was established by the Government as part of the structures to monitor and evaluate Ireland's *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007-2016*. The Department of Social Protection has been given responsibility by Government to convene the Social Inclusion Forum, which is a key element of the Government's commitment to consult with all relevant stakeholders, including people experiencing poverty and the groups that represent them in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, and those with particular fields of expertise in matters relevant to, or impacting on, poverty and social exclusion.

The Forum provides an opportunity for engagement between officials from government departments, community and voluntary organisations and people experiencing poverty in relation to the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*.

The 2015 Forum was organised by the Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Social Protection with the assistance of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland and the Community Worker's Co-operative (CWC).

The purpose of the Social Inclusion Forum is to provide organisations and individuals with the opportunity to:

- Review progress on the implementation of National Social Target for Poverty Reduction agreed as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- Input their views on key policies and implementation issues;
- Identify barriers and constraints to progress and how best these can be tackled;
- Provide suggestions and proposals for new developments and more effective policies in the future.

This report provides a summary of the 11th Meeting of the Forum which took place on Wednesday 25th March 2015 at the Croke Park Conference Centre, Dublin. The theme of the 2015 SIF was '**Social Policy Innovation for Social Inclusion**'. Social innovation is part of the **social investment package** and must be embedded in policy making and connected to social priorities.

The report includes inputs from guest speakers to the workshops, which provided a contextual framework for the discussions in each of the four parallel workshops. The report aims to capture the discussion and conclusions of each workshop as well as highlighting some common themes which cut across all of the workshops. In addition, a number of overarching recommendations are highlighted for the attention of policy makers. The report will be made available to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

The views contained in this report reflect the views of the speakers and the participants at the Forum and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Social Protection.

Section 2

Acknowledgements

Section 2: Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

The Department of Social Protection acknowledges the support and assistance of the European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland and the Community Worker's Co-operative in the organisation of the Social Inclusion Forum and for the preparatory workshops which they jointly organised to enable individuals experiencing poverty to consider their contribution to the work of the Forum.

Sincere thanks and appreciation is also extended to all those who participated and contributed to the Social Inclusion Forum on the day.

Appreciation is extended to the workshop facilitators Sineád Smith, Siobhán Lynam, Alice-Mary Higgins and Valerie McFarlane and to the note takers for faithfully recording the content of the workshop discussions.

Finally, thanks are also expressed to the rapporteur, Aiden Lloyd, who managed to convey the many voices succinctly on the day and in the compilation of this report.



Section 3

Key Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Section 3: Key Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Key Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The 2015 Social Inclusion Forum is convened in the aftermath of the setting of the National Social Target for Poverty Reduction for the implementation of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 - 2016. The National Social Target for Poverty Reduction (NSTPR), aligns Ireland with the Europe 2020 Poverty Target objective to lift at least 20 million people out of poverty or exclusion. Ireland's contribution to this target is to lift a minimum of 200,000 people out of combined poverty by 2020. A further component of the NSTPR is the child-specific poverty target, which is to lift over 70,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020; a reduction of at least two-thirds on the 2011 level.

The National Social Target for Poverty Reduction was framed within the recovery strategy to address the effects of the economic crisis, which resulted in significant cuts in government spending and which seriously impacted on those living below or close to the poverty line¹. The worst of that period of budget cuts is now over. However, it will take some years for a full recovery to emerge. The level of deprivation continues to increase and now runs at 30.5% and consistent poverty also continues its upward trajectory from 4.2% in 2008 to 8.2% in 2013². On the positive side, there is a definite recovery of employment and it is expected that the Pathways to Work Strategy 2012-2015 will contribute to further progress in this regard, particularly for the long term unemployed and other marginalised groups. That recovery has yet to significantly impact on many rural areas which indicates the need for stronger regional development strategies.

It is disappointing that the achievement of the revised Target for Poverty Reduction remains challenging. Hopefully, matters will have improved sufficiently over the next year or two to bring some sort of wider and deeper recovery reflecting the national objective to take people out of poverty.

The key issues and conclusions set out in this report are important to the achievement of the objectives in the NAPinclusion. They point the way to a smoother and speedier achievement of the objectives and they identify how barriers to those achievements can be circumvented. In that sense all of the points in the report are important and should be scrutinised by relevant departments and agencies for insights and learning. That said, there are a number of points that stand out because of their stark impact or because they cut across several themes and target groups and are of strategic importance in advancing the achievement of the poverty reduction target. These key points are listed below:

- **Progress against the poverty target and sub targets** set out in the NAPinclusion are monitored and made available through publication of the Social Inclusion Monitor report. This is a useful reporting mechanism in terms of measuring overall progress on the targets

1 Crisis, Austerity, Recovery: Income Distribution through the Great Recession in Ireland, 2015 ESRI

2 Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2013, Central Statistics Office

Section 3: Key Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

against key statistical data.

A more proactive approach, would also take into account the policy decision and implementation practices that determine whether the Target is achievable or not. This is the core content of the Social Inclusion Forum (SIF), which presumably is intended to enable progress on important policy/programme areas to be assessed, critiqued and amended in order to provide the best conditions to meet the poverty targets.

Over the past number of years no progress has been made towards the Irish contribution to the Europe 2020 target despite these targets being amended in the National Social Target for Poverty Reduction. It is surely vital to factor in the effect of the policies, delivery practices and



implementation strategies that create the conditions whereby the targets can be achieved. Successive Social Inclusion Forum reports have attempted to highlight this approach in a practical way by including a number of key messages for policy makers upfront in the report. This reflects the reality that while all of the discussion is concerned with important matters of social need, policy responses and programme implementation some are of particular strategic importance to the achievement of the poverty targets and therefore require a specific focus and response.

- The impact of the economic downturn has been particularly difficult for young people** who have experienced higher levels of unemployment and encountered real difficulties in accessing/embarking on a career path. Young people have also been subject to substantial welfare payment reductions making independent living difficult if not impossible. The combined effect has been to increase emigration and, in disadvantaged areas, to push young people towards the margins. The Youth Guarantee offers a solution but implementation will require a speedier, more flexible and holistic approach capable of overcoming the silo factor of department and agency programmes.

A particular problem arises in managing transition points, where responsibility shifts between agencies but the process that underpins the relationship and provides motivational direction is lost in the changeover. Giving youth organisations a substantial role in a combined programme/agency response would help to overcome this problem as well as introducing a wider social

Section 3: Key Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

objective to the matrix.

- **Children's services** will always be a point of focus when child poverty levels continue to be unacceptably high. While there have been a number of welcome developments to copper fasten the rights of children and to improve services there is also an urgent need to link up national strategies aimed at children and their families – e.g. health strategies, social inclusion etc., - to bring about a more coherent targeting of disadvantaged children.

A particular gap appears to exist in relation to community participation at local level on Children and Young People's Services Committees. The participation of such a key stakeholder group is crucial to the development of effective children's services. Obviously, community capacity building is an essential element of quality participation but this is very difficult to achieve when local community development infrastructure has been massively diminished by funding reductions and less-than-helpful restructuring under the *Putting People First* policy.

Government needs to look again at the need for neighbourhood and community development responses which can harness community effort towards resolving matters of child poverty and service access. The Community Development Programme provided this prior to its abolition/absorption. The Family Resource Centre Programme provides an infrastructure to which a new community development programme could be attached at low cost.

- **The housing crisis**, brought about on foot of the construction bubble and subsequent property market collapse, has had a widespread impact, but this has been hardest for those reliant on social housing or rent subsidies. The huge decline in housing supply has triggered increases in rents well beyond what is affordable to families who have no alternative housing option. This situation is exacerbated by the cap on rental allowances which leaves a gap between market prices and the supports provided by the State's welfare system.

The decision to move away from local authority public housing towards social housing body provision and rental subsidies is only feasible if there is a policy regime that includes a proper legislative base to protect tenants and landlords alike. Affordability, security of tenure and guaranteed standards could be ensured through such legislation.

However, legislation will not address the problems arising from a supply strategy that is primarily based on private ownership with only minimum social housing provision. Shelter is a basic need; therefore housing provision needs to be driven by a rights based approach. The absence of a tenant/community voice in the development of housing policy development and monitoring leaves the primary stakeholder out of the housing provision process. Again, this means investing in community participation in order to secure that voice within the policy

Section 3: Key Conclusions and Policy Recommendations



- Migrants**, who are essentially people whose place of birth is outside of the State, and their children (many of whom are born within the State), now constitute a sizable grouping in society who frequently occupy the social margins in terms of employment, poverty, discrimination and a separation from the rights and guarantees of citizenship. Despite being late into the immigration phenomenon Ireland appears likely to repeat many of the mistakes of other countries. Coherent integration strategies are needed and the failure to adequately tackle the problem of the undocumented has facilitated the growth of oppressive employment and trafficking as well as barriers to accessing vital health and welfare services. Direct provision, in particular the extended years of waiting for a decision imposed on asylum seekers, is promoting social consequences that will inevitably cost both State and society in years to come.

Both indigenous and immigrant communities have an enthusiasm and capacity to advance integration and address issues of racism and discrimination that prevent this integration. However, a dismantled community sector at the very time it is desperately required to facilitate this happening means that such an approach is untenable. Investing in community development infrastructure remains the best mechanism through which to identify needs and formulate effective integration responses.



Section 4

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Section 4: Welcome and Opening Remarks

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Opening Remarks

The moderator Mr Hugh Frazer opening proceedings and welcomed people to the Forum and thanked everybody for their attendance, especially those who travelled some distance to attend. Mr Frazer outlined the aim of the Forum which is give people who are directly affected by poverty and social exclusion and those who work with them a voice in the development of the policies that directly affect them, and in the ways that the policies are implemented. It also provides a valuable opportunity for those responsible for policy making and its implementation to get together with members of community and voluntary organisations at national and local level and with people experiencing poverty, to listen to each other and share information.



Setting the Context

Ms Simonetta Ryan, Assistant Secretary, Department of Social Protection welcomed everyone on behalf of the Department of Social Protection. Ms Ryan thanked the Community Worker's Co-operative and the European Anti-Poverty Network, for their support and expertise in framing and organising the event, in particular the preliminary regional seminars held recently around the country, which she felt greatly enhance participation in the Forum.

Section 4: Welcome and Opening Remarks

Ms Ryan stated that the Forum provides an opportunity for participants to relate their experience of the policies that are central to the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, and to discuss the challenges that arise at personal, local and national levels, and the priorities that need to be adopted to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

Ms Ryan went on to say that the challenges facing the country are now very different to when the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion was drawn up in 2007 with a time span to 2016. We suffered a major banking crisis and economic crash from 2008 and entered the bailout in 2010. In that period the Government had to focus on meeting the Programme requirements so that the country continued to be funded.

Ms Ryan pointed out that a key strategy has been to protect core payments to the greatest extent possible but to modernise the social protection system to provide an integrated service to clients, with activation and support at the core. Because this period has been so turbulent at national and EU levels the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion* is somewhat outdated. Recent NAPinclusion implementation reports have indicated that many of its goals and actions appear out of date, or are less relevant due to changed circumstances, priorities and policy responses. At EU level it does not reflect the National Reform Programme or the European Semester for example. As a result, an updating of NAPinclusion for its remaining two years 2015-2016 is required.

It has also been agreed to extend the timeframe of NAPinclusion to 2017.

- This will align it with stakeholder departments' Statements of Strategy which cover the period 2015 to 2017.
- To acknowledge 2017 as the 20th anniversary of Ireland's first national poverty strategy and poverty target in 1997.
- Consultations on future NAPinclusion strategy beyond 2017 could to be framed around this landmark anniversary.

Ms Ryan pointed out that the Department has begun the updating process and there would be an opportunity for participants to contribute their views later in the morning.

The Social Inclusion Monitor (SIM) reports on progress towards the national social target for poverty reduction and the main findings from the 2013 report show:

- There was continued recovery in economic growth and employment in 2013, leading to a fall in unemployment.
- The at-risk-of-poverty rate fell for the first time in three years, as did the anchored at-risk-of-poverty, confirming real improvements in the incomes of the poorest households.
- Consistent poverty increased marginally to 8.2 per cent, leaving a gap of four percentage points to be bridged to meet the interim poverty target by 2016.
- There was an increase in consistent poverty among children to over 11 per cent. The child poverty target now requires 100,000 children to be lifted out of poverty by 2020.
- No progress was made towards the Europe 2020 target.

Section 4: Welcome and Opening Remarks

Ms Ryan added that Ireland also contributes to EU initiatives to tackle poverty and to promote social inclusion by participation and inputs into various activities, including the:

- Social Protection Committee which reports on the European social situation and fosters policy co-ordination.
- Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, which is one of the flagship initiatives of the EU 2020 Strategy.
- Europe 2020 poverty target and the mid-term review. Ireland's contribution to the EU Poverty Target is to lift a minimum of 200,000 people out of combined poverty between 2010 and 2020.

The theme of this year's Forum is '**Social Policy Innovation for Social Inclusion**'. Social innovation is an integral element of the EU Social Investment Package (SIP), which is a far-reaching package that guides Member States to more effective spending on social protection. It seeks to achieve lasting and positive social outcomes including high employment and reduced levels of social exclusion and poverty. The package encompasses a broad range of policy areas from childcare and healthcare, through education and training, to employment activation and re-skilling.

Fundamental to the SIP is the notion that social policies should empower people from an early age, strengthen their capabilities to adapt to risks such as changing career patterns, new working conditions or an ageing population and enhance their opportunities to participate in society across the life course. Investing as early as possible is the best way to break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and ensure that people live up to their full potential.

Ms Ryan concluded by adding that participants would hear later that morning in the various workshops practical, real examples of ideas, services and models being delivered across four different policies areas:

1. **Youth Exclusion;**
2. **Children's Services Prevention and Early Intervention;**
3. **Social Housing;**
4. **Migrant Integration.**



Section 4: Welcome and Opening Remarks

Feedback on the outcomes of Regional Preparatory Workshops

Mr Robin Hanan, EAPN Ireland and Ms Ann Irwin, CWC, presented a video based on a series of workshops which they had organised with people affected by poverty around the country to discuss messages to be brought to this Forum. They stressed that the Social Inclusion Forum is the most important gathering of officials and community groups to talk about poverty and to strategise for change. The timing is vital as we emerge from Recession. People on the lowest incomes lost most in the Recession and the challenge is to rebuild incomes, create quality employment and services for a more inclusive and equal Ireland. The main messages from the video were summarised in a more detailed report distributed at the Forum.

They pointed to the lack of progress on poverty reduction which was reflected in the frustration expressed at the workshops from policy choices since 2008 that have impacted negatively on those on the lowest income. A particular concern is the continuous rise in consistent poverty and deprivation, which is now running at over 30%.

They also spoke of the deep frustration at the lack of feedback and progress reporting on issues highlighted in the past by SIF participants.

The regional workshops also highlighted the housing crisis and the problems this raises for many people, including those who are losing their home, those seeking rented accommodation as rents continue to rise. They said that rent supplement limits are quite inadequate and rent controls or constraints need to be introduced. There was a strong sense that Traveller Accommodation Plans are not being implemented, presenting huge problems for young Travellers trying for a family.

Participants had noted the disturbing prevalence of poverty and deprivation among children. Special mention was made of children with disabilities and children in direct provision. No child should have to live in direct provision and the system should be shut down. Children with disabilities need additional education supports including Special Needs Assistants but budget cuts mean that many children are not receiving these supports.

Youth exclusion was a reality emerging from the workshops. Surviving on lower social welfare rates, taking up work placements that lead nowhere. These difficulties are compounded for young Travellers because of lack of ethnic recognition. Reductions in funding to youth work organisations was also posing difficulties at this time of greatest reliance on such services.

Referring to migrants, the feedback stressed the widespread poverty and their over-representation in low pay employment sectors. The absence of a national policy on education/training for asylum seekers and problems in accessing services arising from the Habitual Residence Condition was also highlighted in the workshops. The health and well-being of women was a particular concern in relation to direct provision.

Section 4: Welcome and Opening Remarks

There was a concern about the cross-cutting issues arising in the regional workshops. The implementation of the Local Government (Reform) Act 2014, coupled with years of disproportionate cuts, have decimated community development infrastructure, and were key issues. The introduction of a procurement process to the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) was regarded by some as a step towards the privatisation of poverty responses, with all that this implies in terms of public responsibility and commitment.

Finally, in the context of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for Women's Equality, there was a call for a renewed focus on the achievement of equality for women.



Round table discussions on updating and extending the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion for the period 2015-2017

The round table discussions focused on the aftermath of the existing National Action for Social Inclusion period which comes to an end in 2016. The purpose of the discussion was to ascertain the nature, levels and extent of poverty and poverty associated needs with a view to updating the NAPinclusion for the period 2015-2017.

In general, the discussion was framed by a desire for a **new vision for society** following the disabling effect of austerity. People were of the view that such a society should be based on human rights for all, a commitment to social development – especially that people's development and welfare be other than a bi-product of the economy - and a return to greater investment in public services and community development.

There was a strong belief expressed that **equality and human rights** should be a central goal of Government to enable people with disabilities, Travellers and other marginalised groups achieve meaningful inclusion and equality, and to address the widely condemned direct provision system which is leading to mental health problems and longer term exclusion.

Income adequacy was a particular expressed need reflected by many participants who spoke of the reaction becoming increasingly 'response embedded', as witnessed by the growth of food banks and increased demands on charitable organisations to meet basic subsistence needs. Low pay, zero hours and short-time contracts were directly contributing to this. The gender pay gap and the location of disadvantaged groups in employment areas associated with low pay were mentioned as a particular concern.

Many of the needs identified at the round tables were **work-related issues**, illustrating the point that employment is not necessarily a route out of poverty. The cost of going to work has increased because of government's housing and transport strategies and the intense burden of mortgages and lack of affordable childcare was highlighted by many. The affordable childcare issue was particularly identified as a problem because of its impact on women and those parenting alone.

There was a widespread concern to ease the path to employment for young people, especially through a more robust and **widespread application of the Youth Guarantee**.

There was a widespread concern about services, with a strong demand for a return to **investment in vital public services** – investment in children's services getting a particular mention on many tables. Health was another issue mentioned: reduced health services had a disproportionate effect on poorer people because of the association between poverty and poor health. There was also a concern to bring about better coordination between agencies in order to achieve coherence of services. Better planning was widely regarded as the means to bring this about.

The importance of **education access** across the life cycle was a concern of many, with a particular application to asylum seekers and the children of asylum seekers. The reality that the population is ageing was also raised by many as a good reason to strengthen the life cycle approach in education strategies. The increased cost of third level education was mentioned as being a barrier to people living in poverty because it cuts them off from the means to escape their poverty.

Given the prominence and immediacy of the housing crisis it was hardly surprising that **housing/accommodation** was a particular topic. Traveller accommodation needs, especially the endurance of the problem, was one issue arising, many people agreed, because of local authority failure to implement the Traveller Accommodation Strategy.

Section 4: Welcome and Opening Remarks

The over-reliance on the private sector to provide housing was widely regarded as resulting in a **lack of social housing** and erratic supply and cost problems, with particular effect on people on low incomes, homeless people and migrant families. The need for better rental support systems and a call for investment in social housing was widely proclaimed across the tables.

A concern that straddled many areas of need related to the disproportionate **impact of austerity on civil society** and the undermining of the independence of the community development sector through the application of elements of the Local Government (Reform) Act 2014. A particular problem identified was that changes had resulted in social inclusion funding becoming both top-down and subject to a competitive tendering process. People were clear in stating that community development is an effective mechanism that allows people to access the services required to combat poverty. Participants were also clear that community development is a primary means whereby disadvantaged people are able to have their voice heard, an important democratic consideration that needs to be recognised.



Section 5

Workshops

Section 5: Workshops

Workshops

Participants chose one of four parallel workshops to discuss key issues under a set of themes relevant to the NAPinclusion strategy and the targets set by the National Social Target for Poverty Reduction - both of which are set within the targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the aims of the Social Investment Package. The workshop themes covered important issues that have emerged from the boom and bust phases of the economy - social housing provision, the integration of migrants, children's services and youth exclusion.

Workshops 5.1:

Youth Exclusion

Presentations

Ms Anna Ludwinek, Research Manager, Living Conditions and Quality of Life (LCQL), European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working

Conditions said there was a need to broaden the debate on young people that has so far been mainly dominated by the integration into the labour market to also encompass a broader approach to social inclusion. What is needed is a process that ensures that those most at risk of social exclusion gain appropriate resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and that they have a standard of living and wellbeing that is considered normal.

She stressed the importance of transitions (from education to work but also into broader adulthood) and the need for services to pay attention to these crucial moments in young people lives as well as taking cognisance of the importance of ill health as a barrier for social inclusion, in particular the growing issue of mental health problems.

Ms Ludwinek highlighted the issue of affordable housing for young people which is crucial for young people being able to move out of the parental home and start living independently.

She also spoke of the importance of reaching out to those that are hardest to reach and are most disadvantaged thus avoiding the cherry picking which programmes and initiatives may fall back on to ensure numbers or seemingly successful outputs. She spoke of the challenges posed regarding how to make sure that one can build on the experiences and progress of existing programmes, avoiding moving to the development of another programme and thereby ensuring sustainability.

Section 5: Workshops

Finally, Ms Ludwinek spoke of the importance of a coherent, broad approach to social inclusion where young people can meaningfully participate. She emphasised the need for an integrated approach of different services.

Ms Christine Lodge, Manager, Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYR), Central Youth Facility, gave an account of BRYR's involvement in the pilot Youth Guarantee project in Ballymun.

BRYR is a community based youth work organisation working for the development of young people in Ballymun. Despite significant cut to budgets in recent years, services are provided to over 700 young people.

Notwithstanding major regeneration the area continues to experience social disadvantage, including high unemployment, low family income, poor education attainment, literacy/ numeracy problems. Crime, justice and mental health are prevailing problems. For young people, unemployment impacts at three levels: personal, societal and economic.

The Youth Guarantee is an EU initiative offering 18–24 year olds guidance, education and training, work experience and employment. In Ballymun, the pilot Youth Guarantee project is implemented by a coordinated statutory-community collaboration that includes Ballymun Jobs Centre, Department of Social Protection, BRYR and the City of Dublin Education and Training Board. It is managed by a team of senior staff from the partner organisations. BRYR's role is to help young people engage, overcome any barriers identified through the feedback of young people and contributing to the dissemination of lessons from the pilot.

Despite BRYR's significant involvement no additional funding was made available. The pilot project raised challenges for BRYR, especially in maintaining its voluntary engagement ethos alongside the potentially punitive sanctions of statutory organisations. The struggle to engage 'hard to reach' young people was also challenging. Despite these challenges, benefits did emanate from the shared multi-organisational commitment. There were meaningful offers of education, training and employment and the direct involvement of young people was facilitated by a more flexible interpretation of regulatory criteria. All of this greatly benefitted young people and demonstrated a rationale for the involvement of youth organisations.

As part of the national rollout, it is important that the local and national and youth work sector contribute to addressing youth unemployment and the development of related policy. It is also important to ensure the voice of young people is heard and listened to in the process. This is a key finding from the evaluation of the BYG pilot. Youth workers and the youth work sector have the capacity to actively engage with young people, particularly those hard to reach.

Section 5: Workshops

Mr Colin Cummins, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, presented an outline of CLASP (Community Leadership in Arts and Sport Programme) which is a local training initiative that targets young people 'at risk'. CLASP is a 40 week community based programme that provides Level 3 Core Skills Development in sports, arts and culture. It is a high support model involving a strong team approach.

CLASP is unique because it allows participants to develop concrete skills that help people to reintegrate into their community, building their confidence through a partnership model which facilitates people to value themselves and their achievements.

CLASP faces challenges in building on the momentum of the programme to date, especially in terms of transition to the next stage being supported.

Participant Discussion: Key Points

A holistic response

There was broad agreement in this workshop that State investment decisions must consider the longer-term costs of youth exclusion and balance this against the cost of supporting participation in terms of societal development and sustainability.

The workshop took a strong view that there needed to be recognition of the wider costs of non-participation. The general consensus was that issues of youth exclusion must be looked at in a holistic way – i.e. looking beyond activation towards seeking wider social returns. Most people were of the view that such an approach would recognise the value of the individual by enhancing their strength of spirit, promoting inclusion and enhancing the general participation of young people. Policies are needed to broaden social investment in public services to support active inclusion – accessibility/affordability of public transport being one example. Most people were clear that policy and services need to be client centred, universalist, applied in an integrated, mixed peer group context and grounded in common interest.

Managing transition

Many workshop participants called for less focus on the technical intervention and a greater concentration on the overall process, for instance supporting the preparatory stages – the pre-offer groundwork - managing the transition and planning the exit strategy. Participants agreed that these are the most vulnerable process points in the development cycle and it is where further investment in community and youth support services is needed to sustain earlier efforts and to ensure results.

Section 5: Workshops

There was a strong view that policy also needs to include mechanisms to capture the learning - at individual and process levels – and embed it in the mainstream. Participants also expressed a concern about work offers that don't pay and called for consideration of policies that address issues of work security. They felt that policy needs to break the cycle of disadvantage with the intrinsic goal of achieving income security – without which the inevitable outcome is welfare dependency.

Access to quality services

Participants were agreed that young people need equal access to quality services. Policy must ensure services reach everybody, but in particular the 'hard to reach' - those experiencing multiple barriers such as young Travellers, youth with disability, young ex-offenders or substance abusers (and their families), young parents, youth in direct provision, early school leavers. There was a consensus that a single rigid system doesn't suit all, the need for flexibility to meet diverse needs in the education system being a clear example.

Participants agreed that many young people are dropping out of formal systems, so there is a need to look anew at abilities and skills and find innovative ways to develop these.

Participants identified the need for funding to equalise the scale and pace of youth development and inclusion at national level and agreed that there should be no variance in funding due to scale or geography. What is needed is an integrated approach to mainstreaming quality service provision to young people across the country.

Intergenerational solidarity

The workshop called for a concept of social investment that encompasses intergenerational solidarity in order to avert inevitable exclusion. There are common policy issues that cross lifecycles so intergenerational solidarity is needed and should be encouraged in new policy initiatives, however, people felt that this will require the mainstreaming of equality in order to deal with fear of exclusion.



Section 5: Workshops

Workshop 2:

Children's Services – Prevention and Early Intervention

Presentations

Ms Elizabeth Canavan, Assistant Secretary, Children and Family Policy & Legislation Division and Mr Conor Rowley, Principal Officer, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, presented an overview of the national policy framework for children and young people *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF)*, including Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPCS) and the ABC Childhood Programme.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures is a whole-of-Government approach that will run until 2020 and will accommodate a number of constituent strategies. The framework centralises common outcomes, captures policy commitments, identifies key transformational goals necessitating action and ensures an innovative and effective way of working. The framework will identify and progress key themes including child poverty reduction.

The Children's and Young People's Services Committee is the local interagency structure currently being rolled out to improve the lives of young people at local and community level. It brings together public and not-for-profit organisations to engage in joint planning and coordination of services for children and young people.

The Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme operates in 13 sites and is focused on children's learning, development and health and on parenting. The interventions are evidence informed, with the aim of integrating with mainstream services, and use a consortium-based approach with a designated lead agency.

Professor Dympna Devine, Head of School of Education, UCD, began her presentation with a number of questions:

- Thinking about 'children' and 'childhood' what 3 words come to mind?
- Thinking about 'children' and 'childhood' 50 years ago, what 3 words come to mind?

She said that these questions highlight how our ideas about children and childhood change over time and therefore policy has to develop and change.

Professor Devine spoke about the definition of the child under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states that all persons from the age of 0 - 18 are defined as children. She outlined the importance of Convention for articulating ideas of a 'good' childhood and this required investment by the State and an outline of what is defined as

Section 5: Workshops

‘good’ for every child. She argued that children should not be perceived as passive, quoting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children which sees children as ‘beings’ in the present as well as future adult ‘becomings’.

Professor Devine also talked about valuing children differently:

- Valuing children as a group,
- Valuing children as citizens, giving them a voice, opportunity to participate and to assume agency,
- Taking children seriously – how they ‘live’, ‘think’ ‘do’ and ‘be’,
- Valuing different groups of children: children in poverty; migrant children; children of Travellers; disabled children.

She noted that in society there were children who ‘belong’ versus those who are ‘other’. She stressed that good societies invest in creating good childhoods. She emphasised that a values approach needs to be strategically implemented alongside universal embedded principles. She also felt that a key challenge was long-term and sustained investment in children, families and at community level.

Professor Devine noted that Ireland is at a key transition point emerging from the economic crisis. Children learn at an early stage what and who is valued. Prevention and early intervention is key, but what is crucial is the nature of the intervention. It is influenced by:

- Power, voice and identities – seeing the service/intervention from the perspective of the ‘whole’ child,
- Joined-up thinking,
- Critically reflective approach to children’s status.

Ms Hazel O’Byrne, Policy and Communications Officer, Young Ballymun, started with an overview of the context of Young Ballymun’s work:

- Significant increases in child poverty in Ireland,
- Joblessness,
- Increased financial stress, living standards down,
- Poverty closely correlated with children’s wellbeing,
- Persistent poverty, which has a greater link to socio-emotional outcomes than single instance events.

Ms O’Byrne highlighted the importance of a multi-dimensional approach to child poverty. She outlined that Young Ballymun is about breaking the cycle of poverty through prevention and early intervention work. The value of this approach is reflected in the recommendation of the EU Commission report *Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage*¹.

¹ Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage (Ireland) 2014, EU Commission

Section 5: Workshops

Young Ballymun provides multi-layered, integrated, embedded services for children and families from pregnancy through infancy to toddlerhood and childhood. A common agenda together with mutually reinforcing strategies, shared measurement, continuous communication and backbone organisation brings a collective impact.

Ms O'Byrne finished with an overview of the 4 components of Young Ballymun's service strategy:

- *Ready Steady Grow* Infant Mental Health Strategy for 0-3s
- 345 Learning Years *Quality Curriculum* and *Standards Strategy*
- *Incredible Years* - Social and Emotional Learning Strategy
- *Write Minded* Language and Literacy Strategy

Participant Discussion: Key Points

Policy

The need for commitment at a political level to tackle poverty was emphasised by participants who also identified critical reflection as a cornerstone need in current policy, something that was regarded as not a common enough practice in Ireland. There was also criticism by participants of current policy for focusing on the consequences rather than the causes of poverty, particularly in relation to the spatial distribution of poverty. Despite the emphasis placed on joined-up approaches to policy making in the presentations and amongst some contributors, some participants felt there was very little evidence of a joined-up approach to policy implementation.

Questions were raised by some participants about the intention of BOBF to be cross-cutting, yet there is a clear need to practically link with other policy areas such as education, direct provision and housing objectives. It was also noted by some participants that BOBF is more targeted than many strategies, but is the emphasis on innovation about doing more with less?

Many people highlighted the gap between policy and institutional frameworks, pointing to the need for greater capacity building and shared accountability. Participation was raised as a serious matter needing attention at both local and national level. A particular recommendation from the workshop was that young people should be represented on a national steering group.

DCYA outlined at the event that Children's Services Committees are being redeveloped and are now Children and Young People's Services Committees. These have an extended age-range from 0-24; will be structured according to the five national outcomes for children and young people; will now for the first time involve the community and voluntary sector as a matter of course; and will have regard to the voice of children and young people, both at national and local committee

Section 5: Workshops

levels. A 'Blueprint for the Development of Children and Young People's Services Committees' has been developed to chart the direction of committees and this document has been circulated for consultation to sectors which work with and for children and young people.

Research and Evaluation

Participants recognised that setting a reasonable time period to measure outcomes is an issue for time-limited projects. Another challenge is sustaining the outcomes of projects over time and developing appropriate indicators and benchmarks.

Funding

The inadequacy of resources for the C&V sector was raised by several participants, with sustained (multiannual) funding as a particular issue leading to a loss of learning. Organisations asked what mechanisms were going to be put in place to fund work with young people.

Key issues

Participants said that children live in families; therefore there is a need to address poverty and social exclusion among parents and within communities in order to address child poverty. Many people also felt there was a need to provide appropriate services for parents – parenting skills, education and training etc.

Questions were raised as to how BOBF engages with marginalised children such as Travellers, asylum seekers, children with disabilities, migrant workers etc. Some participants argued that the needs of marginalised children should be prioritised by Children and Young People's Services Committees.

Childcare

Participants spoke about the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme which provides support for parents in low paid employment and training or education by enabling qualifying parents to avail of reduced childcare costs at participating community childcare services. However, parents can incur debt due to the contribution they have to make. Furthermore, it was said that childcare workers find it stressful to see parents struggling to find the money to pay for the crèche.

Participants were unanimous in stressing that a national policy was needed on after-school care. It was noted that it was not just about homework, but also about recreation and general development.

Section 5: Workshops

Children and Young People Services Committees (CYPSCs)

Much of the discussion focused on the role of CYPSCs. There was some disagreement between DCYA and participants on the power balance between the community and voluntary sector and statutory agencies within these committees. Several participants called for a framework and standards to be set at national level on how services are to be delivered and how resources are to be targeted. The main criticism was that there should be better targeting of disadvantaged children as many participants felt that this is not happening.

DCYA highlighted that the plans of CYPSCs are based on local needs assessment.

Questions were raised in the workshop about:

- How organisations can participate?
- How can the right balance be achieved between statutory organisations and community groups?

Several participants noted a paradox at local level with a number of important local groups not represented. It was felt that the community and voluntary sector needs to be given an equal place on the committees, in order to develop a shared agenda. In response DCYA emphasised that the function of CYPSCs is about enhancing outcomes for children and young people via the key players in these domains and less about structures. Therefore, only services which deliver provision for children and young people will be represented.

Other questions related to CYPSC plans to ensure integrated service delivery to disadvantaged children. How will community organisations be included? How will it work in practice?

Many participants said there is a need to change the way services work together and to be more accessible.

The DCYA explained that this is being actively progressed via current developments in both policy and provision through:

1. the implementation plan and infrastructure supporting Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020;
2. the implementation of the Area Based Childhood programme; and
3. via the redevelopment of Children and Young People's Services Committees.

It was suggested by some participants that CYPSC's need to develop three year plans. However it was pointed out that the Committees do develop and oversee the implementation of a three-year Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) for the county / CYPSC area that is designed to improve outcomes for children and young people. The Plan outlines local priorities that the CYPSC has agreed to address and includes a detailed action plan of activities which will be undertaken by the Committee and its sub groups to make impact on those priorities. The Plan is developed in partnership with children, young people and families as well as in partnership with member agencies and sub groups and is responsive to local needs.

Section 5: Workshops

A key weakness of CYPSC identified was that it was unable to influence national policies – e.g. the provision of healthcare.

Questions were asked about how and where communities can get involved in the development and implementation of policy. Sub-groups of CYPSC was one suggestion, but there was a feeling among some participants was that engagement at the local level was not real. There was a strong consensus that the community and voluntary sector would like to be more engaged with the policy-making process.

It was outlined that Children's Services Committees are being redeveloped and are now Children and Young People's Services Committees. These have an extended age-range from 0-24; will be structured according to the five national outcomes for children and young people; will now for the first time involve the community and voluntary sector as a matter of course; and will have regard to the voice of children and young people, both at national and local committee levels. A 'Blueprint for the Development of Children and Young People's Services Committees' has been developed to chart the direction of committees and this document has been circulated for consultation to sectors which work with and for children and young people.

It was suggested that the sector support cross-departmental working through the Sponsors Group (the subgroup of the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium) and the Advisory Council.



Section 5: Workshops

Workshop 3:

Social Housing

Presentations

Ms Lisa Clifford, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, outlined the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and how it relates to wider social housing policy.

Ms Clifford listed a number of issues associated with housing support payments in a 1995 report including: the creation of employment traps, the need for a single agency approach, payment of supplement without assurances on the standard of property, non-payment of rent to landlords and growth of demand. A key recommendation was that all forms of social housing be administered by local authorities.

The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) was introduced in 2004 as an initial response to sourcing housing in the private rented sector. Under this scheme local authorities enter into direct contractual arrangements with landlords to secure long-term availability of accommodation, although the tenancy is between the landlord and the tenant.

HAP was introduced on a pilot basis in 2014 and addresses a number of previously identified issues by:

- Facilitating a return to full time employment without losing HAP,
- Improving the quality of accommodation through inspection procedures,
- Supporting better regulation of the private rented sector,
- Integrating housing supports – all administered through the local authority.

HAP continues to be rolled out to other local authorities, including a homeless pilot model implemented by Dublin City Council on behalf of authorities in the Dublin region. HAP is a new form of social housing support, replacing Rent Supplement for households with a long term housing need and placing responsibility to address housing needs with local authorities (Rent Supplement for short term cases will remain with DSP). Housing needs are met through HAP accommodation, thus reducing housing waiting lists. Various conditions, similar to local authority tenancies, apply to the tenant. Landlords must be tax compliant and comply (and are inspected) with standards for rental accommodation.

HAP provides a flexible policy response by providing an interim step prior to allocation of a more permanent solution. It also offer greater choice of areas and expands delivery for single person households.

Section 5: Workshops

Senator Aideen Hayden, Labour Seanad Whip, Housing, Finance, Children and Youth Affairs and Chair of Threshold, outlined the percentage distribution of housing stock showing the impact of housing policy in supporting owner occupation and the relatively recent rise in private rented accommodation since 2006. In 2011 social housing accounted for 8.7% of accommodation and private rented accommodation 18.5%.

Features of the current housing crisis include:

- A stalled construction sector, creating a supply problem, including a shortage of rented accommodation,
- Repossession threats, making it difficult to ascertain need,
- Decline in social housing provision and growth in private rented sector,
- Cuts in Rent Supplement payments, coupled with rapidly rising rents in urban areas,
- Increase in family homelessness – poorest families displaced into homelessness.

The private rental sector now provides housing for almost one-in-five Irish families. Over 70,000 are in receipt of Rent Supplement. From 2009 to 2012 rates were reduced by up to 30% and Threshold surveys estimate almost 50% of Rent Supplement clients are paying illegal top-ups because rent supplement limits are completely out of kilter with the market, where rents have risen by almost 11% nationally (but much higher in cities).

Problems with Rent Supplement include the vulnerability of clients and a general lack of protection in terms of standards, rent reviews and security of tenure. Payments are made in arrears and can be stopped when a dispute occurs and there are forced lease breaches and loss of deposit.

The way forward requires a renewed strategy for the private rented sector as a matter of urgency, including the enforcement of minimum standards, protection for tenants where 'buy to let' properties are repossessed, protection for tenant deposits and an acceleration of HAP. In addition, *rent certainty* needs to be introduced together with a review of Rent Supplement levels to reflect the market. A reform of the Rent Supplement scheme to make payment in advance would also improve matters.

Dr Padraic Kenna, School of Law, College of Business, Public Policy and Law, NUIG, spoke about an EU study on homelessness prevention in the context of evictions. This pilot project focused on the protection of the right to housing in the context of evictions and is linked to EU 2020 poverty reduction targets and the Social Investment Package in terms of combatting homelessness, reducing housing vulnerability and promoting access to quality social services.

Section 5: Workshops

Although there is no common definition of social housing there are three common elements:

- Mission of general interest
- The objective of increasing supply of affordable housing
- Targeting of specific vulnerable socio-economic groups.

The study looked at owner occupier, private rented (with or without Supplement), social housing rented and unauthorised occupancy (squatting or black market) and followed this through the process leading to eviction.

The study looked at the extent and trends in evictions in member States, the profiles of evicted households, relative risk factors and risk groups, the risk of homelessness and the protective mechanisms in place following eviction. The study sought to identify the most effective and efficient measures to prevent, tackle and monitor evictions. The study concludes that prevention of homelessness can be focused at the following stages:

- Primary prevention – through the availability of secure affordable housing, resulting in few evictions among vulnerable groups.
- Secondary prevention – through interventions in the eviction process i.e. housing benefit, arrears payments, emergency payments, leasing schemes and mortgage-to-rent schemes.
- Tertiary prevention – by social housing targeted at those becoming homeless i.e. shelter accommodation, high support specialist schemes and rapid rehousing.



Section 5: Workshops

Participant Discussion: Key Points

General points

There was agreement in this workshop that Ireland has a polarised (between profit and non-profit) social housing sector, with too much reliance on the private rented sector. Using mechanisms such as Rent Supplement, the Rental Accommodation Scheme and the Housing Assistance Payment to bolster private rental sector provision was regarded by most participants as an abdication of State duty by transferring responsibility for social housing away from local authorities and approved housing bodies.

There was a strong view in the workshop that consultation with community groups when formulating policy is crucial and that they must have full and meaningful participation in the process of policy making. Many participants were concerned that participation should not be tokenistic if it is to shift the unequal power balance between Government and the community/voluntary sector.

There was a widespread call by participants for a holistic approach to poverty related issues such as accommodation needs. Participants were clear in stating that it is not just about the accommodation, even though the presenting problem is a housing one – all State services must be joined-up and interfacing. In addition, there was a strong view that housing policies need to be proofed and monitored for unintended consequences to prevent people falling through gaps.

Finally, participants were adamant that housing is a fundamental right and planning to meet this right is all important in order to build sustainable communities.

Private rented sector

There was a strong view among participants that rent affordability is a huge problem and that the caps placed on Rent Supplement (RS) and the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) are unrealistic, resulting in huge top-ups are being paid by those receiving such supports. Considerable concern was expressed by many participants about HAP, with some questioning whether it was essentially about managing the housing list figures. Others viewed HAP as passing responsibility to another department without solving inherent problems associated with Rent Supplement. The fact that HAP recipients come off the local authority waiting list was viewed by some as falsifying the numbers and was regarded as a regressive step.

Many participants were concerned that the lack of supply of social housing is driving people into the private rental sector. There was a view by some participants that it is unfair/immoral that social tenants, who are often impoverished, are forced to compete in the private market. There was also a concern about the huge shortage of Rental Accommodation Scheme accommodation. Many claimed that landlords are leaving the scheme in their droves.

Section 5: Workshops

There was a strong view that landlords just won't accept 'social' tenants because they can do better in the private market, as a result people seeking accommodations with RAS/HAP are discriminated against by landlords. Ethnic origin can compound this problem according to participants. There was a consensus that the private rental sector is not fit for purpose.

There was an acceptance by all participants that the private rented sector housing needs to have guaranteed standards and security of tenure imposed as a matter of policy. They pointed out that Ireland doesn't have a 'corporate' landlord tradition – most landlords have limited housing properties for rent and that this acts against regulation of the sector. Many were of the view that the sector needs to be professionalised. An additional problem identified by many participants is that many real estate companies do not manage accommodations properly. As a result standards are very poor for Rent Supplement recipients.

Quality of provision

Many people said there were often terrible standards in social housing provision. It was claimed that local authorities are not maintaining properties to an acceptable standard. Some participants pointed to the contradiction of local authorities requesting certain standards in RAS/HAP but not maintaining their own properties. Better standards in social housing would help to create more sustainable communities in many areas presently experiencing problems.

Homelessness

In terms of homelessness many participants said there is a clear lack of coordinated approaches whereby local authorities define the problem and formulate solutions but frequently do not consult with homeless agencies. The problem of rural homelessness was highlighted by some participants as something that needs better understanding.

Marginalised Groups

Many participants pointed to the very poor accommodation amenities afforded to Travellers which indicates the need for more investment in accommodation that acknowledges ethnic identity. Asylum seekers were another vulnerable group with specific housing needs and transitional supports, including a one-stop shop providing information for those leaving direct provision.



Section 5: Workshops

Workshop 4:

Migrant Integration

Presentations

Ms Dearbhla Ryan, Community Worker, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, provided an outline of MRCI's work, which focuses on migrants at the edge of the labour market who are most at risk of poverty, exclusion and discrimination due to the legal, administrative and institutional barriers they face every day. Ms Ryan said that although Ireland is 15 years into immigration it continues to operate an inflexible, ad-hoc patchwork of policies and schemes and has yet to present an Immigration Residency and Protection Bill. This leaves many people in a precarious, often undocumented situation that leads to poverty and exclusion.

Ms Ryan said that migrants are over represented in low wage and precarious work sectors: domestic work, restaurants, security, retail and agricultural work and continue to experience employment exploitation and trafficking into forced labour. Migrants face difficulties accessing third level education which is based on citizenship rather than residency and involves high fees for non-citizen young people who have gone through the Irish school system.

She said that the right to reside and the Habitual Residency Condition continue to act as a serious barrier to some of the most vulnerable communities in the country. People who live in direct provision and those awaiting the outcome of a humanitarian leave to remain application or deportation order can only access social protection in exceptional circumstances.

Ms Ryan said that discrimination against migrants is an issue. A recent report: by Crosscare² highlighted the negative experience of migrants accessing social protection in relation to treatment by staff in social welfare offices. The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) Ireland's quarterly reports³ have highlighted the negative experience of some attempting to report racism to the Gardaí.

She said that all of this will result in serious repercussions for the future in terms of mental and physical health, inclusion and cyclical poverty. The solution is to introduce

² Person or Number?: Crosscare (2015)

³ <http://enarireland.org/>

Section 5: Workshops

regularisation for undocumented migrants and clear the backlog in the protection system. She urged Government to direct National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) inspectors to look to speak with workers privately about their wages and conditions before demanding identity and other documents, and remove the Habitual Residence Condition from legislation. Finally, she said that increasing funding for community development approaches which will increase migrant participation and leadership in civil society, politics and policy development was desperately needed.

Ms Catherine Headon, Programme Coordinator, EPIC Programme, Business in the Community Ireland, began with reference to the ESRI & Equality Authority report of 2012⁴ which stated that migrants face higher than average unemployment rates despite having good levels of education.

The EPIC Programme is a service available to people from EU States and from non-EU States with *Stamp 4*. It helps immigrants living in Dublin⁵ to become financially independent and socially integrated. The programme which is funded by the Department of Justice and EU Social Fund supports access to employment and further education using a partnership model involving private sector companies and non-Governmental organisations.

The programme provides a 6 week training course comprised of pre-employment training, including English language for work; interview skills; information on living and working in Ireland; IT training, work shadowing and time management. A strength of EPIC is that the training is individually tailored, delivered by a multicultural team and providing psychosocial support. The programme achieved a placement rate is 66% in 2014.

In response to questions from the attending participants, Catherine advised that whilst EPIC is currently Dublin only, Business in the Community which manages the EPIC Programme, is a business network whose members are very open to working with its member companies to provide those business links, work experience placements etc, by partnering with other community organisations in a replicated form of EPIC in other cities such as Cork, Galway or Waterford, if funding could be made available. It was noted that having a job is a recognised key factor for success in the integration journey of immigrants and bearing in mind the above referred to ESRI findings, immigrants face challenges in finding work, and need support in getting jobs.

4 Analysing the Experience of Discrimination in Ireland: ESRI & Equality Authority (2012)

5 EPIC is currently Dublin only but Business in the Community, which manages EPIC, is open to implementing a replicated form in other cities

Section 5: Workshops

Participant Discussion: Key Points

The questions addressed in the workshop were:

1. what are the main issues for migrant communities experiencing poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation in relation to this theme and
2. what and where are the opportunities for migrant communities to get involved with/in the development and implementation of policy on these issues?

Immigration policy

The need for legislation on immigration was recognised by most participants in the workshop, who also believed that legislation should be underpinned by human rights and equality principles. There was almost total agreement by participants that the direct provision system causes social exclusion and poverty. Clearing the backlog of people in direct provision was regarded as a first priority. Some participants felt that removing direct provision from private enterprise would help to improve the experiences of those in such provision.

Whole-of-Government approach

Many participants were of the view that a whole-of-Government approach would improve accountability, allow for a better assessment of impact and help to break down the silo impact. A parallel adoption of a life-cycle approach, versus the existing over-focus on a targeted approach, would also produce better outcomes for people.

Regularisation of undocumented workers

There was a consensus that undocumented workers and their families are a particularly vulnerable group in society. Participants called for inspection of workplaces, contracts and the introduction of additional protections governing employment and conditions within the workplace – at the moment there is strong evidence of zero implementation of regulations in some workplaces and insufficient controls by the appropriate department. Participants were clear that everybody living in Ireland should be able to get a PPS number.

Community development

Participants pointed to existing policies whereby community infrastructure is being dismantled despite the evidence that a strong community sector has a huge impact on issues for migrant families on the ground. Participants were clear that migrants need to be empowered to make demands for better policies but that cannot happen when there is no empowerment work taking place. Participants said that there needs to be strong and focused community infrastructure in place to ensure a strong voice for migrant communities in order for communities to participate in and influence policy. Participants were clear that these communities should be resourced to do so.

Section 5: Workshops

Policy

Almost all participants expressed a frustration that policies remain unchanged. Clearly, political decisions are required but issues around migrants appear to be a low priority on the policy agenda.

Many participants called for a new approach to policy, particularly integration policy. Firstly, they believed that policy making should be inclusive of asylum seekers, thus moving away from top down approaches that set targets that don't take local contexts into account.

Many participants were agreed that there are challenges in introducing and applying proofing across a number of areas but felt these could be overcome. Policies should include the application of a social impact assessment at planning stage and a benchmarking/monitoring procedure for the post-planning stages.

Integration strategies

Racism and discrimination were identified as underlying problems affecting migrants and should be at the core of policy responses, yet, participants said, there was no focus on this. Participants called for the introduction of an integration strategy with a strong focus on racism.

Poverty

Participants pointed to the evidence that the most vulnerable migrants (those in direct provision and migrant women and the children of these groups) become those most affected by poverty and social exclusion. Access to education, especially barriers to third level education was regarded by participants as a major contributor to endemic poverty among migrants. Being unemployed with no English means that there is little opportunity for progression. Participants called for appropriate services and supports to combat this barrier. Mapping the existing system was regarded by many participants as first step.

Conclusions

The agreed three key conclusions from the workshop were as follows:

- The dismantling of the community sector that has taken place over the past number of years is hindering integration. Without the essential capacity building and organisation that community development brings it will be impossible to develop a strong migrant voice capable of leveraging change.
- Direct provision needs to be ended, it is causing poverty, it will leave a costly legacy both in budgetary and social terms and may very well become a matter of social enquiry and censure in the future.
- Regularisation of the undocumented is a priority. This situation has arisen because of policy and institutional failures which now need to be addressed. Such groups need to be included in terms of access to services and being afforded the protection of labour market regulations. Immediate and longer term responses to their needs requires a targeted approach separate to or in parallel to the lifecycle approach.

Section 6

Concluding Section

Section 6: Concluding Section

Summary of Workshop Discussions

Mr Aiden Lloyd, Conference Rapporteur presented a summary of the workshop discussion conclusions, highlighting the issues, concerns and recommendations from each workshop.

The **Youth Exclusion** workshop identified the need for a holistic policy response to youth exclusion that looks beyond activation and seeks wider social returns in terms of promoting intergenerational solidarity and avoiding the wider costs of non-participation. The workshop concluded that this will only happen if the overall approach is fully integrated and collaborated.

Wider youth participation in a more integrated approach will require better management of transition points and a greater focus on process:

- Ensuring proper preparatory stages in terms of personal development and readiness.
- Planning at each exit point for the next stage i.e. on leaving education, at training course exit etc.
- This focus on process will ensure that interventions are tailored around the individual's needs.

There was also a concern to make sure that responses reach everybody, especially vulnerable groups such as Travellers, young people parenting alone, young offenders etc., on the basis that flexible, non-rigid systems that can meet the needs of these groups will also foster principles of equality and social solidarity.

The **Children's Services** workshop, which focused on prevention and early intervention, called for the dedication of resources to building capacity at local level, so that community groups can engage effectively in decision making and the delivery of effective services. This workshop also called for better targeting and monitoring of disadvantaged children at local level if there is to be truly effective delivery and access to services. Ensuring a voice for children in this process was also regarded as an important but necessary challenge. Finally, the logic of linking children's services with other national policy strategies such as NAPinclusion, the Healthy Ireland Strategy and integration strategies was highlighted for attention.

The **Social Housing** workshop identified the need for a long term policy on social housing, informed by a rights-based approach, which moves away from widespread reliance on private rented sector provision by channelling increased investment in local authority and approved housing bodies provision. This would provide for security of tenure, affordability and the setting/maintenance of standards.

The consensus view was that the private rented sector is not fit for purpose in terms of meeting the need for social housing. There is little security of tenure, affordability is an issue and there are few guaranteed standards which must be adhered to by landlords. The workshop concluded, however, that

Section 6: Concluding Section

there will be a continuing need for private rented sector social housing provision, therefore these three factors -security of tenure, affordability and guaranteed standards - need to be in place for all tenants in the private rented sector if the State is to discharge its social responsibilities.

The last point from this workshop identified the need for real and meaningful consultation with the community and voluntary pillar when formulating housing policy. In addition, there was a strong view that community groups/organisations need to be resourced to build community capacity so that they are genuine participants in the policy making process. An additional rationale for this participation is to ensure that housing policy, which is a determining factor in homelessness, is fully informed. Indeed, there was a strong view that all policies across government departments need to be proofed for their effect on poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Finally, there was a concern that comments of attendees be fed back to policy makers so we are not back in the same place next year.

The **Migrant Integration** workshop discussion centred on the main issues for migrant communities experiencing poverty and social exclusion and in identifying the opportunities for these communities to be involved in the development and implementation of policy on these matters.

The workshop identified direct provision as a key issue which is causing poverty and exclusion. Participants also called for regularisation of the undocumented, which forces people to the margins of society and exposes them to workplace abuse and criminal acts. There were particular concerns arising from what many described as a dismantled community sector, which was unable to fulfil its function in voicing the concerns of migrants and moving people closer to statutory services and entitlements. Participants were clear that community development activity is often best placed to meet the needs of particularly marginalised groups but can no longer do so in any adequate way because of cuts to programmes and budgets.



Section 6: Concluding Section

Address by the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton T.D.

The Tánaiste expressed her pleasure in addressing this 11th meeting of the Social Inclusion Forum (SIF).

She remarked that this meeting was against a much better – and heartening – backdrop than previous years. How we've turned the economic winter into a hopeful spring. The economy is growing again. How we are providing new opportunities for our people and we have the room to invest again in essential public services.

She stressed that this is in no way to downplay how hard the years have been for all our people since the crisis. But it is a reality that, despite the massive scale of that crisis, we have emerged from it with a social protection system still among the best in the EU at reducing poverty.

She acknowledged that nonetheless, significant challenges remain - something everybody in the room could testify to, given their work at the coalface. And their feedback will help shape Government policy as we seek to address those challenges.

**'Social Policy Innovation for Social Inclusion'**

Addressing the theme of the conference 'Social Policy Innovation for Social Inclusion' the Tánaiste reflected that we can never stand still in the area of social policy, because society changes, and new challenges emerge. The Tánaiste gave one very practical example of such innovation.

The Back to Work Family Dividend was announced in the Budget to help jobseekers with families and lone parents to return to work. Under the scheme, parents returning to work retain the element of the welfare payment which they receive for their children. It means that, over two years, a family

Section 6: Concluding Section

with one child will receive additional support of €2,324 to supplement wages. A family with two children will receive €4,649, and so on. This, she felt, was a very good example of the system not standing still, and responding to society's needs as we seek to make further progress in helping people back to work.

Social policy innovation, therefore, must be embedded in policy making. She said that what people heard throughout the day in the various workshops - such as the Housing Assistance Payment and the Area Based Childhood Programme - are examples of new ideas, services and models being used and developed to address social issues. The Tánaiste said she believed there is a key role for community and voluntary organisations tackling poverty and social exclusion in identifying new solutions to the difficult problems we face as a society.

Updating and Extending NAPinclusion

Outlining the Government's commitment the Tánaiste stated - We want to deliver a social, as well as an economic recovery, to ensure that everyone - every family, every community - benefits from the renewed growth. Building an inclusive society in Ireland continues to be a key priority of the Government today. A growing, competitive economy providing high levels of employment and the resources required for quality public services is an essential part of that.

The Government has adopted a strategic approach to tackle the systemic and structural issues that lead to poverty and social exclusion. This approach includes the framing of ambitious targets for reducing and eliminating poverty.

Along with the national aspiration to reduce poverty, Ireland continues to support the headline poverty target set out by the EU in its Europe 2020 Strategy. We have a long track record of promoting a common and shared approach at European level to tackling poverty. Ireland's contribution to this EU poverty target is to lift a minimum of 200,000 people out of combined poverty between 2010 and 2020.

Social Inclusion Monitor (SIM) 2013

The Tánaiste welcomed the publication of the Social Inclusion Monitor 2013. The purpose of the Monitor is to report on progress towards the National Social Target for Poverty Reduction. The Monitor points to the general recovery in economic growth and employment that occurred in 2013, with a consequent reduction in the unemployment rate. Also, there is a welcome reduction in the at-risk-of-poverty rate to the lowest level since 2010. It is clear from the Monitor that it will take some time for the economic recovery to filter down into all households and to undo the legacy effects of the crisis. Nonetheless, the Tánaiste pointed out that the Government remains committed to meeting the National Social Target for Poverty Reduction by 2020. And the strength of the recovery now under way will assist with that work.

Section 6: Concluding Section

Budgetary Measures and Government Policy

The Tánaiste said that a strong social protection system is critical to everything we do. The CSO recently published analysis of the 2013 Survey on Income and Living Conditions. It shows a reduction in the at-risk-of-poverty rate from 16.5% in 2012 to 15.2% in 2013. Central to this reduction is the enhanced role of social transfers in reducing the at-risk-of poverty rate by 60.4%. As a result, Ireland will remain among the best-performing countries in the EU in reducing poverty through social transfers.

This, she added, reflects the continuation of substantial investment in the social protection system and the maintenance of core weekly rates of welfare payments under this Government. In the Budget, the Government increased Child Benefit and the Living Alone Allowance and partially restored the Christmas Bonus to help families and to support the most vulnerable. Furthermore, under the Pathways to Work strategy, they introduced the Back to Work Family Dividend to further reduce unemployment.

The Department of Social Protection recently published the social impact assessment of the main welfare and tax measures for 2015. It found that for the first time since the economic crisis, welfare and income tax policy will result in an increase in average household incomes of 0.7 per cent (equivalent of almost €6 per week). And this includes the effect of the water charges.

She remarked that while it was clear that the recovery is under way, the task now is to secure the recovery and spread the benefits, and make real and lasting progress in reducing poverty.

Child Poverty

The Tánaiste said she was especially concerned about the social and economic consequences of children being brought up in poverty. The Government has set a specific target to lift over 70,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020. She outlined her intention to increase Child Benefit again in the next Budget, which she hoped would help. She mentioned that the Government is also rolling out the Area Based Childhood programme. This will provide additional investment in prevention and early intervention services for children and their families in the 13 most disadvantaged areas in the country. She added that assisting families return to work is also critical, so they build better financial futures for themselves over time. But we're also going to provide enhanced services for children in other areas. For example, in the second half of this year, parents will be able to take children under six to the doctor for free.

Section 6: Concluding Section

Conclusion

The Tánaiste concluded by saying that the challenges we face as a country didn't end when the crisis ended. So our task now is to relentlessly use the new leeway available to us to improve services at every turn, and to build the social recovery.

She acknowledged the input of all the participants and stressed it was impossible to achieve without this input. She thanked sincerely the participants for attending and for sharing their views and experiences.

She particularly acknowledged the **European Anti-Poverty Network** and the **Community Workers' Co-operative** for their support and expertise in organising this and related events. The Tánaiste highlighted the report on the Forum - which will be made available to Government, the various stakeholders and the public generally - is a major outcome of the process. She said it is designed to ensure that the insights, conclusions and recommendations of the Forum are fed into the policy making process and are available to all stakeholders. She added that she looked forward to reading this report in due course.

Finally she thanked Hugh Frazer, the moderator, the speakers, facilitators, note takers and the staff of her Department who helped to organise today's event.



Section 6: Concluding Section

Closing Remarks

The moderator, Mr Hugh Frazer, thanked the Tánaiste before bringing the proceedings to a close. He outlined that a full report of the day's discussions and conclusions would be compiled by the rapporteur, Mr Aiden Lloyd. The finalised report will be laid before the Oireachtas, published on the Department's website and circulated to all interested parties. The report will also be brought to the attention of the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Sector Reform.

The moderator thanked everybody for their participation and valuable input during a long day of constructive deliberation and discussion that brought clarity to many of the themes set out in the workshops.

Thanks were extended to the staff of the Social Inclusion Division who organised the event and to Croke Park Conference Centre for facilitating the smooth operation of the event. Grateful thanks were extended to the facilitators and other key contributors in delivering today's programme. Finally, special thanks were extended to the European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland and Community Workers' Cooperative, and to everybody that attended the regional preparatory workshops which they organised during the weeks leading up to today.



Glossary



Glossary:

National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 – 2016 (NAPinclusion)

The 10 year plan of the Irish Government aimed at tackling poverty.

Social Inclusion:

Ensuring marginalised people and those living in poverty have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives.

Lifecycle Approach:

This approach places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery by taking into account the risks facing him/her and the supports available at each lifecycle stage (children, people of working age, older people and people with disabilities). It offers a comprehensive framework for implementing a streamlined, crosscutting and visible approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion. By adopting the lifecycle approach, the *NAPinclusion* supports the development of a more joined-up and multidisciplinary approach to policy making, with coordinated inputs from a wide range of actors.

Social Inclusion Division (SID):

The role of the Social Inclusion Division is to support the Minister and Government in developing and implementing Government strategies for preventing, reducing and ultimately eliminating poverty and social exclusion. The Division also promotes greater social inclusion and social cohesion in collaboration with other stakeholders including, in particular, people experiencing poverty.

The European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland (EAPN Ireland):

The European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland is a network of groups and individuals working against poverty. EAPN Ireland is the Irish link to the European Anti-Poverty Network which brings together civil society organisations from all over the European Union in order to put the fight against poverty at the top of the EU, national and local agenda.

The Community Worker's Co-operative (CWC):

Established in 1981, the Community Worker's Co-operative is a national membership organisation that seeks to promote quality community work as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality, and contributing to the creation of a more just, sustainable and equal society.



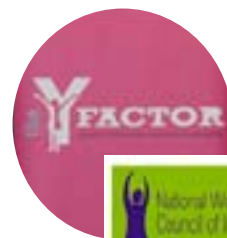
Appendix 1: The Social Inclusion Innovations Showcase

The Social Inclusion Innovations Showcase took place in the mezzanine area of the Conference Centre. The showcase element provided an opportunity for groups to host a stand and promote their organisation and the projects they are involved with. Projects were invited to bring along and display any literature and material relating to their project.

List of Projects

UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 17th October Public Awareness Funding Initiative

- The National Irish 17 October Committee.
- Age Action.
- Hospital & Croom Family Resource Centre.
- Saol Project.
- Irish Local Development Network (ILDN).
- National Women's Council of Ireland.
- Lus na Gréine Family Resource Centre.
- Louth Community Drugs and Alcohol Team.
- North West Simon Community (Sligo, Leitrim & Donegal).
- Arden View Community and Family Resource Centre.



Other organisations participating as part of the Social Inclusion Forum 2015

- Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre.
- European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland.
- Doras Buí.
- Greater Dublin Independent Living (GDIL).
- Community Worker's Co-operative.





Department of Social Protection, Áras Mhic Dhiarmada, Store Street, Dublin 1



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí

Department of Social Protection

www.welfare.ie