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Annual Report of the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee

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Social Inclusion Strategy

Key to Abbreviations used in Report

ADM	Area Development Management Ltd
AP	Assistant Principal Officer
CDP	Community Development Programme
CSF	Community Support Framework
CSO	Central Statistics Office
EAP	Employment Action Plan
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
FIS	Family Income Supplement
GNP	Gross National Product
HEO	Higher Executive Officer
IDPC	NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPA	Institute of Public Administration
LURD	Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development
NAPS	National Anti-Poverty Strategy
NESF	National Economic and Social Forum
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
P2000	Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness
SMI	Strategic Management Initiative
SWA	Supplementary Welfare Allowance
TEP	Territorial Employment Pact
UN	United Nations
YPFSF	Young People's Facilities and Services Fund

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Action Programme for the Millennium

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

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

National Anti-Poverty Strategy

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

Preface

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy was published in April 1997. The Strategy set out to reduce poverty and social exclusion both in general and in a number of key policy areas.

This Government's commitment to building an inclusive society is set out in our Action Programme. We are committed to building an inclusive society where all citizens have the opportunity and the incentive to participate fully in the social and economic life of our country. We want everybody to be able to contribute to the wealth of the nation and to share in the benefits of social and economic growth.

Immediately on taking up office, the Government established a Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion chaired by the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, TD and we have adopted poverty-proofing guidelines to ensure that all Government decisions take into account their impact on poverty.

The most recent data available from the ESRI and the Central Statistics Office show that the main Strategy targets have now been substantially achieved and in some cases exceeded (the original target date was set for 2007). In particular

- The number of people in consistent poverty has been reduced from 9-15% to 7-10% - with the NAPS target 5-10% almost achieved
- The level of unemployment has been reduced from 11.9% to 6.4% - again almost achieving the NAPS target of 6%
- The level of long-term unemployment has been reduced from 6% to 3.1% - already below the NAPS target of 3.5%

- The income adequacy target, as defined by the Commission on Social Welfare, has been achieved in full with all social welfare payments over the target rate.

In the light of the substantial achievement of the original targets and in view of the rapid economic and social progress achieved over the past two years, I and the Government believe that it is essential to build on what has been achieved to date and to move to a new phase of our policy to make this a more inclusive society.

The overall socio-economic position now is substantially different to that existing at the time the original targets were drawn up. We have a booming economy and rapidly falling unemployment. The Government has decided that we should take this opportunity to revisit and update targets as part of our Social Inclusion Strategy.

The Government has agreed, in the light of the latest ESRI data which is now available, to ambitious new social inclusion targets as follows:

- Consistent poverty to be reduced to below 5% by 2004
- Unemployment to be reduced to below 5% by 2002
- Long-term unemployment to be reduced to 2.5% by 2002

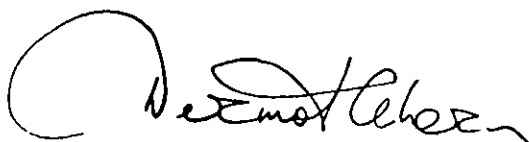
In addition, we have asked the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee to draw up new targets to reflect the changed environment, for example in relation to education and adult literacy, and to consider action targets in relation to particular groups such as children in poverty. The input of the social

partners in the area of target setting would be particularly valuable.

This report sets out the wide range of activities which have taken place across all Government Departments to build an inclusive society. It shows that all aspects of public policy must be involved. The range of activities and the success in adopting such a cross-Departmental approach are a tribute to the work of all those involved. The recent launch of the Integrated Services Project by an Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, is an excellent example of what can be achieved to provide a co-ordinated approach.

I would like to thank the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee for their important contribution over the past two years. One of their key achievements has been to embed the Strategy throughout the civil service. A key challenge facing us in the next phase of the Strategy will be to broaden it out to the wider public service - including local authorities - and to involve all the social partners.

For the first time in modern Irish history, we have the real possibilities of breaking cycles of poverty and deprivation and of creating a nation where everybody feels they matter.



Dermot Ahern, TD

Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs

Chapter

Background

One

Introduction and Context

1.1 At the United Nations World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March 1995, the Irish Government, together with other Governments, endorsed a Programme of Action aimed at reducing overall poverty and inequality throughout the world. Arising from this commitment, the Irish Government approved the development of a National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) which would set out the extent of poverty and social exclusion in Ireland as well as identifying the strategic policy direction needed to tackle the issue. The Strategy, which was developed by an Inter-Departmental Policy Committee, comprising high level officials from relevant Government Departments, was launched in April 1997 following wide-ranging consultation and participation with the voluntary and community sector. Membership of the Committee is set out in Appendix A.

In developing the NAPS, a number of principles were adopted which underpin the Strategy. These are:

- ensuring equal access and encouraging participation for all
- guaranteeing the rights of minorities, especially through anti-discrimination measures
- the reduction of inequalities and, in particular, addressing the gender dimensions of poverty
- the development of the partnership approach building on national and local partnership processes
- actively involving the community and voluntary sector
- encouraging self reliance through respecting individual dignity and promoting empowerment and
- engaging in appropriate consultative processes, especially with users of services

The goals of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy are further underpinned by the current Government's commitment in its Action Programme for the Millennium to "*address urgently the issues of exclusion, marginalisation and poverty*" and to "*halt the drift towards a two-tier society in Ireland*". This commitment has been reflected in a number of key initiatives aimed, not only at reducing poverty, but at the deepening of social inclusion across a range of key areas. These will be elaborated on throughout this report.

The NAPS is supported by the central position it is accorded in the current national agreement, Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness (P2000), which recognises that one of the three essential challenges facing Irish society is that of significantly reducing social disparities and exclusion. P2000 states that social inclusion will be pursued "*not in any residual way, but as an integral part of this partnership and a strategic objective in its own right*". The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) and the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), which constitute the two main social partnership bodies, contribute to the analysis and monitoring of economic and social policies. In particular, the NESF, as part of its work programme, will report from time to time on particular initiatives in relation to social inclusion and equality which form part of the NAPS.

The Combat Poverty Agency, in addition to its role as advisors to Government on the development of

anti-poverty strategies generally, has a key contribution to supporting and evaluating the NAPS process. This includes consideration of the views and experience of the voluntary and community sector. The Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (IDPC) looks forward to receiving the first such report which is scheduled to be received later this year.

The participation and input of all the social partners in developing the NAPS is gratefully acknowledged. The voluntary and community sector has a wide ranging and particular experience of the difficulties faced on the ground which proved invaluable in arriving at a coherent strategy. The forthcoming White Paper on the Relationship between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the State will set out a cohesive framework for statutory support of the sector and set the background for further development of a meaningful consultation process on continued implementation of the Strategy and the many and varied elements, across a range of Departments, which provide the framework for the implementation of the Strategy. Research, commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency, on *"Models of consultation and on-going participation between the statutory sector and the community and voluntary sector to inform the implementation of the NAPS"* has formed the basis for a paper on this issue which is being considered by the IDPC in the context of the White Paper.

The global target of the NAPS is as follows:

"Over the period 1997-2007, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy will aim at considerably reducing the numbers of those who are 'consistently poor' from 9% - 15% of the population to less than 5% - 10%, as measured by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)".¹

The most recent data available relates to the 1997 Living in Ireland Survey, conducted by the ESRI, which shows that the numbers experiencing consistent poverty had fallen to 7% - 10% of the population by 1997, with the NAPS global target virtually achieved. The most up to date figures available at the time the NAPS was developed related to 1994. (See sections 2.3 and 5.3 for further discussion on this aspect.)

While NAPS looks at poverty in a global context, it examines specifics within five key themes, each with its own subsidiary targets and timeframes. These themes are *unemployment, income adequacy, educational disadvantage, urban disadvantage* and *rural poverty*. Further detail on the goals and targets in each of these areas is set out in chapter 2.

1. "Consistent" poverty is defined as being below 50% - 60% of average household disposable income and experiencing enforced basic deprivation. Basic deprivation is the presence of at least 1 of a list of 8 indicators determined by survey to be basic necessities by reference to the fact that they were both regarded as necessities by and possessed by a majority of those surveyed. Examples include having 2 pairs of strong shoes, having a warm waterproof overcoat and having a roast meal (or its equivalent) at least once a week.

Institutional Mechanisms

- 1.2 Much of the early work, after the launch of the NAPS in 1997, was involved with setting up the structures necessary to support and oversee its implementation. There is now a set of structures in place to ensure that the issue of social inclusion is central to policy formulation and implementation - from the high level strategic view to the co-ordination and executive functions necessary to ensure its ongoing implementation. In setting up the structures, care was taken to streamline the range of consultation mechanisms which exist.

In line with the principles of the Civil Service Strategic Management Initiative(SMI), NAPS recognises the multi-faceted nature of the problem of social exclusion and, as such, the focus at all times is on a cross-Departmental and integrated approach to tackling disadvantage. Each Department retains the lead role in progressing policies under its own areas (although there have been several initiatives specifically resulting from NAPS, most notably, perhaps, the introduction of a poverty proofing process as discussed in section 2.2).

This cross-Departmental approach is reflected in the mechanisms put in place to oversee the Strategy which are as follows:

Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion:

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

Senior Officials Social Inclusion Group:

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

Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (IDPC):

This Committee, originally established to develop the Strategy, continues to meet four to five times per year and provides the principal strategic focus for the NAPS. It comprises senior civil servants as well as representatives of FÁS, Area Development Management Ltd (ADM) and the Combat Poverty Agency. It considers the ongoing progress on implementation of the Strategy as well as progress towards achieving the NAPS targets. This Committee remains the key agent for addressing central NAPS issues and agreeing future plans and programmes of activity. The Committee is co-chaired by

the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.

NAPS Liaison Officers:

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

NAPS Unit:

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

Combat Poverty Agency:

The Agency are assigned a specific role in NAPS in monitoring and evaluating the strategy as well as providing ongoing support and advice to the NAPS Unit and Departments. NAPS is accorded a high priority in the Agency's Strategic Plan 1999 - 2001.

Chapter

Progress in 1998

Two

Setting parameters

- 2.1 While 1997 saw the launching of the NAPS and the establishment of the institutional structures necessary to underpin the social inclusion agenda, 1998 has seen much progress across all areas in terms of actual development of programmes and initiatives which promote social inclusion.

In the first half of 1998, Departments submitted their baseline documents which provide a broad strategic statement on social inclusion policy relevant to each Department. These documents cover a period of several years and it is intended that they will be updated periodically. In August 1998, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs published its baseline document "*Social Inclusion Strategy of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs*". This and other Departments' (unpublished) statements are available from the NAPS Unit in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.

Departments also submitted their 1998 workplans setting out what they intended to pursue and achieve in terms of programme development and expansion as well as new initiatives identified over the shorter-term of the immediate year ahead.

The main achievements and progress for 1998 in the field of social inclusion are set out thematically in the sections 2.3 to 2.7 which focus on the five key areas identified in the NAPS. A more detailed listing of the individual programmes and initiatives progressed by each Department can be found at Appendix B.

P2000 committed the Government to additional spending of £525 million in full year terms on social inclusion measures during the period of the programme. As a result of the various social inclusion measures announced in the 3 relevant budgets, additional spending of some £950 million in full year terms will have taken place over the period. It is estimated that gross current expenditure on social services generally in 1999, at £11.2 billion, will be one quarter higher than in 1996.

Monitoring and evaluation of the NAPS is overseen by the IDPC and is assisted by the production of reports by Departments. The Combat Poverty Agency contributes to the evaluation process, which is still being refined after the first full year of activity. The P2000 monitoring arrangements also focus on many of the relevant initiatives and programmes.

Poverty Proofing

- 2.2 One of the most significant developments during 1998 was the introduction of a system, known as Poverty Proofing, whereby significant policy proposals would be assessed at design stage for their

impact on poverty. It was agreed at the first meeting of the IDPC that such a system would be developed and a framework document, within which the Poverty Proofing exercise would be carried out, was agreed by the social partners in the context of P2000. Following a Government decision in July 1998, Poverty Proofing was included as a requirement in the updated Cabinet Handbook for the preparation of memoranda for Government.

Poverty Proofing in the context of the NAPS is defined in the framework document as *"the process by which Government Departments, local authorities and State Agencies assess policies and programmes at design and review stages in relation to the likely impact that they will have or have had on poverty and on inequalities which are likely to lead to poverty, with a view to poverty reduction"*.

The current Cabinet Handbook, issued in October 1998, requires that Memoranda for Government should, inter alia, *"indicate clearly, as appropriate, the impact of the proposal for ... persons in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty, in the case of significant policy proposals"*.

The Poverty Proofing guidelines are currently being implemented on a one year pilot basis in Civil Service Departments only. The process will be reviewed at the end of the pilot year at which point its expansion to other areas of the public service will be considered.

Separately, P2000 contains a commitment that *"in the context of the NAPS, this [key developments in the equality area] will be complemented by the strengthening of administrative procedures for equality proofing"*. It was, however, agreed in the framework that the paramount concern for any proofing mechanism would be that it is workable and that the inclusion of the full range of equality issues (gender, disability, ethnic origin, religion, marital status, etc.) would extend beyond the remit of the NAPS and would have significant resource implications. It was, therefore, agreed that Poverty Proofing should concentrate on inequalities in so far as they are likely to lead to poverty.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform have since undertaken with University College Cork to carry out a research programme on equality proofing which will include equality proofing in the context of the NAPS. It is expected that this research will be completed around Summer of 1999 and will make recommendations on an equality proofing mechanism. Such a system would complement the Poverty Proofing system currently in place giving further impetus to the consideration of inequalities and their impact on causing or deepening poverty. A working group involving representatives of the social partners has been established with a view to making proposals on gender proofing generally and to have a liaison role with regard to the above mentioned research project.

The Poverty Proofing Framework lists several areas where the proofing process should be applied. These are:

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

Given that this complex process has only been in operation for a few months, it will take some time before it can be fully implemented across Departments and any initial difficulties resolved. Information received from Departments to date would indicate that the process is gradually becoming more firmly embedded within Departments. Many have issued further internal communications reminding staff of the circumstances in which Poverty Proofing should be undertaken and are considering other means, such as senior management or similar fora, to raise awareness internally.

Enhanced Guidelines on the Poverty Proofing process (see appendix C), including worked examples supplied by Departments, have now been issued by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. These should help to clarify some of the difficulties which officials are experiencing in implementing the process.

Poverty Proofing is due to be reviewed at the end of its pilot year, around September of 1999, and any ongoing difficulties with implementation will then be identified and addressed in conjunction with the social partners.

Unemployment

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

Overall Target: *"To reduce the rate of unemployment, as measured on an internationally standardised basis (ILO) by the Labour Force Survey, from 11.9% in April, 1996 to 6% by 2007; and to reduce the rate of long-term unemployment from 7% to 3.5% with a particular focus on reducing the number of very long-term unemployed who are especially at risk of being consistently poor."*

This is the area which has, perhaps, shown the most significant progress to date. The continued strong economic growth in recent years has resulted in very significant job creation. The latest available

figures from the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) are for the period September to November 1998 and they indicate that the unemployment rate had fallen to 6.4% and the long-term unemployment rate to 3.1% at that stage. This reflects a continued increase in the numbers at work - rising from over 1.3 million in April 1996 to over 1.5 million by September-November 1998 while the number of people unemployed fell from 179,000 to 106,000 over the same period. Encouragingly, this is also mirrored in the figures for the long-term unemployed which fell from 103,000 to under 52,000 in the same period.

This means that the target set out in the Government's *Employment Action Plan* (EAP), published in April 1998, of a 7% unemployment rate by end-year 2000 has already been exceeded. In addition, the NAPS target of a 6% unemployment rate by 2007 has almost been achieved while the NAPS target of a rate of 3.5% for long-term unemployment has now been exceeded, a full eight years before the target date.

While the factors underlying this dramatic reduction in unemployment are, of course, complex, the implementation of the EAP, with its focus on preventing the drift into long-term unemployment as well as re-integrating the persons who are already long-term unemployed into the labour market, has played an important role. The preventative strategy element of the EAP came into effect from 1 September 1998 and was targeted at 18 to 25 year olds approaching 6 months on the Live Register with a view to providing them with the necessary support based on their individual need to help them secure a job or appropriate training. Early results have been encouraging. Of the first cohort of 18 - 25 year olds approaching 6 months on the Live Register, referred to FAS for a guidance interview in September 1998, 78% had left the Live Register at end-February 1999. This systematic activation approach has been extended to 18 - 25 year olds approaching 18 months on the Live Register with effect from March 1999 and to 25 - 34 year olds approaching 12 months on the Live Register with effect from May 1999.

The *Local Employment Service*, which aims to provide a comprehensive and personalised service for targeted groups of long-term unemployed in areas of particular disadvantage, continues to be developed. Its forthcoming extension to a further seven areas (bringing the total to 25) will be a valuable tool in maintaining the necessary focus on the long-term unemployed, particularly those that may not yet have the necessary skills to take advantage of the current buoyant jobs market. The Government have taken a decision in principle to re-organise the national employment service (i.e. FAS employment services) and the LES to maximise the coherence and complementarity of the services. To that end, it is setting up an Employment Service Advisory Committee within FÁS which is representative of all the stakeholders and which will advise on the operation and development of all components of the employment service.

It is, of course, necessary, particularly in these days of a very dynamic labour market, that all training

and employment support schemes be monitored on an on-going basis to ensure that they remain effective and targeted appropriately. In this regard, a review of the *Community Employment scheme* (CE) was conducted during 1998 and the 1999 Budget provided for additional active labour market places for the long-term unemployed and Jobs Clubs for all unemployed persons. In addition, a training programme for lone parents, along with the provision of Jobs Clubs places for lone parents, has been introduced. Discussions are currently underway with the social partners in the context of P2000 on the refocusing of CE places and the optimal mix of training and employment scheme places.

It is to be hoped that such actions, together with continued implementation of the *FÁS Action Programme on Training for the Long-Term Unemployed*, will make further inroads in reducing long-term unemployment in our society. The recent announcement of an additional £25 per week training bonus for long-term unemployed people, to take effect in 1999, will help to increase incentives to engage in the necessary training.

The implementation of a dedicated *social economy programme* targeted at the regeneration of disadvantaged communities is taking place with effect from 1999. This programme is being implemented on the basis of a report produced in the context of P2000 and agreed by all the social partners.

The continued development of the 4 Irish *Territorial Employment Pacts* (TEPs), based in Dublin, Limerick, Dundalk/Drogheda and Co. Westmeath is an opportunity to mobilise social partner support to help unemployed people to access existing local jobs or create new employment. Set up as part of a European Commission initiative and co-ordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach, the TEPs can help enhance the employment potential in these areas by addressing gaps in service provision, supporting co-ordination of local activities and facilitating exchange of best practice.

The IDPC notes the enactment in June 1998 of the *Employment Equality Act* which will support the NAPS aim of facilitating equal access for all to employment opportunities. In conjunction with the forthcoming *Equal Status legislation* and establishment of a new *Equality Authority*, this will help to ensure that barriers of discrimination will be lowered and the risk of social exclusion reduced for those groups which are particularly subject to discrimination.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is finalising the development of an active policy to enhance the employment rates of people with disabilities within the wider public service (as opposed to the civil service). This, together with the commitment demonstrated by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government in issuing, in August 1998, a *Draft Code of Practice for the Employment of People with Disabilities in the Local Authority Service*, should ensure that the State is in a position to take a lead role in ensuring that the particular employment problems faced by the disabled are ameliorated.

Income Adequacy

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

Overall Target: *"Policy actions in relation to income adequacy will be targeted at contributing to the overall reduction in the percentage of the population whom the ESRI have identified as being "consistently poor" from 9% to 15% to less than 5% to 10% over the period 1997-2007."*

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

The ESRI report, *"Monitoring Poverty Trends"*, commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, indicates that very significant progress was made between 1994 and 1997 towards meeting the NAPS target as set out above. The report shows that the numbers of consistently poor, defined by reference to 50% and 60% of average household disposable income combined with the presence of basic deprivation, had reduced from 9% to 15% of the population in 1994 to 7% to 10% by 1997 with the NAPS target, particularly at the 60% threshold, almost achieved. This reflects a sharp reduction in the presence of basic deprivation resulting from sustained increases in the real value of incomes, thereby increasing the purchasing power of those on lower incomes. This contrasts, however, with a further increase in the numbers of people falling below the relative income lines (40%, 50% and 60% of average disposable income¹) which, according to several commentators, including the ESRI, is largely attributable to the fact that increases in social welfare rates have lagged increases in earnings over the period 1994 to 1997.

The *1998 Budget* (announced in December 1997) provided for a personal taxation and employee PRSI package of some £517 million including an increase in personal allowances of £250 per year and widening of the standard rate tax band by £100 (for a single person) as well as cuts of 2% in both the standard and higher rates of income tax. The weekly PRSI free allowance was increased by £20 to £100 per week. In addition, the Budget provided for a *social welfare* package costing some £225 million in a full year. This included a general social welfare rate increase of £3 per week (an increase of 4.2% - 4.6%). A central feature of the Government's Action Programme for the Millennium is to increase the Old Age Contributory Pension to £100 per week by 2002. In this regard, an increase of

¹ The numbers falling below the 40%, 50% and 60% relative income lines, without reference to basic deprivation, stood at 7.6%, 21.9% and 36.5% respectively in 1997

£5 per week was provided for old-age pensioners (6.4% - 7.4% increase). There were also increases in *child benefit* payments of £1.50 per month for first and second children and £3 per month for subsequent children. The move to calculation of *Family Income Supplement* (FIS) payments on the basis of net rather than gross income, as well as increases in the income thresholds, also led to significant improvements in the income position of low income families. These increases compare to earnings growth of about 5% and an inflation rate of 2.4% for 1998.

The recent **1999 Budget** (announced in December 1998) provided for a general *social welfare* rate increase of £3 per week (4.0% - 4.3%) and a higher increase of £3.60 for people on Short-Term Unemployment Assistance and Supplementary Welfare Allowance (5.3%). Continuing the progress made in 1998, the 1999 Budget provided for a special increase for pensioners, both contributory and non-contributory, of £6 per week (7.2% - 8.3%). This will bring the Old Age Contributory Pension to £89 per week in 1999. These are significant real increases in the context of a forecast inflation rate in 1999 of around 2% and compare quite favourably with likely pay developments this year.

A specific target of both the NAPS and P2000 was that the minimum rates of payment recommended by the *Commission on Social Welfare* would be achieved before the end of 1999. The increases announced in the 1999 Budget mean that this key target will be met, based on current forecasts for inflation. Following the 1999 Budget all rates of payment will be at least at the minimum level recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare, ranging from 100% to 123% of the minimum rate.

The rates of payment of *child benefit* were increased by £3 per month for the first and second children and £4 per month for subsequent children (9.5% increase on both rates) at a cost of £41 million in a full year while the FIS income threshold was increased by £8 per week. The level of direct child income support has increased substantially in recent years and the total spend on child benefit is projected to be almost £450 million in 1999. While this is a substantial sum, several commentators, including the Combat Poverty Agency, have suggested that increasing child benefit payments should be accorded higher priority in light of the relatively high risk of poverty faced by children, particularly those in larger families, in Ireland. The universal nature of the payment makes it an appropriate means of support for low income families as it avoids the danger of creating a poverty trap through withdrawal of benefit on reaching a certain income threshold, perhaps on securing employment.

Other significant innovations in the 1999 Budget included the introduction of the new *Farm Assist* scheme to replace the existing Smallholders Unemployment Assistance which will benefit some 13,600 very low income farmers.

The full year cost of all social welfare increases announced in the 1999 Budget and the Social Welfare Act, and other recent improvements, is some £317 million.

Much publicity surrounded the move to a *tax credits* system in the 1999 Budget, with some £600 million in tax reductions targeted primarily towards lower earners. This was a significant move in terms of tax reform. By equalising the cash benefits from the tax reductions across the incomes band, the Budget ensured that proportionally higher gains were made by those at the lower end of the scale thus reducing incomes inequality. The fact that the first £100 per week is tax free is also a significant move in this regard and results in some 80,000 people being removed from the tax net altogether in 1999.

These changes have ensured that there is a greater incentive for the unemployed to take up employment and should impact positively on further reducing unemployment and, consequently, poverty. This is in line with the NAPS which strongly recommends that incentives should be maintained. In tandem with this, a more targeted focus on training and education for the long-term unemployed (see 2.2 above) and improvements in the Back to Work Allowance scheme should help to ensure continued reductions in the long-term unemployment rate.

The recently published report by Goodbody Consultants on the *Disincentive Effects of Secondary Benefits*, prepared in the context of a P2000 commitment, will also help to further develop policy in this regard and will merit close attention to ensure that adverse impacts of withdrawing secondary benefits are minimised.

The publication in May 1998 of the report of the Pensions Board on the *National Pensions Policy Initiative*, "Securing Retirement Income", was an important step in pensions policy in attempting to ensure that the income adequacy needs of the elderly in society will be met, particularly in light of the increase in the proportion of older people in the population in around 20 years time. In this regard, increased coverage of occupational pensions (which is currently less than 50% of those at work) will be an important pillar of total pension provision and it is intended to publish a Pensions Bill later this year or in early 2000 which will give effect to many of the Board's recommendations.

Educational Disadvantage

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

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

The latest figures available are taken from the 1997 Annual School Leavers Survey, carried out by the ESRI on behalf of the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Education and Science, and relate to students who left second-level education in the year ending August 1996. This research shows that while the number leaving with no qualifications continues to fall (3% in 1996), there remains a substantial cohort (16% in 1996) who left having completed the Junior Certificate only. 81% of the cohort remained to upper secondary education which represents a significant increase over the 60% retention rate at this level in 1980 but is unchanged from the 1996 survey and represents a levelling out over the previous 3 to 4 years. The NAPS target is representative of school leavers to completion of senior cycle only and does not take cognisance of those leavers who entered legitimate education and training programmes such as apprenticeships, Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Centre programmes or other further education opportunities on leaving the second level system. While figures for students leaving the system with qualifications are further improved, it is nonetheless clear that predicting the elimination of early school leaving by any specific date is unrealistic and may fail to adequately reflect the role and legitimacy of interventions outside the mainstream school setting. The Department of Education and Science is currently working on achieving a more complete picture in this area by enhancing data collection from programmes such as apprenticeships, Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres.

The related issues of educational disadvantage and early school leaving are multi-faceted in their causes and effects and early school leaving without certification is a very strong predictor of unemployment and social exclusion. The ESRI survey bears out the correlation between the level of education and the chances of securing employment as well as the wage level attained by the school leaver. Education is one of the key factors in ameliorating the effects of early school leaving but the collaborative supports of a wide range of statutory and voluntary bodies are required if the needs of children and families at risk are to be met over time. However, this does not diminish in any way the obligation on all statutory and voluntary bodies to redouble efforts to deal effectively with the problem of early school leaving.

A number of initiatives are being progressed by the Department of Education and Science with a view to increasing retention rates in second-level education. One of the most significant of these is the new *Educational Welfare Bill*. One element of this will involve a complete overhaul of School Attendance legislation and it will raise the minimum school leaving age to 16 or completion of 3 years of second level education, whichever is the later. The Bill will establish a new National Educational Welfare Board, which will include representatives from the education partners and the State agencies involved in the education, care and welfare of children. The emphasis will be on assistance to schools, families and children, rather than on penalties. The Board will co-ordinate State services to children who have school attendance problems and should make a significant impact in eliminating early school leaving before the Junior Certificate. Overall, it is intended that the new Board and its officers will serve as an active catalyst for the development, co-ordination and implementation of policies targeted at those

whose connection with education is most marginal.

The Department also operates a number of programmes aimed at countering educational disadvantage, which should further support the aims of this Bill. Such programmes include the *Home, School Community Liaison scheme*, the development of a *National Educational Psychological Service*, expansion of the *Remedial Teacher Service* to all primary and post primary schools from September 1999 and the network of over 157 *Youthreach* and *Senior Traveller Training Centres* offering almost 7,500 places and which, since 1998, have the benefit of both a new guidance, counselling and psychological services measure and childcare measure. Other initiatives include the provision in the 1998 Budget of £6.5m for *school library books*, particularly targeted towards disadvantaged schools, and £1.5 million for special targeted interventions in areas with particularly low completion rates. Progress is also being made in relation to the development of a national policy to make 500 third-level places available for students from disadvantaged backgrounds in line with the recommendations in the *Report of the Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education*.

Implementation work on 14 pilot projects under an *Early School Leavers Initiative* began in September 1998. A total of £3.62m (including £2.96 million of EU Structural Funds) is available for this initiative over the period 1998-2000. The aim is to initiate strategic pilot projects in urban and rural disadvantaged areas to develop models of good practice with a view to integration, after structured evaluation, into mainstream policy and practice.

The report of proceedings and conclusions of the *National Forum on Early Childhood Education* held in March 1998 was launched in November 1998. It provides an important input into policy decisions on the future development of pre-school education services and is a valuable input in the ongoing preparation of the White Paper on Early Childhood Education which will be published during 1999.

Adult education and particularly the issue of basic literacy deficiencies is an area which is receiving increased attention following the recent OECD report finding that nearly one-quarter of all Irish adults had only basic literacy levels. As the link between educational attainment and income levels is well established this is an area of obvious concern. In order to begin to address this deficit, the 1998 adult education budget was doubled to £4.065m. The additional funds were used to promote innovative approaches in critical areas which will inform the development of a national adult literacy programme. The progressing of this agenda was also supported by the publication in November 1998 of the Green Paper "Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning" which recommended, inter alia, the development of a national adult literacy programme and a back to education initiative for adults who have not completed upper second level education. In addition, an Inter-departmental Group on literacy among the unemployed was set up by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion and held its first meeting, chaired by the Department of Education and Science, in December 1998. This Group

will report back to the Cabinet Committee later this year.

The *Women's Education Initiative*, funded by the Department of Education and Science and aided by the European Social Fund, was established in 1998 to assist projects to address the current gaps in provision for educationally disadvantaged women. Over the 2 year period to the year 2000, 13 projects are being supported to develop models of good practice for improved provision for educationally disadvantaged women.

The issue of appropriate education provision to the Traveller community was also significantly furthered in 1998 with the establishment of an *Advisory Committee on Traveller Education* in July. It is the policy of the Department of Education and Science that Traveller children should be integrated into mainstream education to the maximum extent possible. In addition to the pre-school, primary and visiting teacher service provision already in place, the 1999 Budget provided £300,000 over two years to provide a new capitation grant to second-level schools for every enrolled Traveller pupil. This provision came into effect in January 1999. The primary visiting teacher service has been augmented with an extra 10 teachers being appointed so that the service will now be available on a nation-wide basis. The network of 27 Senior Traveller Training Centres provides a programme of integrated general education, vocational training and work experience for some 697 travellers annually in the 15+ age group. Responsibility for the operation of the network was transferred from FAS to the Department of Education and Science in April 1998. A National Co-ordinator promotes and monitors the development of the network while a National Education Officer for Travellers promotes and oversees the implementation of the visiting teacher service.

Urban Disadvantage

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

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

The report and recommendations of the Inter-Departmental *Task Force on Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems*, which have been endorsed by the Government, have

the potential to greatly increase co-ordination and integration of development activities at local and community level with a more participatory role for all relevant stakeholders, particularly local communities. By utilising the particular skills and expertise of the wide range of bodies operating at local level (local authorities, other State agencies, partnership companies, LEADER groups and the social partners including voluntary and community organisations) in a co-ordinated fashion and working towards a common goal, the potential exists to maximise organisational effort and resources to meet the particular needs of local communities. The report recognises the importance of retaining the central focus of local development agencies and locally delivered public services on promoting social inclusion and recommends that each County/City Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development should be informed by, inter alia, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. The Task Force is continuing in place to oversee the implementation of its recommendations which are acknowledged in the NAPS itself as being key to the promotion of social inclusion.

The Combat Poverty Agency has a role in working with local authorities to raise their awareness of NAPS and assist them in advising on the development of anti-poverty strategies in the context of the local government reform process. It will also be centrally involved in the expansion of the poverty proofing process to local authorities.

The Area Based Partnership Companies and Community Groups, which are funded through the *Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development* (LURD), give a clear focus to the task of local development in both urban and rural areas. They have demonstrated an ability to mobilise local effort, to target people who are socially excluded and to take innovative action in dealing with disadvantage. They have an important role to play in the reintegration of the long-term unemployed through their ability to bring all the key players together at local level. In 1998, LURD assisted in the placement of almost 4,800 unemployed people in full-time or part-time employment. In addition, over 5,100 people who were long-term unemployed were encouraged to start their own business. The vast majority were sole traders under the Area Allowance Enterprise Scheme and also received support from the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.

LURD has provided significant support to Community Development Projects and Social Economy Projects. In the education field, the Programme has supported almost 10,000 people to avail of training and education courses. In addition to this, 20,800 young people received support to prevent underachievement at school and early school leaving¹.

The **URBAN** initiative also supported a range of activities aimed at promoting social inclusion. These include funding for refurbishing an industrial unit in Ballymun, completion of the Neilstown Youth Resource Centre and completion of a full day-care facility for children in Mayfield, Cork.

¹ 1998 Area Development Management Ltd. Annual Report

Some 9,250 households on the *local authority waiting lists* were either allocated local authority/voluntary housing for rent or availed of a local authority social housing scheme (e.g. Shared Ownership). Of these, about 3,500 were accommodated in houses new to the local authority stock. About 4,500 starts are expected to commence in 1999, the highest level of the housing programme since 1986. Nonetheless, it would appear that there has been a considerable increase in numbers applying for local authority housing as a result of the recent surge in house prices although this cannot be definitively confirmed until the latest assessment of needs from March 1999 is completed.

In the longer term, it is to be hoped that the Government response to the *Bacon Reports* will help to alleviate the housing shortage. In the meantime, certain actions have been taken to try to alleviate the worst effects on low income groups, for example, by increased assistance to the Voluntary Housing sector, improvements to the Shared Ownership scheme and a new Affordable Housing scheme. A Housing Unit has been established in the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) to assist the local authorities to develop a more effective overall approach to housing management with an emphasis on tenant participation.

The *Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act* was enacted in July 1998. It imposes a statutory obligation on local authorities in relation to the provision of accommodation for Travellers. Seminars on the implementation of the Act have been held in conjunction with the Housing Unit of the IPA for relevant local authority staff and guidelines on "Basic Services and Facilities for Caravans Pending the Provision of Permanent Accommodation" issued to local authorities and Traveller interest groups in November 1998. A detailed memorandum on the Act's implementation, incorporating certain directives, was issued by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government and all sections other than section 25 (grants and loans for caravans) have been commenced. The Minister has specified that local Traveller Action programmes be adopted by 31 March 2000.

An Inter-Departmental Committee, comprising the Departments of Environment and Local Government, Social, Community and Family Affairs, Health and Children and Finance, is examining the issues which arise in relation to the transfer of the administration of the *Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) rent and mortgage supplementation scheme* from the health boards to local authorities. The work of the Committee is well advanced and considerable progress has been made in addressing the major issues involved. The transfer of SWA housing supplementation gives rise to a number of important issues with wide ranging implications for recipients under the scheme, local authorities and other agencies concerned. These will require careful consideration by Government. It is hoped to finalise the work of the Committee at an early date.

The Department of the Environment and Local Government paid recoupment amounting to £20.82 million in 1998 to local authorities in respect of their expenditure on the provision of accommodation

for *homeless people* (approx. £4 million) and on emergency accommodation for asylum seekers (approx. £17 million). Given the number of asylum seekers in emergency accommodation, it is expected that expenditure/recoupment in 1999 will be considerably up on the 1998 figure.

In the second half of 1998, a Cross-Departmental Team on Homelessness under the chairmanship of the Department of the Environment and Local Government was established at the direction of the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. The Team is to develop an integrated response to homelessness, covering such issues as emergency, transitional and long-term responses and secondary issues which have a particular effect on homeless people including health, education, employment and homemaking. The Team has had several meetings and has received written submissions from official agencies and voluntary bodies providing services for homeless people and has met several such bodies. It is expected that the Team will report to the Cabinet Committee by mid-year 1999.

An expert Advisory Panel completed its assessment of Integrated Area Plans submitted under the new *Urban Renewal Programme* and furnished its report to the Minister for Environment and Local Government. The report's recommendations have been accepted by the Government, with 49 Integrated Area Plans approved for the purposes of the new scheme. Residential incentives under the approved plans have been brought into operation with effect from 1 March 1999, while implementation of commercial/industrial incentives under the new scheme is still awaiting EU approval.

Work continued in 1998 on progressing the *National Drugs Strategy*. The Government allocated £10m in 1997 to implement 234 separate measures in action plans submitted by the Local Drugs Task Forces in the 13 worst affected areas. Implementation of the approved measures continued during 1998 and considerable progress was made in setting up the necessary structures to deliver the proposed actions in the Task Force Plans. 163 of the 234 approved projects were up and running by the end of 1998. Following an independent evaluation of the initiative, focusing on assessing the effectiveness of the processes and structures associated with its delivery, the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion agreed to the continuation of the Task Forces for the time being.

A total of £20 million has also been allocated to the 13 Local Drugs Task Forces from the *Young People's Facilities and Services Fund* (YPFSF) over the period 1998 - 2000 to develop youth facilities, including sport and recreation facilities, to attract young people at risk of becoming involved with drugs into more healthy and productive pursuits. The Assessment Committee has completed its work and has submitted recommendations to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. A further £2.8 million from the YPFSF has been allocated to statutory and voluntary organisations outside the Task Force areas where a drugs problem exists.

The Department of Health and Children and the Department of Education and Science are running

several *education and prevention programmes aimed at young people at risk of drug misuse*. "Walk Tall", a substance misuse prevention programme for primary schools, was piloted in selected primary schools in the Drug Task Force areas in 1998. Following positive evaluation, this programme is currently being introduced on a phased basis into all primary schools by the end of year 2000, supported by a National Project Officer and a team of 6 teacher trainers. At post-primary level, the "On My Own Two Feet" drug misuse prevention programme is continuing in all schools and is also being used in Youthreach centres. This programme was piloted and positively evaluated in some Task Force primary schools in 1998. The National Youth Health Programme - a partnership between the Department of Health and Children, the Department of Education and Science and the National Youth Council of Ireland - provided extensive training on drug prevention and policy development in 1998. A Drug Questions Local Answers pack developed by the Department of Health and Children is a resource which enables communities to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to the drugs issue in their areas. In 1998, extensive training took place in many health board areas where many of the communities in which this programme is used are either considered or designated disadvantaged. In addition, for European Drug Prevention Week, new colourful, user-friendly information cards on drugs were developed.

The *Probation and Welfare Service* of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, many of whose clients are from disadvantaged urban backgrounds, seeks to respond to the needs of offenders by providing a number of facilities for ex-offenders and people at risk of offending. An Expert Group was established in 1998 to examine the role of the service, its needs and its organisational structure and to make recommendations on the matter. The Department funds various workshops and training projects in many areas which aim to reduce recidivism through skills development and counselling to facilitate the development of constructive personal and social skills with the ultimate aim of reintegrating the participants into gainful employment. 14 Juvenile Diversion Projects for young people involved, or at risk of getting involved, in crime were administered by the Gardai in 1998 - 7 in Dublin, 3 in Cork, 2 in Limerick and 1 each in Waterford and Dundalk. These projects focus on juveniles who are already involved in crime or who are likely to drop out of the education system prematurely together with those in need of developmental support due to family circumstances. A further 10 projects were approved by the end of 1998 to be located in Dublin (6), Waterford (1), Bray (1), Tralee (1) and Sligo (1). £280,000 has been received from the EU-funded INTEGRA programme to participate in a transnational study, known as the Connect Project, which targets the specific needs of prisoners in Mountjoy Prison as they move through training and on to reintegration into society and the workforce.

The Government approved a pilot *Integrated Services Project* with the ultimate aim of developing new procedures to ensure a more focused and better co-ordinated response by statutory authorities to the needs of communities with the greatest level of disadvantage, as a basis for a model of best practice. The project is overseen by the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee on Local Development, chaired

by Mr Chris Flood TD, Minister of State at the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation. The project is initially focused on 4 target areas, 3 in Dublin and 1 in Cork, with the intention being that a successful model, evolved during the pilot stage, can be extended to other areas of major urban disadvantage as a model of best practice. The implementation phase of the project has now begun and was launched by the Taoiseach last December on foot of the preparation of a needs analysis for each of the 4 target areas.

The development of the Integrated Services Project is complemented by a *Local Office Family Services Pilot Project* being developed by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, as both focus on the more integrated delivery of public services in conjunction with the local communities. The project, which is being piloted in Cork, Waterford and Finglas, Dublin, will build on the one-stop shop concept with the aim of providing improved access to information for families locally through the Social Welfare Local Offices. Each project will seek to provide the highest quality information service regarding supports available to the family, both statutory and voluntary, with particular emphasis on supports available locally. Opportunities for directed referral to non-Departmental services will also be explored. The projects will also seek to case manage groups of clients with complex needs, such as lone parents, carers and families of the unemployed, in co-operation with other locally based statutory and voluntary agencies, with a view to enhancing the self-esteem and potential of the individuals selected in order to increase their capacity to become self-reliant and self-directed. It is expected that implementation of the project will begin around May of 1999.

The *Community Development Programme* (CDP), established in 1990 in recognition of the role of community development in tackling poverty and social exclusion, continues to be expanded. The aim of the CDP is to develop a network of community development resource centres and projects in communities affected by high unemployment, poverty and disadvantage. The number of projects funded under the programme has increased from 15 in 1990 to some 90 in 1998, of which 72 are operating in urban areas of disadvantage. In line with the P2000 commitment to expand the CDP to a further 30 areas, the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs recently announced 17 areas which have been approved for the CDP. It is envisaged that a further 17 areas will be announced shortly, bringing the total number of new areas to 34.

Rural Poverty

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

income support, and access to adequate services and infrastructure, co-ordination of responses and empowerment of local people and communities."

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

Many of the developments in combating rural poverty are as identified in the previous section regarding urban disadvantage in so far as policies seek to tackle social exclusion nationally while having regard to the particular spatial characteristics of different areas.

In this regard, the future developments in *integration of Local Government and Local Development* are equally important for rural and urban areas although the nature of the County Development Plans will, of course, differ depending on the region. Similarly, the expansion of the Community Development Programme, as outlined in the previous section, will be of benefit in tackling rural disadvantage. 18 of the 90 CDP projects funded in 1998 operated in a rural context and 12 of the 17 additional areas approved in February 1999 are rural. These will complement the various partnerships and community groups funded under the *Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development* (LURD). In addition, the introduction of the *Farm Assist* scheme, outlined in section 2.4, will assist some of the lowest income earners in that sector while the *Fishing Assist* scheme is expected to benefit some 500 low-income, self-employed fishermen.

The role and functions of the Department of Agriculture and Food include a number of policy areas and programmes which help to address social exclusion and so contribute to the NAPS. These include programmes for direct payments of income supports, encouraging and assisting enterprise and the empowerment of communities in rural areas. Two of the more significant programmes run by the Department are the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and the LEADER programme.

The main objective of the *Disadvantaged Areas Scheme* is "to ensure the continuation of farming thereby maintaining a minimum population level". The scheme applies to 75% of the country and payments totalling £120 million were made to around 110,000 farmers in 1998. Because this scheme is confined to disadvantaged areas and has relatively low limits on the number of qualifying livestock, it is an important income source for low-income farm families who derive a greater share of farm income from headage than is the case for better off farmers. Total direct payments (including headage and premia and other non-capital payments made directly to farmers) accounted for 56% of average family farm income in 1998 and more than this on smaller farms.

LEADER is the EU Initiative for Rural Development which provides a role for rural communities to

involve themselves directly in the local development process. All rural areas are covered by the 34 groups approved under LEADER II and funded on the basis of "business plans" for local development drawn up by the groups themselves. The programme is designed to complement other measures under the Community Support Framework (CSF) and, in particular, to support "bottom-up" development. Each group must devote resources to support and facilitate community development both in the general sense of improving the community's capacity to identify its own potential, set its own priorities and pursue its own goals as well as assisting individuals and entrepreneurial groups with project ideas through financial aid and other support. LEADER can make a significant contribution to promoting social inclusion by contributing to the general economic and social development of rural areas. £23 million was advanced to LEADER groups in 1998, of which £12 million was provided to the voluntary and community sector while £8 million was allocated to some 400 enterprises.

The Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties (Cavan, Monaghan, Louth, Donegal, Leitrim and Sligo), is unique in its approach in that its implementation is being carried out by a number of intermediary funding bodies ranging from Government Departments through County Councils to bodies with an interest in voluntary and community activity. 5 themes have been identified to combat poverty and social exclusion in further embedding peace and promoting reconciliation. The guidelines for action under the programme are urban and rural regeneration, employment, cross-border development, social inclusion, productive investment and industrial development.

A *White Paper on Rural Development* is currently being prepared by an Inter-Departmental Committee chaired by the Department of Agriculture and Food. It is expected that the White Paper will focus on social, cultural and environmental aspects of rural development as well as the economic conditions in rural communities. It will seek to facilitate the capacity of rural communities to participate in and contribute to their own development and in addressing the issues of rural poverty and social exclusion. The Paper will be framed in the context of the need for a multi-dimensional and integrated approach to rural development. In that context, it will be important to identify the opportunities for synergy with existing policy, where appropriate, and in particular the proposals of the Task Force on Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems.

Access to adequate public services was one area highlighted in the NAPS as being of particular importance to rural dwellers. The *Pilot Programme for the Provision of Integrated Public Services in Rural Areas* was completed at the end of 1998 and a final evaluation report is being prepared for publication. It is intended that the report will be circulated to Departments, State Agencies and public service delivery bodies so that the lessons learned can be taken into account for the future design and delivery of public services. The report will also be taken into account in the context of the White Paper on Rural Development.

Many of the Partnerships and community groups are working closely with the local communities developing solutions at local level to lack of transport facilities (using school buses, community car schemes, etc.). An Expert Working Group, comprising representatives from the private sector, State agencies, Partnerships and community groups, has been established by ADM to develop a *strategy for rural transport*. This work is supported by a National Transport Co-ordinator employed by ADM under the Rural Renewal Projects to support the development of community based transport initiatives with a view to mainstreaming models of best practice.

While the Department of Agriculture and Food has the main role in terms of promoting rural development, the Departments of the *Marine and Natural Resources* and *Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands* are also pursuing a number of measures supportive of social inclusion in rural areas. The Department of the Marine and Natural Resources conducts a range of schemes designed to maintain and improve economic activity and employment in the areas of forestry, maritime transport, sea fisheries and processing, aquaculture, angling and mineral exploration and development. The Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands supports many projects such as waterways restoration, improvement works on historic properties and national monuments, etc., as well as improvements in the gaeltacht areas and off-shore islands that are supportive of social inclusion, both directly through employment generated by projects themselves and future tourism potential as well as the potential they contain for improving the rural environment and quality of life in rural areas.

Other Developments

- 2.8 There are several other areas of relevance to the fight against social exclusion where developments can be reported.

One such is the emerging debate on childcare provision. The Report of the Expert Working Group on Childcare set up under P2000 was recently published and has been noted by the Government. Following the publication of the Report, the Government has set up an *Inter-Departmental Committee on Childcare*, chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, to consider the issue of childcare in a broader context. The Committee has been asked to evaluate, cost and prioritise the childcare proposals in the Report, together with those in the Report of the Commission on the Family, the Report of the Forum on Early Childhood Education and those set out in the Action Programme for the Millennium. The Committee has been asked to make recommendations to the Government by August 1999.

In line with the Government's "families first" policy, a new *Family Affairs Unit* was set up in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs in 1998. Its function is to co-ordinate family policy, pursue the findings of the Commission on the Family and to undertake research and promote

awareness about family issues. In addition to the pilot Local Office project referred to previously, the Unit has overseen several other developments in the area of family affairs including the administration of some £1.5 million for relationship and bereavement counselling grants to voluntary organisations and the provision of £600,000 in 1998 for the nationwide expansion of the Family Mediation Service, 6 new services at regional centres throughout the country having been commenced in 1998. In addition, a series of Family Services Information Fora have been organised throughout the country to provide voluntary and community groups who work with families at local level with an opportunity to hear about the family services in the Department and to express their views on the development of family policy and services in Ireland.

The *Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* also contributes to tackling social exclusion in local communities. Centres funded under this programme aim to combat disadvantage by improving the functioning of the family unit by targeting families who are disadvantaged and by outreaching to the most marginalised, often providing special services for lone parent families, young mothers and others considered in need of extra support. Both the report on the Family Resource Centres (1997) and the Report of the Commission on the Family recommended expansion of the programme. An additional £700,000 allocated in the 1998 Budget allowed the expansion of the programme from 10 centres to 31 centres in 1998. An additional £1.03 million was provided in the 1999 Budget (bringing the total 1999 allocation to £2.13 million) which will allow for the funding in 1999 of some 20 additional centres.

In January 1998, the Government established the *Young People at Risk Programme* which has at its centre the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF). Mr Fahey TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for children, was given approval by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion to spend £7.2 million over the 3 year period, 1998 to 2000, on 14 pilot projects for children at risk. The objectives of these projects are to work intensively with children, and the families of children, mainly in the 7 to 12 age group, who are at risk of going into care or getting into trouble. The projects must also establish formal collaborative structures involving the health boards with relevant public agencies, the voluntary sector and the local community. They must identify or, where appropriate, establish a local centre within each community which will act as a focal point for the delivery of services to young people and children. These initiatives are important in the context of Ireland's commitment to the UN Charter on Children's Rights and in light of the fact that children, particularly those in larger families, have been identified as a group at relatively high risk of poverty.

In response to a *Review of the Carer's Allowance* published by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs in October 1998, the 1999 Budget included a range of measures to improve the position of carers. These measures will benefit an additional 3,300 carers in addition to the existing 11,500 in receipt of Carer's Allowance at a full year cost of over £18 million, a substantial addition to the £45 million spent in 1998. Other proposals in the Review, including the introduction of a

needs assessment, are currently being advanced by the relevant Departments in consultation with the care groups.

The ongoing development of the *equality agenda* is also complementary to the NAPS. The Employment Equality Act was signed into law in June 1998 and the Equal Status Bill is being redrafted and should be published in 1999. The imminent establishment of a new Equality Authority will support the implementation of the new legal provisions while the proposed Human Rights Commission will provide a further safeguard against discrimination affecting some of the most vulnerable groups in society. This will be underpinned by research commissioned by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform of an equality proofing process which will support and complement the Poverty Proofing framework agreed by Government in 1998.

The *Legal Aid Board*, which has a vital role to play in providing access to justice in civil matters for people on low income, was put on a statutory basis by the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995 and operates under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

There has also been considerable progress in combating the barriers faced by *people with disabilities*. The Establishment Group, set up by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, to bring forward detailed proposals for the establishment of a National Disability Authority and a Disability Support Service submitted its report to the Minister in June 1998. The Government approved the adoption of the Establishment Group's Report and the implementation in full of its recommendations. The Disability Authority Bill was published and passed by the Seanad in December 1998 and is expected to proceed to the Dail early in 1999. It is the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform's aim that equal opportunities for people with disabilities is placed firmly on the agenda of each Department and, in this regard, is developing mechanisms to facilitate cross-departmental working. In addition, as stated in section 2.3 above, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is finalising the development of an active policy to enhance the employment rates of people with disabilities in the public service.

With regard to the *Traveller Community*, and in addition to developments noted in the previous sections, a Monitoring Committee on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community was established in June 1998 under the auspices of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. In 1998, new structures were put in place to give Travellers an input both at national and local level into the planning and delivery of services. At national level, the Department of Health and Children has established a Traveller Health Advisory Committee which comprises officials of the Department, representatives of health boards, Travellers and Travellers' representatives while, at local level, a Traveller Health Unit has been established in each health board area to monitor and plan services locally and to inform the National Committee on the formulation of policy. In addition, the Traveller Health Advisory Committee is considering a draft "Policy Statement on Travellers Health".

Another development of note was the launching of the *Foundation for Investing in Communities* in November 1998. This is a joint initiative between the State and the major employer bodies which aims to establish a permanent structure to support voluntary and community activity through financial and volunteering support from the corporate sector. The Foundation will focus on support for voluntary and community based projects on the basis of additionality, rather than duplication or replacement of existing State funding, continued development of the Local Enterprise Networks currently supported through the Enterprise Trust and seeking new ways of addressing the needs of disadvantaged children. One of the functions of the Foundation is to build up an endowment fund, through corporate and private donations which will provide a permanent funding source for voluntary and community activity. The Government provided a grant of £750,000 in 1998 to help kick-start the Foundation and a further £300,000 has been allocated for 1999.

Chapter

Going Forward

Three

NAPS Administration

- 3.1 There are a number of issues specifically related to NAPS administration and structures which will be progressed over the course of 1999.

The ESRI have now finalised the report, "*Monitoring Poverty Trends*", commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. This report is based on the 1997 Living in Ireland Survey and it updates the 1994 data on which the original NAPS targets were based. Given the substantial reduction in consistent poverty as well as developments in both the areas of unemployment and education participation, the issue of re-basing the NAPS targets will require further consideration. This issue is returned to in chapter 5.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the *Poverty Proofing* process is due to be reviewed around September of this year, following the end of the pilot phase. This will take account of officials' experience of implementing the process and its effectiveness in its first year of operation. Any difficulties arising will have to be identified at that stage, as will the means of resolving those difficulties - whether such solutions relate to refining the questions posed in the framework or training needs of staff as regards its implementation. It is critical that the process be properly evaluated and refined as necessary before its expansion to the wider public service. It will also be necessary to monitor developments in equality proofing to ensure that both processes are complementary and to minimise any overlap which may emerge. In addition, the ongoing development of equality legislation and the establishment of the Equality Authority and the Human Rights Commission potentially have significant implications for the social and economic rights of all citizens and particularly the most vulnerable members of society.

NAPS Unit will be considering the potential for introducing an appropriate *training module* on NAPS and Poverty Proofing in conjunction with the Staff Development Unit in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Centre for Management, Organisation and Development based in the Department of Finance. A suggested method could be to devise a module for inclusion in appropriate management development, or similar, courses, perhaps at HEO and AP level. Towards the end of 1998, NAPS Unit commenced a series of meetings with individual Liaison Officers to discuss issues arising in their roles and the issues identified were brought to the attention of the IDPC. It is intended to convene periodic meetings of Departmental Liaison Officers, beginning in 1999, to ensure that any particular difficulties faced by these key officials can be raised and dealt with swiftly and that new Liaison Officers can be orientated regularly.

The follow-up summit to the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, the original impetus behind the NAPS, will be held in Geneva in June 2000. This summit, the so-called *Copenhagen +5*, will examine the level of implementation of the Programme of Action and

Declarations of the Copenhagen Summit. It will seek to identify progress made and constraints encountered as well as lessons learned by nation states in seeking to implement their commitments with a view to recommending concrete actions and initiatives to strengthen efforts towards full and effective implementation of the outcomes of the Copenhagen Summit. A comprehensive national response to a questionnaire circulated by the Secretary General of the United Nations is being co-ordinated by the NAPS Unit in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the views of relevant NGOs will be sought. An EU Expert Group on reporting for Copenhagen +5 has also been formed to adopt a common EU position on the future direction for implementation of the Programme of Action. Ireland is represented on this Group by officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.

A survey on public perceptions of poverty conducted by Research Evaluation Services, on behalf of the Combat Poverty Agency, as part of the Irish Social Omnibus Survey, was released in December 1998. The vast majority of people (81%) felt that the Government should be involved in an anti-poverty strategy while only 8% were aware that the NAPS existed. This showed the information gap that exists in terms of public awareness of poverty. To address this issue, a NAPS Profiling Group has been convened. Comprising selected Departmental Press and Information Officers as well as representatives from the Combat Poverty Agency and NAPS Unit, this group will advise on raising the profile of the NAPS and ongoing developments in tackling social exclusion and on implementation of the *NAPS Information and Public Education Strategy* approved by the NAPS IDPC in 1998. An outline report on the NAPS was invited and submitted to the UN for inclusion in the 1999 UN Human Development Report.

Another issue which will be progressed is the *monitoring and evaluation* of the NAPS itself. In addition to this report and the Copenhagen reporting system, the Combat Poverty Agency will be progressing its initial evaluation of the NAPS. They expect to publish their first assessment in 1999 which will be a review of progress to date and highlighting key issues for consideration in the further implementation of NAPS. The National Economic and Social Forum which has a role in monitoring NAPS in the context of P2000 has recently been reconstituted and it is hoped that it will shortly be in a position to begin its assessment of progress on social inclusion issues generally.

Work on production of the *White Paper on the relationship between the State and the Voluntary Sector* is ongoing. The White Paper is expected to be finalised by end-Summer 1999 and will, among other things, establish a framework for more cohesive support by the State for the voluntary and community sector. This will help to inform the future development of the NAPS and partnership with the voluntary sector.

Social Inclusion Programme

3.2 Some of the main items which will be emerging over the rest of the year in furtherance of the social inclusion agenda are listed below. This is by no means an exhaustive list and more detail can be found in Departments' 1999 workplans, copies of which are available from NAPS Unit on request. Many of the measures referred to are ongoing and, as such, some of them will already have been referred to in chapter 2. Nonetheless, the following provides a flavour of the actions on social exclusion which are being pursued.

3.2(1) Unemployment

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will continue to review, on an on-going basis, the effectiveness of its active *labour market programmes* in light of current labour market circumstances to ensure their effectiveness in enhancing the employability of long-term unemployed and socially excluded persons. In particular, they will continue to contribute at EU level to the development of an *EU Employment Strategy* and, each year, advance and report on the implementation of the EU Guidelines to give effect to the strategy at national level. The systematic activation strategy of the Employment Action Plan will be extended to 25 - 34 year olds who are approaching 12 months on the Live Register from May 1999. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will pursue, in conjunction with other Government Departments, the elimination of barriers which hinder the movement of unemployed persons into jobs.

A significant future development is the planned introduction of a *minimum wage*. An Inter-Departmental Committee will produce a report on a plan of action for implementing a minimum wage as well as a report on its likely impact on the economy, employment and competitiveness. In consultation with the social partners and other Government Departments, a Minimum Wage Bill will be prepared by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

3.2(2) Income Adequacy

Given that the minimum rates of payment recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare will be achieved in 1999 for all social welfare recipients, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs intends to consider the issue of the *future direction of social welfare rates*. Consultation will be needed with other Departments also to ensure due account is taken of budgetary and other considerations, such as incentives to employment. It is important that any review be complementary to the continuing employment creation efforts of other State Agencies.

In line with a commitment in P2000, an independent appraisal of *Basic Income* is underway. The study is being overseen by a broadly based steering group, chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach.

Phase 1 of the study is almost completed and it is hoped that Phase 2 will be finished by the end of the year.

The *Working Group on the Different Treatment of Households under Tax and Social Welfare systems*, chaired by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, is charged with identifying and costing ways of ensuring consistent and equitable treatment of different types of household, including married, co-habiting and one-parent households under both systems. This Group is expected to report during 1999.

3.2(3) Educational Disadvantage

The publication of a *White Paper on Early Childhood Education*, which will take into account the findings of the National Forum on Early Childhood Education as well as the evaluation report of the Early Start Programme, will outline the Government's policy in this area and will complement the report on childcare referred to above. In advance of this and in order to avoid delays, £1.2 million is being provided in 1999 and 2000 for special initiatives on early education, with a particular focus on children with disabilities.

During 1999, the Department of Education and Science will continue to support the *Disadvantaged Areas scheme*, *Breaking the Cycle* and the provision of *Support Teachers* at primary level. The £57 million *1999 Budget package* to tackle educational disadvantage, the largest of its type ever in this country, will enable a number of significant advances to be made. These include the expansion of the *Home/School/Community Liaison scheme* to all disadvantaged primary and post primary schools from September 1999, the expansion of the Remedial Teaching service to all primary and post primary schools from September 1999, the establishment of the National Educational Psychological Service which will assist in identifying the special educational needs of children, development of school plans by schools in disadvantaged areas, introduction of the new capitation grant aimed at retention of Traveller students, interventions to prevent early school leaving in areas with particularly low completion rates, adult literacy programmes, and a major £9 million plan to provide sports facilities in Drug Task Force areas in conjunction with the Departments of Social, Community and Family Affairs and Environment and Local Government. The school library book scheme will be complemented by additional funding from the Department of the Environment and Local Government to implement the recommendations of "Branching Out - A New Public Library Service".

A *new primary school curriculum* will begin implementation in 1999/2000. The continued expansion of the *Junior Certificate School Programme*, the *Transition Year Programme*, the *Leaving Certificate Applied* and *Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme* will also help to aid retention of pupils whose needs may not be met by the current system. £8 million has also been provided for 1999 and 2000 for a comprehensive package of automatic entitlements for children with special needs, such as autistic children and children with severe learning difficulties or disabilities. In addition, the *Youth Affairs*

budget of the Department of Education and Science for 1999 has been increased to assist general youth service provision in the non-formal education sector.

The Department will also continue to support Youthreach, VTOS and a range of programmes designed to improve participation in *third level education* by students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including development of a national policy to reserve 500 third level places specifically for disadvantaged students. The Departmental Co-ordinating Committee on Traveller Education oversees the delivery of *education services to Travellers* and is currently engaged in drawing up a comprehensive plan for the implementation of those recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community relevant to education provision.

Following the publication of the Green Paper "*Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning*" in November 1998, an extensive consultation process is now underway with submissions being accepted up to the end of June 1999. A number of regional seminars will be held culminating in a national forum to be followed by the preparation of a White Paper. In addition, a *cross-departmental group on literacy among the unemployed* has been established which will report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion later this year. In the meantime the additional £1.5 million provided in the 1999 Budget, bringing total provision for adult education in 1999 to in excess of £5.6 million, aims to maintain the momentum of developments already underway.

3.2(4) Urban Disadvantage

As identified in section 2.6, the ongoing implementation of the recommendations of the *Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems* will be an important contributor to ensuring a coherent response to urban disadvantage.

In addition, the continued implementation of *LURD* through the partnership companies, implementation of the new *urban renewal scheme* based on Integrated Area Action Plans, the pilot *Integrated Services Project*, the pilot *Family Services Project* and the *National Drugs Strategy* as well as the *Young People's Facilities and Services Fund* will all contribute to tackling social exclusion.

An in-depth review of the *National Drugs Strategy* is planned by the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation. This review will take account of experience to date as well as looking at particular aspects of strategy such as the issue of homeless drugs users and more integrated treatment of drug misusers going into and returning from prison.

The Department of Environment and Local Government will continue to monitor the affordability of *housing* and develop further measures to assist low income potential house purchasers as well as appropriate strategies to increase house supply. They will also be responsible for overseeing the local authority housing programme (4,500 starts in 1999) and maintaining output under voluntary housing

schemes as well as the redevelopment of local authority housing schemes in certain areas. Once finalised, the latest assessment of housing needs, conducted in March 1999, will be an important indicator of the trends in social housing needs. The assessment will also identify the number of applicants for local authority housing who are in receipt of SWA supplementation and those applicants for whom SWA assistance is the more appropriate response.

The housing needs assessment will provide an indication of the level of *homelessness* in Ireland and will be an important input into the report of the Inter-Departmental Group on homelessness which is expected to report back to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion later this year. In the meantime, the Department of the Environment and Local Government will continue to fund and monitor the performance of local authorities on providing accommodation for the homeless. This will be complemented by the emergency residential centre for homeless children under 12 years which was opened in Dublin in January 1999 by the Eastern Health Board and other emergency accommodation for boys which will open shortly in other locations in Dublin. A Forum on Youth Homelessness has recently been established in the Eastern Health Board region including representation from key voluntary organisations and it is intended to launch a series of new initiatives for homeless youth in 1999.

The Department of the Environment and Local Government will also fund the implementation by local authorities of *Traveller accommodation* programmes and ensure implementation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

3.2(5) Rural Poverty

As with urban areas, the implementation of the recommendations of the *Task Force on Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems* will be an important means of promoting rural development and tackling rural disadvantage. The forthcoming *White Paper on Rural Development* will also be a vital tool in developing a strategy to combat rural poverty. The introduction of *Farm Assist* and *Fishing Assist*, both due to commence in October 1999 with payments backdated to April, is a direct response to the difficulties faced by low income farmers and fishermen.

Teagasc, on behalf of the Combat Poverty Agency, are conducting "*A review of farm income support policy in the context of targeting resources to low income farm households*" which is expected to be completed later in 1999. This research will help to inform the future development of income support policies for farmers.

The evaluation and implementation of the lessons learned from the pilot *service delivery* programme should aid Departments in improving their services to rural areas thus reducing the sense of isolation which can sometimes be experienced by people in such areas.

The *Department of the Marine and Natural Resources* will continue its wide range of activities aimed

at developing enterprise in areas under its remit, such as forestry, mining, aquaculture, ports development, etc. Similarly, the *Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands* has a programme of work to continue improvements to arts and cultural institutions, waterways, etc., and improvement works to off-shore islands and gaeltacht areas. These activities contribute in a very direct way to promoting rural development and social inclusion throughout the country by creating employment directly and, more importantly in the longer term, indirectly through increased tourism and enhanced economic viability of enterprises in the area.

3.2(6) Other Developments

The *Inter-Departmental Committee on Childcare* is expected to report back to Government by August 1999. This latter committee is charged with evaluating, costing and prioritising the proposals contained in the report of the P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare, the report of the Commission on the Family, the report of the Forum on Early Childhood Education and the Action Programme for the Millennium. This work will be complemented by the development of a national database on childcare facilities being compiled by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Increased funding of over £3.6 million has been provided for the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme in 1999. This programme is designed to support local communities and employers who are trying to facilitate women and men with childcare responsibilities to access training, education and employment.

As mentioned in chapter 2, there are numerous developments in train in the area of promotion of a more equal society. These include the implementation of the *Employment Equality Act* which will commence around mid 1999 and the publishing of the *Equal Status Bill*. In addition, the research commissioned by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform on *equality proofing* will be published and a P2000 working group on gender proofing has been established.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will, during 1999, draft a plan of action to inform Government policy based on "A Strategy for Equality", the report of the *Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities*, as well as enacting the National Disability Authority Bill. That Department will also chair an establishment group for mainstreaming National Rehabilitation Board disability services and establish a committee to work towards achieving the 3% public service employment target for people with disabilities. Funding will be provided in 1999 for pilot community projects to facilitate local access by people with disabilities to information and to facilitate their participation in local area partnerships and enable them to play an active role in the life of their community. Funding will also be made available for pilot community action plans which will focus on transport to facilitate cross-sectoral planning at local level for the delivery of services for people with disabilities. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will facilitate and monitor the implementation of new structures within EÁS for the training and employment of people with disabilities.

The Department of Health and Children are pursuing a number of initiatives which are aimed at improving the *health status* of disadvantaged people. Its review of the 1995 Health Promotion Strategy will be informed by the results of the recent national health and lifestyles survey, Slán, where early indicators demonstrate the link between health status and socio-economic group. The Department will also publish a new policy document, "Youth as a Resource", which will focus on the health needs of young people at risk with a particular emphasis on early school leavers who have been shown to be more at risk in terms of their health behaviour than their school-going counterparts. A Policy Statement on Travellers' Health will be published in 1999 and will outline measures to be taken to achieve a higher level of health services take-up by the Traveller Community. Medical attention is available in the Eastern Health Board region for refugees and asylum seekers as soon as possible after their arrival in the country and, in 1999, funding of £300,000 is being provided to the South Eastern and Southern Health Boards to establish appropriate services in their regions. The other health boards have been asked to consider the need for such a service in their areas.

The *Family Affairs Unit* in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs will be continuing the programmes begun in 1998, such as the holding of family services information fora and the expansion of the Family Mediation Service. They will also administer an increased allocation of £2.1 million in grant funding for the support of marriage, child and bereavement counselling services. Other areas to be pursued in 1999 include the development of a programme of awareness raising on parenting issues in conjunction with the Department of Health and Children and the commissioning of research relevant to family-oriented policies.

Chapter

Economic and Social Prospects

Four

The Domestic Context

- 4.1 Developments in the domestic economy are obviously a central factor in determining the future evolution of social inclusion in Ireland. The exceptional growth rates enjoyed by the Irish economy over recent years have translated into dramatic increases in employment and substantial falls in unemployment, as well as wide-spread improvements in living standards. At this stage, it would appear that the prospects of a "soft landing" for the economy, as it inevitably slows towards more sustainable growth rates, are good. Real GNP growth for 1998 is estimated to have been about 8.5%, slowing to a forecast 6% in 1999. This is expected to translate into an increase of some 3% in the numbers at work with a subsequent fall in the unemployment rate to an average of 6.4% for 1999. Non-agricultural earnings are estimated to have increased by approx. 5% in 1998.

The proposed examination by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs on the future direction of social welfare rates, now that the targets set by the Commission on Social Welfare have been achieved in the 1999 Budget, is timely. The negotiations on a successor to P2000, which will get underway later in the year, will also be an appropriate forum to give further consideration to this issue having regard to all other relevant factors, such as budgetary and employment implications, etc. The negotiations on a new partnership agreement will, of course, also be an important indicator for the future direction of social policy in Ireland as evidenced by the central position accorded to social inclusion in the current P2000 agreement. The IDPC will monitor developments at the negotiations to see where agreements reached might usefully impact on furthering the social inclusion agenda.

The peace process highlights the need to build an inclusive society and, in this regard, political and cultural inclusion needs to be underpinned by strengthening social inclusion through tackling poverty. The EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (as outlined in section 2.7) has been making a contribution in disadvantaged communities in the border counties and Northern Ireland in this regard.

The ongoing negotiations on Agenda 2000, the next round of European Union funding, will be of considerable importance to both rural and urban areas of disadvantage. The successful outcome from the negotiations on the Common Agricultural Policy will be an important support to rural economic development over the next several years. The decision to divide the country into two regions will have an important role to play in terms of providing the designated Objective 1 areas with the necessary infrastructural capacity to become more self-reliant by attracting and encouraging industrial investment. Equally, it is important that disadvantaged areas in the Objective 1 in transition region have access to appropriate replacement funding to ensure that progress made with the assistance of EU funded programmes in the past can be maintained. In this context, it is important to note that the Government has made clear its commitment to disadvantaged areas outside the proposed Objective 1 region in that as long as the prudent policies which have played a major part in securing the economic growth of recent years are continued, we should have the resources to make good the reduction in EU aid for the country as a whole.

Other developments, which have already been mentioned, and which will further define the context in which the NAPS operates, are developments in childcare provision and developments in the area of equality, through the establishment of an equality authority, the enactment of new equality legislation and the ongoing research into equality proofing as well as the review of the poverty proofing process.

The International Context

- 4.2 The development of social policy and goals at an international level is an ever increasing and important driving force behind social development. As stated previously, the UN World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, was the catalyst for developing the NAPS and the 5 year review will be conducted during the next Summit to be held in Geneva in July 2000. This process will refocus efforts on the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme for Action and lend a new impetus to combating social exclusion at an international level.

The Amsterdam Treaty offers significant potential for co-ordinated action on social exclusion at EU level. Article 137 allows for measures to be adopted to encourage co-operation between Member States through initiatives aimed at improving knowledge, developing exchanges of best practice, promoting innovative approaches and evaluating experiences in order to combat social exclusion. This reflects a wider understanding at European level of the definition of social exclusion compared to previous, valuable but limited, actions which tended to be predominantly focused on tackling unemployment. These provisions are supported by Article 13 of the Treaty which allows for appropriate EU action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

The European Commission, in conjunction with the EU High Level Group on Social Exclusion (on which Ireland is represented by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs), is currently examining how best the promotion of social inclusion could be furthered at EU level. A Roundtable Conference was held in May 1999 to look at how the Community should support Member States in promoting social inclusion. This will contribute to the development of an action programme on social inclusion. The possibility of adopting a resolution on the issue or the publication of a Communication on social exclusion are currently under consideration. In addition, the Finnish Presidency (which will succeed the German Presidency in July 1999) have agreed that an EU level conference on social inclusion will be held in Helsinki around November of 1999 which will also help to raise the profile of social exclusion at a European level.

Chapter

Progress towards NAPS Targets

Five

Introduction

As outlined in Chapter 2, there have already been significant developments in the areas in which NAPS has set specific targets; unemployment, educational disadvantage and income adequacy. This indicates the need for the targets to be revised to take account of the changed circumstances. The rapidity of developments in the relatively short time since the NAPS was launched also brings into question the appropriateness of targets with a very long, 10 year timeframe. Shorter term rolling targets with periodic reviews may be a better model.

Given that the ESRI report "*Monitoring Poverty Trends*" has only recently been finalised, it has not yet been possible to give sufficient consideration to what appropriate targets may be for the future although this is an area to which the IDPC intends to give early consideration. The following sections briefly outline progress which has been made to date against the targets and some of the issues which may need to be considered in conducting a revision.

Global Target

- 5.1 The target here is to reduce the numbers of "consistently poor" as defined by the ESRI from 9% to 15% of the population in 1994 to under 5% to 10% by 2007.

The report, "*Monitoring Poverty Trends*", shows that the numbers experiencing consistent poverty, defined by reference to the 50% and 60% relative income lines combined with the presence of basic deprivation, has shown a sharp fall to 7% to 10% by 1997. This means that the long term target set out in the NAPS is virtually achieved and thus needs to be reviewed and then revised.

In revising this target, the views of the ESRI on the technical aspects of the survey will have to be considered. The limitations of the survey (for instance it does not cover the homeless and does not take account of the value of secondary or other non-cash benefits) might usefully be considered to examine if alternative data sources could be used in tandem with the ESRI data itself. The Combat Poverty Agency have commissioned a study on the "*Potential of Secondary Data Sources as a Resource for Information on Poverty*" from UCD which is due to be finalised in Autumn of 1999 and may be useful in considering this issue.

Furthermore, the fall in consistent poverty can be attributed to a reduction in basic deprivation, which is consistent with real increases in social welfare payments over the years. However, the numbers falling below the relative income lines, without reference to basic deprivation, have increased slightly, and are projected by the ESRI to increase further up to 2001. "Basic deprivation" is defined by reference to a survey of people's opinions and it is not clear at this stage to what extent the

classification of what is a basic necessity will change over time. If it is the case that the threshold of what people consider to be a "basic" requirement ultimately rises in line with increases in living standards and expectations, it may be that the reduction in basic deprivation exhibited to date will tend to slip back as the level of the threshold increases.

Other issues which may need to be considered are the appropriateness of a shorter term, rolling target of, perhaps 3 to 4 years duration, and the appropriateness of mean (as currently used) versus median income.

Unemployment

- 5.2 The NAPS target was to reduce the rate of unemployment from 11.9% in April 1996 to 6% by 2007 and to reduce the rate of long term unemployment from 7% to 3.5% over the same period.

Buoyed by the strong economic performance in recent years, the rate of progress on this front has been exceptional. The latest figures available from the Quarterly National Household Survey relate to the period September to November 1998 at which point the unemployment rate was estimated at 6.4%, a reduction of over 5 percentage points in less than 3 years. This means that the NAPS target for 2007 has almost been achieved and the target of 7% by the end of year 2000, set out in the Employment Action Plan, has already been surpassed. Progress on reducing long-term unemployment has been equally dramatic with the rate standing at 3.1% for the period September to November 1998, with the NAPS target having already been exceeded.

In light of progress to date, and forecasts for a continuation of the trend in 1999, it is clear that the situation needs to be reviewed. In doing so, it must be recognised that there cannot be a continuation of recent trends in the long term. A 5% unemployment rate is frequently asserted to be "full employment" and the Tánaiste has recently indicated that she feels such a figure is achievable over the lifetime of this Government. The challenge is to find the lowest possible level of unemployment and to sustain it in the long term while recognising that there will inevitably be periodic fluctuations around that target.

While it may be the case that there is a level of frictional unemployment consistent with full employment, the existence of long-term unemployment can only be viewed as a structural problem. While progress on this front to date has been very encouraging, it is important that resources continue to be directed towards improving the employability of the long-term unemployed with a view to minimisation of long-term unemployment.

Educational Disadvantage

- 5.3 The primary target is to eliminate early school leaving before the Junior Certificate and to increase the retention rates to Leaving Certificate level to at least 90% by 2000 and 98% by 2007

As the figures for the 1995/96 school leavers cohort show, 81% completed the Leaving Certificate, 16% completed the Junior Certificate and 3% left without any qualification in that year. While the numbers leaving without any qualification continues to fall, the numbers completing the Leaving Certificate seem to have levelled out somewhat in the previous 3 to 4 years following significant increases throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. This figure is confined specifically to completion of senior cycle and does not take account of students who leave the second level system but pursue education and training programmes leading to certification through apprenticeships, Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres. Retention figures are improved when account is taken of the participants in such programmes.

As already stated, education is one of the key factors in ameliorating the effects of Early School Leaving but the collaborative supports of a wide range of statutory and voluntary bodies are required if the needs of children and families at risk are to be met over time. It is not surprising that the higher the retention rates, the harder it is to achieve further increases in the numbers remaining to completion as the remaining early school leavers are likely to be the most disaffected students. Ironically, strong employment conditions are also mitigating against achieving the NAPS targets on education retention as some school-goers choose to leave early in order to take an available job. Young persons from disadvantaged households are perhaps more likely to leave early in such a situation as the pressure to earn a wage may be greater than for other students. However, in the long term, it is not beneficial to leave without a qualification as unskilled workers will have lower job security, less chance of finding replacement employment if necessary and lower earning potential.

This does not diminish in any way the obligation on all statutory and voluntary bodies to redouble efforts to deal effectively with the problem of early school leaving. This concerted effort includes the targeted interventions in areas with particularly low completion rates, the expansion of the Leaving Certificate Applied, which offers an applied programme to meet the needs of those students who up to now found the Leaving Certificate unsuitable, and school planning to help schools in disadvantaged areas to more effectively meet the needs of their students. In addition, the consideration by the Department of Education and Science of legislation to ensure that young workers under the age of 18 are given appropriate education and training is a timely development.

Regardless of economic or educational conditions, it is, perhaps, unrealistic to expect that the educational system will be suitable for as many as 98% of students. While the IDPC would not consider it appropriate that a target should be lowered simply because progress is slower than

expected, it may in this instance be appropriate to restructure it to give due regard to other, less formal, education and training opportunities and to interventions outside the mainstream setting.

Income Adequacy, Urban and Rural Disadvantage

- 5.4 One of the targets under the income adequacy heading was that the minimum rates recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare would be achieved by the end of 1999. This was provided for in the 1999 Budget and, from June 1999, all social welfare recipients will be receiving between 100% and 123% of the recommended rates, based on current forecasts for inflation. Now that this target has been met, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs will be considering the issue of the future direction of social welfare rates.

It may also be worth considering whether targets could usefully be set in areas other than those incorporated in the original NAPS report, including, perhaps, more specific targets in the area of Urban Disadvantage and Rural Poverty.

Conclusion

The last several years have seen very significant changes in Irish society as living standards have moved towards the European average and demographic changes combined with the ending of large scale emigration (and indeed the advent of net inward migration) have led to a new cohort of young workers. In addition, the significant improvement in employment opportunities, particularly in the services sector, has led to a very considerable increase in labour force activity for women, particularly married women with children.

The dynamic growth in the economy is translating into substantial jobs growth and the Quarterly National Household Survey data shows that long-term unemployed persons are accessing jobs in greater numbers. Unemployment has now fallen to 6.4% for September to November 1998, well below the European average, alleviating what has traditionally been one of the greatest social problems in Ireland.

The prospects for a continuation of strong economic growth are good, although they will inevitably tail off from the exceptional levels recorded in recent years. The ongoing Peace Process will, if successful, also lead to increased prosperity and enhanced opportunities throughout the island as a whole. Sound economic performance is vital if the progress made in recent years, particularly the improved employment situation, is to be maintained.

While the more traditional aspects of social exclusion such as unemployment (and particularly long-term unemployment) and educational disadvantage must continue to be vigorously tackled, we now face a new set of challenges which can be associated with increased prosperity. This enhanced prosperity serves to highlight in a more marked way the existence of long standing social problems such as homelessness, drug addiction and disaffection, particularly among young people, in certain areas.

Several other constraints have also become evident. Rapid development has led to increased congestion in urban areas and the infrastructural deficit which exists must be tackled in order to maintain the increased level of economic activity which we now enjoy. Other issues which have emerged are the current housing shortage and the increasingly important issue of childcare facilities. Given the dramatic growth in employment, an issue which will require close monitoring into the future is the possibility of increasing income disparities among employees and the danger which that might pose in terms of the emergence of a new class of "working poor".

Much is being done to promote the cause of social inclusion and much has been achieved to date. However, there can be no room for complacency and it will be necessary to address emerging issues into the future in order to ensure that inequalities in our society can be reduced.

Appendix

Membership of the NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee

A

Membership of the NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (as at 31 March, 1999)

Dermot McCarthy ¹	Department of An Taoiseach
Deirdre Carroll ¹	Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs
Patricia O'Connor	Department of Education and Science
Pat Nolan	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Finian Matthews	Department of the Environment and Local Government
Frank O'Donnell	Department of Agriculture and Food
Charlie Hardy	Department of Health and Children
Joe Mooney	Department of Finance
Tony Fitzpatrick	Department of the Marine and Natural Resources
Agnes Aylward	Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation
Moling Ryan	Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands
Vera Kelly	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Gerry McDonagh	Department of Public Enterprise
Hugh Frazer	Combat Poverty Agency
Tony Crooks	Area Development Management Ltd
Gerard Walker	FÁS

¹: Co-Chairperson

Appendix

Departmental Reports of social inclusion measures

B

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

Food sub-Programme

- Food sub-Programme of EU supported Operational Programme for Industrial Development aims to build a competitive food industry which will generate national wealth and employment while helping to sustain rural economies. Grants paid are biased towards less favoured areas.
- grants paid of £15.05 million. 1998 grants approved of £21.134 million relating to 32 projects expected to generate, on completion, 787 new jobs.

Disadvantaged Area Scheme

- Implemented under the Operational Programme for Agriculture, Rural Development and Forestry (OPARDF), the scheme aims, inter alia, "to ensure the continuation of farming thereby maintaining a minimum population level". Applies to 75% of the country. Scheme payments account for c. 70% of Family Farm Income (FFI) where FFI is less than £2,500 pa (such farms accounting for 40% of farms in disadvantaged areas). Total direct payments account for 48% of average FFI and over 50% of FFI on farms under 10 hectares, rising dramatically for hill farmers and small and medium sized cattle enterprises.
- 1998 payments amounted to £120 million (principally related to livestock farming activities) paid to approx. 110,000 farmers.

Winter Fodder arrangements

- £11 million provided in 1998 to deal with fodder difficulties experienced by some farmers.
- £6 million provided to facilitate the disposal of mountain sheep from overgrazed commonages in certain counties in the West of Ireland.
- £2.75 million paid to producers eligible for headage payments on sheep in addition to the normal ewe premium (giving a higher rate of £11 - £12 per ewe in 1998).

Farm retirement scheme

- Scheme provides income support to retiring farmers between the age of 55 and 66 while allowing younger farmers to benefit from the transfer of land and expand their earning potential from farming.
- 1998 payments totalled £66.89 million, paid to approx. 8,500 farmers of which 1,222 were new applicants.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS)

- REPS aims to establish farming and production methods which reflect the increasing public concern

for conservation, landscape protection and wider environmental concerns; to protect wildlife habitats and endangered species of flora and fauna; to produce quality food in an environmentally friendly manner.

- REPS participants in 1998 were paid a basic premium of £125.20 per hectare up to a maximum of 40 hectares (payments are made annually for a 5 year period).
- 1998 payments amounted to £132.75 million, paid to some 40,000 farmers.

Installation aid for young farmers

- In 1998, 628 payments totalling £3.52 million were made under the 1994-1997 Installation Aid Scheme which operated under the OPARDE.
- A new Scheme of Installation Aid was launched at the end of 1998 confined to qualified young farmers under the age of 35 who set up on farm units for the first time with a labour requirement of not more than 3 Man Work Units. Funding of £10 million over a 3 year period has been made available with a premium of £5,600 payable to eligible applicants.

Schemes for control of farm pollution and improvement of dairy hygiene

- These schemes of grant aid to farmers for on-farm development works, supported under the OPARDE, aim to protect the environment, increase efficiency of output and improve quality. Rates of grants are biased towards the needs of small producers.
- In 1998, 2,242 payments totalling £18.69 million were made under the Control of Farm Pollution Scheme and 1,153 payments totalling £7.91 million were made under the Dairy Hygiene Scheme.

Operation of Milk Quota Regime

- Arrangements for various schemes continue to favour smaller scale producers who are regarded as the first priority category in terms of access to any quota becoming available for redistribution at the end of the quota year.
- The Temporary Leasing Scheme is of particular benefit to smaller producers as it provides for an exception to the land/quota link, thereby allowing smaller producers to acquire available quota without the added expense of leasing land. Under the 1997/98 Temporary Leasing Scheme, smaller producers (with quotas under 35,000 gallons) were allocated 43.6 million gallons, 75% of the total quantity distributed under this scheme.
- The Milk Quota Restructuring Scheme (which allows Co-ops/Dairies to purchase quota from producers ceasing milk production and resell this quota to certain categories of producers in the same Co-op/Dairy) gives total priority to smaller scale producers. As milk quota is attached to particular land, the retention of a greater number of family farms is a major contributor to the economic and social well-being of rural areas. Also, as smaller producers tend to be concentrated in less-favoured areas, this scheme, by encouraging extended enterprises, is particularly beneficial to areas with limited

alternative economic activity. In 1998, under this scheme, 10.6 million gallons (80% of the total) was reallocated to approx. 6,000 smaller producers (with quotas under 35,000 gallons).

- Restriction introduced on transfer of quota from disadvantaged areas to retain milk production in these areas thereby ensuring that the social and economic benefits of dairy farming are retained in the locality.
- During the 1997/98 quota year, the Milk Quota Appeals Tribunal granted £1.5 million gallons of quota, free of charge, to 1,300 hardship cases.

Suckler Cow/Ewe Quotas

- Small scale producers, first time applicants for the premium and producers who can demonstrate that their enterprise is in jeopardy from the quota system are given priority in annual distribution of Ewe and Suckler Cow Quota rights from the national reserves.
- Quota rights in disadvantaged areas have been ring-fenced to ensure that existing quota rights remain in these areas.
- In 1998, Suckler Cow Premium rights of 4,052 units were allocated to 1,001 applicants and Ewe Premium rights of 114,057 units were allocated to 2,354 applicants.

Producer Groups

- Producer Groups encourage farmers to co-operate and give smaller producers greater access and control in the production and marketing of their products. Financial assistance is provided towards the formation and administration of such groups in such areas as production of cereals, mushrooms, sheep, pigs and deer.
- Horticultural Producer Groups who draw up Operational Programmes qualify for financial assistance on an ongoing basis.
- In 1998, payments totalling almost £214,000 were made to 9 groups

Assistance for Weather-Related Crop Losses

- This scheme is designed to assist crop growers whose viability is threatened as a result of bad weather and is intended to relieve exceptional cases of hardship.
- A fund of £1.2 million was provided in 1998 to compensate for damage to cereal, grass, fruit and vegetables. Payments of £1.51 million were made.

Hardship Grant for farmers with restricted holdings

- This grant is designed to facilitate the purchase of fodder by herdowners whose holdings are restricted on foot of a herd re-test for Brucellosis or Tuberculosis and where animals are retained and fed during periods of restriction. Eligible herdowners may receive up to £200 per month for up to 4 months

during the period November to April, inclusive.

- 1,242 herdowners received a total of over £524,000 in the 1997/98 cycle.

Research, Training and Advisory services

- "Teagasc 2000", a new strategy launched in July 1998, reflects the central role which Teagasc (the Agriculture and Food Development Authority) plays in developing an innovative, competitive and sustainable agriculture and food industry and in ensuring the continued viability of rural communities.
- The objective of Teagasc's rural development research programme is to provide the strategic knowledge base to support the continued viability of rural areas. This programme focuses, inter alia, on
 - Modelling the dynamics of change and assessing the impact of policy and other factors in rural areas
 - Pinpointing the factors which will optimise rural viability
 - Establishing the implications of employment changes and the expected increase in part-time farming for household viability and replacement/succession
 - Identifying factors which influence the establishment and viability of alternative employment opportunities and enterprises.
- Teagasc is the main provider of vocational education and training for young people who make careers in agriculture. It carries out an extensive programme of in-service training for practising farmers. Special provision is made for women in farming and comprehensive training is also provided in rural enterprise development
 - To meet the needs of part-time farmers unable to attend courses during the normal working week, the Certificate in Farming course is now offered in the evenings, at weekends and during holiday periods. A distance learning option is being developed.
 - An integrated Certificate in Farming and Rural Enterprise is now provided for school leavers taking over a farm from which they will not earn a full income. This course combines training in farming with that in a second skill, either an alternative farm enterprise or, in conjunction with other vocational training agencies, a trade or craft, thereby meeting the need for multi-skills training.
 - Teagasc maintains a comprehensive programme of Rural Enterprise Development to meet the training needs of farmers or other rural dwellers who would like to generate extra income through farm diversification and rural enterprise.
 - In addition, the following specific courses in rural development training are provided in conjunction with FÁS, CERT, VECs and RTOs; Certificate of Rural Enterprise (general skills course for school leavers - 38 certificates awarded in 1998 with a further 148 students continuing in the course), Certificate in Rural Enterprise Skills (training in business establishment and development for more mature participants - 184 certificates awarded in 1998 with a further 505 students continuing) and Diploma in Rural Development (a third level course for community activists and animators provided through Universities).
- Teagasc offers a wide range of advisory services designed to assist farm families to maximise income

and exploit opportunities for development. Services are provided free of charge to small scale farmers and those involved in rural development or diversification. Teagasc implements a Rural Viability and Diversification Advisory Programme which assists farm families under financial pressure to analyse their current position, identify the threats to their survival and advise on opportunities for additional income generation. Local community development groups and farm organisations are involved in encouraging the smaller and most disadvantaged farmers to participate in the programme.

LEADER II

- All rural areas are covered by 34 groups approved under LEADER II, the EU Initiative for Rural Development, which provides a role for local communities to involve themselves directly in the local development process and promotes the bottom-up process of local development.
- The programme incorporates the following elements:
 - Mandatory emphasis on animation and capacity building both in the general sense of improving the community's capacity to identify its potential, set its own priorities and pursue its goals and also in terms of assisting individuals and entrepreneurial groups with project ideas through financial and other assistance.
 - Groups are requested to favour community based project activity when awarding grants.
 - Particular emphasis is placed on the need to provide training in community development, as a complement to other activity.
 - A target of 40% representation by women on the Boards of LEADER groups by the end of the programme has been set.
 - By agreement with Area Development Management Ltd (ADM), 9 groups have been approved to implement the Area Based Partnership approach to the long term unemployed under the Local Development Programme, enabling these groups to combine the social and economic policies of both programmes to best effect in tackling social exclusion.
- Of the £23 million advanced to LEADER groups in 1998, £12 million was provided to the voluntary and community sector and £8 million allocated to some 400 enterprises.

School milk scheme

- Nationwide scheme of financial aid to pre-schools, primary and second level schools to provide subsidised milk and milk products to students at a maximum price to school children of 12p per 0.25 litres.
- 2,621 schools participated in 1998 at a cost of some £1.2 million.

EU Beef/Butter Intervention Stocks

- In 1998, 253 tonnes of beef was made available, free of charge, to approx. 160 designated charities for hostel dinners.
- 60 tonnes of butter was allocated, free of charge, to 63 charities.

- 150 tonnes of beef was canned and made available, at reduced cost, to non-profit organisations, e.g. hospitals, day-care centres.

Pilot programme for integrated public services

- Under the programme, a number of pilot projects were operated by local project committees in partnership with state agencies, local development and community organisations to test community-based models for the delivery of essential public services in rural areas of low and dispersed populations.
- The pilot programme ended in 1998. An evaluation of the programme is currently in progress and will be published in 1999.

INTERREG

- This cross-border EU initiative aims to address the specific problems encountered by border regions and operates a number of measures specifically aimed at economic regeneration, tourism and general improvements in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.
- The joint INTERREG programme for Ireland-Northern Ireland covers all the border counties (including Sligo) on both sides of the border and is designed to address the peripherality of these areas and to encourage cross border co-operation.
- To the end of 1998, some 26 projects had been approved under the Agriculture measure with a total grant aid provision of £1.8 million and a total cost of £7.5 million. A total of 59 full-time equivalent jobs is projected.

White Paper on Rural Development

- Being prepared by an Inter-Departmental Committee on the basis that rural development is a broad, multi-functional process involving the economic, social, cultural and environmental conditions which influence the quality of life in rural communities.
- The focus will be on the physical and social conditions of people living in rural areas, economic diversification and development, facilitating the capacity of rural communities to participate in and contribute to their own development and on addressing the issues of rural poverty and social exclusion.
- The White Paper is due to be published before the Summer of 1999 and will contain a vision statement of the overall objective to be achieved in rural areas and the broad policy framework and necessary institutional mechanisms to achieve it.

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS, HERITAGE, GAELTACHT AND THE ISLANDS

Waterways

- Restoration and improvement works were undertaken on various waterways throughout the country in 1998 including:
 - Royal Canal - ongoing
 - Barrow Navigation channel - ongoing
 - Grand Canal - ongoing
 - Tralee Ship Canal - negotiations for purchase of canal basin completed, work ongoing
 - Construction of the Boyle Canal - ongoing
 - Suck Navigation channel - dredging work completed
- Plans underway, in partnership with tourist interests and the private sector, to maximise the benefits of the Shannon-erne Waterway to the local area by generating additional business and traffic and marketing new products and services in the waterway's catchment area.

Community based work

- A number of FÁS schemes are in place at various locations, e.g. Landscaping and enhancement projects at Clondalkin along the canals.
- 4 community groups are working on barge restoration projects (materials provided by the Department) at Killucan, Co. Meath, Shannonbridge, Co. Offaly, Athy, Co. Kildare and Clondalkin, Dublin.

Historic Properties

- Restoration and improvement works were undertaken at various historic properties around the country during 1998 including:
 - Castletown House, Co. Kildare - completed
 - Glebe Gallery, Co. Donegal - completed
 - Emo Court, Co. Laois - ongoing
 - Kilkenny Castle - ongoing
 - Victorian Cascade at Iveagh Gardens, Dublin - ongoing
 - National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin - tenders invited
 - Rathfarnham Castle, Dublin - completed
 - Kilmacurragh Arboretum, Co. Wicklow - planning permission granted

National Monuments

- Restoration, conservation and improvement works continued at various National Monuments including:
 - Boyle Abbey, Co. Roscommon - ongoing
 - Dun Aonghasa Fort, Aran Islands, Co. Galway - ongoing
 - Portumna Castle, Co. Galway and 17th century courtyard - ongoing
 - Megalithic monuments at Carrowmore Cemetery, Co. Sligo - ongoing
 - Newmills Corn/Flax Mills, Co. Donegal - completed
 - Dunamase Rock, Co. Laois - ongoing
 - Knowth Tumulus, Boyne Valley, Co. Meath - ongoing
 - Trim Castle, Co. Meath - ongoing
 - St. Audoen's Church, Dublin - ongoing
 - French Church, Waterford - ongoing
 - Gowran Church, Co. Kilkenny - ongoing
 - Mainguard, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary - ongoing
 - Tintern Abbey, Co. Wexford - completed
 - Barryscourt Castle, Co. Cork - ongoing
 - Charlesfort, Co. Cork - ongoing
 - Provision of piers on Great Blasket island, Co. Kerry - ongoing
 - Adare Castle, Co. Limerick - ongoing
 - Newcastlewest Castle, Co. Limerick - ongoing
 - Roscrea Castle and Mill, Co. Tipperary - ongoing
 - Pier and monuments on Scatterry Island, Co. Clare - completed
 - Ferns Castle, Co. Wexford - ongoing
 - Kells Priory, Co. Kilkenny - ongoing

Visitors Services

- In 1998, Visitor Services recruited some 325 guides at various heritage sites throughout the country.
- These sites are visited by 2 million people annually and generate admission charges of £3.5 million - admission charges are held at a level below private sector entry charges to facilitate access by as wide a sector of the community as possible.

Arts and Cultural Institutions

- The Cultural Development Incentive Scheme is designed to develop the arts and cultural infrastructure, especially in the regions. Schemes in the following locations were on hands or completed in 1998:
 - Letterkenny, Co. Donegal - ongoing
 - Cork Public Museum - ongoing

- Limerick City Art Gallery - ongoing
- Edenville House, Co. Roscommon - ongoing
- Doolin, Co. Clare - ongoing
- Macroom, Co. Cork - ongoing
- Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin - ongoing
- Blanchardstown, Dublin - ongoing
- Tallaght, Dublin - ongoing
- Hugh Lane Gallery/National Ballroom, Dublin - ongoing
- Inis Oirr, Co. Galway - ongoing
- Tralee, Co. Kerry - ongoing
- Westport, Co. Mayo - ongoing
- Oxmanstown Hall, Birr, Co. Offaly - ongoing
- Tipperary South Riding County Museum, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary - ongoing
- Straide, Co. Mayo - ongoing
- Sligo Model Arts Centre, Sligo - ongoing
- Cork Opera House - ongoing
- Old Courthouse, Portlaoise, Co. Laois - ongoing
- Waterford Theatre Royal - ongoing
- Art House Cinema, Cork - ongoing
- Clonard Community Centre, Co. Wexford - ongoing
- North Kerry Literary and Cultural Centre, Listowel, Co. Kerry - ongoing
- Culturlann Mhic Aonghusa, Naul, Co. Dublin - ongoing
- Wandesford Quay Artists Studios and Galleries, Cork - ongoing
- Old Market House Arts Centre, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford - ongoing
- Clare County Museum, Ennis, Co. Clare - ongoing
- Kildare Library and Cultural Centre, Co. Kildare - ongoing
- Tipperary Excel Project, Co. Tipperary - ongoing
- Cultural and Tourism Centre, Bray, Co. Wicklow - ongoing
- Galway Arts Centre - completed
- County Hall, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath - completed
- Everyman Palace Theatre, Cork - completed
- Cobh Carillon, Cobh, Co. Cork - completed
- Black Box Project, Co. Galway - completed
- Lambert Puppet Theatre, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin - completed
- Moate Community Centre Project, Moate, Co. Westmeath - completed
- A memorial park at Croppies Acre, Dublin opened at the end of 1998.
- Work is continuing on the conversion of Collins Barracks, Dublin into a new facility for the National Museum of Ireland at a cost of £29.85 million, phase 1 of which opened in September 1997.
- The Creative Art for Everyone scheme and Arts Awareness Intervention 1 & 2 have come to an end and an evaluation report will be finalised in 1999.

The Gaeltacht and the Islands

- Over £3 million spent in 1998 on improving access to and infrastructure of populated offshore islands. Of this, some £0.7 million was spent on provision of subsidised ferry services and almost £2.4 million on capital projects.
- During 1998, a subsidised ferry service was introduced serving Clare Island and Inisturk, Co. Mayo and Inisboffin, Co. Galway. Also, after consultation with the island communities concerned, a daily service was introduced serving the two smaller Aran islands, Inis Meain and Inis Oirr.
- The Islands Division of the Department drew up a programme of works for 1998 for infrastructure improvements on the islands, after consulting with the relevant local authorities and the various island communities. £3.8 million was approved for projects ranging from road improvements, marine works and coastal protection to the improvement of island water supplies. In addition, almost £2 million was approved for the improvement of landing facilities on 5 islands of the Co. Cork Coast. It is hoped to complete all works sanctioned in the 1998 programme before the end of 1999.
- Over £3.8 million was spent in 1998 on projects aimed at improving the economic, social, physical and cultural infrastructure of Gaeltacht regions (of which over £3.4 million was spent on road improvements, group water schemes, marine works, community halls and recreational facilities and approx. £0.4 million for cultural schemes).

Film and Broadcasting

- The Department has responsibility under section 35 of the Finance Act 1987 for certification of film projects for tax incentive purposes with the aim of achieving a sustainable Irish film industry.
- There has been a dramatic increase in the number of films being completed in Ireland each year with consequent implications for new investment and job creation. A quota of trainees to learn the necessary film industry skills must be taken on by projects approved under section 35.
- The Department also supports Board Scannán in the development of the Irish film industry.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Early Start pre-School Programme

- Aims to expose young children to an educational programme which would enhance their overall development and prevent school failure and offset the effects of social disadvantage.
- In 1998, over £2.1m was spent on this programme benefiting 1,558 pupils in 55 classes.
- Each pre-school attracts; special capitation funding of £75 per pupil, a qualified primary teacher and a childcare assistant, a start-up grant of £4,500 for materials/equipment and a grant of £1,500 to foster parental involvement.
- In addition, the Department supported 53 pre-school classes for up to 636 Traveller children, managed by local voluntary bodies and the Traveller community. The Department pays 98% of teaching and transport costs, plus grants for equipment and materials.
- The Department also funds the Rutland St. Project catering for 95 pupils age 3-5yrs; includes a pre-school centre, a special staff teaching allocation, classroom assistants, secretarial services and cooks, together with the provision of school meals.

Forum on Early Childhood Education

- National Forum took place in March 1998 bringing together service providers and experts to advise on a co-ordinated strategy for future development of early childhood education services.
- Report of proceedings and conclusions of the Forum was launched November 1998.
- Preparation of a White Paper on Early Childhood Education has begun and will be published in 1999.
- 1999 Budget includes £1.2m for special initiatives on early education, focusing on early education for children with disabilities.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme

- In 1998, 318 primary and 211 second level schools were included in the scheme, serving 75,894 and 99,000 pupils respectively (covering 17% of schools).
- Involves additional, over quota, teaching posts of 294 at primary level and 225 at second level.
- An extra £30 is paid per pupil in the form of capitation grants which covers heating and general running costs, equipment and materials and a home/school liaison grant for actions with parents.
- Additional funding provided for designated schools to launch book rental schemes.
- Additional concessionary teaching posts.
- Maximum class size guideline of 29 applies to all schools in scheme.

Breaking the Cycle

- Over £3.2 million spent in 1998.

- Involves 33 urban schools covering 7,046 pupils; provides extra staff to allow a Pupil/Teacher Ratio (PTR) of 15:1 in all junior classes, special funding of up to £3,000 for materials/equipment, £4,000 for out of school projects, support from specially appointed co-ordinators, targeted in-career development for school staff.
- Involves 123 rural schools covering 6,817 pupils; provides special funding of £1,000 for materials/equipment, £1,000 for local initiatives, special capitation funding of £75 per pupil, support from 25 specially appointed co-ordinators, targeted in-career development for school staff.
- A total of 121 extra posts were allocated in 1998 in support of this scheme.
- Each school is required to prepare a 5 year development plan - the 1999 Budget includes provision for £2 million to assist with developing school plans and to provide additional support for teachers.

Support Teacher Project (previously Teacher-Counsellor scheme)

- In 1998, 37 teacher-counsellors operating in 41 primary schools at a cost of £570,000.
- Aims to co-ordinate a whole school approach to designing and implementing good practice and strategies which will help to prevent the occurrence of disruptive behaviour and to teach and counsel small groups and individuals who exhibit persistent behaviour difficulties in the classroom.

Home-School Community Liaison Scheme

- A key element in the strategy to combat educational disadvantage, where a co-ordinator (teacher) is assigned to a school, or group of schools, in disadvantaged areas to work with school staff, parents and relevant community agencies in advancing the educational interests of children.
- 225 primary and 85 second level schools are in the Home School Liaison Scheme where they have the support of 133 co-ordinators at primary level and 83 teachers at second level.
- 1998 expenditure of £2.9m catering for over 58,000 pupils at primary level and 48,000 pupils at post primary.
- A National Co-ordinator oversees the day-to-day operation of the scheme and a National Steering Committee reviews the operation of the scheme.
- 1999 Budget includes provision for every disadvantaged school to have a home school liaison service available to it from September 1999.

Remedial/Resource Teachers

- The Remedial Scheme provides support for children experiencing learning difficulties, particularly in core areas of literacy and numeracy.
- Approx. 90% of primary pupils have access to this service.
- From September 1998, 60 extra remedial posts were provided at primary level which, combined with 350 posts at post-primary level, increased overall provision to 1,652 posts.
- A summary report, "Study of Remedial Education in Irish Primary Schools," by the Educational

Research Centre will be published in 1999.

- 1999 Budget includes provision for a remedial teacher service to be made available to all schools from September 1999.
- A total of 104 Resource Teachers operated in schools in 1998, catering for pupils with more severe learning difficulties and disabilities - an increase of 26 posts over 1997.

Curricular reform

- At primary level the work of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is nearing completion and the new curriculum will be launched during the 1998/99 year. It will be implemented on a phased basis, taking up to 5 years to complete.
- At second level, there was continued expansion in 1997/98 of the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), Transition Year Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).
- The JCSP is designed to reach out more effectively to those students whose needs are not met by the present, broad-based Junior Certificate. Introduced in 1996, the JCSP is now operational in 85 schools which receive an additional grant of £50 per pupil and an extra 0.25 teachers per school.
- Transition Year Programme aims to promote the personal, social, educational and vocational development of students. In 1997/98 24,665 pupils participated in Transition Year.
- The LCA aims to strengthen the vocational and technical dimension of senior cycle programmes and offer an applied programme to meet the needs of those for whom the traditional Leaving Certificate had been unsuitable. In 1997/98 5,308 pupils were participating in LCA.
- The LCVP aims to strengthen the vocational, technical, language and entrepreneurial dimension of senior cycle programmes. In 1997/98 22,247 pupils participated in this programme.

IT 2000 Project

- Launched in November 1997, IT 2000 aims to upgrade computer literacy levels throughout the school system and involves a State investment of £50m over 3 years.
- Telecom Éireann provided all schools with a free PC, free line rental for 2 years, one hour per day free usage and, if required, an internet connection.
- Over 14,000 teachers attended training during 1998.
- Primary and second level schools, recognised under the Free Education Scheme, were eligible for grant aid of £2,000 basic grant and £5 per pupil in the case of ordinary schools. Special schools received a basic grant of £3,000 and £20 per pupil.
- Additional support for pupils with special needs is provided under a special fund of £250,000 as well as an equipment grant scheme operated by special education section (amounted to £529,000 in 1998).
- The National Centre for Technology in Education, based in DCU, was established to implement IT 2000. It has a staff of 10, including a director and 4 co-ordinators. A panel of 20 IT advisors will be put in place to provide advice and support to schools on a regional basis.

Guidance, Counselling and Psychological services

- All schools have an ex-quota allocation in respect of guidance, varying from 0.1 posts to 2 posts depending on school size. The equivalent of 561 whole-time posts were allocated in 1998/99 in respect of guidance.
- New guidance/counselling/psychological services introduced to Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centre programmes in 1998.
- 8 whole-time equivalent posts seconded from the VEC sector to the Local Employment Services.
- The National Centre for Guidance in Education published "Guidance in Adult and Continuing Education" in September 1998.
- The Department supports 25 Youth Information Centres, providing advice and support to young people, throughout the country (£710,000 provided in 1998).
- A Psychological Service, combining case work with pupils and work with parents, teachers, etc., is provided in all post-primary schools.
- A scheme was introduced at primary level focusing on disadvantaged areas. 15 additional educational psychologists were employed during 1998 to expand the service to primary schools.
- 1999 Budget included £1.5m to establish a National Educational Psychological Service over the next two years - process to be completed in five years with a target of 200 psychologists.

Book Grant Scheme

- Scheme of assistance in provision of school books, administered locally by school principals (geared towards encouraging book rental schemes).
- Over £6.9m provided in 1998; £2.5m for primary and £4.4m for post-primary schools.
- 1999 Budget includes £6.5m for school library books; each primary school has been allocated £1,000 with schools in the Disadvantaged Area Scheme allocated £3,170 each, second level schools allocated £2,500 with designated disadvantaged schools allocated £5,320 each.

Exam fees

- With effect from June 1998, exam fees for Junior and Leaving Certificate were waived for approx. 36,833 candidates (where the student, or their parent/guardian, were medical card holders).

School Attendance

- In addition to initiatives outlined above, the 1999 Budget includes provision for £1.5m for special targeted interventions in areas with particularly low completion rates.
- The Department is drafting a School Attendance (Amendment) Bill to deal with issues of non-school attendance for publication in 1999 (intended to address issues relating to educational welfare of children experiencing difficulties in school attendance and early intervention to address the problem;

the legislation will raise the minimum school leaving age to 16, or on completion of 3 years of the Junior cycle, whichever is the later).

- A new National Educational Welfare Board to be established under the legislation (will include representatives from the education partners and State agencies with the emphasis on assistance to schools, families and children rather than penalties).

8-15 year old Early School Leavers Initiative

- £3.62m (including EU funding of £2.96m) allocated to the initiative for the period September 1998 to June 2000.
- Aims to select a range of strategic pilot projects to test models of integrated, area-based co-ordination of services for young people at risk of early school leaving. Models of good practice will be developed with a view to their integration into mainstream policy and practice.
- 3 strands: Project Strand involving 14 pilot projects began in September 1998; Research Strand focusing on characteristics of those most at risk of early school leaving and development of an early warning tracking template is underway; Evaluation/Support Strand to provide administrative and professional support for the overall project and develop performance indicators will be initiated.
- A full-time Project Co-ordinator has been recruited and an Evaluator (to evaluate the ongoing delivery and effectiveness of the actions undertaken) will be engaged.

Children with special needs

- Policy seeks to facilitate, in so far as possible, the integration of children with disabilities into the mainstream system.
- The Education Act provides that the admissions policy of schools must specifically cover students with disabilities and special education needs. School plans must ensure that the objective of equality of access to and participation in school by students with disabilities and special education needs are met.
- Provision for special needs students in 1998 included:
 - capital funding towards facilities such as special toilets and wheelchair ramps in national schools
 - 78 resource teachers (to address special educational needs which are more than remedial) at primary level and 147 at second level allocated for 1997/98 cycle. An additional 25 posts allocated at primary level from September 1998 (bringing overall provision to 250)
 - 42 visiting teachers to give essential support for children with disabilities in ordinary national schools throughout the country
 - Special fund of £250,000 under IT2000 allocated to cater for the needs of individual special needs pupils
 - Allocation of £529,000 for the purchase of equipment, including computer equipment, for pupils with special needs
- In November 1998 the Minister announced a package of measures for integrated education for special needs children and children with autism including:

- formalised system of Child Care supports for all children with special needs, in special schools, special classes and ordinary schools, who have been assessed as requiring such support
- formal introduction of pupil-teacher ratio of 6: 1 for children with autism
- additional part-time hours allocated to ordinary second level schools to cater for the needs of visually or hearing impaired pupils (generally 3-5hrs per week per pupil). These pupils also have access to the Visiting Teacher Service
- An IT support and advice service for the special education area in primary schools continued in 1998 as did a range of Summer courses for teachers of children with autism and teachers in schools with severely handicapped students.
- In order to facilitate third level access, the special support scheme allocated £250,000 towards equipment, personal assistants materials, sign language assistants/interpreters, targeted transport services, etc., for special needs students in Universities / Institutes of Technology / further education.
- 1999 Budget contains an extra £3.4m over the next two years for escorts and safety harnesses for all children with disabilities travelling on school buses and £400,000 for the purchase of equipment for special needs teachers.

Traveller education needs

- Policy aims to increase the number of Traveller children benefiting from education and to integrate Traveller children into mainstream education to the maximum extent possible.
- In July 1998, the Minister announced the establishment of an Advisory Committee on Traveller Education (including Traveller representatives, the National Association of Traveller Training Centres and the Partners in Education).

Pre-School

- In 1998, funding (for running costs, tuition and transport services) was provided for 53 pre-school facilities catering for some 636 Traveller children (in addition to health board grants in some areas for child-care assistants and health and hygiene facilities).
- A small number of pre-schools, funded by the local health boards or voluntary organisations, also cater for Traveller children.
- a mobile pre-school is operated for Travellers by Barnardos.

Primary Level

- of the estimated 5,000 primary age Traveller children in Ireland, 4,560 attend school (4,300 in ordinary classes and 260 in special classes).
- There are 4 special primary schools for Travellers (3 in Dublin, 1 in Galway) with a pupil-teacher ratio of 14:1.
- 363 resource teachers work with Traveller children in 319 primary schools.

Second Level

- In 1998, of the estimated 2,000 - 2,400 Traveller children between the ages of 12 and 15, 650 attended post-primary schools and 175 attended a network of Junior Education Centres (which have a low pupil-teacher ratio and a flexible curriculum).

- 1999 Budget includes £300,000 over the next two years to provide a new capitation grant to encourage second level schools to meet the needs of Traveller children.

Senior Traveller Training Centres

- A network of 27 Senior Traveller Training Workshops provide a programme of integrated general education, vocational training and work experience for some 697 Travellers annually in the 15+ age group (responsibility for the operation of the network was transferred to the Department from FÁS in April 1998).
- The number of places was expanded from 550 to 697 in 1998.
- A new guidance/counselling/psychological services measure and child-care supports were introduced in 1998.
- A National Co-ordinator promotes and monitors the development of the network.

Visiting Teacher service

- 20 visiting teachers deliver a service to 11 counties.
- A National Education Officer for Travellers promotes and oversees the implementation of the education service (involves identifying the needs of Travellers in the region, assisting in planning and establishment of education provision, consultation with Traveller families and ensuring optimal use of existing educational facilities).

Children at risk

- 5 Youth Encounter projects were supported in 1998 at a cost of £500,000 excluding teachers salaries, employing 125 non-teaching staff and catering for up to 125 young people who have become involved in minor delinquency or are at risk and have become alienated from the mainstream system.
- 3 Line projects were established, bringing together the community, State agencies and relevant Government Departments, to provide a direct and immediate response for young people from 8-18 years who have dropped out of the system due to disruptive behaviour or habitual non-attendance.
- 5 Young Offenders Centres were supported catering for 186 long-stay and 20 short-term/remand places.

Substance misuse prevention

- Initiatives include: continuation of substance misuse prevention education programmes "Walk Tall" (primary) and "On My Own Two Feet" (second level), participation in the European-wide Health Promoting School Network, active role on the National Drugs Strategy Team (the Department has made arrangements for the support of over 70 local projects amounting to £1.6m under this initiative).
- An Evaluation report on the substance misuse prevention programme for primary schools was launched in November 1998. It is intended to more widely disseminate the programme to primary schools following the pilot phase.
- A support team has been put in place consisting of a national project officer and 5 teacher trainers who are responsible for organising and delivering staff seminars.

- A project management group has also been established within the Department including a senior psychologist as project leader.
- 1999 Budget includes provision of £1m for the phased implementation of the drugs misuse prevention programme (including provision of in-service training for teachers).
- All Youthreach centres provide a substance misuse prevention programme and, in co-operation with other State agencies, a crime awareness programme, "Getting On".

Youthreach

- Aims to provide education, training and work experience for young people aged 15-18 with no formal education or training qualifications.
- The programme has expanded progressively and is now offered in over 130 centres.
- In a major expansion, an extra 2,240 places were provided in 1998; total 6,765 places.
- A new measure for counselling, guidance and psychological services was initiated at an annual cost of some £478,000 per annum; provision is being made for supporting in-service training in front-line counselling skills for staff, co-ordination of services, dissemination of good practice and evaluation.
- The range of progression options is being expanded through the provision of tailor made options on the education side.
- A childcare measure was introduced in 1998 for Youthreach, VTOS and Traveller Programmes. A budget of £0.93m was allocated to the VECs for this measure and a further £1.77m in 1999.
- A 1997 FÁS survey of 1,838 participants indicated a progression rate for participants of 70.6% (41.6% in employment, 13.6% in further training, 5.6% returned to education and 9.8% in linked work experience).

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)

- A second chance education and training programme for adults aged 21+ who are at least 6 months unemployed.
- 5,000 places are offered per annum at a cost, in 1998, of £26.44m (a training allowance is paid in lieu of social welfare entitlements, as well as a travel and meals allowance).
- A range of vocational options from Foundation level to Post-Leaving Certificate level are offered.
- A 10% limit on places reserved for lone parents was removed in September 1998 to allow greater flexibility.
- In 1998, payments under VTOS were equalised with the Back to Education Allowance scheme which should promote a higher uptake of places.
- As referred to under Youthreach above, a child care measure was introduced in 1998.
- 1997 indicators show that progression rates to employment or further training have increased to 73.3%
- A report (expected mid-1999) has been commissioned to identify and report on the outreach, recruitment, delivery and support strategies which are most effective in catering for those most in need.
- The fifth edition of "Guide for Mature Students", including information on VTOS, was published in

1998, the VTOS Homepage was set up in 1997 and a book, "VTOS spells success", was launched in March 1998 to promote and encourage participation.

Adult Education and Literacy

- The Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme provides funds through the VECs to enable disadvantaged adults to pursue adult literacy and community education programmes free or at a nominal cost. It is estimated that, prior to expansion in 1998, some 5,000 participants per annum benefited from Literacy provision and a further 14,000 from Community Education.
- 1998 provision of over £4m was double the 1997 budget with the increase targeted at literacy/numeracy provision. 1999 Budget includes an additional £3.2m over two years to address this issue. The additional funds are being used to promote innovative approaches in critical areas which will inform the development of a National Literacy Strategy.
- Standardised reporting and performance indicators are being developed as part of the approach.
- To inform the development of a National Literacy Strategy, a working group will be convened to make recommendations on; a framework for development of the overall literacy strategy, development of national quality standards, standardised funding mechanisms and administrative supports.
- A feasibility study on the establishment of a Savings and Loan Fund as a means of increasing participation in Adult Education is underway.
- £1.23m was provided in 1998 for the Special Initiatives for Disadvantaged Adults Scheme (SPIDAS). An additional £500,000 in grant aid was provided towards the running costs of adult education organisations.
- Under the Womens Education Initiative, £0.3m was provided in 1998 to support 13 projects which address gaps in provision for educationally disadvantaged women.
- As part of the broadly based strategy on lifelong learning, the Adult Education Section of the Department has been integrated into a Further Education Section.
- Green paper, "Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning", published November 1998.

Post-Leaving Certificate Courses

- Full-time 1 and 2 year programmes of integrated education, training and work experience outside the third level sector (certification provided by National Council for Vocational Awards).
- From September 1998, a means-tested maintenance grants scheme was introduced for participants at a cost of some £15m per annum.
- Current expenditure on PLC courses (excluding maintenance grants) is some £43m per annum (aided by the ESF). In addition, £20m from the Education Technology Investment Fund has been earmarked for infrastructural investment in PLCs and apprenticeships.
- Some 23,800 participants are enrolled for 1998/99.
- A survey of participants leaving the programme in 1994/95 indicated a 90% progression rate to employment or further education.

Third Level access

- The State meets the tuition fees of students in full-time undergraduate course at approved colleges. Tuition fees are not payable on ESF aided certificate and diploma courses and tax relief is available on a range of other courses not eligible under the free fees initiative.
- 3 means-tested grants schemes are available: Higher Education Grants Scheme (26,440 students in 1996/97), VEC Scholarship Scheme (4,500 students in 1996/97), ESF Maintenance Grant Scheme (16,500 students in 1996/97). Some 60% of certificate/diploma students and 40% of university students are eligible for maintenance grants.
- Progress is being made in developing a national policy to make 500 third level places available for students from disadvantaged backgrounds as recommended by the Report of the Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education.
- Funding was provided for 3 access initiatives, involving linkages between colleges and local second level schools.
- HEA supports initiatives in a number of colleges specifically related to disadvantaged students. This includes special entry arrangements where more flexible entry criteria are applied and various supports put in place for students entering by this method.
- DIT have arrangements for direct entry for second level students from disadvantaged backgrounds who do not meet normal admission criteria.
- DIT has established a Community Links Programme (involving 22 schools) to aid in alleviation of educational disadvantage, particularly in Dublin's Inner City. A full-time Community Education Links Co-ordinating Officer has been appointed to co-ordinate and develop the different initiatives.
- The Institutes of Technology in Dublin and Waterford offer specific courses for 2nd chance education for mature and disadvantaged women.
- A pilot scheme enabling holders of NCVA Level 2 awards to progress to designated certificate and diploma courses in the Institutes of Technology is in place.
- DIT have adopted a policy document, "Access to Education in the Dublin Institute of Technology for those who are Socio-Economically Disadvantaged", (aims to allow direct entry for 100 disadvantaged young people per annum by 2002).
- A new National Certificate in Technology course, targeted at non-standard applicants, commenced in January 1998 in 9 ITs with almost 300 places approved. A further intake of 500 is planned for 1999.
- Full-time Summer courses in Information Technology, catering for 255 students (103 of whom were social welfare recipients) in 8 centres, were held from June - September 1998.
- In August 1998, the NCEA launched a Foundation Certificate to support adult students seeking admission to higher education.
- the Institutes of Technology Equality Network Project is operational in 6 ITs, specifically aimed at women who have been disadvantaged by lack of educational opportunities.
- In January 1998, approval was announced for the creation of an Establishment Board for a new Institute of Technology in Blanchardstown, Dublin.

- 1999 Budget included total additional funding of £6.9m over the next two years to tackle the following: £1.5m to address the issue of non-completion of courses, £3m to promote access to third level for people from disadvantaged backgrounds (including people with disabilities), £2.4m to fund an extension of the maintenance grants scheme so that all independent mature students will now qualify for the higher rate of grant.

Prison Education service

- The Department allocates 165 whole-time teacher equivalents (over 200 individual teachers) to the prisons through the VECs on the basis of recommendations from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Area Partnerships

- Under the OPLURD, 38 Area Based Partnerships provide a range of education, training and support services in designated areas of disadvantage.
- The Department funds a National Education Co-ordinator and 25 whole-time equivalent posts which enable a local co-ordinator to be provided in each Partnership area.

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT

National Employment Action Plan (EAP)

- Preventive strategy element came into effect on 1 September 1998, targeted at 18-25 year olds approaching 6 months on the Live Register with a view to providing quality supports on the basis of individual needs to help secure a job or other employability support as appropriate.
- Of the 884 persons referred in September 1998, 51% had been interviewed by FÁS by end-October, 1% were scheduled for interview after end-October and 4% were already engaged with Local Employment Service (LES) and the remainder had failed to attend for interview.
- Of the 454 persons interviewed by FÁS in September, 42% had been placed in a job or referred to a training programme, 34% were receiving continuing intensive support as appropriate to their circumstances and no action was being taken in relation to the remaining 24% who had dropped out due to personal circumstances.
- Of the first cohort of 18-25 year olds approaching six months on the Live Register, referred to FAS for a guidance interview in September 1998, 78% had left the Live Register at end-February 1999.

Employment Service

- FÁS provide a public Employment Service through a network of 54 full-time local offices nationally and hold clinics on a regular basis at a further 80 locations around the country.
- Issues related to reform and restructuring of the Employment Service are closely linked to the implementation of the EAP and the recent roll-out of the preventative strategy element to 25-34 year olds approaching 1 year on the Live Register.
- FÁS has a refocused emphasis on placement and guidance counselling and has increased its placement staff to 463 persons.
- Before implementation of the activation programme, it provided 70,000 training and employment opportunities per annum.

Local Employment Service (LES)

- Introduced in 1995, the LES aims to provide an integrated and tailor-made response to targeted groups of unemployed people in areas of particular disadvantage.
- LES has a staff of some 260, about 160 of whom are engaged in mediation, and has a caseload of about 11,000.
- LES operates in 18 areas with plans for extending the service to another 7 selected areas. P2000 contains a commitment to extend it, eventually, to all Partnership areas.
- An independent evaluation of the LES was completed in July 1998 and circulated to interested parties.

- The Government has decided in principle to re-organise the national employment service and the LES to maximise the coherence and complementarity of the services; it is setting up an Employment Service Advisory Committee within FÁS which is representative of all the stakeholders and which will advise on the operation and development of all components of the Employment Service.

Community Employment (CE)

- Since 1996, CE has been targeted more on the long-term unemployed. A whole-time job programme, "Job Initiative", was introduced for persons more than 3 years unemployed and a recruitment subsidy scheme, "Jobstart", was introduced and is targeted specifically at encouraging employers to recruit the long-term unemployed.
- Funding of approx. £11.3 million was provided in the 1998 Budget for an additional 2,000 places on re-integration programmes, 1,000 of which were on the CE part-time job option and 1,000 on the Job Initiative programme. There was also an increased provision of 5,000 places on the Back to Work Allowance scheme.
- The Department intends to implement reforms to CE, on a phased basis, on foot of discussion with the social partners in light of the conclusions of the Deloitte & Touche review of CE.
- The Deloitte & Touche review was a key element in deciding on provision for CE in the 1999 estimates which provided for 37,500 places compared to the 41,000 in 1998.
- Any reduction in CE places and refocusing of supports in remaining CE or other programmes will be implemented in the context of a radically changed and dynamic labour market and in response to the need to provide a more targeted and strategic focus on the provision of active labour market programmes through targeted measures to tackle long-term unemployment, namely:
 - development of a dedicated Social Economy programme
 - expansion of the LES
 - introduction of FÁS positive action programme on training for the long term unemployed
 - enhancing incentives for long-term unemployed to participate in training
 - extension of Jobs Clubs
 - extension of specific skills places

Social Economy Programme

- The Social Economy Working Group finalised its report in July 1998 and this was subsequently agreed in the P2000 process.
- The Working Group broke the social economy down into 3 component parts:
 - Community Business (ultimately financed from business alone)
 - deficient demand social enterprises
 - enterprises based on public service contracts
- The Report recommended:
 - the development of the social economy as a policy objective in its own right

- the introduction of a social economy programme with dedicated financial and institutional supports (existing resources, both financial and institutional, to be used for this purpose). Funding of approx. £41 million per annum would be available from a reallocation of CE funds and the Community Enterprise programme. New resources of approx. £1 million would be required to assist enterprises at the start-up phase.
- A National Monitoring Committee to be established to monitor the development and implementation of the programme.
- FÁS should establish a National Support Unit and, at local level, technical support to enterprises should be provided by FÁS Community Services staff in partnership with local interests on the basis of a framework agreement set by the National Monitoring Unit. Working groups to be established to oversee the technical support function at local level.

FÁS Action Programme on Training for long-term unemployed

- Special training initiatives being established in all Partnership areas to provide over 1,000 additional training places per annum for the long-term unemployed.
- Research which has been carried out indicates a range of key factors essential to increased participation. These factors will be incorporated into training programmes.
- An additional £25 per week training bonus for long term unemployed persons is to be introduced in 1999 to increase the incentive for them to take up the wide range of training options available under the Plan.

Jobs Task forces

- In response to closures, job losses and redundancies, 6 working groups, including representatives of relevant State agencies, were initiated to assess and recommend the most appropriate response to compensate for the loss or immediate risk to jobs in particular areas.
- The focus is on finding replacement industries and jobs as well as addressing the retraining needs of the work force in the area.

Information provision

- Information on FÁS programmes is accessible through a nationwide network of local FÁS offices, clinics held regularly by FÁS officials in local communities and advertisements of vacancies on Aertel, in local newspapers and on local radio.
- The Trade Division of Enterprise Ireland has a facility for handling enquiries from Irish speakers and arrangements have also been put in place by FÁS for Gaeltacht communities.

Performance Indicator System

- A Performance Indicator reporting system has been put in place to provide reports to the FÁS Board on a quarterly and annual basis (including a report on the percentage of long-term unemployed and women on the main training and employment programmes).
- A review of access for long-term unemployed persons to training has commenced. Participation rates for long-term unemployed will be benchmarked and each FÁS region asked to set targets or quotas for participation.
- Deloitte & Touche consultants, as part of their review of the CE scheme, have been asked to draw up a list of possible performance indicators for CE.
- The Jobstart, Workplace and Job Initiative programmes were reviewed in 1998 to assess their effectiveness.

National Traineeship Programme

- This programme has been developed to provide a pathway for unemployed persons to progress to further training/education and employment opportunities.
- It will be developed as the primary vocational skills and pre-labour market programme for young labour market entrants.

Targeting Women

- There are 300 Community Employment Projects with a childcare dimension employing some 1,400 CE workers.
- Childcare training programmes are being run in several Partnership areas.
- FÁS provides Return to Work programmes for those who wish to return to the labour market.
- An innovative approach to providing flexible and easily accessible training for women is being piloted through a FÁS/NOW project in co-operation with locally based community groups.
- The review of the CE scheme found that 47% of CE participants are women and that lone parents, virtually all of whom are women, account for 22% of all participants.
- The Department is represented on a working group, chaired by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, to examine access by women to labour market opportunities. The group is expected to report in Spring 1999.

Targeting Travellers

- FÁS funds 27 Local Management Committees in respect of overheads and training allowances incurred by a network of Traveller Peoples Workshops around the country providing young Travellers with basic skills, education and work experience.
- From time to time, as demand arises, FÁS offer Return to Work courses designed to meet the particular

needs of Traveller women.

- A number of CE projects specific to travellers are in place.

Targeting people with disabilities

- There is a special provision in CE eligibility rules that allow persons registered with and referred by the National Rehabilitation Board to participate in CE without fulfilling the eligibility criteria.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Prices

- In November 1997, the Serviced Land Initiative was launched with Exchequer funding for water and sewage infrastructure to open up additional land for housing.
- The Bacon Report was published in April 1998 and the Government responded with Action on House Prices - a range of measures designed to increase the supply of housing, reduce overheating in the market and assist first time house buyers.
- While house prices continued to increase sharply in the first half of 1998, figures for the September 1998 quarter showed a slow-down in the rate of increase in new house prices.

Action on House Prices

- The immediate priority in Action on House Prices was to curb overheating in the housing market while putting in place measures to ensure an adequate supply of housing into the medium and long term.
- Key features are:
 - Increase in Serviced Land Initiative funding from £15m to £30m (since increased further to £39m)
 - £5m for road access to open land for housing
 - Major stamp duty reductions
 - Withdrawal of tax incentives to investors
 - Reduced Capital Gains Tax from 40% to 20% for 4 years (to increase to 60% thereafter) to encourage release of land for housing
 - Improvements in shared ownership scheme
 - Measures to promote increased residential density

Affordability for First Time Buyers

- Major stamp duty reductions, removal of investor competition and greater availability of the shared ownership option were introduced to help improve affordability for first time buyers. The changes in stamp duty rates also brought more second-hand houses onto the market. The effects of these will be reinforced by measures to increase supply as described above. Interest rate reductions will help borrowers generally, including first time buyers, by reducing mortgage repayments.

Housing Output

- Record output in 1997 was surpassed again in 1998 with some 42,000 completions.
- The Serviced Land Initiative should yield around 100,000 additional housing sites over the coming years.

- Local authorities were asked to expedite delivery of the schemes, and procedures have been streamlined to minimise delays.
- Planning authorities have been advised to promote higher residential densities at appropriate locations. Consultants are preparing draft guidelines on housing density and these were published in early 1999 for full public consultation.

Local Authority Housing Programme

- 3,290 houses were completed or purchased by local authorities in 1998. These, together with output from the complementary social housing measures and vacancies occurring in the existing housing stock, have enabled some 9,250 households to be catered for in 1998.
- An increase in capital provision for social housing of some £35m (19%) was provided in 1998.
- The 1999 provision of £250m (including £21m for the redevelopment of Ballymun) represents an increase of £36m (17%) on the 1998 amount of £214m. This will enable some 4,500 new starts in 1999 - an increase of 600 starts on 1998 - the highest level of the local authority housing programme since 1986.

Local Authority Waiting Lists

- The latest assessment of housing needs was conducted in March 1999 (the previous assessment, conducted in March 1996, indicated that 27,427 households were in need of local authority housing). This assessment will allow for a definitive quantifying of housing needs although it would appear that there has been an increase in the numbers applying for local authority housing, particularly in Dublin (where the "list" is reported to have increased by 50%) and other large urban centres.
- It is likely that the high cost of new housing, increases in the number of Irish people returning from abroad, shortage of private rented accommodation, demographic trends, etc., will continue to have an impact on the numbers applying for local authority housing.

Assessment For Supplementary Welfare Allowance

- An Inter-Departmental Committee is examining the issues involved in the possible transfer of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance rent and mortgage scheme to local authorities (from the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs). The Committee's report is expected to be finalised in 1999.

Homelessness

- Funding of £5.5m was provided for 1998 in respect of recoupment of expenditure on the homeless. This was increased to £20m during 1998 with the increased expenditure mainly related to emergency accommodation for asylum seekers.
- A provision of £20m has been provided for 1999 in respect of the recoupment of expenditure on the homeless.

- In addition, a capital provision of £4m has been agreed for 1999 for the provision of hostel accommodation for the homeless.
- Local authorities have been asked (as part of the housing needs assessment mentioned above) to ensure that every effort is made to accurately record the number of homeless people in their functional areas.

Voluntary Housing Sector Schemes

- 200 units of accommodation were provided under the Rental Subsidy Scheme in 1998. A review of the scheme, with a view to maximising output, is being finalised.
- In 1998, under the Capital Assistance Scheme, there was a significant increase in the number of projects and units approved. 32 projects were completed in 1998, providing 283 units of accommodation. Approval issued to 60 new projects in total in 1998 which will provide 478 units of accommodation.
- The levels of capital assistance were substantially increased in 1998. The maximum level of assistance for a single or two-person unit is now £44,000 in the cities and greater Dublin area and £37,000 elsewhere.

Dublin Inner City Flat Complexes

- In 1999, funding of £6.5m will be provided to enable Dublin Corporation to commence the comprehensive redevelopment of nine run down flat complexes throughout Dublin's inner city. The redevelopment proposals consist of a mix of some new buildings, refurbishment of some flats, and the demolition of other flats and their replacement with low rise housing at a total cost of £87.9m over the 5 year period 1999 - 2003. In total, 103 additional new housing units, 774 replacement units and 266 refurbished units will be provided together with some sites for voluntary housing.
- The project covers the flat complexes in the North Inner City and a number of other complexes including St. Michael's Estate, Marmion Court/Queen Street and Bridgefoot Street/Island Street.

Housing Unit

- A Housing Unit has been established and is based in the Institute of Public Administration. Its purpose is to assist local authorities to develop a more effective overall approach to housing management, with an emphasis on tenant participation. A Consultative Committee has been appointed to oversee the work of the Unit and to provide policy advice and guidance. This Committee comprises representatives of local authorities, the voluntary housing sector, ADM Ltd and tenants.

Ballymun Redevelopment

- The Ballymun redevelopment is continuing with funding of £21m provided in 1999.
- Ballymun Regeneration Ltd has set down its strategies in a Masterplan which provides an overview of

the project and looks to the development needs of the area.

- The cost of the Masterplan is £261m.
- The core element of this is £183m for the demolition of the flats and replacement with housing. The company proposes demolishing 2,814 high-rise dwellings and replacing them with 2,820 low-rise "conventional" dwellings.
- Other costs amount to £78m, of which £63m relates to the provision of new roads, pavements, road realignment, diversion of services, underground cabling and the provision of new services, landscaping works, parks, play areas, community buildings and neighbourhood centres. The remaining £15m relates to the provision of a Regional Office and Estate Offices, swimming pool refurbishment, a new library and the redesign of the two existing community centres.

Housing Management Initiatives Grants Scheme

- The 1998 provision of £200,000 was fully allocated. A considerable proportion of the allocation went to support projects in the area of staff and tenant training in estate management.
- £200,000 has again been allocated for 1999.

Remedial Works Scheme

- The 1998 allocation of over £19m provided for the refurbishment of some 3,000 dwellings (including re-roofing in Ballymun of over 2,000 dwellings).
- The 1999 allocation is over £19.3m.

Bathrooms Sub-Programme

- The out-turn for this sub-programme in 1998 was £500,000 providing bathroom/shower facilities in 230 dwellings.
- The allocation for 1999 is £250,000 to bring the programme to a conclusion.

Task Force on Special Housing Needs - Aid for the Elderly Scheme

- The Task Force was set up in 1982 to undertake an emergency programme to improve the housing conditions of elderly persons living alone in unfit or unsanitary accommodation. The scheme is fully Exchequer funded and was instituted on foot of a budget provision of £1m in 1982.
- The 1998 provision of £5m represented an increase of over £800,000 on 1997. 1,356 jobs were completed in the first half of 1998 compared to 1,212 for the same period in 1997.
- £6m has been made available for 1999.

Tenant Purchase Scheme

- 1,997 sales were completed by local authorities in 1998. The scheme is currently being reviewed under the Public Expenditure Review Programme.

Shared Ownership System

- 805 transactions were completed by local authorities in 1998. A number of improvements to the scheme were introduced in 1998 viz:
 - An increase in the income limit for single income households from £15,000 to £20,000
 - A reduction in the rent payable by shared owners who enter into their transactions on or after 1 May 1998 from 5% to 4.5% per annum of the local authority's equity

Housing Provisions in 1999 Budget

- The 1999 provisions were focused carefully on those who are most in need, including the disabled, the elderly and young homeless people.
- Significant improvements were made to the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme with the effective maximum grant increasing by 50% from £8,000 to £12,000, with the grant now covering up to 75% of the approved cost of works compared to 66% previously.
- The essential repairs grant scheme under which local authorities have traditionally assisted elderly people in unfit houses in rural areas has been significantly improved.
- An extra £1.6m was provided for the Task Force on Special Housing Aid for the Elderly bringing the total provision for the scheme to £6m in 1999.
- A special grant of £1m was provided for a new "Foyer" project in Dublin to meet the needs of homeless young people.
- New tax incentives for the provision of accommodation for third level students were announced.

Traveller Accommodation

- The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 was enacted in July 1998 and most sections of the Act have now commenced. It imposes a statutory obligation on local authorities in relation to the provision of accommodation for Travellers.
- Seminars on the implementation of the Act have been held in conjunction with the Housing Unit of the IPA for local authority staff.
- Guidelines on "Basic services and facilities for caravans pending the provision of permanent accommodation" issued to local authorities and Traveller interest groups in November 1998. Guidelines for Residential Caravan Parks for Travellers were also issued.
- The Department continued to cover 100% recoupment of the capital cost incurred by local authorities in meeting Traveller accommodation needs, amounting to £8.2m in 1998.

- The capital allocation for the provision and improvement of Traveller specific accommodation for 1999 is set at £11m.
- Approximately £1m was recouped to local authorities in respect of expenditure on the management and maintenance of Traveller accommodation. A number of pilot initiatives were also introduced to improve management and maintenance generally.
- The Department continued to recoup 90% of the salaries of local authority social workers dealing with the provision of accommodation of Travellers, amounting to £1.3m in 1998. In addition, the Department recouped 90% of the salary of a National Accommodation Officer for Travellers, employed by the Irish Traveller Movement.
- Traveller representative groups were consulted through the National Accommodation Consultative Committee, which is now being established on a statutory basis, on matters relating to Traveller accommodation.
- The Department also addressed seminars organised by the Irish Traveller Movement on accommodation matters.

Cross-Cutting Issues

- The Department is involved in a number of cross-departmental initiatives, which generally come under the aegis of the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. These are in the areas of local development, anti-drug strategies, sports and recreational facilities for young people at risk, family support initiatives, homelessness and the Integrated Services Project.

People with Disabilities

- In October 1998, a Circular Letter issued to local authority managers, specifically requesting managers to take action in regard to the following matters which were recommended in the Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities:
 - Each manager to assign to a specific officer the function of co-ordinating and promoting access activities in his or her area
 - Managers were asked to ensure that additional parking bays be provided for disabled persons
 - Managers were asked to ensure that a sufficient number of wheelchair accessible taxi licences should be made available in every taximeter area. (In addition to the 400 wheelchair accessible taxi licences already issued in the Dublin area in 1998, Dublin Corporation recently gave approval to allow 820 more wheelchair accessible taxis to be phased in over a 3 year period - 350 by the end of 1999, 235 by the end of 2000 and 235 by the end of 2001)
- Over 100 optical scanners for use by visually impaired persons have been provided for in the 1999 allocation of £7.6m for library services (an increase of 140% over the 1998 allocation).
- Minister announced that he intends to require that all new houses built on or after 1 January 2000 be accessible to people with disabilities.
- Minister issued a Draft Code of Practice for the Employment of People with Disabilities in the Local

Authority Service (pending finalisation of the Code, local authorities have been advised that the guidelines set out in the draft should be followed).

- Minister has invited comments from interested members of the public and groups through the medium of the main newspapers. 14 submissions have been received and these are being examined in the context of finalising the Code.
- Local authorities have been reminded of the commitment in Partnership 2000 that the 3% quota for the employment of people with disabilities will be reached in the public sector. Local authorities have been advised that those who have not reached the 3% quota should immediately put in place measures to ensure that this target is met as quickly as possible, but no later than the expiry of Partnership 2000 (the percentage of people with disabilities employed in the local authority service at 31 December 1997 was 2.59%).
- Local authorities were advised in August 1998 that those who had not yet appointed a designated Liaison Officer for the employment of people with disabilities should do so immediately.

Adult literacy/libraries - open and distance learning programmes/long-term training projects with FÁS

- The report of the Public Library Service Review Team, "Branching Out - A New Public Library Service", was published in November 1997. The Report contains a number of recommendations designed to address a wide range of issues affecting the delivery of public library services to the community.
- One of the issues identified was the inadequacy of the current levels of capital funding to allow the backlog of projects to be funded. In recognition of this, capital funding for 1999 has been increased from £2.76m (in 1998) to £7.2m which includes £1m for bookstock.

Urban Renewal Scheme

- Negotiations on a new Urban Renewal Scheme continued throughout the latter half of 1998. An Advisory Panel completed its assessment of Plans submitted and has furnished a report to the Minister.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND CHILDREN

National Health and Lifestyle Survey

- “Slán”, the National Health and Lifestyle Survey, conducted in 1998 is the first comprehensive national survey which details health related behaviour of adults and school-going young people.
- Early indicators demonstrate the link between health status and social class and will enable the Department to target high risk groups on specific issues and to monitor trends.

National Youth Health Programme

- A partnership between the Department of Health and Children, the Department of Education and Science and the National Youth Council to develop and disseminate health promotion resources and provide training on health issues for young people. Many of the programmes work with disadvantaged young people.
- In 1998, it provided extensive training on drug prevention and policy development.
- In 1999, a new policy document, “Youth as a resource - promoting the health of youth at risk”, will be published. It focuses on the health needs of young people at risk with a particular emphasis on early school leavers as research shows that those who leave school early are more at risk in terms of their health behaviour than their school-going counterparts.

National Healthy Eating Campaign

- Targets the general population and has specific initiatives aimed at lower socio-economic groups, e.g. posters and booklets for people with low reading ability.

Advertising Programmes

- In 1998, a new anti-smoking campaign, including specific posters and messages for disadvantaged communities, was developed. A pilot scheme training GPs on brief interventions in smoking cessation was carried out and positively evaluated.
- A convenience advertising campaign was implemented, involving the placement of sexual health promotion, HIV and drug prevention messages in washroom/toilet areas. Advertisements with messages specifically developed for disadvantaged youth are placed in snooker halls, amusement centres, community and drop-in centres. In 1998, young people from disadvantaged communities assisted in the development of some advertisements.

Primary Childhood Immunisation Programme

- Delivered free of charge to all children by GPs under contract to the health boards and the aim of the

programme is to achieve and maintain a 95% immunisation uptake level.

- An Immunisation Advisory Group was established in July 1998 to consider a range of issues concerning the operation of the Programme with a view to maximising uptake amongst the target population.
- Where uptake is particularly low the health boards may make special arrangements to improve uptake and, in this regard, health boards have been requested to make particular efforts to promote a higher uptake amongst the Traveller population as the immunisation uptake among this group may be lower than for the rest of the population.

Maternity and Infant Care Service

- This service is available free of charge to all women regardless of means.
- The 1997 Report of the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme Review Group made recommendations, the majority of which relate to details of the administration of the revised scheme. Negotiations with the Irish Medical Organisation in relation to fees for the implementation of the revised scheme were finalised in 1998 and implementation will commence in 1999.

Opthalmic Services

- An additional £1m was made available in 1998 in a concerted effort to improve this service and reduce waiting lists for adult medical card holders and all school-going children.

Health Centres

- In 1998, an enhanced programme of developments for health centres was introduced covering the renovation and building of new centres which will provide a range of services agreed with the local health board. This programme flows from the recognition that good health services, delivered locally and in appropriate surroundings, can have a significant positive impact on local communities as well as on the individuals concerned.

Dental Treatment Services Scheme

- In 1998, a total of over £16m was provided for the scheme and by year-end there had been a 47% increase over 1997 in the number of routine dental treatments undertaken.
- The scheme's quality objective, which declares that applications will be approved by health boards within one month (30 days), was achieved by four health board regions by the end of 1998, but had yet to be achieved on a consistent basis in the other regions due to the high uptake levels for treatment and restrictions in the operation of the scheme due to budgetary constraints towards year-end.
- A pilot project on training oral health workers up to certificate level has been successfully completed and positively evaluated. The feasibility of incorporating the Certificate in Oral Health in the UCG

Training Programme and making it more widely available to oral health care workers across the country both in the private and the public sector is being explored with the College.

- The Dental Health Awareness Campaign for the Traveller Community was launched in November 1998 by Minister of State Dr Tom Moffatt TD.

Drugs Strategy

- Throughout 1998, the National Drugs Strategy Team, chaired by the Department of Health and Children, has been driving the implementation of the service plans of the 13 Local Drugs Task Forces that were set up in 1997. The Government allocated £10m for the implementation of the service plans and there is a commitment that this funding will ensure consolidation of the work being done on an inter-agency basis at local level.
- An evaluation of the National Strategy, carried out in August 1998, indicated that progress to date is good and work should continue.
- Health boards, particularly the Eastern Health Board (EHB), have continued to enhance and expand their services:
 - in the greater Dublin area the EHB provides drug treatment facilities for people in their own local area at 42 locations, 19 of which were put in place in 1998
 - drug education and prevention and rehabilitation services have been expanded
 - at the end of 1998 about 3,600 people were receiving methadone treatment
 - the EHB provides a freephone helpline 1800 459459 which operates from 10am to 5pm Monday to Friday
 - aftercare and rehabilitation programmes are provided by the EHB at the Soilse Project, Henrietta Place and it also supports, by way of grant aid, aftercare and rehabilitation carried out at eight locations in its area
- Other health boards have also enhanced their services in recent years and all provide appropriate prevention and treatment services to people who need them.
- "On My Own Two Feet", a substance misuse prevention programme was piloted in 1998 in some primary schools in the Drug Task Force areas and was positively evaluated. It was previously only available in second level schools. It was developed in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science.
- The "Drugs Questions Local Answers" pack was developed by the Health Promotion Unit as a resource to enable communities to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to the drugs issue in their area. In 1998, extensive training took place in many health board areas.
- New information cards, designed to be more user-friendly and accessible, were developed for European Drug Prevention Week 1998.

HIV/AIDS Services

- £50,000 lottery funding was provided in 1998 to the AIDS Housing Fund to assist in the provision of

accommodation for people with HIV/AIDS who find themselves homeless and/or in need of care.

- Appropriate treatment for HIV/AIDS is provided to anyone who needs such treatment; combination therapy is administered at St. James's, Mater/Beaumont and Cork University Hospitals to all patients where it is clinically indicated that treatment would be beneficial.
- The needs of marginalised groups are being examined and addressed through the work of the HIV Prevention Strategies in the Gay Community Project, which works in partnership with health boards, particularly the Eastern Health Board, and other statutory and voluntary agencies.

Travellers' Health Issues

- a Traveller Health Advisory Committee, comprising officials of the Department, representatives of health boards, Travellers and Travellers' representatives, has been established at national level while, at local level, a Traveller Health Unit has been set up in each health board to monitor and plan services locally and to feed into the national committee in the formulation of policy.
- A draft policy statement on Travellers' health, outlining measures to achieve a higher take-up of health services by the Community, is under consideration by the Traveller Health Advisory Committee. A key element will be the involvement of Travellers themselves in the planning and delivery of services.
- £0.5m was allocated to health boards in 1998 to fund initiatives in relation to Traveller health.
- The Primary Health Care for Travellers Project (PHCT) and the EU funded NOW programme were piloted by the Eastern Health Board and Pavee Point. Both pilot projects involved the training of Traveller women for employment in the primary health care area.
- The PHCT has been operating successfully in Area 6 of the Eastern Health Board (EHB) since 1994 and funding was provided in 1998 to replicate it in the EHB's Area 5. Three other health boards, the Midland, Mid West and North East initiated similar projects in 1998.
- The NOW project operated from April 1996 to December 1997 and was accredited by Trinity College Dublin. Twelve Travellers successfully completed the course and received certificates. Nine are employed by the EHB in extending the PHCT and one is employed in the EU "Youthreach" programme which started in 1998.

Physical and Sensory Disability Services

- In 1998, a total of £12.4m was provided for services to people with physical and sensory disabilities:
 - £2.4m to help eliminate core underfunding of existing services
 - £3m for the development of the service, enabling 50 additional posts to be created in health boards (mostly speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists)
Additional resources were also devoted to respite care, day care and home support, including personal assistance services
 - £3m for capital projects, of which £1m was used to address waiting lists for aids and appliances and the balance invested in such services as long-term residential care, respite care and day care
 - £4m was provided by way of a supplementary estimate for aids, appliances and such equipment

as wheelchair accessible buses to facilitate access to services, particularly day care services

- A co-ordinating committee for physical and sensory disability services was established in each of the health boards in 1998. These committees will give the voluntary agencies and people with disabilities an input into the formulation of policy and facilitate partnership between voluntary and statutory agencies.
- Priorities for the allocation of £3m development funding were decided by the health boards in consultation with their local co-ordinating committee, on the basis of service needs at local level.
- The 1996 Report of the Review Group on Health and Personal Social Services for People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities, "Towards an Independent Future", recommended the establishment of a database on the health service needs of people with physical and sensory disabilities. Following a successful joint database pilot project by three health boards a database development committee was established in December 1998.
- In July 1998, the Government approved the Report of the Establishment Group on the National Disability Authority, "Building a Future Together", and the implementation of its recommendations (including a recommendation that responsibility in relation to vocational training and employment services for people with disabilities would be mainstreamed at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment).
- The Government also approved the continuation of the Establishment Group to implement the Report.

Mental Handicap Services

- The main principle underlying the development of the mental handicap services is to enable each individual with a mental handicap to achieve his/her full potential and, where possible, live within his/her family circle and local community.
- Priorities for development of services include provision of appropriate residential and day-care places, continuation of the programme of moving persons from inappropriate placements and meeting the needs of an ageing population. While over 90% of persons with a mental handicap are receiving core services, some need a change of service, and these requirements will be built into future developments.
- An additional £21m was provided in 1998; £3.75m to strengthen existing services, £7m to develop new services and £10.25m in capital funding (£5.25m from the National Capital Programme and a further £5m allocated by the Minister over and above this amount). By the end of 1998, an additional 220 residential places and 300 day places were provided. (In late 1997, a major £30m capital programme was put in place for mental handicap services to run over four years in tandem with the Assessment of Need report. This is the first time that such a programme was provided allowing for multi-annual planning in developing services).
- The process of transferring clients from inappropriate placements was underway in 1998:
 - £550,000 was allocated to St. Ita's Hospital, Portrane, for the upgrading of the Admission/Assessment Unit and the development of an Acute Psychiatric Unit in Beaumont

- £250,000 was provided for a special maintenance programme for the mental handicap services in St. Ita's
- A £13m project funded by the Department and the EHB commenced at St. Ita's , building work started on a residential and day services complex at Oldtown, Co. Dublin and a project manager was appointed to manage the overall development plan
- A £200,000 capital grant was provided to enable the EHB to purchase a holiday home for the clients in St. Ita's
- Approval was given for the contract stage in respect of new facilities in Killarney which will provide purpose built accommodation for 30 persons with a mental handicap currently resident in St. Finan's Hospital
- A similar project in Lisnagry, Limerick which will accommodate 36 persons currently resident in St. Joseph's Hospital, Limerick progressed to the tender stage
- Two research projects were initiated in 1998:
 - A study on residential services for persons with a mental handicap by the Centre for the Study of Developmental Disabilities in UCD, looking at issues related to quality of life and outcomes for clients in both community and campus-based accommodation
 - A pilot project by the Mid Western Health Board on early intervention services for children with physical or sensory disabilities and/or delayed development
- As recommended in the report, "Enhancing the Partnership", new funding arrangements were put in place in January 1998 for the Southern and Mid Western Health Board Regions. Discussions on new funding arrangements were finalised for the Midland, North Eastern, North Western, South Eastern and Western Health Board areas to take effect from January 1999.
- With regard to the needs of children with autism, health-related support services, mainly on an outreach basis, were put in place by the health boards and specialist voluntary agencies for special classes provided by the Department of Education and Science, in both mainstream and special schools.

National Children's Strategy

- Work is underway on the preparation of a National Children's Strategy. It is intended that wide consultation will take place before final proposals are agreed in relation to a National Children's Strategy.

Focus Ireland Aftercare Project

- Focus Ireland completed a report on a survey of Young People Leaving Care and it was launched at a conference in November 1998. This report will be important in informing future policy developments in the provision of aftercare services for young people leaving residential care.

Foster Care

- With effect from June 1998, the foster care allowance payable was increased from £57.75 to £60.25 per week in respect of children under 12 and from £64.70 to £73.75 per week for children over 12.
- In December 1998, a special bonus of £100 was paid in addition to the Christmas Bonus Payment of 70% of the standard weekly rate sanctioned for foster children and children placed with relatives.

Youth Homelessness

- In general, when homeless children/young people come to the attention of a health board every effort is made to reunite them with their family or to arrange to have them placed in foster care or residential care as appropriate. Social work support, advice, information and counselling, including counselling for families and individuals, are offered.
- The problem of homeless children/young people is most acute in the Eastern Health Board (EHB) region. In 1998, an average of eight young people per night presented to the social work service operating outside normal office hours and the Board estimates that 400 young people are out of home in the region each year.

Pre-School Services

- Under the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 1996, pre-school service providers are obliged to notify their local health board that they are carrying on or proposing to carry on a pre-school service (pre-schools, playgroups, nurseries, creches, etc.). On receipt of notification the health board will provide relevant information to the applicant and arrange for an inspection to be carried out by an authorised person.
- The latest information provided by health boards indicates that 2,853 notifications have been received nationally and over half of these have been inspected. All first inspections should be completed by mid-1999. Inspections will take place annually thereafter.
- A Working Group, representative of the Child Care Policy Unit at the Department of Health and Children and all the health boards, is in place to monitor the implementation of Part VII of the Child Care Act 1991 and to ensure a consistent approach to the implementation of the Regulations.

Cross-Border Rural Childcare Project

- Aims to promote the development of a co-ordinated strategy for childcare services in deprived rural areas along the border of Ireland and Northern Ireland (North East Monaghan; Clogher and Donemana, Co. Tyrone; Mohill, Co. Leitrim; Belleek, Co. Fermanagh and Newtowncunningham, Co. Donegal).
- A report, entitled "A Needs Led Approach to Planning", published in March 1998, outlines the needs and uses for child care by parents and employers in the six locations and identifies a number of models of rural childcare which would best meet the identified needs.

Springboards Initiative

- In January 1998, the Government established the Young People at Risk programme, which has at its centre the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund.
- £30m was allocated to the Fund over the 3 year period 1998 - 2000 to support a variety of capital and non capital projects in disadvantaged areas.
- Mr. Fahey TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for children was given approval by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion to spend £7.2m over a three year period 1998 - 2000 on 14 pilot projects for children at risk. The objectives of these projects are to work intensively with children, mainly in the 7-12 year age group, who are at risk of going into care or getting into trouble, and their families.

Barnardo's Parenting Research

- A report of the study on the need for and availability of parenting programmes, "Enhancing Our Future: a Profile of Parenting Programmes in Ireland", was launched in June 1998.
- The report is a valuable resource for organisations, professionals and parents in making informed choices regarding the most suitable programmes for their particular needs.

Medical Card Guidelines

- It was provided for in the 1996 Budget that persons who have been unemployed for at least 1 year would retain their medical card (for 3 years) after entering employment. The provision also covers approved schemes applicable to the long-term unemployed.
- In response to a number of problems which emerged relating to interpretation and application of this provision, a joint Department of Health and Children/Health Board Working Group was established in 1998 to clarify the guidelines on eligibility.
- The Group submitted its report to Health Board Chief Executive Officers in June 1998. Recommendations made in the report were agreed and revised guidelines are expected in 1999. These will facilitate greater awareness of the provision and speedier, more consistent and transparent processing of applications.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM

Social Exclusion Group

- An internal Departmental Group known as the Social Exclusion and Equality Group was established to ensure the maximum co-ordination of issues, which impact on poverty. The Group also co-ordinated the Department's application for structural funds in the 2000 to 2006 period. It is chaired by an Assistant Secretary-General.

Probation and Welfare Service

- Aims to respond to the needs of offenders, many of whom are from disadvantaged urban areas.
- The service provides a number of facilities for ex-offenders and people at risk of offending.
- In 1997, an Expert Working Group was established to examine the role of the service, its needs and its organisational structure and to make recommendations. The Group's first report was published in November 1998 and the second report is expected to be presented to the Minister shortly.
- Many workshops and training projects, with the aim of reducing recidivism, are funded by the Department and run by, or on behalf of, the Probation and Welfare Service. The training includes skills development as well as training in numeracy, literacy and life skills. Many of the projects also include counselling.
- Intensive Probation Supervision is provided through a number of projects. These projects divert serious offenders from prison at the court stage and place them in a demanding community-based programme with the ultimate aim of reintegrating the participants into gainful employment.
- The financial allocation to the Service for 1998 included provision for £250,000 for projects which promote social inclusion. The funding is for use in areas of urban disadvantage, mainly in Cork and Dublin, but also in other parts of the country. The Probation and Welfare Service is to identify a limited number of suitable projects where this funding may be targeted.

Integra Offenders

- Ireland has received £280,000 under the EU funded INTEGRA programme to participate in a transnational study involving Finland, UK, Belgium, Greece and France. Known as the Connect Project, it commenced on 1/1/98 and runs to 31/12/99, in conjunction with the National Training and Development Institute.
- The purpose of the project is to target the specific needs of prisoners in Mountjoy prison and the Training Unit as they move through training and on to reintegration into society and into the workforce.

Juvenile Diversion Programme

- Funding is provided for 14 Juvenile Diversion Projects located in Dublin (7 projects), Cork (3 projects), Limerick (2 projects), Waterford (1 project) and Dundalk (1 project).
- At the end of 1998, approval was given for the establishment of a further ten projects in pockets of urban disadvantage. Six of the projects will be located in Dublin with the balance in Waterford, Bray, Tralee and Sligo.
- The advisory committees running each of these Projects are multi-agency in nature, usually involving Gardai, Probation and Welfare personnel, a major voluntary youth organisation, clergy, and community representatives.

National Drugs Strategy

- Under the National Drugs Strategy, programme structures have been established for the effective, co-ordinated delivery of drugs services at national and local level in accordance with the recommendations of the First and Second Reports of the Ministerial Task Force.
- The main structures in place are:
 - Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion
 - Inter Departmental Group (IDG) on National Drugs Strategy
 - National Drugs Strategy Team (NDST)
 - Local Drugs Task Forces (LDTFs - 12 in Dublin and 1 in Cork)
- £10m was provided to support the implementation of "Service Development Plans" which were prepared by each Local Drugs Task Force, and evaluated by the NDST.
- The Department and the Gardai are represented on sub-committees and the management committee of the Inter-Agency Drugs Project (IADP) in the North Inner City. This project has been largely incorporated into the new structures (as detailed above) and is now part of the Local Drugs Task Force for the North Inner City.
- The Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (under the auspices of the National Drugs Strategy Inter-Departmental Group) is targeted at areas where there are high levels of social and economic disadvantage, and where a serious drug problem exists, or has the potential to exist. Initially, £30m was allocated to the fund to support a variety of capital and non-capital projects which include facilities and services for young people "at risk", sport and recreational facilities, strategies to attract "at risk" young people into facilities and support for voluntary and community groups. In April 1999, it was announced that the Government was allocating an additional £4.8m to the Fund. Facilities and Services Development Plans were drawn up by Development Groups in the 13 Local Drugs Task Force areas, comprising representatives from Vocational Education Committees, local authorities and Local Drugs Task Forces and have been evaluated by the National Assessment Committee. The Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion has allocated £25m to support the implementation of projects in the Local Drugs Task Force areas. In addition, up to £500,000 has been allocated to voluntary organisations who have the capacity to deliver drug prevention programmes at national or regional level.

Integrated Services Project

- The Integrated Services Project was launched in December 1998 by the Taoiseach.
- The Department established a Project Management Team comprising representatives from the Department and two of its agencies, An Garda Síochána and The Probation and Welfare Service, to oversee implementation of the Project.
- The Team has decided on a programme of action to implement what are termed the “Generic Recommendations” and the “Priority Proposals for Specific Action in Target Areas” as outlined in the submission of the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee on Local Development.

Employment Target in the Public Service

- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform has responsibility for monitoring the 3% target for the employment of people with disabilities in the Public Service, as distinct from the Civil Service. This arises from a commitment in Partnership 2000 that the 3% target will be met in the broader Public Service during the period of the Partnership.
- The percentage of people with disabilities so employed has increased slightly between December 1995 and October 1997 and a survey is underway to ascertain the position as at December 1998.
- A Monitoring Committee, chaired by the Department and consisting of representatives of the Four Pillars to the Partnership and of Government Departments, has been put in place in order to monitor progress towards achievement of the target. The Monitoring Committee will be reporting to the Minister and to Partnership 2000 in relation to progress made. A first meeting of the Monitoring Committee took place on 29 March 1999.

National Development Plan

- The Department has proposed a funding strategy in the context of the next round of EU Structural Funds:
 - for offenders and persons at risk
 - for the promotion of diversity and equity in the labour market
 - to address gender segregation in the labour market
 - and for childcare
- The Department's plans are outlined in a document entitled “Inclusion, Diversity and Equality for All”.

Childcare

- The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme is designed to support local communities and employers who are trying to facilitate women and men who have childcare responsibilities while accessing training, education and employment. It is targeted particularly at parents in disadvantaged areas and those in low pay who cannot afford access to these opportunities due to the lack of

affordable good quality childcare.

- Funding of £2.4m was provided in 1998 and the 1999 allocation is £3.7m (EU funding for the Programme is 1m ECU with a decision in principle to provide a further 1m ECU); in addition, approximately £1m in EU funding was secured to further enhance the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme.

Expert Working Group on Childcare

- Established in July 1997, and chaired by an Assistant Secretary-General in the Department, this group comprised representatives of Government Departments, statutory bodies and other organisations, in addition to persons who have expertise in areas relevant to childcare.
- The objective of the Group was to devise a national framework for the development of the childcare sector in Ireland in the context of equal opportunities promotion. The Group's report was finalised in January 1999 and accepted by Government.
- The Expert Working Group's report has been referred to an Inter-Departmental Committee on Childcare who have been charged with evaluating, costing and prioritising the proposals of the Expert Working Group as well as the proposals in the Report of the Commission on the Family, the Report of the Forum on Early Childhood Education and the Action Programme for the Millennium. The Inter-Departmental Committee is expected to report by August 1999.

Equal Status Bill

- An Equal Status Bill 1999 was published by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on 19 April 1999. This measure gives protection against discrimination in non-workplace areas and thus complements the Employment Equality Act 1998. The Bill is a commitment in the Good Friday Agreement.
- This legislation replaces the earlier Equal Status Bill 1997, which the Supreme Court found unconstitutional. The essential thrust of this measure is the same as that of the 1997 Bill but it has been amended to meet the Supreme Court's requirements.
- The grounds on which the 1999 Bill prohibits discrimination are: gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin and membership of the Traveller community. The Bill deals with discrimination outside the employment context, including education, provision of goods, services and accommodation and disposal of property. Services are defined broadly to include access to public places, banking and insurance services, entertainment, facilities for refreshment and transport.
- The Bill is before the Oireachtas and it is anticipated that it will be enacted in the coming months.

Employment Equality Act

- The Employment Equality Act 1998, will support the NAPS concern to facilitate access to employment

for all without discrimination.

- The 1999 Budget provision includes £3.7m to cover the cost of the existing level of activity of the Employment Equality Agency as well as the increased costs that will arise as a result of the establishment of the Equality Authority and the Office of the Director of Equality Investigations under the Employment Equality Act. The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform has set 1 September 1999 as the target date for implementation of the Act.

Task Force on the Traveller Community

- A Monitoring Committee on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community was established in June 1998 to provide an ongoing foundation for action to improve the position of Travellers.
- The committee is representative of relevant Government Departments, the three main Traveller organisations (Pavee Point, the National Traveller Women's Forum and the Irish Traveller Movement) and each of the four pillars in Partnership 2000.
- The Committee intends to present its first report to Government before the end of 1999.

People with Disabilities

- The Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities indicated that, if their earning capacity is seriously reduced and they also have to meet the extra costs associated with their condition, people with disabilities are at serious risk of living in poverty. In this connection, research carried out by the ESRI shows that households headed by people with disabilities, who are unable to work due to illness or disability, are one of the groups in Irish society most likely to live in poverty and to experience basic deprivation. People with disabilities are recognised in NAPS as a group at particular risk of poverty.
- Significant progress is being made in the implementation of the key recommendations of the Report and a Plan of Action on the Rights of People with Disabilities, based on the reports, is currently being finalised by an Inter-Departmental Task Force.
- The report's findings are borne out by a survey published by the Irish Wheelchair Association. Of a sample of 1,000 of its members, 53.5% replied that they had some or a lot of difficulty in managing on their income. The Commission's Report, "A Strategy for Equality", was published in November 1996 and it contains 402 recommendations aimed at improving the position of people with disabilities.

National Disability Authority

- The Establishment Group set up to bring detailed proposals for the establishment of a National Disability Authority (NDA) and a Disability Support Service (DSS) submitted its report to the Minister in June 1998. The Government approved the Report and the implementation, in full, of its recommendations.

- The Disability Authority Bill 1998, was published in December 1998 and passed by the Seanad in that month. The Bill is expected to be passed by the Dail before the summer recess.
- The establishment of the NDA is a key infrastructural recommendation of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities. The NDA, which will be a statutory agency, will ensure that the impact of public policy and services on people with disabilities is monitored.
- The establishment of a representative council of people with disabilities was facilitated by the Department and, in April 1997, the Irish Council of People with Disabilities was launched by former President Mary Robinson. The Council now has over 5,000 members in 30 county networks. In 1998, £700,000 was allocated to the Council to facilitate its work and the work of its county networks. In addition, staff of the Department continue to give considerable assistance of a practical nature to the Council in its day-to-day operations.
- Increased allocations were made in 1999 for the disability subheads to facilitate the attainment of the Department's objectives in relation to people with disabilities. The increased grant in 1998 to the Irish Council of People with Disabilities was maintained in 1999. Overall, the increase on the combined disability subheads, excluding a new provision for a National Disability Authority of £1.771m, was in excess of 20%.

Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities

- In keeping with the proposals in the Government's Programme, "An Action Programme for the Millennium", it is the Department's aim that equal opportunities for people with disabilities is placed firmly on the agenda of each Department and State agency.
- In this regard, the Department is developing mechanisms to facilitate cross-Departmental working. Such cross-Departmental action, involving this Department and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, led to a package of measures for 1998, costing in excess of £4 million, of direct benefit to many thousands of people with disabilities and voluntary agencies. This funding will enhance the opportunities for people with disabilities to achieve independent living and community integration.

Equality Proofing

- A research team based in UCC were commissioned to undertake a research project entitled "The Evaluation and Development of Equality Proofing in the Context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy".
- The project will:
 - (a) make recommendations on a gender proofing policy in the context of the European Structural Funds
 - (b) make recommendations on the nature of, and means of undertaking, a suitable equality proofing policy, specifically in the context of the NAPS
 - (c) make recommendations on the feasibility of a wide-ranging application of equality proofing

Four Pilot Projects on Access

- The projects are aimed at people with disabilities and operate in Ennis, Cork City, Tallaght/Clondalkin and Cahirciveen. The cost of project workers and associated costs are met by the Department. These projects allow access at local level for people with disabilities to all information, in appropriate formats, on issues affecting their lives.
- In 1999, £160,000 is being made available by the Department to fund the projects and to facilitate the employment of a Project Co-ordinator by Area Development Management Ltd. The Department, in conjunction with ADM, is continuing to monitor the projects and to give whatever assistance of a practical nature that is required.
- The Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities recommended that Community Action Plans be drawn up to facilitate cross-sectoral planning at local level for the delivery of services to people with disabilities. In this regard, the Department has provided £45,000 to fund two pilot Community Action Plans which will focus on transport. The plans are being piloted in Meath and South Mayo and it is intended that they will develop models of good practice which can be replicated in other areas of the country.

Civil Legal Aid and Advice Service

- The Legal Aid Board, which was put on a statutory basis by the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995, operates under the aegis of the Department.
- In civil cases, the Board makes the services of solicitors and barristers available to people of limited means.
- In 1997, a total of 13,805 people were provided with legal services by the Board, an increase of just over 10% on 1996. Of those assisted by the Board, 6,021 received legal aid (i.e. representation in court), an increase of 1,361 on the numbers represented by the Board in 1996.
- Grant-in-Aid to the Legal Aid Board in 1997 amounted to £8.3m. In 1998, this was increased to £9.6m, an increase of over 15%, while the 1999 allocation is almost £12m, an increase of 24% on 1998.

Pay Differentials Research

- A follow-up study to the ESRI Report, "Male-Female Wage Differentials: Analysis and Policy issues", is being undertaken by the ESRI. It is expected that the Report will be completed and published by Autumn 1999.

Crime Forum

- In the Department's Discussion Paper, "Tackling Crime", it was stated that 'the link between crime and disadvantage is real and is, in the Department's view, an issue that has to be faced up to by all

sections of society.' The Department is endeavouring to widen the debate on crime and its causes and to integrate, as far as possible, social policy with crime policy.

- The report of the Crime Forum, published in December 1998, has assisted in this process and identified further areas where cross agency co-operation would be beneficial.
- The Minister intends to establish a Crime Council in 1999, following due consideration of the report.

DEPARTMENT OF THE MARINE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Forestry

- Increased grant aid premiums for farm forestry (up to 75% of annual afforestation).
- Ongoing development of awareness campaign and joint Teagasc/Forest Service promotional package to increase grant aid take-up levels.
- Introduction of measures to accelerate grant payments.
- Identification of 50,000 ha of cutaway bog suitable for afforestation.

Maritime Transport

- Tax measures in 1998 Finance Act to allow for £5,000 special seafarers allowance to make seafaring more attractive and competitive.
- PRSI refunds made available in respect of employment of Irish seafarers.
- Decision in principle to establish a National Maritime College at Haulbowline, Co. Cork (as recommended in the Report of the Task Force on Seafarer Training).
- New policy developments will lead to investment in new vessels and an additional 200 jobs over 2 years.
- £25 million invested in development of commercial ports (£11 million of which was provided in aid).
- Commissioned Review of State Regional Ports and Harbours with a cargo throughput of under 250,000 tonnes to facilitate transfer of declining regional ports to local control for marine leisure purposes.
- Established new fund to support infrastructural improvements to small piers and harbours for, inter alia, marine tourism.

Sea Fisheries/Processing

- Established National Common Fisheries Policy Review Group, involving key players in the industry, to consult, develop and advise on national objectives and strategies to maximise the sector's contribution to the national economy.
- Secured EU agreement to no further reductions in the size of the Irish fleet to 2001.
- Introduced new scheme of grant aid and tax incentives for whitefish fleet.
- Investment in processing targeted at maximising the volume of the national catch processed to second or higher level.
- Launch of major safety awareness programme.
- Established Task Force on Training and Employment in the fishing industry to develop a HR strategy in partnership with the industry.

- Constructed new training centre in Castletownbere, Co. Cork.
- Provided 2 mobile training units.
- Launched new training initiative specifically aimed at female partners/family members of small-scale coastal fishermen.

Aquaculture

- New legal framework put in place.
- Commissioned strategic economic review of sector.
- Progress made towards elimination of backlogs, enabling additional projects to proceed (expect backlogs to be eliminated by end-1999).

Coastal Protection and Management

- Secured additional funding for the undertaking of protection works.
- Initiated development of multi-annual Coast Protection Strategy.
- Public responses to Coastal Zone Management Study evaluated. Legislation being prepared with a view to publication of a Coastal Zone Management Bill in late 1999.

Angling

- Salmon Management Strategy put in place (involves continuously enhanced conservation measures, catchment management pilot projects, tags and quotas regime, establishment of Salmon Management Commission).
- Launched 5 year development plan for inland fisheries.
- Action Plan on Pollution Prevention and Response drawn up to provide for rapid response to fish kill incidents and damage to water quality.
- Provided £1.3 million investment package for tourism angling.

Mineral Exploitation and Development

- Over 200 jobs generated in Galmoy Mine, Co. Tipperary now reaching full production levels. Progress continued on development of Lisheen Mine, Co. Tipperary; expected to enter production in late-1999 and generate over 300 jobs.

Hydrocarbon Exploration and Development

- Appraisal drilling in Corrib gas field successfully completed.
- £5.6 million investment programme in Research and Development.
- Significant usage of Irish ports and services by exploration sector.

- South Porcupine Licence Round in December 1998.

Other

- Held major participative conference on investment and employment opportunities in the marine sector in Co. Donegal. Detailed proposals being forwarded to Donegal Employment Initiative Task Force.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISE

Irish Energy Centre

- Energy Action continued to provide energy conservation and home insulation services to the elderly and low income groups.
- Over 11,000 homes have now been treated.
- The Energy Action service has been extended to provide a basic home security service (providing locks, spy holes, security chains).
- The Energy Action model has been extended nationwide. 7 such groups are now operating with a further 3 at an advanced stage of planning.
- Over the last 3 years, training programmes organised by Energy Action have led to full-time employment for 64% of trainees.
- £110,000 has been provided to Energy Action for 1999.

CIE Public Service Contracts

- The CIE group of companies provide a large number of public transport services which are considered socially desirable but are commercially unviable.
- State support for such services is provided through an annual Exchequer subvention amounting to £108.8 million in 1999.
- The current subvention arrangements will be replaced by a series of multi-annual public service contracts with the individual CIE companies which will specify the quantity and quality of passenger transport services to be provided and the payment to be made by the State in return.
- Negotiations for the introduction of the contracts are at an advanced stage and it is hoped that contracts incorporating the range of CIE public transport services will be signed before end-1999.

Mainline Rail Investment

- Total investment of £275m under the National Development Plan (NDP), 1994 - 1999 focusing on track renewal, modern signalling systems and rolling stock. Benefiting all major lines, this investment will facilitate operating cost and journey time savings.
- Due to reallocation of EU aid earmarked for LUAS, an additional £12m in EU funds will facilitate a total additional investment of £26m in track renewal by the year 2000, benefiting the Mallow-Killarney, Cherryville-Kilkenny and Mullingar-Carrick on Shannon routes.

Dublin Light Rail Project

- In May 1998, the Government decided to proceed with a light rail network comprising a surface line from Tallaght to Connolly Station and a line from Sandymount to Ballymun and Dublin Airport with an

underground section in the city centre.

- The Minister formally signed the new Light Railway Order in respect of the Tallaght-Abbey St. line on 1 March 1999, subject to the inclusion of conditions set down in the report of the Public Inquiry, held in November 1998. It is expected that construction on this section will get underway in Spring 2000.
- An application for a Light Railway Order in respect of the Sandymount-St. Stephen's Green line was submitted to the Minister in December 1998 and the Public Inquiry commenced in April 1999.
- A public consultation document setting out the various route options from Broadstone to Ballymun and Dublin Airport was launched in December 1998.
- Preliminary studies on the underground section from Broadstone to St. Stephen's Green are to commence shortly.

DART/Suburban Rail

- The measures recommended in the Short Term Action Plan, published by the Dublin Transportation Office (DTO) in September 1998, to increase passenger capacity on the rail network, include:
 - 16 additional DART carriages on top of the 10 already on order (increasing the fleet to 106 and boosting line capacity by 30%)
 - 20 extra suburban rail cars in addition to 27 new carriages already on order
 - extended DART and suburban station platforms to cater for longer trains
 - doubling of the rail line between Clonsilla and Maynooth to cater for improved Dublin suburban rail services and associated new signalling
- The rail package involves a total investment of £63m, of which some £40m is from the decommitted LUAS EU aid.
- Implementation of all the rail measures will increase peak hour capacity by 11,300 - a 60% increase in total rail trips or an increase of 17% in total public transport trips in the morning peak.
- £16.3m is being provided, with assistance from the EU Cohesion Fund, to extend the DART to Greystones and Malahide. A partial service on the Greystones line will commence in late Summer 1999. Both extensions will be operational by Summer 2000 and neither will require an operating subsidy.
- A new DART station was opened at Fairview and planning permission was obtained for a new station at Barrow St. New stations have been opened at Drumcondra and Kilcock along the Maynooth corridor.
- The second phase of the Real Time Passenger Information System, involving extra information screens, is available in DART stations.
- New park and ride facilities have been completed at Donabate and the car park at Skerries has been extended. Attention is now focusing on improving parking facilities at Greystones, Clontarf Road and Bray. This investment is co-financed by the ERDF.

Long-Term Suburban Rail Development

- The Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area include a number of suggestions for

improving the suburban rail network in the longer term (these are only at the conceptual stage and require detailed technical and economic feasibility work) including:

- a possible new rail link to Navan
 - possible separation of long distance and commuter rail traffic through the construction of by-pass rail lines (options include a new rail link from the Belfast line through Swords and Dublin Airport to the Western line; a new rail link loop east of the current loopline in Dublin)
 - quadrupling of existing double lines where feasible
 - enhancement of rail service to the development centres identified in the Strategic Planning Guidelines (Phase 1: Drogheda, Naas, Newbridge, Kilcullen, Wicklow and Navan;- Phase 2: Athy, Arklow, Kildare and Monasterevin)
 - more sophisticated signalling technology to increase track capacity
- The Government agreed that the Minister should arrange for the detailed costing and feasibility work, the outcome to be considered as part of the strategic transport needs of the country as a whole in the context of the preparation of the next NDP.

Dublin Bus

- The DTO Action Plan recommended the acquisition by Bus Átha Cliath of a further 150 buses to expand peak hour services.
- £5.5m is to be provided from the decommitted LUAS EU aid for the acquisition of 50 of these buses for use along the Quality Bus Corridors (QBCs). The balance of the cost of these buses (£21m) is to be met from the Exchequer.
- The buses will be introduced on a phased basis, beginning in April 1999. They will add a total of 9,450 extra bus trips in the peak rush hour, an increase of over 20%.
- The increased fleet will also ensure the effective utilisation of the 12 QBCs currently being developed to enhance the priority, speed, reliability and overall quality of service on key routes in the Greater Dublin Area - 2 QBCs are already in place, 2 are under construction and a further 6 are expected to be in place by the end of 1999. The Malahide Rd. QBC, opened in December 1998, has already resulted in significant reductions in bus journey times and a 20% growth in bus use.
- DTO is providing £9m for the implementation of traffic management and comprehensive bus priority measures in order to significantly reduce bus journey times along QBCs.
- Following a revision of the cost of a number of projects funded under the CIE Investment Programme for 1999, a significant amount of funds became available to enable further progress on the issue of accessibility for the mobility impaired. Following negotiations, the EU Commission agreed to co-finance certain elements of the package which will fund the acquisition of 28 low floor buses (comprising the leasing of 6 low floor double deck buses for a 6 month trial period, 1 articulated bus, 1 LPG demonstration bus and the purchase of 20 accessible midi buses).

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL, COMMUNITY AND FAMILY AFFAIRS

Budget 1998

- increase of £5 per week for pensioners aged 66 and over and for people on Retirement or Invalidity Pension aged 65 and over;
- £3 increase in all other maximum personal rates;
- 3% increase in most Qualified Adult Allowances;
- minimum weekly rate of Maternity and Adoptive Benefit to increase to £83.70;
- Child Benefit up by £1.50 on the lower rate and £3 on the higher rate (new rates of £31.50 and £42 respectively);
- rate of Child Benefit for twins to be increased by 50%;
- grants payable to twins extended to all multiple births of three or more children, i.e., £500 at birth and £500 when the children reach four years and twelve years of age;
- FIS to be calculated on net earnings; weekly income thresholds increased by £7, giving £4.20 a week increase for most recipients;
- £5 increase for Carers aged 66 and over; £3 increase for Carers under age 66;
- all carers receiving Carer's Allowance qualify for a Free Travel Pass in their own right which allows carers to travel alone;
- six weeks payment of Carer's Allowance to be paid after the death of a spouse/partner being cared for, who is not getting a social welfare payment;
- everyone aged 75 or over who is medically certified as unfit to travel alone to be eligible for Companion Free Travel Pass;
- £5 increase for those on maximum rate of Widow's and Widower's Pensions for those aged 66 and over; £3 for those on maximum rate under 66;
- rental income from a person living with the pensioner to be exempted from the Widow's and Widower's (Non-Contributory) Pension means test;
- 5,000 increase in number of places on Back to Work Allowance;
- Back to Work Allowance for self-employed people to be extended to four years;
- existing Second and Third Level Allowance combined into the Back to Education Allowance;
- Cost of Education Allowance for people getting Back to Education Allowance increasing from £100 to £150 per year;
- Back to Education Allowance extended to people with disabilities;
- £3 increase for those on Blind Person's Pension and Disability Allowance;
- people who transfer from Invalidity Pension, Disability Allowance and Blind Person's Pension to certain other social welfare pensions to keep their entitlement to Free Schemes;
- £50 of weekly earnings from rehabilitative employment not to be taken into account when assessing means for Disability Allowance, Blind Person's Pension and Supplementary Welfare Allowance;

- £2,000 exemption to apply to the (new) scheme of compensation to be operated by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands for landowners and land users who are at a financial loss as a result of the designation of their land as Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas;
- additional £2.75m provided for the development of Family Services in 1998 bringing total provision to £3.95m;
- total provision for 1998 for Voluntary and Community Services was £15.85m including the following additions:
 - Community Development Projects - £500,000; Community Trust Challenge Fund - £750,000; Grants to Voluntary Organisations - £100,000; Money Advice and Budgeting Service - £100,000;
- additional £320,000 for continued development and support of independent information giving sector and for promoting volunteering (NSSB);
- PRSI Free Allowance in respect of Class A and H contributors increased from £80 to £100 per week;
- earnings ceiling for PRSI up by £1,000 from £23,200 to £24,200 per annum;
- earnings exemption thresholds for levies up by £10 per week (£197 to £207); levies remain at 2.5% (no ceiling);
- Employers' PRSI: earnings thresholds for the lower rate up from £260 to £270 per week; earnings ceiling up by £1,100 from £27,900 to £29,000 per annum;
- Ceiling for self-employed PRSI up by £1,000 from £23,200 to £24,200 per annum.

Budget 1999

- Total SW package: £305.5m.
- increases of £6 per week for pensioners aged 66 and over and for people on Retirement or Invalidity Pension aged 65 and over. This increase applies to full rate pensions and there are proportionate increases for pensioners on reduced rates;
- £3 increase for those aged under 66 on full rate payments with proportionate increases for those on reduced rates;
- higher increase of £3.60 for people on short-term Unemployment Assistance and Supplementary Welfare Allowance to achieve the recommended Commission on Social Welfare (CSW) rate;
- increase of £3 in Qualified Adult Allowance for Old Age, Retirement and Invalidity Pensions; increase of £3 in Qualified Adult Allowance for Blind Person's Pension where the qualified adult is 66 or over; £2 increase for other payments.
- minimum weekly rate of Maternity and Adoptive Benefit increased to £86.70;
- increase in FIS weekly income thresholds by £8;
- Child Benefit up by £3 on the lower rate and £4 on the higher rate;
- increases, once enacted, bring all payments to (at least) the minimum recommended by the CSW - fulfilling P2000 and NAPS commitment;
- £6 increase for carers aged 66 and over; £3 increase for carers under age 66;
- once-a-year payment of £200 towards the cost of respite care;
- carers of 16-65 year olds will no longer be disqualified from Carer's Allowance where the person being

- cared for is not getting a social welfare payment;
- carers of children getting Domiciliary Care Allowance to be eligible for Carer's Allowance;
- conditions for full-time care and attention to be relaxed; carers can take up paid employment for up to ten hours per week; conditions of residency to be relaxed also;
- all carers of people getting Constant Attendance or Prescribed Relative Allowance will qualify for a Free Travel Pass in their own right;
- Free Telephone Rental Allowance to be extended to all carers getting Carer's Allowance, and to carers of people getting Constant Attendance or Prescribed Relative Allowance;
- for the purposes of Carer's Allowance, the £150 weekly income disregard applied to a spouse's income is to be applied to a couple's joint income; a £75 weekly income disregard is to be applied to a single person's income;
- credited contributions to be awarded to eligible carers getting Carer's Allowance or caring for people getting Constant Attendance or Prescribed Relative Allowance;
- people going into hospital or institutional care will retain any existing Disability Allowance payment;
- people with disabilities to be eligible for Back to Education Allowance from age 18 onwards;
- 2,000 increase in number of places on Back to Work Allowance (from 27,000 to 29,000);
- Special Projects Fund administered by local Jobs Facilitators to be increased by £100,000 to £400,000;
- Nationwide Pilot Scheme for people on unemployment payments for five years or more. The scheme involves six weeks 'on the job' training with a £25 weekly travel/meal allowance. 1,000 Back to Work Allowance places to be reserved for people on the pilot scheme. Scheme to include people getting One-Parent Family Payment, Disability Allowance and Blind Person's Pension;
- Cost of Education Allowance for people getting Back to Education Allowance increasing from £150 to £200;
- Upper income limit for retention of Qualified Adult Allowance to be increased from £90 to £105 per week for many payments;
- Farm Assist introduced to help low income farmers - will replace Smallholders Assistance;
- current Fuel Allowance £15 additional income limit to be increased to £30;
- Fuel Allowance scheme to be extended to people who have access to their own fuel supply;
- special 50% pro-rata Old Age (Contributory) Pension to be introduced for self employed (Class S) contributors, with at least five years' contributions, who were over age 56 on 6 April 1988 when social insurance for the self-employed was introduced;
- arrangements to be made for payment of arrears on a sliding scale for late claims, made prior to 1997;
- Volunteer Development Workers will be covered for full rate Disability and Unemployment Benefit, for two years after returning to Ireland;
- increase of £700,000 in support for Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling and Family Mediation Services;
- total provision for Voluntary and Community Services is £21m, including the following:
 - Money Advice and Budgeting Service - £4.2m; Foundation for Investing in Communities - £300,000; funding of £8m for the Community Development Programme which includes funding for 10 additional community development projects as part of the P2000 commitments; and an

increase of £1.03m for Family and Community Services Resource Centres.

- additional funding of £100,000 for National Anti-Poverty Networks;
- additional allocation of £100,000 to initiate a pilot telephone-based information service (NSSB);
- earnings ceiling for PRSI up by £1,200 from £24,200 to £25,400 per year;
- earnings exemption thresholds for levies up by £10 per week (£207 to £217);
- Health Contribution increased to 2% and Employment and Training levies abolished - net reduction from 2.25% to 2%;
- Employers: earnings thresholds for the lower PRSI rate up from £270 to £280 per week; earnings ceiling up by £6,000 from £29,000 to £35,000 per annum;
- Self-employed: earnings ceiling up by £1,200 from £24,200 to £25,400 per annum.

NAPS Administration/Development

- updates on NAPS progress provided through a variety of media (e.g. PQs, briefs, presentations, magazine articles, etc.);
- DSCFA's NAPS Baseline Document, "Social Inclusion Strategy of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs", published in August 1998;
- DSCFA's NAPS annual workplan produced in early 1998;
- design and implementation of NAPS training module for Liaison Officers in Government Departments;
- NAPS Information and Public Education Strategy approved by IDPC; began work on establishment of NAPS 'Profiling Group';
- following scrutiny of Departmental Baseline Documents and Workplans, two issues - homelessness, and literacy among the unemployed - were identified as potential areas for cross-Departmental action. Cross-Departmental groups established.
- framework on poverty proofing agreed after consultation with social partners; following approval by Government, poverty proofing system now being implemented on a one-year pilot basis across Government Departments; enhanced guidelines on the process being prepared for civil servants;
- NAPS Unit represented at the European Social Policy Forum, analysed the implications arising from the results of the 1998 Human Development Report, and provided presentations to visiting officials when required;
- Department's Strategy Statement was published in June 1998, stating the Department's high level goals which included "To promote the implementation and further development of anti-poverty strategies to address poverty and disadvantage";

Pensions

- Report of the Pensions Board on the National Pensions Policy Initiative, "Securing Retirement Income", published in May 1998. Broad thrust of proposals accepted by Government. Work underway on implementing the Board's recommendations via a new Pensions Bill to be published in

late-1999/early-2000;

- Government decided to proceed with introduction of a special Old Age (Contributory) Pension for that group of self-employed who were over 56 when PRSI was extended to the self-employed in 1988; anyone in this group who has at least five years' contributions paid since 6 April 1988 will qualify for this new pension;
- Some analysis work undertaken on a review of 'after death' payment arrangements; formal review to commence in 1999;
- Pensions Board's Report on the NPPI addressed the issue of secondary pension provision by women and set a target for increasing coverage;

People with Disabilities

- Conference ("Making it Clear") held in conjunction with relevant organisations to identify information needs of people with disabilities and devise effective strategy to meet those in the future;
- Merging of NSSB and certain functions of the NRB into new organisation (COMHAIRLE) commenced with a view to integrating information services at national, regional and local level;
- two customer panels for people with disabilities have been established;
- the re-design of application and information leaflets was undertaken in respect of the following schemes: Invalidity, Disability Allowance, and Disablement Benefit;
- a first module of disability awareness training was provided for all staff in Longford Social Welfare Services;
- DSCFA working towards the objective of having all offices accessible to people with disabilities. A refurbishment programme is ongoing in Local Offices, with seven of them refurbished in 1998; contractors are on site in another five offices;
- the subject of disability awareness is dealt with in a specific element of the Department's Customer Service Training Programme;
- the Back to Education Allowance for recipients of Disability Allowance was introduced in September 1998;
- easing of the restriction on the payment of Disability Allowance in the case of people who move into full-time residential care or who are in hospital for more than 13 weeks, included in the 1999 Budget package;
- income disregards for persons engaging in rehabilitative employment and in receipt of Disability Allowance increased from £36.60 to £50 per week;
- working group established to examine the issue of rehabilitation and its interaction with disability payments;

Voluntary and Community Services

- revised Community Development Programme (CDP) information booklet published in October;
- 17 areas approved for the expansion of the CDP;
- funding has been provided in the 1999 Budget to allow the expansion of the programme by the inclusion

of a further 20 additional centres in 1999;

- allocation of £200,000 in Budget to fund 'After-School Service' for projects funded under the CDP, Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme, and other core-funded groups;
- Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme expanded from 10 centres to 31 centres by end-1998;
- Steering Committee, drawn from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, was established in May 1998; submissions on proposals for the White Paper were received by November 1998 and seminars were held in December 1998 and January 1999;
- funding to the Combat Poverty Agency was provided in connection with the Peace and Reconciliation Programme;
- former schemes of grants for women's, men's and lone parents' groups were integrated in the new Scheme of Grants for Locally-Based Community and Family Support Groups; the new integrated scheme operated in 1998 with some 756 groups receiving once-off grants totalling some £888,418 under the scheme;
- with a 1998 Budget of £3,143,000, the number of Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) projects expanded from 44 to 48. When the last project to be approved (i.e. Leitrim) is up and running, the MABS will be nationwide. The 1999 Budget for this service is £4,210,000;
- allocation of £2m to the Task Force on Security Needs of Older People (grants) in 1998 Budget. Following review of demand, an additional £3m was allocated, bringing total 1998 allocation to £5m. Consultant engaged to undertake review of scheme to ensure it provides assistance in the most efficient and effective way possible. Consultant's report expected mid-1999;
- Foundation for Investing in Communities launched as joint initiative between the State and the major employers' bodies; Foundation will, as one of its functions, support voluntary and community activity in disadvantaged areas through building an endowment fund;

Family Affairs

- Government established the Family Affairs Unit with a specific function to pursue the findings of the Commission on the Family Report, following their consideration by Government;
- Family Affairs Unit is examining the most appropriate institutional mechanism to facilitate inter-Departmental liaison, co-operation and co-ordination of family policy issues;
- Marriage and Child Counselling scheme was advertised in the national and provincial newspapers in April 1998 and an information leaflet and application form designed and printed;
- £1.5m made available to voluntary organisations providing marriage and child counselling services; 145 groups received grants totalling £1,266,050; £233,000 made available to voluntary organisations providing marriage preparation programmes and bereavement counselling and support services;
- possible introduction of a Parental Leave Benefit scheme examined in the context of discussions with the social partners under Partnership 2000; Government decided that parental leave would be introduced on an unpaid basis; DSCFA will continue to monitor the impact of the Parental Leave directive;
- pilot projects to refocus the delivery of social welfare and other services at local level to better meet the needs of families are being developed in three locations; implementation to begin in 1999

- Government has allocated £150,000 for the purpose of conducting or commissioning research into the area of family issues in 1999.

Unemployment

- Employment Action Plan (EAP) became operational on 1 September 1998 for under-25s crossing the six-month threshold of unemployment; this involves DSCFA identifying cases and referring them to FÁS for interview and progression under the EAP;
- Workpath Initiative launched by the NRB, supported financially by the Department; this is a transitional support service to help the long-term unemployed make the transition to full employment;
- Work ongoing in relation to the different treatment of regular part-time, casual, systematic short-time and week-on/week-off workers for Unemployment Benefit and Unemployment Assistance purposes;
- Memorandum of Understanding signed between DSCFA and FÁS to provide a more harmonised response to unemployment;

Adequacy

- rent limits reviewed in all Health Boards to ensure that people on social welfare payments continue to have access to housing;
- planned to complete an examination of the potential for further development of FIS and Child Benefit schemes this year, and to advance proposals for the development of child income support policy to feed into the 2000 Budget process;
- at European level, a report was prepared by a working group (which included DSCFA members) on guaranteed minimum income schemes within social protection systems; the report covers the national minimum-income guarantee schemes currently in place in all EU states except Italy and Greece;
- introduction of Fishing Assist to help some 500 low-income self-employed fishermen;

Individualisation of SW Payments

- the dimensions and implications of the individualisation of social welfare payments is being looked at by the inter-Departmental Group examining the treatment of married, co-habiting and one-parent households, under the tax and social welfare systems. The group will report in 1999.

Policy on One-Parent Families

- One-Parent Family Payment introduced in 1997, to replace the Lone Parent's Allowance and Deserted Wife's Benefit Schemes. Payment includes significant income disregards, the object of which is to encourage and facilitate lone parents to take up full employment. The operation of the new scheme is due for review in 1999;

- a standard disregard of £115.38 per week applied to One-Parent Family Payment, with 50% of earnings of £115.38 to £230.76 per week only counted;

Supplementary Welfare Allowance

- Review of the National Fuel and Smokeless Fuel Schemes was completed and some of its recommendations were implemented in the 1999 Budget;
- inter-Departmental group on homelessness established under NAPS (including relevant voluntary and community representation);

Educational Disadvantage

- procedures introduced to provide information to all unemployed people on entry and again as they become eligible for education options;
- campaign (national/local press and local radio) to highlight employment opportunities, directly or following further education or training to upgrade skills;
- grant to National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and consultation on various literacy initiatives ongoing;
- DSCFA participated in relevant cross-Departmental and multi-agency groups aimed at providing a more co-ordinated approach to service delivery, e.g. Inter-Departmental Working Group on Education and Training, the Consultative Group on Adult Education;
- DSCFA engaged in discussions with the Department of Education and Science in relation to the administration of the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), the payment of which was brought back into line with our Back to Education Allowance;
- unified Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) scheme introduced;
- scope of BTEA extended to include persons in receipt of Disability Allowance and Blind Person's Pension in addition to unemployed persons and lone parents;
- annual Cost of Education Allowance increased from £100 to £150;
- scope of BTEA extended to include courses of training and development for persons residing outside Area Partnership Company areas in addition to courses of academic education;
- two reports, "Everything to Gain - a study of the Third Level Allowance Scheme" (produced by Aontas and NALA) and "College Knowledge - Power, Policy and the Mature Student Experience at University" (NUI, Maynooth), commissioned by DSCFA;

Customer Service/Information

- Guide to Social Welfare Services published;
- discussions continued with voluntary sector on production of information pack for lone parents;
- grant aid to Carers' Association towards cost of running a Helpline and further grant for information pack for elderly/carers, etc.;

- AERTEL update;
- customer panel meetings held in Dublin, Limerick and Tralee; planned to have a customer panel in place in each region in 1999;
- introduction of LoCall under active consideration;
- Minister launched "It Pays to Work" campaign which, coinciding with the Employment Action Plan, will help to ensure that unemployed people are aware of and fully understand their options; the campaign includes a newsletter for all unemployed people, an information video and a series of features on local radio and in local newspapers;
- computer tape of One Parent Family Payment (OFP) given to FÁS on a weekly basis, with FÁS returning tape details of OFP recipients who have taken up CE schemes, to facilitate quicker CE client approvals, and statistics;
- currently finalising an Irish language version of the main guide to Social Welfare Services information;
- working group on the Irish service has completed a draft report; recommendations being considered as part of 1999 business planning process;
- code of practice in place for forms and leaflets to ensure that the language used is as customer-friendly as possible;
- training and development programme for DSCFA's Information Officers prepared;
- co-operation between NSSB and DSCFA in the area of information provision ongoing;
- Pre-Departure Advice and Returning to Ireland information booklets (for emigrants) updated in consultation with FÁS and relevant voluntary sector emigrant advice groups;
- exhibition of Back to Work products held in Ballyfermot;

Incentives/Disincentives

- Government approved publication of Goodbody's evaluation of incentive effects of secondary benefits; discussion with social partners has begun (April 1999);
- introduction of FIS being assessed on a net income basis implemented since October 1998.

Free Schemes

- extension of Free Travel companion pass to over-75s who are certified as medically unfit to travel alone;
- extension of Standard Free Travel Pass to all Carer's Allowance recipients for April 1999;
- retained Free Schemes entitlement for people who transfer from Invalidity Pension, Disability Allowance and Blind Pension to certain other Departmental pensions;

Research

- ongoing programme of research with the ESRI agreed;
- work ongoing in a variety of research areas on which the ESRI is undertaking work for DSCFA;

DEPARTMENT OF THE TAOISEACH

Co-ordinating and Monitoring Partnership 2000 Commitments

- The Department has overall responsibility for co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of the provisions set out in Partnership 2000 which, on the social inclusion side, reflect the objectives of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. The implementation process is underpinned by a number of systematic monitoring mechanisms or arrangements as outlined below.

Partnership 2000 Progress Reports

- A report is produced each quarter and circulated to all Departments and social partner organisations. The Report gives details of progress made on each commitment. This is complemented by a process of follow-up to written queries from the social partners which takes the form of written responses from appropriate Departments and/or updates to the information provided in the Progress Reports and/or bilateral meetings between the Departments and social partner organisations.

Partnership 2000 Secretariat Meetings

- One such meeting, comprising Departmental officials and social partner representatives, takes place each quarter and one per annum is chaired by the Taoiseach. The core purpose of these meetings is to provide the social partners with clarification on any additional queries which they may have on individual commitments - these frequently have a social exclusion dimension to them.

Partnership 2000 Plenary Meetings

- One such meeting, comprising Departmental officials and social partner representatives, takes place each quarter. The core purpose of these meetings is to monitor implementation by theme, mirroring closely the chapter headings in the Agreement. Detailed papers are compiled by the appropriate Departments and circulated to the social partners. Presentations are given at the meetings, followed by social partners comments and queries.
- The themes of Social Inclusion and Equality were specifically addressed on two occasions during 1998 and related issues frequently arose in the context of other thematic presentations and discussions - for example, active labour market policies in the context of competitiveness, rural development and exclusion in the context of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, and a comprehensive spread of social exclusion considerations in the context of Budget policy.

Working Groups

- The Department is represented on a number of Groups under P2000 dealing with social exclusion issues - for example, Childcare and Basic Income (which it serves)

Partnership 2000

- In relation to plans for 1999, the Department's focus throughout most of the year will be on securing the implementation of all Partnership 2000 commitments which remain incomplete or outstanding, including those relating to social exclusion. This intention, combined with the considerable progress already made, underpins the NAPS objectives in a concrete way.
- In the second half of 1999, pathways towards negotiations on a P2000 successor will be put in place and it is likely that substantive negotiations will get under way during this period as well. The policy considerations informing this negotiations process will reflect the concerns set out in the NAPS.

NESC and NESF

- During 1998, the Department oversaw the reconstitution of the National Economic and Social Council and the National Economic and Social Forum, both of which have played a significant role in the development of social partnership. It is intended to place both on a statutory footing and arrangements are being made for the drafting of a Bill.
- The composition of both the NESC and NESF has been changed to reflect the new mandate of these bodies. Community and voluntary sector representation has been included on the NESC while Government Departments, local government representation and independent members have been added to the NESF.

NESF

- The Terms of Reference of the new Forum are to monitor and analyse the implementation of specific measures and programmes identified in the context of National Partnership Programmes, especially those concerned with the achievement of equality and social inclusion; to do so through consideration of reports prepared by teams comprising representatives of the social partners with appropriate expertise, and representatives of relevant Departments and agencies and its own secretariat, with reports to be published by the NESF with such comments as may be considered appropriate.
- To ensure that the teams compiling such reports take account of the experience of implementing bodies and customers/clients, including regional variations and opinions.

NESC

- The Terms of Reference of the NESC are to provide a forum for discussion and analysis of the principles and strategic issues relating to the efficient development of the national economy and the achievement of social justice and to advise the Government, through the Taoiseach, on their application.
- Through its reports, it will develop the framework within which discussions on future National Programmes will take place.

Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion

- The Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, chaired by the Taoiseach, met 8 times in 1998. It approved a number of new initiatives in the course of the year, including the National Drugs Strategy, the launch of the £30m Young People's Facilities and Services Fund, a new initiative dealing with children at risk, a pilot poverty proofing process and issues surrounding the objective of improving the integration and efficiency of service provision by State Agencies in deprived areas.
- During 1998, five strategy papers were considered by the Cabinet Committee on the key NAPS themes of Unemployment, Income Adequacy, Educational Disadvantage, Urban Disadvantage and Rural Disadvantage.
- The Cabinet Committee is supported by a Senior Officials Group comprising Assistant Secretaries-General from the relevant Departments, serviced by the Department of the Taoiseach. It meets in advance of Cabinet Committee meetings to finalise the agenda, and ensures implementation of the policies agreed.

Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPS)

- The Department is the national co-ordinator for four Irish Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPs) set up as part of the European Commission initiative to mobilise local social partner support in tackling unemployment.
- The Irish TEPs are based in the Dublin region, Limerick, Dundalk/Drogheda and Co. Westmeath. They build on experience of local development, with a specific focus on opportunities for unemployed people to access existing local jobs or to create new employment. They are also referenced in the Employment Action Plan.
- During 1998, with the aid of technical assistance from the Commission and the Department, the TEPs have built their partnership structures, engaged in local consultation and prepared detailed action plans which were submitted to the Commission. Following approval of these plans, the TEPs are now implementing a number of projects. Funding of 2m ECU has been made available from Structural Funds and Exchequer co-financing. In addition, projects are seeking support from local partners.
- The Department monitors progress on a quarterly basis, as well as supporting the TEPs in integrating their activities with mainstream employment related work of Departments and agencies.

Strategic Management Initiative

- Steps are being taken to extend the Quality Service Initiative across the wider public service to enhance the quality of service provided to all customers, in particular the more disadvantaged or excluded groups.

Information Society

- The Information Society Commission was established in 1997 and reports directly to the Taoiseach making recommendations on measures needed to develop an Information Society in Ireland.
- As part of its brief, the Information Society Commission is involved in examining how use of new information and communications technologies (ICTs) can help to address traditional social problems of disadvantage and exclusion. The Commission is also monitoring the impact of information society developments across different sectors of society.
- A research survey conducted by the Commission during 1998 provides valuable information on levels of awareness of, and access to, ICTs among different socio-economic groupings, and allows direct comparison with similar research carried out in 1996. Further benchmarking research will be carried out in 1999. The findings from this body of comparative research will inform the ongoing work of the Commission and its reports to the Government.
- Through the work of its Government Services and Social Inclusion Advisory Group, the Commission arranged a consultative conference in June 1998 around the theme of "Social Inclusion through the use of Information and Communications Technologies". The key conclusion to emerge from the conference was the need for measures to promote access to, and literacy in, the new technologies associated with the evolving information society. The Commission is exploring the public policy issues raised by these goals and the best means of realising them. Further consultative fora on social inclusion issues are envisaged.
- During the coming year, the Commission will also identify examples of best international practice in the deployment of ICTs in projects and initiatives designed to further social inclusion objectives.

Poverty Proofing

- During the year, the Department contributed to the preparation of a proposal to have all Government Memoranda poverty proofed. This proposal was accepted by Government and the new Cabinet Handbook now contains a provision whereby all memoranda must indicate clearly, in the memoranda, the impact of the proposal, for persons in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty, in cases of significant policy proposals.

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM, SPORT AND RECREATION

Drugs Task Forces

- Task Forces prepared action plans aimed at development of community-based initiatives to complement existing programmes and services; £10m allocated to implement 234 separate measures in Plans, some of which commenced in 1997 and continued during 1998; 163 projects now up and running;
- MOS, Mr Chris Flood, T.D., currently preparing detailed proposals on the future operation of the Task Forces; these will be submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion in 1999.

Young People's Facilities and Services Fund

- YPFSS set up to develop youth facilities, including sport and recreational facilities, and services in disadvantaged areas where a significant drug problem exists or has the potential to develop;
- £30m Exchequer funding committed to the Fund over the period 1998-2000, £20m of which is targeted at Drugs Task Force areas; £10m allocated by Cabinet Committee to support strategies and projects aimed at young people and children at risk in other major urban centres.

Local Government Reform

- Inter-Departmental Task Force established to develop a model for the greater integration of the Local Government and Local Development systems;
- Following the report of the Task Force, an Implementation Group is working on the implementation of its recommendations.

Operational Programme for Local, Urban and Rural Development

- Performance indicators for OPLURD were refined and approved by the Technical Assistance Steering Group;
- 3,800 unemployed people (90% of whom were unemployed for more than one year) have set up their own business with Partnership and Community Group assistance;
- An additional 2,280 unemployed people have been directly placed in employment (two-thirds unemployed for over one year);
- From Sept 1997 to June 1998, over 9,500 children and over 1,800 adults were involved in preventive education activities;
- 2,401 adults on low incomes have participated in Partnership-funded education and training courses;
- Partnerships continued to support a broad range of community development, childcare and infrastructure projects in their areas;
- Work continued under OPLURD (1994-1999); there are 18 Partnerships and 25 community groups

located in rural areas active in enterprise development, education and training, community development, services to the unemployed, and infrastructure and environment; target groups include the long-term unemployed, lone parents, Travellers, people with disabilities, and smallholder households.

- Rural partnerships and community groups have set up local rural development advisory groups to respond to the needs of low income smallholder households; these groups consist of representatives of farm organisations and of Teagasc and various state agencies; the initiative's aim is to develop and test intervention strategies to assist low-income smallholder households in achieving a viable household income;
- Area Development Management Ltd (ADM) is working on a training programme to develop and implement a practical 30-hour course on rural resources development and management in the context of present trends in the Irish rural economy; participants will be Local Development Staff working with rural communities and groups with a particular emphasis on smallholder households.

Integrated Services Project

- Government agreed that IDPC on Local Development should oversee development of a pilot Integrated Services Project to develop new procedures to ensure a more co-ordinated response by statutory authorities to the needs of severely disadvantaged urban communities.
- The project is initially focused on four disadvantaged communities: Dublin's North East Inner City, The Canal Communities, Jobstown in Tallaght, and Togher in Cork;
- Reports were produced for each area (overseen by an ADM-appointed National Co-ordinator) which profiled existing services and resources, identified the level of integration already existing, and made recommendations to enhance co-ordination and integration efforts by the statutory agencies in conjunction with the local communities;
- An overview paper, drafted in consultation with D/TSR, based on area reports and subsequent consultation, was endorsed in full by Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion.
- Taoiseach launched implementation phase at a specially convened meeting of Secretaries-General and CEOs of relevant State agencies.
- Four Development and Monitoring Officers have been appointed and are reporting good progress in the areas.

URBAN Initiative

- Proposal approved for the refurbishment of industrial unit in St Margaret's in Ballymun; £466,074 assistance given under the Enterprise/Employment measure for a £703,614 project; hoped to provide space for 12 start-up businesses with a potential of 30-35 jobs;
- Neilstown Youth Resource Centre (Clondalkin) completed at a cost of £270,000 with URBAN assistance of £100,000 under the Community Infrastructure (ERDF) measure;
- Planning permission granted for the Fettercairn Youth Horse Project (Tallaght);

- Full day-care facility for children established at Newbury House (Mayfield, Cork) assisted under the Children and Youth measure.

CERT

- Participants on the targeted programmes for the unemployed are now receiving NTCB qualifications, enhancing their job prospects;
- 95% success rate in placing course participants in employment; 1998 throughput stood at 1,140 students.

Sports Programmes

- D/TSR assisted some of the larger National Governing Bodies of Sport which submitted proposals to target disadvantaged populations;
- Grants paid to the VECs in respect of the Youth and Sport Grant Scheme; grants are provided to local youth clubs and sport clubs and the Special Projects grants are paid to projects specifically targeted at socially and economically disadvantaged populations (e.g. Travellers);
- Grants paid to a number of organisations which, although not sporting organisations, offer sports programmes aimed at a wide population; these organisations are asked to identify the disadvantaged populations they would propose to target.

Appendix

Poverty Proofing Guidelines

C

Guidelines for the Implementation of Poverty Proofing Procedures

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following the Government decision of 23 July 1998, in line with a Partnership 2000 commitment to strengthening of administrative procedures for equality proofing in the context of the NAPS, it is now a **requirement** in the updated Cabinet Handbook, published in October 1998 (p.19), that memoranda for the Government involving significant policy proposals “**indicate clearly the impact of the proposal on groups in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty in the case of significant policy proposals**”.
- 1.2 Although some Departments’ remit may not seem to impact directly on poverty, and while some Departments are not involved in direct service delivery, it must be noted that this is an **obligatory requirement**. While the secondary effects of some proposals (particularly those which are not directly aimed at alleviating disadvantage) may not be immediately apparent, **they may still have an impact on the poor**, or may, inadvertently, lead to a risk of poverty for some people/groups.
- 1.3 The statement of impact on poverty should be based on a **systematic analysis**, using the Framework previously circulated and outlined again in section 4 below.

2. What is Poverty?

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

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

- 2.2 The NAPS overall target focuses on the 9-15% of Irish households that were determined, in the ESRI’s 1994 Living in Ireland Survey, currently being updated to 1997, to be “consistently poor” (based on the 50% and 60% relative income lines **combined with** the presence of basic deprivation). The target is to reduce this proportion to less than 5-10% of households by 2007.

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

3. What is Poverty Proofing?

3.1 Poverty proofing is defined as follows:

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

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

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

4. Poverty Proofing Procedure

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

4.2 Proofing What?

Poverty proofing should be undertaken in the following circumstances:

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

- in the preparation of legislation.

4.3 Proofing How?

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

- What is the primary objective of this policy / programme / expenditure proposal?
- Does it . . .
 - i) help to prevent people falling into poverty?
 - ii) reduce the level (in terms of numbers and depth) of poverty?
 - iii) ameliorate the effects of poverty?
 - iv) have no effect on poverty?
 - v) increase poverty?
 - vi) contribute to the achievement of the NAPS targets (including subsidiary targets under the five themes)?
 - vii) address inequalities which might lead to poverty? (See 4.5 below)
 - viii) as proposed, reach the target group(s)? (See 4.4 below)
- and what is the rationale and basis of the assessment (for example, administrative data sources/household survey data, Working Group or Task Force Reports etc.) behind each of these replies?
- If the proposal has the effect of increasing the level of poverty, what options might be identified to ameliorate this effect? *[this could include proposals to counteract adverse effects which may be identified for certain sub-groups even where the impact on the overall population is positive - see 3.3 above.]*
- If the proposal has no effect on the level of poverty, what options might be identified to produce a positive effect? *[Again this could address any potential for certain social categories to miss out on benefits generally available to the target group.]*

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

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

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

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

5. Evaluation

5.1 Poverty Proofing is currently in place on a one-year pilot basis.

The effectiveness of the process will be reviewed at the end of the trial year (Summer/Autumn 1999). Officials in all Departments will be asked to respond to an evaluative process on their experience of the Poverty Proofing Procedure in order to inform that review.



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