

 <b>Office for Social Inclusion</b> An Oifig um Chuimsiú Sóisialta			
<b>Social Inclusion Forum Workshop</b>		<b>Older People – Care Services in the Community</b>	

## **National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-2005 – Relevant Extracts from Office for Social Inclusion’s First Annual Report**

Ireland’s second National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAP/Inclusion) covering the period 2003-2005 was submitted to the European Commission on 31 July 2003. The Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) is the Government Office with overall responsibility for developing, co-ordinating and driving the NAP/Inclusion process.

OSI’s first Annual Report on the implementation of the Plan was launched on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2004 by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs. This report was produced by the OSI in consultation with relevant Government Departments who have policy responsibility for the social inclusion targets and commitments contained in the Plan, and with representatives of the Social Partners through the Social Inclusion Consultative Group.

The following extracts from the Annual Report relate to actions on the targets relevant to this workshop.

Copies of the report, in both Irish and English are available on line through the OSI website – [www.socialinclusion.ie](http://www.socialinclusion.ie) – or by contacting the office at 01 704 3851.

### **Access to services by older people**

The improvement of access by older people to required services is a priority objective under the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-2005 (NAP/Inclusion).

A relatively high proportion of older people, a majority of whom are women, are at risk of poverty and social exclusion and this risk is exacerbated when they are living alone. Income support and accessibility of services is critical to their quality of life. The ageing of the population, including increasing longevity, leads to greater demands for care for older people. The relative rural decline is continuing with the rate of increase in the population, as recorded in the 2002 census, at 4.3% being over 6% less than the increase in the urban population, which is now 60% of the total population. This can affect the level of services and isolation for older people.

NAP/Inclusion Policy tasks:

- To develop an infrastructure of care services that seeks to achieve a proper balance between the respective roles of families, the State, the private sector and voluntary organisations.

- To ensure that the range of State services is fully accessible with special reference to those living alone.

### **Relevant targets contained in the NAP/Inclusion**

- *By 2003, national guidelines will be put in place for the provision of respite care services to carers of older people;*
  - *By end 2007, adequate heating systems will be available in all local authority rented dwellings providing for older people;*

### **Respite care services to carers of older people – national guidelines**

The issues of guidelines for the provision of respite services to carers of older people will be referred to the Health Information and Quality authority which is due to be established at the beginning of next 2005.

Additional funding of almost €10.75 million has been provided for health services for older people in 2004, of which approximately €3.75 million went to the Home Help Service. The National Implementation Group to monitor the introduction of the recommendations contained in the Elder Abuse Report has commenced its work. Indications of commitment and some early progress have been received from the ERHA and from the health boards.

The Review of the Nursing Home Subvention Scheme has commenced on foot of the recommendations of the O'Shea report on the scheme. Funding was provided in 2004 to develop models of good practice in the care of older people in the community and some Health Boards have developed pilot projects. These evaluations will inform the workings of the health board group in consultation with the Department of Health and Children group in the design of a National Home Care Grant Scheme. This scheme will be introduced as resources permit.

### **Long-Term Care of Older People**

A Study to Examine the Future Financing of Long-term Care in Ireland was launched in June 2003 by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. In order to progress policy in this area, the Department has circulated a consultation document which aims to focus interested parties on the specific complex issues which need to be addressed. These issues, which are discussed at length in the report, include benefit design, delivery, cost and financing of long-term care in the future. The document has been circulated to over 70 interested parties including government departments, health boards, interest groups and the social partners.

It is envisaged that the feedback from the above process will act as the starting point for the working group referred to in *Sustaining Progress*, which will examine the strategic policy, cost and service delivery issues associated with the care of older people. It is planned that this working group will be established by the end of 2004.

### **Heating systems in local authority dwellings**

To progress the achievement of the 2007 target for adequate heating systems and to accelerate the provision of central heating facilities the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government introduced a central heating programme in July 2004 for local authority rented dwellings. The Department will provide €12 million capital funding in 2004 with the local authorities providing a further €3 million, bringing the total funding for the programme in 2004 to €15 million.

### **Health services for older people**

Additional funding of almost €10.7 million was provided for Services for Older People in 2004, of which approximately €3.75 million went to the Home Help Service. The National Implementation Group to manage the introduction of the recommendations contained in the Elder Abuse Report is in operation. The Review of the Nursing Home Subvention Scheme has commenced. Funding was provided in 2004 to develop models of good practice in the care of older people in the community and some Health Boards have developed pilot projects.

### **Budget 2005 Improvements for Carers**

- Increase the Respite Care Grant by €165, from 835 to €1,000. The award for those providing care for more than one person will increase from €1,670 to €2,000. This measure will benefit approximately 32,800 carers, including those who may not be entitled to Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit.
- Extending the Respite Care Grant to all eligible carers who are providing full time care and attention to an older person or a person with a disability will directly benefit over 9,000 carers who are not currently in receipt of Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit. Overall, 32,800 full time carers will receive the respite award.
- In recognition of the particular challenges which are faced by those carers who are providing care for three or more people, the Respite Care Grant will be paid in respect of each care recipient. It is estimated that this measure will benefit approximately 400 carers.
- Increasing the income disregards for Carer's Allowance by €20 and €40 will raise the permitted income levels for a single person to €270 and €540 for a couple. It is estimated the changes will result in an additional 1,000 new carers qualifying for payment and 2,400 existing carers receiving an increase in their weekly payment.
- Increase the weekly earnings limit from €150 to €270 for Carer's Benefit recipients who work for up to 10 hours per week outside the home. This measure will allow all Carer's Benefit recipients to engage in employment and self-employment and to maintain contact with the labour market if they so wish.
- The abolition of the '3 months in employment' condition for Carer's Benefit applicants will simplify the qualifying conditions of the scheme and make it more flexible and accessible.

### **Consultative Committee on 'Social Inclusion Measures for Older People at Local Level'**

The National Council for Ageing and Older People is examining the issue of 'Social Inclusion Measures for Older People at Local Level', through a consultative committee, which intends to produce a report by early next year and on which the Office for Social Inclusion is represented.

### **NESF Project Team on Care for Older People**

The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) recently established a Project Team on care for older people. The focus of the Team's work will be on enhancing older people's care services and identifying any gaps in supporting the wishes of the majority of older people to live at home.