

A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF SERVICE  
PROVISION FOR AT RISK CHILDREN  
AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Eemer Eivers & Eoin Ryan

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Educational Research Centre  
St. Patrick's College, Dublin



# **A Case Study Analysis of Service Provision for At Risk Children and Young People**

## **Executive Summary**

As part of the 8- to 15-Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative, the Educational Research Centre was commissioned by the Department of Education and Science to examine service provision for at risk children and young people. The aims of the research were to examine the integration of mainstream and targeted preventative and support services in schools and of existing services between schools and other statutory and voluntary agencies in the school/community catchment area.

Four areas were chosen for case studies: Jobstown, a large estate in Tallaght; The Glen, in Cork inner city; Muirhevna Mór, an estate in Dundalk, and a rural area between Westport and Newport in County Mayo. In each case, a profile of the area was constructed and service providers for the area were identified. Individual interviews were conducted with a number of service providers and with teachers in both primary and post-primary schools serving the area. Group interviews were also conducted with parents. Current provision was analysed, on the basis of which recommendations are made for promoting more integrated service provision. Distinct differences were found between the four case study areas, in terms of amount and type of provision, as well as in the degree of integration of services.

### ***Current Provision***

Service integration had not been achieved in any of the four areas, although there were differences in the extent to which basic structures had been instituted to facilitate it. Planning at local level, typically supported by the local Partnership company or a local co-ordinating body, appeared to have led to better communication between service providers. Partnership companies were generally well regarded, particularly those that were perceived to adopt a 'bottom-up' approach. Although there was considerable variation in the extent to which schools were integrated into the wider network of service provision, most were not well integrated. Smaller schools, in particular, tended to be more isolated than larger ones. The degree to which a school strived for a more integrated service appeared to depend on the attitudes of the principal and of key staff members, such as the HSCL co-ordinator, where such a post existed. Primary schools were perceived to be more welcoming of parents and more child-friendly than post-primary schools.

Health Boards were generally criticised for not adopting an integrated approach, and for being chronically understaffed. While some 'frontline' staff within Boards were praised, there was a perception that decision-makers did not believe in, or were not committed to, integration.

Many service providers were housed in inappropriate facilities, with little or no advertising of their presence. Parents' knowledge of service provision in their area was quite limited. It is probably not a coincidence that the highest level of local awareness was found in the case study area where premises were well-signposted.

Much provision was financed by short-term funding, often on a pilot basis, making long-term planning for individual organisations, and for the area, difficult. Government Departments, including the Department of Education and Science, and statutory bodies were frequently described as the biggest obstacles to developing an integrated service. Common gaps identified in provision included activities for young people, developmental youth work, early intervention programmes, and psychological services for schools. Provision in the rural case study area was limited in the extreme.

## ***Recommendations***

### **Legislation**

Staffing levels for the proposed Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) in the proposed Educational (Welfare) Bill should represent a significant increase on current provision (of School Attendance Officers). The threshold number of days for referral to an EWO should be raised, EWOs should be assigned to schools, rather than to areas, and the role of Juvenile Liaison Officer should be taken over by EWOs. Students who have completed their Junior Certificate examination should be allowed to leave school, even if they have not reached 16 years of age, and provision for training should be expanded prior to establishment of the proposed Register of Young Persons under the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act.

Prohibitions on the employment of young people under the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act should be enforced, and inspections should be carried out outside office hours. Measures on underage drinking in the Intoxicating Liquor Bill 2000 should be enforced, with particular attention to off-licences and adults who purchase alcohol for minors.

### **Schools**

A small number of schools had established close links with local service providers, and had made considerable effort to make the school more parent-friendly. Many of the recommendations for changes to be made at school level are based on changes that have already occurred in these schools. To achieve better links with the local community, schools should be encouraged to allow community use of their facilities after hours and during school holidays. Schools that do not currently offer courses to parents should be encouraged to do so, and more primary schools should employ classroom assistants or use parents to assist in the classroom in a voluntary capacity. Both HSCL and Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators should continue to

engage in a variety of strategies, particularly home visits, to increase parental involvement, and should be extensively involved in networks of local service providers. Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators should not be used as remedial teachers.

Schools, particularly post-primary schools, should create more opportunities for positive interaction with parents, using occasions such as sports days, choral recitals and art displays. Post-primary schools should assign designated contact teachers to parents, supply students with more information about subject choices prior to enrolment, and at least occasionally have class-based parent-teacher meetings.

## Department of Education and Science

Inservice training on inter-agency co-operation should be offered, and consideration needs to be given to the non-teaching aspect of some teachers' roles in terms of allowing time for such activities. Liaising with other service providers should be recognised as one of the main functions of the role of HSCL and Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators, as should providing regular feedback to their colleagues. This requires a certain amount of flexibility in their working day.

The Department of Education and Science should issue schools with guidelines about the type of pupil information that should be passed from primary to post-primary schools, and it should define models of best practice for primary to post-primary transfer programmes, and disseminate this information to schools. Smaller rural primary schools should be fully included in any such programmes. Pupil tracking systems should be in place in both primary and post-primary schools, and should be updated twice yearly.

In assigning caseloads to remedial teachers that are shared between schools, greater consideration should be given to travel requirements. Consideration should also be given to the needs of teaching principals in schools designated as disadvantaged, and to those in small rural schools.

## Health Boards

Staffing levels for social workers should be increased, and efforts made to maintain staff in posts for longer periods of time and to fill current post allocations. Cases should be assigned on an area basis, and every school should have a designated contact social worker. The number of visits to pre-school children by Public Health Nurses should be increased, and the nurses should have greater flexibility in their working hours and more positive publicity about their role.

Health Boards and the Department of Health and Children need to enunciate more clearly defined policies on the reporting of child abuse, and on the protection of confidentiality of reporters of such abuse. Management within the Health Boards needs to prioritise service integration and to include it as part of the core role definition for key employees.

## Funding Practices

Aside from the obvious issue of amount of funds allocated, the methods by which funds were allocated clearly affected delivery of services. Pilot projects, although useful, should not replace long-term provision. Where a pilot has been found to be successful, it should be considered for mainstreaming. Funding bodies should clarify future funding prospects for service providers as far in advance as is practicable. Local knowledge, such as that of the County and City Development Boards (CDBs) or Partnership companies, should be used in the allocation of funds. In severely disadvantaged areas, broad-based interventions as well as targeted interventions should be considered.

## Structures and Supports at National Level

Greater co-ordination between agencies is needed at both local and national level. If the new CDBs are to improve co-ordination locally, they should use existing results from consultative processes where possible, and avoid duplication of the processes. Since the CDBs are intended to be inclusive in their membership, with representation from the social partners and statutory and voluntary agencies operating at local level, state agencies (such as the Department of Education and Science) which do not have significant local representation should examine ways in which they can participate in CDBs.

Since rural areas are inadequately served, particularly by health-related services, consideration should be given to the development of models of provision more suited to the needs of rural populations. In urban areas, locating a variety of service providers within a purpose-built premises is something which should be aimed for. Such premises should have a high public profile, and should not be based in or around schools.

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## List of Acronyms

<b>ACE</b>	Accessing College Education	<b>LEADER</b>	Liaisons Entr' Actions de Developpement de l'Economie Rurale
<b>ADM</b>	Area Development Management	<b>MABS</b>	Money Advice and Budgeting Service
<b>CDB</b>	County / City Development Board	<b>NCCA</b>	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
<b>CE</b>	Community Employment	<b>NEHB</b>	North Eastern Health Board
<b>CSO</b>	Central Statistics Office	<b>NESC</b>	National Economic and Social Council
<b>CTW</b>	Community Training Workshop	<b>NESF</b>	National Economic and Social Forum
<b>DED</b>	District Electoral Division	<b>NTDI</b>	National Training and Development Institute
<b>EHB</b>	Eastern Health Board	<b>NYCI</b>	National Youth Council of Ireland
<b>ERHA</b>	Eastern Regional Health Authority	<b>NYP</b>	Neighbourhood Youth Project
<b>EWO</b>	Educational Welfare Officer	<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>FÁS</b>	Foras Áiseanna Saothair	<b>PHN</b>	Public Health Nurse
<b>GAP</b>	Glen Action Project	<b>SAO</b>	School Attendance Officer
<b>GRIP</b>	Glen Reading Improvement Scheme	<b>SAPS</b>	Small Area Population Statistics
<b>HSCL</b>	Home/School/Community Liaison	<b>SHB</b>	Southern Health Board
<b>ITT</b>	Institute of Technology Tallaght	<b>SWMDCo</b>	South West Mayo Development Company
<b>JADD</b>	Jobstown Assisting Drug Dependency	<b>TAPS</b>	Technology Awareness Programme in Schools
<b>JETS</b>	Jobstown Education and Training Strategy	<b>WHB</b>	Western Health Board
<b>JISP</b>	Jobstown Integrated Services Process	<b>YDP</b>	Youth Development Project
<b>JLO</b>	Juvenile Liaison Officer	<b>YIP</b>	Youth in Partnership
<b>LCAP</b>	Leaving Certificate Applied Programme		
<b>LCVP</b>	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme		
<b>LDTF</b>	Local Drugs Task Force		

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# An Introduction to the Integration in Delivery of Services for at Risk Children

## Introduction

This chapter introduces the background to service integration for children and families at risk. It outlines the national and international context of service provision, as well as describing the aims and methods of this research project. Throughout, the term at risk is taken to mean children who are “from disadvantaged backgrounds who fail to reach the necessary standards in school, often drop-out and as a consequence fail to become integrated into a normally accepted pattern of social responsibility, particularly with regard to work and family life” (OECD, 1995, p. 13).

## Background

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds who are at risk of educational failure have received much research attention during the last 30 years. Many projects designed to counteract educational disadvantage have been piloted and assessed, perhaps the best known of which is Head Start in the United States (Zigler & Valentine, 1979). In Ireland, there have been a number of projects aimed at alleviating the effects of educational disadvantage, such as the Rutland Street Project (Holland, 1979; Kellaghan, 1977), the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (Ryan, 1994), Early Start (Ryan, Ó hUallacháin, & Hogan, 1998), and Breaking the Cycle (Weir & Ryan, 2000a, 2000b). However, despite a reasonable amount of success in each of the interventions, the problems of educational failure still persist.

There has also been a growing realisation that children at risk of educational failure can suffer from a multitude of problems and that these problems cannot be treated independently of each other. As Lontos (1992) stated: “the educational needs of children cannot be separated from their social needs. Both urban and rural families are often faced with multiple problems: lack of time, energy, and money; inadequate housing and schools; lack of community support; difficult family relations; innumerable social problems; and barriers related to race, class, culture, and language. ‘High risk’ families are those contending with multiple problems.” (1992, p.8).

It may seem self-evident that the best way to deal with a young person manifesting multiple problems is not to focus on each problem in isolation, but to deal with the person as a whole. Unfortunately, this has not tended to happen. Melaville and Blank (1991) criticised traditional models of intervention for not recognising the interrelated nature of problems, for a failure by professionals and agencies to communicate with each other and for an inability to come up with comprehensive solutions. Quite simply, specific problems were dealt with by specific agencies, with little or no communication between them. As the CMRS (1992) pointed out, many young people were dealing with a proliferation of professionals, leading to an attitude of dependency, and an inability to take responsibility. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, intervention was designed to fix problems, rather than to offer the necessary support to prevent problems arising in the first place.

Apart from the fact that fragmented intervention does not offer a holistic approach, it has also led to many young people simply slipping through the cracks. Lack of inter-agency communication has been implicated as a causal factor in a number of high profile cases where child protection services failed, such as the Kilkenny Incest Investigation. For example, Reder, Duncan and Gray (1993), in an examination of the results of 35 inquiries into the deaths of children in the U.K., concluded that the one common finding was that “inter-agency communication was flawed” (1993, p.60).

In recognition of the limitations of previous provision, the concept of integrated provision has recently come to the fore. Proponents of such an approach argue that it should prove more effective in the long-term, as service providers link together to develop a solution for the person as a whole. The OECD (1996, 1998) has been one of the main promoters of the concept of service integration, citing a definition of service integration from the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare that has been widely used: "Service integration refers primarily to ways of organising the delivery of services to people at the local level. Services integration is not a new programme to be super-imposed over existing programmes; rather, it is a process aimed at developing an integrated framework within which ongoing programmes can be rationalised and enriched to do a better job of making services available within existing commitments and resources. Its objectives must include such things as:

- (i) the co-ordinated delivery of services for the greatest benefit to people;
- (ii) a holistic approach to the individual and the family unit;

- (iii) the rational allocation of resources at the local level so as to be responsive to the local needs." (OECD, 1996, p.35).

Many proponents of service integration have suggested locating all relevant services (i.e. social, health, psychological, and educational) in the same publicly accessible building, in what has become known as a one-stop shop. The OECD has reviewed the benefits and problems associated with such an approach, outlined in the appropriately titled *Under One Roof* (OECD, 1998).

Recent Irish governments have also supported service integration as a way of combating poverty, social exclusion, and educational disadvantage. Tackling educational disadvantage has been outlined as a key target of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS). NAPS has stated that its key objective in relation to educational disadvantage is: "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" (Ireland, 1997, p.9). In addition to NAPS, the government has set up a Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, chaired by the Taoiseach and including Ministers from eight departments. One of the main aims is to ensure that all government departments take into consideration the effects their policy and decisions has upon poverty, and that efforts are co-ordinated across departments.

The Department of Education and Science has signalled its support for the strategy through its Social Inclusion Unit, which co-ordinates policy on educational disadvantage. Inter-agency co-operation was also defined as a key component of the 8- to 15- Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative, in which a number of pilot projects were set up in 1998 to tackle the problem of early school leaving. The proposed Education (Welfare) Bill makes provision for the co-ordination of activities between a new structure, the National Educational Welfare Board and other relevant state agencies, such as the Gardaí, VECs, Health Boards, NCCA, and the National Youth Work Advisory Committee.

The Department of Education and Science is not the only department to advocate service integration. For example, under the auspices of the Department of An Taoiseach, Area Development Management (ADM) company was set up in 1992 to assist and promote local development. To this end, it has helped set up 38 Partnership companies in the most disadvantaged areas, in addition to 34 community groups in other areas. One of the aims of these Partnership companies is to help local

communities develop, and within this to provide support for those at risk of educational failure through their education co-ordinators. Thus far, this support has taken the form of homework clubs, after school schemes, and third level access programmes, among others.

The Integrated Services Process (ISP) is a pilot project set up in 1998, managed by ADM, but under the auspices of the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation. The project promotes integration among state agencies, in consultation with local communities in disadvantaged urban areas. It is being piloted in four areas, three in Dublin and one in Cork, with the intention of developing a model of best practice that can be extended to other areas of urban disadvantage. The pilot phase is due for completion in December 2000. However, initial indications would indicate that it has already achieved considerable success, primarily in improving co-ordination between various agencies (ISP, 2000).

The Irish government has, in addition, started moving towards an integrated social services system (Ireland, 1996). A feature of this is the Personal Public Service Number (PPS Number), which involves utilising an individual's RSI number as a "unique public sector identifier" (Ireland, 1996). It is envisaged that each individual would be assigned a single PPS Number upon registration of birth, which would be retained throughout life. In addition to being used for revenue and social welfare purposes, the number will also be used as an individual identifier by the health services, the Department of Education and Science, and by the General Registry Office. One of the proposed uses of the PPS Number is the tracking of pupils and students as they progress through the education system. It is believed that the PPS Number will make available, for the first time, information on the numbers of pupils who drop out during primary schooling and at the transition from primary to post-primary school. Such information should enable the Department of Education and Science to focus on areas that are in need of support.

A testing of an integrated "one-stop-shop", which provides "a single local contact point for customers which would be the gateway to the full range of social services provided by the State" (Ireland, 1996, p65) has been established in two areas in Dublin - Tallaght and Ballymun. These test centres focus on the delivery of an information, advice, and directed referral service, with the intention of broadening the available services over time.

The Department of Environment and Local Government (1999) has begun to promote service integration in local areas with the creation of County and City Development Boards (CDBs) in each city and county in the country. The boards comprise representatives of local government, local development agencies (such as the Partnership companies), and other state agencies and social partners operating locally. One of the main aims of the CDBs is to avoid duplication in the delivery of services at the local level, in addition to filling gaps in the needs of a community. The key functions of the CDBs are the development of a strategy for the economic, social and cultural development of the area, and overseeing the implementation of this strategy. To ensure a fully integrative process and to allow local communities to express their opinions to the CDBs, community liaison officers will be appointed in each area.

Other non-government bodies such as the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) and the Council of Religious in Ireland (CORI) have also been strongly supportive of the need for local service integration. The CPA initiated a three-year programme aimed at tackling educational disadvantage through a co-ordinated and integrated partnership of all agencies at a local level. The programme was set up in four areas - Drogheda, Killinarden, Tralee, and Tuam. Each area is involved in similar activities, including examining the extent of local disadvantage, identifying gaps in service provision, and inter-agency training programmes (CPA, 1998).

In addition to the schemes mentioned, there have been a number of locally based initiatives, supported by EU funding, that have been set up to combat educational and other disadvantages, throughout the country. These schemes, such as Deis na Gaillimhe, Kilkenny Youthlynx, Mol an Óige in Tipperary, and the Jobstown Education and Training Strategy (JETS), each operate on the basis of integrating local service provision to tackle educational disadvantage.

As can be seen from this brief summary, the need to foster an integrated approach underlies much recent government policy. As a result, the Department of Education and Science commissioned the ERC to analyse the current degree of integration between school-based services, and between these and non-school-based services, in order to suggest measures that might be adopted to foster a more integrated approach. The remainder of this report outlines the work undertaken to achieve this.

## Task Definition

The research specification for the project strand of the 8- to 15- Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative listed three main areas of work. Two of these were the identification of characteristics of early school leavers, and the identification of variables for inclusion in a pupil database to identify those at risk of early school leaving. This work is dealt with in a report by Eivers, Ryan, and Brinkley (2000). This report will focus on the third requirement of the specification – an analysis of the integrated delivery of services to children.

The function of this aspect of the research was defined in the research specification as follows: *“This third aspect of the Research Strand will examine the existing integration of mainstream services and of other targeted preventative and support services in schools. It will also examine the integration of existing services between schools and other statutory and voluntary agencies in the school/community catchment area and prepare a strategy for the implementation and development of that vital integration.”*

To fulfil these criteria, case studies were carried out in four areas around the country, representing urban, provincial, and rural experiences of integration.

## Rationale for Case Study Method

Given the time and financial constraints, it was beyond the capacity of this research project to examine integration of service delivery for children in Ireland as a whole. Such an approach would necessarily have a focus on large service providers with a nationwide base, to the relative exclusion of smaller, locally-based organisations. It would also lead to a focus on official policy of organisations, rather than on how policy is implemented at local level. In addition, it would make it difficult to discern regional and more localised variations in the quality of service offered to young people.

Therefore, it was decided to carry out in-depth case studies in four areas. The main advantages of such an approach were perceived to be as follows:

- it allowed for a more detailed analysis (albeit on a smaller scale);
- it allowed for variation across areas;
- it facilitated comparison between contrasting situations;

- it allowed consideration of small, locally based organisations and voluntary groups;
- it allowed the practical experience of integration (or lack of it) to be examined.

## **Methodology**

In each of the case study areas, the ERC reviewed current mainstream services (e.g. remedial and psychological services) and other targeted schemes (e.g. Home School Community Liaison Scheme, Breaking the Cycle). In addition, an in-depth analysis of the availability and use of services in each location was completed.

Three primary and three post-primary schools were visited in each case study, and interviews were conducted with a principal and teacher in each. Services available in each location were identified and interviews conducted with those who were involved in service provision. Parents who lived in disadvantaged areas and had utilised local services were also interviewed. Finally, the integration of existing support services between schools and local statutory and voluntary organisations that deal with families at risk was reviewed, and where services were inadequately integrated, improvements were suggested.

### ***Selection of Case Study Areas***

Four areas were chosen for case studies: Jobstown, a large estate on the outskirts of Dublin city; The Glen, in Cork inner city; Muirhevna Mór, an estate in Dundalk, and a rural area between Westport and Newport in County Mayo.

A number of factors informed the selection of case study areas. Firstly, the areas were chosen to reflect a mixture of city, town and country conditions. Secondly, as information had already been gathered on early school leavers from certain parts of Ireland, the selection of the areas was limited to ones already covered in the early school leaver interviews. Thirdly, Gaeltacht and border areas were excluded from selection of the rural case study area, as it was felt that they would be somewhat atypical of the rural experience. Also, they would benefit from grants and some facilities that other rural areas might not have.

Fourthly, rather than depending exclusively upon an objective outsider's view, it was believed that local knowledge would be an invaluable contribution to the case

studies. To this end, the ERC engaged the assistance of the National Training and Development Institute (NTDI), as they had offices in a wide variety of locations throughout the country and their staff would be able to gather information on local services. NTDI staff members assigned to the research were trained by the ERC in interview techniques, collection of data, and provided with a background to the project.

Fifthly, as the Central Statistics Office can provide detailed census data on District Electoral Divisions (DEDs), where possible, areas were chosen to match DEDs. In most cases the DED reflected a locally recognised distinct area. Thus, Jobstown estate is almost identical to the DED of Jobstown (although the DED also includes a small part of Brookfield, an adjoining estate of similar socioeconomic composition). What is locally known as The Glen is the same as The Glen A DED. The DED of The Glen B was not included, as it is locally recognised as Ballyvolane, an area with different services and with a different socioeconomic composition. The DEDs of Kilmaclasser and Kilmeena cover most of the rural area between Westport and Newport, and are similar in socioeconomic composition.

Unfortunately, Muirhevna Mór estate was divided across two DEDs, and formed only a minor proportion of the population of each. As the socio-economic composition of the rest of the two DEDs were quite different to Muirhevna Mór, it was not possible to use DED details for Muirhevna Mór. Despite this, Muirhevna Mór was selected as it is generally recognised as the most disadvantaged area of Dundalk. Moreover, the other disadvantaged area of Dundalk considered for selection (Cox's Demesne) did not match a DED either.

Jobstown was selected as the first case study to be carried out, and was used as a pilot for the other case study areas. The area was sufficiently close to the ERC to allow close monitoring and regular visits by ERC staff. Based on the experience of the Jobstown study, some small modifications were made to the manner in which information was collected. Also, the report produced was used in the training of staff for the other three areas.

### ***Developing a Profile for each Case Study Area***

Local knowledge proved invaluable for this aspect of the research. The NTDI staff member also worked with the ERC to produce a profile of the local area. This involved collecting demographic data, relating to age, educational attainment and socio-economic background. This primarily depended upon the use of Small Area

Population Statistics (SAPS), as published by the CSO. Details from the SAPS were compared to national averages for each of the aforementioned variables.

An outline of the local infrastructure, leisure facilities, crime rates, and drug use was also compiled. This was developed by NTDI staff supplementing their local knowledge with information from various sources, such as local Area Partnerships, city or council councils, sports clubs, and An Garda Síochana, among others.

### ***Developing a Description of Services for an Area***

A number of different methods were used to gather information on services available to each case study area. Typically, the local Partnership was the first point of contact. In some cases the Partnerships had already compiled details of services in their area, while in some cases they were only able to supply the names of a few organisations. As NTDI staff gathered most of the data on service provision, they were able to use their local knowledge and contacts to add to the list. As each case study progressed the list of service providers was added to, based on additional services mentioned in the teacher and service provider interviews.

Where possible, information on the activities of each service was gathered using information already in the public domain (for example, descriptions from Partnership literature about the area, promotional brochures and websites). In cases where this did not provide sufficient detail on the activities and structure of service providers, the services were telephoned and asked for more detail.

In Jobstown, short standardised telephone interviews were conducted with all service providers. However, this method was not used in the other three case study areas as it was felt that the level of information obtained did not merit the required work. The Jobstown service providers selected for in-depth interviews were excluded from the telephone interviews, as a description of their organisation formed part of the in-depth interview.

In developing the list of services for each area, it was felt that there was a need to limit the number on each list. Only those most relevant to providing support services to disadvantaged children and families were selected. For this reason, services for the elderly and sports clubs were not included. Despite attempts to be as comprehensive as possible in each area, some services may have been unintentionally omitted.

Another issue that should be noted is that while three of the case studies have been completed in the last six months, the services descriptions may have changed and could now be out of date. However, it is likely that the problems identified in each area will not have altered substantially and that the recommendations and suggestions will still be appropriate.

### ***Selection of Service Providers***

In each area, at least four service providers were selected for in-depth standardised interviews. Services were selected to give representation to both local and national organisations. Those selected were considered to be the most relevant to providing for the needs of potential or actual early school leavers. While, in the urban and provincial areas, there was a good selection of service providers to choose from, the same was not true in the rural case study.

Initial contact with the selected service providers was by letter from the ERC outlining the project and the topics covered by the interview. A follow-up telephone call, by the interviewer, to answer any queries and arrange the interview was made within one week. The ERC and NTDI staff shared interview responsibility in each of the areas.

### ***Selection of Teachers***

In each school, the principal was initially contacted by a letter, which outlined the project and asked if s/he would agree to be interviewed. The principal was also asked to select one other teacher in the school for interview. As knowledge of services may relate to the position held within the school by teachers, it was felt important to get the views of different types of teachers. While the principals selected the second teacher to be interviewed in each school, consultation with the researchers ensured that a variety of *types* of teachers were interviewed in each case study area.

As with the service provider interviews, the ERC and NTDI staff shared the interviewing. A week after the letter was posted, principals were contacted by telephone and the interviews were arranged. Apart from principals, interviews were also conducted with the following types of teachers: HSCL co-ordinator, Year Head, vice-principal, career guidance, support, remedial and resource teachers.

### ***Selection of Parents***

Parents were interviewed as a group rather than individually. Group interviews were preferred, as it was perceived to be a less threatening environment for parents than a one-to-one interview. It also allowed for contact with a larger number of parents. Apart from the pilot case study in Jobstown, where only one set of parents was interviewed, two groups of parents in each area were interviewed.

While two groups of parents were interviewed in The Glen, Muirhevna Mór, and Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser, the range of parents was not as diverse as anticipated. In each area, parents were contacted via the primary schools principals and thus, all of those interviewed had children attending primary school, while a lesser number had children attending post-primary school. In addition, a lack of parental interest, especially amongst fathers was encountered in all areas, though primarily in the rural case study. ERC staff conducted all parent interviews.

### ***Interview Topics***

Structured interviews were designed for each type of interviewee: teacher, service provider, and parent. The interviews primarily focused on the opinions of the interviewees in relation to service integration in their local area, while service providers and teachers were also asked about their experiences of integration.

#### **Teacher Interviews**

Teacher interviews began by presenting a list of local service providers and asking teachers about their knowledge of each service. They were asked about the gaps and overlaps they believed existed in service provision for their school's area. Teachers were also asked about the speed and timeliness of intervention. Following this, they were questioned about the overall adequacy and coherence of service provision in the area.

Teachers were also asked about the quality of local service provision, in terms of staffing levels, the running of the organisations, and how they could be improved. The role of teachers currently and ideally was examined, as was the interaction between teachers and service providers. Finally, teachers were asked for any general comments they had about service provision in Ireland.

### Service Provider Interviews

Service providers were asked to describe their organisation and the level of co-operation they had with other service providers, such as sharing of client information, joint planning, or sharing of premises. They were asked about the funding of their organisation and how it impacted upon the services they offer.

Service providers were then asked to comment on service integration in the local area, overall level of service provision and whether they offer an integrated approach and what led them to do so. Obstacles to integration and changes that could be made at local and national level were also asked about. Finally, they were asked how they would re-organise the treatment of at risk children and if they had any general comments to make.

### Parent Interviews

To gain some insight into the level of parental awareness of service providers, groups of parents in each area were shown a list of local service providers and asked whether they had heard of them. They were also asked if services were accessible. Parents were asked whether they thought the local service providers linked well together, if at all. The role of parents was then assessed, by questioning the parents about what role they should play, the role they actually play, and whether they are kept informed by teachers of their child's problems in school. They were also asked about what role teachers should play and what role they actually play. Finally, they were asked what they would do to reduce the number of early school leavers, if they were the government.

# Profile of Jobstown

## Location

Jobstown is located at the western end of the Tallaght bypass, approximately one mile from Tallaght's new town centre. It is bounded by the Blessington Road, Cheeverstown Road, Fortunestown Way and the Jobstown Road. There are six local authority housing estates in Jobstown and three private estates, the latter composing less than 10% of total housing in the area. Houses are typically uniform, two storey, and terraced, set in large areas of open space. Over 80% of houses are rented from South Dublin County Council.

The District Electoral Division (DED) of Jobstown covers all of what is locally recognised as Jobstown, as well as part of Brookfield, a neighbouring estate with similar population characteristics. For the purposes of this profile, the Jobstown DED Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) from the 1996 census will be used.

## Population

Between 1981 and 1996 the population of the Jobstown electoral area rose from 1,968 to 7,294 people, a 270% increase, with the most intensive period of house building and consequent population growth taking place between 1981 and 1986. The huge population growth has led to an atypical demographic profile for the area. Jobstown has unusually high numbers of young people, lone parents and people dependent on welfare payments. More than one third (39%) of the Jobstown population are aged less than 15 years, compared to 23.7% nationally (CSO, 1997).

The percentage of households headed by lone parents (31.2%) is almost twice the national average of 16%, while average household size in Jobstown is 3.86, compared to the national average of 3.14 (CSO, 1997).

## *Refugees*

At the time of the case study (Summer 1999) there were approximately 20 refugee families living in rented accommodation in the two private estates in Jobstown. The families were of Bosnian, Romanian and Polish origin.

## **Travellers**

Prior to the development of local authority housing estates, Tallaght was a traditional location for Traveller halting sites. Consequently, many Traveller families still live in the Tallaght area. A 1998 report by Jobstown Integrated Service Project (JISP) stated that although there are no official halting sites in Jobstown, many Traveller families live on unofficial sites near the Jobstown Inn and on the Fortunestown Way. These unofficial sites have no facilities, and families are periodically moved on by Gardaí. A small number of Traveller families are also housed in Jobstown.

## **Educational Facilities and Attainment**

Jobstown has three primary schools within its electoral boundaries. These are St Thomas' Junior National School (410 pupils<sup>1</sup>), St Thomas' Senior National School (398 pupils) and St Maelruain's National School (82 pupils). All three schools are mixed sex and are designated as disadvantaged. St Maelruain's is an atypical school in that it is significantly smaller than most schools in the wider Tallaght area and is a Church of Ireland school. Jobstown Community College (562 students) is the only post-primary school in Jobstown. It is a mixed sex, vocational school. A small number of pupils from the area attend Killinarden Community School, a mixed sex community school in a neighbouring estate.

Census data from 1996 indicate that educational attainment levels in Jobstown are low. One third (34.5%) of those aged 15 years or more who had left the formal education system had completed only primary school, compared to 29.5% nationally (CSO, 1998b). The Leaving Certificate was completed by 23% of those aged over 15, compared to 29.9% nationally, while only 7% had a third level qualification, compared to 19.69% nationally. Of those no longer within the formal education system, 48.2% had left at age 15 years or under, compared to 34.8% nationally.

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<sup>1</sup> School sizes are based on the 1998/99 returns made by schools to the Department of Education and Science.

## Socioeconomic Activity

The 1996 census data indicate that the unemployment rate in Jobstown was 35.98% at that time, compared to a national average of just under 15% (CSO, 1998b). Of those unemployed, 60% were unemployed for more than three years, compared to 47.5% nationally. Youth unemployment was particularly high, with 42.2% of the 1996 labour force aged 15 – 24 classified as unemployed or first time job seekers, compared to 22.5% nationally. South Dublin County Council figures from the 1998 Local Authority rent scheme show that 70% of tenant principal earners were dependent on social welfare, and 74% of all principal tenant earners earned less than £149 per week.

Among the employed, males were most likely to be employed in the occupational groups of manufacturing (27.49%) or commerce (27.69%). Females were most likely to be classified as employed in industries “other” than the nine main categories (29.83%), followed by commerce (25%). Less than one percent (0.34%) of Jobstown’s population were categorised as belonging to Social Class 1, compared to 5.35% nationally. However, the area contains a higher than average number of people categorised as belonging to Social Class 5 or 6 (33.18% versus 21.34% nationally).

Area Development Management commissioned a report to provide baseline statistical data for each Area Partnership Company. Based on the report for the Tallaght Partnership area (GAMMA, 1998), Jobstown was assigned a Deprivation score of 10 on the Haase Index of Relative Affluence and Deprivation. The Haase Index provides a single measurement of the overall deprivation of an area. The index uses 1996 Census data on social class, levels of education, levels of unemployment and long-term unemployment, proportion of lone parents, the extent of small farming and the age dependency rate to rank DED’s from 1 to 10. Jobstown’s Rank Factor Score of 10 indicates that the DED is among the most disadvantaged 10% of DED’s.

## Transport

The estates that compose Jobstown were originally designed for high car ownership but this never materialised. Figures from the 1996 census indicate that the main ways people in the area get to work and school are by foot (49%) and by bus (26%). Only 18% of those aged five years and older travel to school or work by car, compared with approximately 45% nationally. Inhabitants of Jobstown are heavily dependent on

public transport. There is a regular bus service that links Jobstown with The Square and the city centre, but some parts of Jobstown are a long walk from the nearest bus service. The service is occasionally withdrawn in the evenings, due to attacks on drivers.

## **Sports & Leisure Facilities**

Sports and leisure facilities are somewhat limited in the immediate area. The main sports facilities are two soccer and one Gaelic pitch. These are owned by South Dublin County Council, are shared with the Brookfield area, and the changing facilities are in cargo containers. Jobstown Community Centre offers a number of indoor sports, such as Tai Kuan Do and indoor soccer, but generally these must be pre-booked for a set number of weeks and cost a fee. St Thomas' school is used at night for Tallaght Youth Service activities such as their boxing club, while The Pastoral Centre is used by a variety of groups including Tallaght Youth Service.

The YMCA (1998) report that 65% of children in Jobstown under 11 years were not involved in outside school activities. The Tallaght Youth Service has now appointed a full time youth worker to the area and is developing programmes which target early school leavers, young women (including mothers), young Travellers and all young people at risk.

## **Drugs**

The Jobstown Assisting Drugs Dependency Project (JADD) indicated that, at the time of the case study, it was dealing with 37 people from the area (35 aged 18 – 27 years and 2 over 35 years of age). The service, which is funded by the EHB and the Tallaght Drug Task Force, offers free direct treatment for addicts and support for families. JADD estimated that its current client group represents approximately one third of the Jobstown addict population. Tallaght Drugs Task Force (1997) estimated that, at a minimum, there were 65 opiate and heroin users in Jobstown in early 1997. There are no estimates available for the numbers who use a variety of other drugs, such as ecstasy, cannabis, cocaine, tranquilisers or alcohol.

Jobstown has had a drug problem since the estates were first built. The problem was exported from the inner city communities from which the population of

the estates originated. For many years the main problem drugs were alcohol and cannabis. However, this has changed in recent years. Younger drug users are more likely to take ecstasy, which, in turn, has led to an increase in heroin addicts (heroin is sometimes used to 'come down' from ecstasy). Currently, heroin, ecstasy and cannabis are widely used.

## **Crime**

Tenant groups, community groups and the Gardaí agree that there are ongoing problems with joyriding, vandalism, car or house break-ins, litter and noise pollution. They also maintain that most of the problems are associated with a small number of residents. The local perception is that the crime rate in Jobstown is significantly higher than the national average. Currently, the URBAN-supported Jobstown Estate Management Group and South Dublin County Council are engaged in efforts to deal with identified problem families.



## Service Provision for Jobstown

There are a considerable number of services for the Jobstown population, although many are not based in the area. In this section the services are listed and briefly described. While the list is as comprehensive as possible, given the many services in operation, some may have been inadvertently omitted. Services based within schools are described first, followed by other services available to the area. Much of the information in this section has been compiled using the Tallaght Partnership document *Educational Opportunities and Services in Tallaght*, by McGrath and Gilligan (1998).

### School-based Provision

Schools in the Jobstown area are included in many of the Department of Education and Science's schemes to combat educational disadvantage. Inclusion in the more general schemes (e.g., Breaking the Cycle) is outlined first, followed by a description of some initiatives peculiar to Jobstown.

#### General Schemes

##### Primary

Table 1.1 summarises schools' involvement in Department of Education and Science-sponsored schemes. Knockmore JNS and SNS are also listed, as, although outside Jobstown, they draw a small number of pupils from the Jobstown area.

Table 1.1. Involvement of primary schools serving Jobstown in Department of Education and Science schemes to redress educational disadvantage.

School	Designated Disadvantaged	HSCL	Early Start	Remedial	Teacher Counsellor	Breaking the Cycle
St Thomas' JNS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
St Thomas' SNS	✓	✓	NA	✓	✓	✓
Knockmore JNS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Knockmore SNS	✓	✓	NA	✓	✓	✓
St Maolruain's COI NS	✓	No	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓	No	No

<sup>1</sup> Designated for grant purposes only.

As can be seen, all of the schools listed are designated as disadvantaged. All also have access to a remedial teacher and all but St Maolruain's have a Home/School/Community Liaison (HSCL) teacher. Both St Thomas' JNS and Knockmore JNS have an Early Start pre-school programme, while St Maolruain's is designated for grant purposes only. Finally, all but St Maolruain's have the services of a teacher counsellor and are included in the Breaking the Cycle scheme.

### Post-primary

As shown in Table 1.2, both Jobstown Community College and Killinarden Community School are designated as disadvantaged. Both schools have a HSCL teacher, and have remedial teachers and teacher counsellors. Aside from the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Programmes, both offer the Junior Certificate Schools, Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Applied Programmes.

Table 1.2. Involvement of post-primary schools serving Jobstown in Department of Education and Science schemes to redress educational disadvantage.

School	Designated Disadvantaged	HSCL	Remedial	Teacher Counsellor	JCSP	TYP	LCAP
Jobstown CC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Killinarden CC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

### **Specific Schemes**

#### Jobstown Education and Training Strategy (JETS)

JETS is supported by EU and Department of Education and Science funding. It provides an inter-agency approach to dealing with early school leaving and educational disadvantage. Two schools (Jobstown Community College and St Thomas' SNS) are working in partnership with Tallaght Partnership, Barnardos, Youth Horizons and South Dublin Chamber of Commerce, and with parents and the local community.

JETS targeted 18 5<sup>th</sup> class pupils from St Thomas' who were identified as potential early school leavers. The pupils were brought together into one class and given a range of extra supports. These include:

- Reduced class size
- After-school activities and homework club
- Increased home-school links and high level of parental involvement
- Structured activities during summer holidays.

JETS began in 1996 in St Thomas' SNS (where the 18 participants were then in 6<sup>th</sup> class) and will continue until June 2000 in Jobstown Community College, when they will sit the Junior Certificate examination. By September 1999, only one of the original group had dropped out of school.

### 8- to 15- Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative (Jobstown)

The 8- to 15- year old initiative in Jobstown is a pilot project jointly funded by the EU and the Department of Education and Science. It is one of 17 similar pilot schemes, and is funded from September 1998 – June 2000. Although described as a pilot, the project is largely a replication of JETS. Eighteen 5<sup>th</sup> class pupils from St Thomas' SNS who were identified as potential early school leavers were brought together into one class and given a range of extra supports. These include:

- Homework club
- Breakfast club (food supplied)
- Out-of-school activities
- Structured activities during summer holidays
- Greater links between home and school and greater parental involvement.

As in JETS, the two schools involved are St Thomas' SNS and Jobstown Community College. Again, Tallaght Partnership, Barnardos and South Dublin Chamber of Commerce are involved, as are the Eastern Health Board (EHB), Department of Justice and Tallaght Youth Service. The 18 involved completed 6<sup>th</sup> class in June 1999, and transferred to Jobstown Community College in September 1999. At the end of their First Year in post-primary school the pupils will be assimilated into other classes.

### Accessing College Education (ACE)

ACE is a Third Level access project funded by South Dublin URBAN Initiative (described in the next section *Other Service Provision*) and the Department of Education and Science. The project is based in Jobstown Community College. Twenty Senior Cycle students receive extra tuition and other incentives to support them accessing Third Level education. The project also runs in two other post-primary schools (Killinarden Community School and Brookfield Community School) in the wider Tallaght area. ACE is unusual in that it offers incentives to high-performing students, rather than to at-risk students.

## Technology Awareness Programme in Schools (TAPS)

TAPS, which is co-ordinated by the Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT), links education with local industry in the development of a technology-awareness training package for young people. It is part of the YOUTHSTART initiative, funded by the European Social Fund. The aim of TAPS is to increase participation in IT education among young people, particularly among disadvantaged school children.

Jobstown Community College and Killinarden Community School are involved in TAPS. There are three main elements in the project:

- Creating a school-industry partnership
- Delivery of the European Computer Driving Licence, certified IT skills course to teachers (who will, in turn, pass on learning to students and other teachers)
- Development of a Web site aimed at encouraging 12 – 16 year olds to consider a career in IT.

## The Lucena Clinic

The Lucena clinic is funded by the Eastern Health Board (EHB) and runs a unit in Killinarden Community School. The clinic deals with students who are emotionally and behaviourally disturbed, and with their parents. Parents can attend a weekly parenting group, while their children simultaneously attend another group. The clinic offers the services of a psychologist and a psychiatrist. The HSCL teacher from Killinarden Community College also engages in support work with parents.

## Other Service Provision

Table 1.3 summarises the purpose, funding and premises of the main service providers for Jobstown. As can be seen, only three (Citywise, Barnardos and the Juvenile Liaison Officer) indicated that they focussed specifically on preventing early school leaving. The majority are located in premises outside the area, and those situated in Jobstown are in standard terraced houses in the estate. Although most reported at least some of their funding coming directly from Government departments, the EU and charitable donations were also a source of funds.

Table 1.3 Service providers for the Jobstown area, described by primary focus, main funding source and type of premises.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Primary Focus</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Premises</b>
Barnardos (YAP)	Prevent ESL	Government + Charity	Terraced house
Brookfield Young Mothers Group	Other	NGO	Outside area
Citywise	Prevent ESL	Charitable donations	Terraced house
Eastern Health Board	Other	Government	Outside area
FÁS Tallaght	Other	Government	Outside area
Jobstown Assisting Drug Dependency	Other	Government + Charity	Terraced house
Jobstown Community Council	Other	Government + EU	Terraced house
Jobstown Estate Management	Other	Government	Outside area
Juvenile Liaison Officer	Prevent ESL	Government	Outside area
National Training and Development Institute	Other	Government, EU + Charitable donations	Outside area
Shanty	Other	Government + Charity	Outside area
South Dublin Chamber of Commerce	Other	Private subscription	Outside area
South Dublin URBAN Initiative	Other	Government + EU	Outside area
St Basil's Traveller Training Centre	Other	EU	Outside area
Tallaght Partnership	Other	Government + EU	Outside area
Tallaght Drug Task Force	Other	Government + EU	Outside area
Tallaght Youth Service	Other	Government	Outside area
West Tallaght Resource Centre	Other	Government	Outside area
Youth Horizons	Other	Government	Terraced house

### ***Barnardo's***

Barnardo's run a Youth Action Project in Jobstown. The project is aimed at children aged between 9 – 13, who are affected by social, emotional or behavioural problems. The project provides a day programme which emphasises personal development and social skills, through group and individual work. Children from Jobstown are referred to the project by St Thomas' SNS or by the Eastern Health Board. The project also has informal links with the Lucena Clinic and Tallaght Youth Service.

### ***Brookfield Young Mothers Group***

Brookfield Young Mothers Group has been in operation since 1991. It is run by Tallaght Youth Service. It is a once-weekly programme for mothers, aimed at developing their self-confidence and interpersonal skills. The programme also provides information on further training opportunities and welfare entitlements. Although located outside Jobstown, mothers from the area can join the group. The group is affiliated to a wider Lone Parents Network.

### ***Citywise***

Citywise is a voluntary organisation that offers school support in an out-of-school context. It is funded primarily by charitable donations from local businesses, with some funds from South Dublin County Council and Tallaght Youth Service. In Tallaght, Citywise is based in a terraced house in one of the Jobstown estates, but young people from the neighbouring areas of Killinarden and Brookfield can also avail of the service. During the school year, the organisation deals with five groups of 10 to 15 young people (aged 10 to 16). Each group can avail of one evening programme per week, typically involving a mixture of academic support and sports or personal development. Citywise also offers some weekend activities (typically day trips) and a summer activities programme.

### ***Eastern Health Board (EHB)***

The EHB is the Health Board responsible for Dublin city and county, and the counties of Kildare and Wicklow. Like all regional health boards, the EHB offers a variety of services to its clients, including access to social workers, psychologists and public health nurses. At the time of the case study the EHB was building a purpose-built Health Centre, to replace current provision, which was inadequate to meet demand.

#### **Rathminton Health Centre**

Rathminton Health Centre is located in two adjoining local authority houses in Jobstown. At the time of the case study, it housed an ante-natal clinic, a dental clinic and a public health nurse service. It was planned to move these services to the new EHB Jobstown Health Centre when it opened.

#### **Jobstown Health Centre**

It was anticipated that the new Health Centre would open in early 2000, and that the following services would be available<sup>2</sup>:

- Public health nurse
- Area medical officer
- Speech and language therapist
- GP service
- Social worker service
- Dental clinic
- Occupational therapist
- Physiotherapist
- Family Support Centre (pre- and ante-natal service, and support for families, adolescents and single parents).

### ***FÁS Tallaght***

FÁS is Ireland's national Training and Employment Authority, providing a range of services, including training and apprenticeship courses and services to business. FÁS also provides training and temporary employment programmes to assist communities

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, the Health Centre opened in mid-May 2000, and not all services were available when last checked (June 2000).

with worthwhile projects and job creation initiatives. The main FÁS office in Tallaght is located in The Square, which acts as a recruitment agency for all FÁS programmes in the area. There are no Youthreach centres located within Jobstown, but programmes are held in the nearby estates of Killinarden and Oldbawn. Early school leavers from Jobstown can apply for entry to these courses through the main office in The Square. Jobstown Community School also sends names of early school leavers to FÁS.

### **Cyclorama**

Cyclorama is a course providing training in the technical aspects of the performing arts. It is sponsored by the South Dublin County Council with the assistance of FÁS, and funded by the Youthstart strand of the EU Human Resources Initiative EMPLOYMENT. The course is designed for 16 – 20 year olds and provides them with a level of expertise to help them find work in the performing arts. The course is run from premises in Jobstown.

### **Towards Second Chance Schooling for Tallaght**

The Second Chance Schooling project is funded by the YOUTHSTART strand of the EU Human Resources Initiative EMPLOYMENT. It aims to develop a strategy for second chance schooling in the wider Tallaght area by providing a range of supports to early school leavers. These are:

- Tracking and meeting with early school leavers to move towards placing them within existing provision
- A mentoring project
- Short training courses for early school leavers.

Although located in Tallaght Village, the project deals with the wider Tallaght area. At the time of writing, 12 of the 60 early school leavers referred to the project were from Jobstown.

### ***Jobstown Assisting Drug Dependency (JADD)***

JADD provides a treatment service for local drug addicts, and assists in rehabilitation (providing educational and job seeking services). It also offers support to the families of drug users. JADD is funded by the EHB and the Tallaght Drug Task Force, with some additional funding from charitable donations. JADD has formal links with the

Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation and the EHB, and informal links with Jobstown Community Council, Jobstown Estate Management and the local Gardaí.

### ***Jobstown Community Council***

Jobstown Community Council is jointly funded by the Irish Government and the EU. Its main role in Jobstown is the empowerment of the local community, by supporting local initiatives to deal with local problems. Funding is supplied by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, South Dublin County Council and the EHB. The Community Council has links with many organisations in the area, including South Dublin URBAN Initiative, the Jobstown Estate Management Group, Tallaght Youth Service, West Tallaght Resource Centre, Jobstown Assisting Drug Dependency, Barnardos and the Shanty project.

In St Thomas' SNS, the Community Council supports two Homework Clubs, catering for a total of 30 pupils aged 8 and 9 years old. The clubs provide supervised learning facilities, physical activities and a meal for participants.

### ***Jobstown Estate Management (JEM)***

Jobstown Estate Management is funded by URBAN, and managed by South Dublin County Council. One of the main aims of the organisation is to encourage the involvement of tenants in their communities and to facilitate increased participation by them in the management of their estates. JEM has organised a Tenant Participation course in Jobstown and supports the activities of the Residents' Association. It provides an information service for tenants, letting people know of activities that will be happening in the estate (for example, road works due to repairs by Telecom). JEM also provides information on other issues, such as Tenant Purchase Schemes, and works to increase communication between service providers (such as the Gardaí) and tenants.

### ***Jobstown Integrated Services Process (JISP)***

JISP aims to develop new procedures to ensure a better co-ordinated and more focused response by statutory authorities to the needs of very disadvantaged communities. The

new procedures will become the basis of a model of best practice. In Jobstown, as in the three other ISP selected areas, JISP aims to ensure that:

- Local services meet the needs of local people
- Co-operation between service providers is maximised
- Service users are involved in planning and evaluation of service provision.

Activities in Jobstown include an Integrated Services Process Forum, open to all statutory and community or voluntary groups in the area. The Forum has highlighted some particular areas of concern and committees composed of the relevant agencies have been set up. Priority areas include supporting families, youth issues and early school leavers. JISP is funded through the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation but reports directly to Area Development Management.

### ***Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO)***

Schools in Tallaght do not currently have access to a School Attendance Officer, as Tallaght is considered to be outside Dublin city limits. Instead, schools can refer cases to the JLO. The JLO programme operates under the supervision and direction of the Garda National Juvenile Office. It provides a nationwide system for cautioning juvenile offenders as an alternative to bringing them before the courts. Those cautioned under the programme may be subject to supervision by a JLO. Supervision involves a range of activities including contact between the juvenile, the family and the JLO. The JLO programme is designed primarily to deal with young offenders. In practice however, it frequently functions in a role similar to that of School Attendance Officer (SAO) in areas not covered by SAOs.

The JLO programme is part of the Garda Community Relations Section. This section has the responsibility for formulating, implementing and evaluating all crime prevention programmes and measures utilised by An Garda Síochána. The section includes the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme (commonly known as the JLO scheme), the Garda Schools Programme, and a Crime Prevention unit.

### ***National Training and Development Institute (NTDI)***

NTDI is part of the Rehab Group. It offers education, training and job placement opportunities for people with disabilities. It is located about one mile from Jobstown, but deals with some clients from the area.

***The Shanty Educational Project***

The Shanty is a community-based educational centre providing second chance education to people in the West Tallaght area. It will move to a new location (in Jobstown) in September 1999. It was initially set up to provide courses for women who had neither the financial resources nor the childcare support to avail of educational courses. Courses are charged at a nominal fee (£1.00 per week including crèche and transport) and priority is given to those on low income or Social Welfare. Having recognised the extent of literacy problems and lack of qualifications among young people in Jobstown, the project is currently working on courses more specifically designed for the needs of young people.

***South Dublin Chamber of Commerce***

The South Dublin Chamber of Commerce covers the new administrative County of South Dublin. It includes Lucan, Tallaght, Clondalkin and the industrial areas bordering the Naas Road and the M50 and has a population of over 200,000. Although primarily supporting business and commerce, the organisation is also responsible for a Schools Business Partnership. The latter aims to improve relationships between post-primary schools and local businesses, and to support local initiatives targeting disadvantaged young people. More specifically, the partnership aims to assist the career guidance service, to facilitate work experience for students and placements for teachers. It also aims to assist with the development of the ITT Summer School.

***South Dublin URBAN Initiative***

South Dublin URBAN Initiative is an EU URBAN initiative supported under the Operational Programme for URBAN Ireland 1996-1999, which is funded by the EU Structural Funds and the Irish Government. URBAN is a European programme aimed at enhancing the social, economic and physical conditions of urban neighbourhoods experiencing social exclusion. URBAN aims to tackle these problems in an integrated manner, maximising the involvement of community, voluntary and statutory sectors.

The area covered by the scheme includes West Tallaght, Avonbeg, and North and South West Clondalkin. As the area contains a large young population, almost one fifth of the URBAN budget has been allocated to initiatives directly involving young people. In Jobstown, the scheme co-finances (with the Department of Education and

Science) the ACE scheme. URBAN's other main youth-related activities in Jobstown are described as facilitating Senior Cycle students in accessing 3<sup>rd</sup> level education, and encouraging parental involvement in educational decisions. URBAN also aims to promote sporting activities for young people in the wider Tallaght area, using sport as a drug abuse prevention strategy.

### ***St Basil's Training Centre***

St Basil's is a 30-place Traveller Training Centre, catering for women of 15 years and older. Funding comes from the EU, and is administered by the County of Dublin VEC. Attendees are primarily drawn from the wider Tallaght area, with a small number from Jobstown. The centre is located over a mile away from the Jobstown area in an old school that has been adapted for its current use.

St Basil's provides training and education to meet the needs of educationally and otherwise disadvantaged women. The centre provides a range of courses, from literacy and numeracy to computers and culturally appropriate pre-marriage courses. St Basil's also functions as an information centre, advising on issues such as health services and social welfare benefits, legal rights and further education.

### ***Tallaght Partnership***

Area-based Partnerships were established in 1991 as a targeted response to problems of long-term unemployment and social exclusion in areas of significant disadvantage around the country. The Partnerships involve different sectors in the local community (state agencies, unions, farmers, employers, community and voluntary organisations) in identifying and meeting local needs. The companies are located in, owned and run by the community, receiving resources from the Government and the European Union to implement their multi-annual Action Plans.

Tallaght Partnership, although located outside Jobstown, is one of the main conduits of service provision in Jobstown. The Tallaght Partnership provides financial support for many of the activities in the wider Tallaght area. Apart from providing finance, the Partnership aims to

- Create a more integrated approach to local activities
- Facilitate the creation of community groups and support the activities of community groups through provision of expertise, mediation and evaluation

- Identify gaps and needs in the local area, particularly for the more marginalised.

In Jobstown, the Partnership is involved in projects such as JETS, Tallaght Youth Service, the Shanty Educational Project and South Dublin URBAN Initiative.

### ***Tallaght Drug Task Force***

The Tallaght Drug Task Force was one of 12 local task forces set up in 1997. Task Forces were established in areas identified as having very serious drugs problems. In Tallaght, representatives from state agencies such as the Gardaí, EHB and FÁS are involved in the Task Force, as are representatives from local voluntary and community groups. The Tallaght Drugs Task Force funds a range of projects in the wider Tallaght area. In Jobstown, the Task Force supports a project in Jobstown Community College targeted at young people at risk of early school leaving and / or becoming involved in drug abuse. It is also involved in a Peer Education Programme, whereby 15-18 year old students completed a Leadership and Drugs Awareness programme. The students who completed the programme developed a Drugs Awareness Programme for delivery to younger students.

### ***Tallaght Youth Service (TYS)***

Tallaght Youth Service is run by Foróige on contract from County Dublin VEC and is funded by the Department of Education and Science. Tallaght Youth Service is engaged in a variety of activities in the wider Tallaght area. However, it is also quite active in Jobstown, and has recently appointed (after a 4-year campaign for funding) a full-time youth worker for the Jobstown area. TYS engages in direct and indirect service provision to the Jobstown population.

The direct services are as follows:

- A personal development, teamwork and listening skills programme for 10 at risk students from Jobstown Community College
- Activities associated with the 8- to 15- Initiative (mentoring, an outdoor pursuit programme and a community action programme)
- Dyslexic Club for 12 pupils in St Thomas' SNS
- Peer Education Programme on leadership skills and drugs awareness

- Traveller After School Project with all 1<sup>st</sup> Year Traveller students in Tallaght (including 5 from Jobstown)
- Brookfield Young Mothers Group for 22 young mothers, four of whom are from Jobstown
- School Holiday Programmes
- Youth Information Centre (located in Tallaght Village).

TYS also engages in indirect service provision. It offers support to a number of voluntary youth groups in the area, by assisting with:

- Training
- Finance
- Programme and organisation development
- Equipment
- Advice and consultancy
- Recruitment.

### ***West Tallaght Resource Centre***

The West Tallaght Resource Centre is a Community Development Project mainly dealing with social welfare issues for the West Tallaght area. It is located in a local authority house in an estate adjacent to Jobstown. It is funded by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The main activities of the centre are providing advice and referrals, and also offering secretarial facilities.

### ***Youth Horizons***

Youth Horizons is a voluntary group, which engages in community building through the provision of educational support. It is funded from Government, EU and charitable sources. It is located in a terraced house in one of the estates.

The group deals with a variety of ages, ranging from 8 to 38. Youth Horizons offers homework clubs to local schoolchildren and provides a summer activities programme. It also offers support to third level students and has an adult education programme. It has recently received funding to work with early school leavers under the age of 15.

# Service Provider Interviews

## Interviewees

Six service providers were selected for in-depth interviews. Services were chosen to reflect both large and small agencies, offering a mixture of direct and indirect services. The services chosen, with interviewees and their job title in brackets, were:

- Tallaght Youth Service (Caroline Hope, manager)
- JETS (Kathleen O'Toole, co-ordinator)
- Juvenile Liaison Officer for Jobstown (Garda Helen Galton)
- JISP (Catherine Morley, co-ordinator, development and monitoring officer)
- EHB (Elizabeth Sweeney, community worker)
- Tallaght Partnership (Anna Lee, manager).

The activities of each of the organisations are described in the section entitled *Service Provision for Jobstown*. One of the selected organisations (JISP) could be described as offering an indirect service to young people, while the other five dealt directly with this group. Not all questions in the interview schedule were relevant to the activities of JISP. For example, “What type of information do you keep on clients?” was only asked of the other five interviewees. Interviews are summarised as a whole, rather than reporting what specific individuals said. Interview time varied from person to person, but typically took between 90 –120 minutes.

## Relationships with Other Service Providers

In order to gain insight into the degree of co-operation between the interviewee's organisation and other local service providers, interviewees were shown a list of service providers in or for Jobstown and asked a series of questions about their interaction with each. More specifically, they were asked to indicate with which (if any) of the groups did they:

- Share client information
- Engage in joint training
- Jointly tender for funding
- Engage in joint planning
- Share a premises.

### ***Sharing Client Information***

The five service providers that offered direct services to the young population of Jobstown all kept some sort of client records. However, the extent of record keeping varied considerably from service to service. Two kept little more than names on a computer database, one kept a reasonable level of detailed information in computerised form, one kept a mixture of very detailed computerised and handwritten data, and one kept client information in handwritten form only.

Those interviewed reported that their organisation engaged in some sharing of client information with other agencies. For the most part, sharing was limited to informal conversations or to passing on names of clients. For example, if a young person was in contact with a service provider, they sometimes passed on the client's name to another organisation in the hope that the client would also use the other service. There was a certain amount of formal sharing of client information, but this was typically where the service providers involved had a formal link themselves. For example, there was formal data sharing between sections of the EHB, and between JETS and stakeholders in the scheme.

In general, those interviewed were very wary about sharing client information. There was a degree of uncertainty about what sort of information could be shared without potential legal problems. The Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act were frequently mentioned as deterrents to full co-operation between agencies. Two of the interviewees indicated that they were erring on the side of caution as they did not know what could and could not be legally passed on to other agencies.

### ***Joint Training***

The issue of engaging in joint training with other service providers was not really applicable to JISP in the same way as to the other interviewees. Therefore, JISP are excluded from the analysis in this section. Of these, all bar one had engaged in some variety of training with other local organisations. However, the joint training referred to typically consisted of one organisation providing a short course for the clients of another.

It was rare for organisations to train together in a multi-disciplinary setting. Indeed, when asked if they engaged in joint training with other local organisations, all

of the interviewees began to talk about offering courses to or receiving courses from other local organisations. All had to be prompted to even consider the notion of training *with* other service providers.

### ***Joint Tendering for Funds***

The JETS programme has a set budget of £50,000 per annum, which is sufficient to cover the activities of the programme. Therefore, the co-ordinator did not engage in joint tendering for funds with any other local service provider. JISP, as currently defined, does not need to tender for funds. As a result, both JETS and JISP are excluded from the analysis in this section.

Of the four other service providers interviewed, three had tendered for funding in conjunction with other local organisations. All three commented that joint tendering had proved successful, not only in gaining extra funding and activities for Jobstown, but in creating better links with other organisations. The feeling was that the effort involved in creating a joint funding proposal was well worthwhile, in three main ways.

Firstly, the three interviewees felt that they had a better understanding of and relationship with the other service providers involved. Secondly, involving organisations with differing perspectives meant that what was proposed took into account the expertise of these differing perspectives. Finally, one interviewee felt that the end result (the new activity or service that benefited from funding) was more effective than it would have been had only her own organisation been involved.

### ***Joint Planning***

All interviewees agreed that their organisation engaged in joint planning with other local organisations. Planning tended to happen at two levels. Firstly, where more than one organisation was a stakeholder in a service (as, for example, in the JETS) the various stakeholders were involved in joint planning for that service. Secondly, local organisations were starting to engage in planning at an area level. One of the main reasons for this development was the work of JISP.

All interviewees were favourably disposed to the concept of joint planning, particularly at an area level. JISP (as well as the Partnership) was seen as one of the

main reasons why high level planning for Jobstown was beginning to come about. All interviewees were members of one of the JISP Task Groups<sup>1</sup>.

There was consensus that the high level planning taking place would probably prove beneficial to Jobstown. However, some of those interviewed also commented on the amount of time required for such activities. One service provider commented that JISP “should be able to put its money where its mouth is”. To her, the fact that JISP was given no funding powers indicated that government viewed integration a something to be done on the cheap, rather than something into which time and people needed to be invested. She thought that an integrated approach saved everyone time in the long run. However, to *plan and create* an integrated approach took time from day-to-day activities – generally time that service providers in Jobstown did not have to spare. Therefore, while an integrated area plan should be a good idea, the reality was that it was forcing service providers to cut down on their own work.

### ***Shared Premises***

Five of the six service providers interviewed shared a premises or some facilities with other organisations. In some cases this led to greater co-operation between organisations, while in others, the interviewees reported little or no effect. Where sharing premises led to greater co-operation and co-ordination, it was usually in smaller premises, with shared facilities such as kitchen and office equipment. In these types of premises, it was impossible to avoid having regular social contact with the other service provider(s). Such social contact generally led to a better understanding of the activities of the other service provider(s), and sometimes, to developing professional links.

In contrast, sharing a large premises, or a large site, where each organisation had its own facilities, did not tend to lead to greater co-operation between organisations. Social contact was rarer, and so was the development of closer ties between the organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> The four Task Groups are small groups of service providers set up to develop proposals and recommendations for Jobstown in the areas of Youth, Family Support, Early School Leaving and End-user Participation.

## **How Funding Affected Organisational Activities**

The service providers interviewed were funded in a variety of ways, reflecting the general funding situation in Jobstown. Three were funded directly by Government departments, two by a mixture of EU and Government funds, and one by EU funding alone. In general, funding was relatively stable, and adequate for their current level of activities. However, three service providers indicated that current funds were inadequate for the level of activities they felt they should be offering in Jobstown. They mentioned specific activities and improvements in service provision that they would like to make but were unable to do so as funding was set to match current activities.

Two interviewees mentioned that funding had an impact on flexibility in service provision. Funds were allocated for specific tasks, and they felt that they were unable to respond appropriately when new developments or opportunities arose. Another interviewee discussed the difficulty her organisation had in keeping experienced staff. She thought that funding for her service was poor, and that staff were paid at a level below what their qualifications merited. She noted a tendency for staff to leave permanent positions in order to work on short-term EU-funded contracts, because these jobs paid better than her organisation could offer.

## **Funding Service Provision in Jobstown**

There was agreement by all six interviewees that a considerable amount of money was being allocated to service provision for Jobstown. Not all agreed that funds were being allocated in a sensible manner. One interviewee had only recently started work in Jobstown and therefore was unwilling to offer an opinion as to how funds for the area as a whole were allocated. The other five interviewees all had strong opinions on the subject.

Four of the five referred to a lack of coherence in allocation of funds. Two thought that funds were allocated in a piecemeal fashion with little or no consideration for pre-existing services. In particular, one interviewee felt strongly about funding allocation not taking into account the skills and expertise of organisations. She thought that this led to some organisations chasing grant money in areas that were not really their area of specialty. She commented on the “new-found interest” of some organisations in early school leaving, now that it was perceived to be a well-funded

area of intervention. She thought that some organisations had received funding for projects outside of their own area of expertise, and with no consideration made of pre-existing services. This was not the fault of the service providers, but of the granting body.

One interviewee put it bluntly when she said that services in Jobstown did not represent value for money. She thought that a considerable amount of money was being pumped into the area, and while results were being achieved, they were not an adequate return for the amount of investment. Another interviewee thought that the funding was creating positive change, due to the hard work of many service providers. However, she thought that even more change could be brought about if JISP managed to bring about a more integrated service. Another interviewee thought that a requirement of any funding should be that it actively promoted partnership between statutory and non-statutory bodies.

Two interviewees referred to the insecurity associated with EU-funded projects. They pointed out that many of the services in Jobstown received funding either directly or indirectly from the EU. They indicate that they and other service providers in the area were unsure about how organisations would be funded when the current phase of EU funding expired at the end of 1999.

One interviewee thought that despite all the money being spent in Jobstown, there was still a “resource deficit”, meaning that many service providers were understaffed. In particular, she thought that the EHB (especially social workers) were underresourced. In her opinion, the shortage of social workers led to overwork and burnout, creating a high turnover of staff. This, she felt, was part of the reason that the EHB had a poor reputation among other service providers, and with their own clients.

## **Integration of Services in Jobstown**

Despite praising specific examples of an integrated approach, all interviewees thought that the young population of Jobstown did not have the benefit of integrated services. Four interviewees cited the JETS and 8- to 15- Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative projects as examples of good practice. A variety of stakeholders were involved in these projects, and the children and families involved received a high level of co-ordinated support from multiple service providers. The JLO, Helen Gralton, was also cited by two interviewees as an example of how an individual could work hard to

develop links with other organisations. The interviewees thought that she was particularly effective at her job because of the way she worked with other service providers to provide a coherent approach to dealing with young people.

In general though, service provision was not seen as integrated, despite the best efforts of many service providers. In particular, vertical integration was seen as rare or non-existent. All six interviewees thought that lack of vertical integration was a feature of Jobstown service provision. Three thought that horizontal integration was lacking, while one thought that some horizontal integration happened. One interviewee thought that services offered a reasonably integrated approach at any given time in a child's life, with schools responsible for much of the integration. Finally, one interviewee said that service providers were trying very hard to improve services as a whole. She thought that this had led to a situation whereby local services offered an integrated *approach* but not an integrated *service*.

Three interviewees also voiced criticism of the focus of services. They thought that service providers tended to focus on dealing with individuals, to the neglect of the bigger picture. They felt that a greater focus on the child and his/her family would be more fruitful. However, another interviewee believed that services in Jobstown did try to deal with the whole family.

### ***Obstacles to Integration***

Unsurprisingly, two interviewees mentioned lack of resources as a major obstacle to providing an integrated service in Jobstown. Both mentioned that, within their own organisations, involvement in activities such as JISP were very positive experiences, but also very time-consuming. They felt that if they had more time, they would be better able to participate in creating a more integrated service for Jobstown. One also thought that the EHB and social workers in particular were understaffed, which she saw as part of the reason for the poor image of the EHB, among service users and among other service providers. Another interviewee mentioned the high turnover of key people in the EHB as a problem.

Lack of communication between service providers, particularly between statutory agencies, was identified as a problem by four interviewees. Different reasons were identified as to why such a lack existed. Two interviewees highlighted a lack of willingness to share client information between agencies. While they thought that this was in part due to legal issues associated with the Freedom of Information Act, other

factors such as lack of contact points between service providers also contributed. One interviewee pointed out that service providers' offices and facilities were located in multiple locations inside and outside of Jobstown. She thought that this made it less likely that contacts would be made and information shared between organisations.

Two interviewees were less charitable in outlining what they saw as obstacles to integration. They believed that integration was contrary to the culture of some service providers, and was threatening to certain individuals. Indeed, one reported coming up against the problem of "turf wars", whereby one service would become hostile if they thought that another service was venturing into their area of work. Both singled out schools for particular criticism. As one interviewee put it "Schools are independent empires." They believed that schools liked to retain control of situations, and often did not foster a spirit of co-operation.

One interviewee was unhappy that the many resources located in schools were often not available to any other service providers, even during the summer holidays. She was particularly unhappy with her organisation's relationship with one local school, where she felt the principal did not want any outside group on his territory. She reported "tremendous difficulty" in being allowed to use any of the school's facilities. Interestingly, while the principal in question did not make any comment on use of facilities, the other teacher interviewed in that school commented (without prompting) on what a waste it was that school facilities were not used by other groups outside of school hours.

Three interviewees discussed the lack of communication between statutory bodies and other agencies as a major problem. They complained that even within the same statutory body communication was often limited, at local and particularly at departmental level. While integration was slowly starting to happen at local level, those in positions of power had not changed their work practices or opinions. Part of the reason for this may have been lack of actual contact with other agencies, but part of it was also seen as the culture of the organisation.

In relation to this one interviewee spent considerable time discussing how, in some statutory agencies, those who frequently liaised with other agencies were often became "isolated from their own framework". She gave two specific examples to explain what she meant. Firstly, she had heard that community gardaí were seen as having taken the "soft option" by other gardaí, and often lost the respect of their peers. Secondly, she thought that volume of clients, rather than successful outcome was the

most important criterion for social workers. Those social workers who took the time to look at the bigger picture, to liaise with other agencies, and to work to produce a co-ordinated solution to a client's problems were seen as less hard-working than those who dealt with a high volume of cases. As she saw it, those very workers who attempted to promote integration and developed contacts with other agencies were sometimes sidelined within their own organisation.

Also in relation to the work practices of social workers, one interviewee criticised the EHB method of case allocation. Currently the EHB uses a caseload management approach, as opposed to geographically based representatives. This, she felt, contributed to discontinuity, and made it harder for service providers and schools to establish relationships with social workers.

One interviewee felt that current funding mechanisms were an obstacle to integration. She also thought that the different organisational structures, and the fact that each discipline had its own areas of expertise, and language, did not help. Another interviewee also mentioned language as a barrier between service providers. She cited the example of schools and social workers, probably with similar goals in mind for a child, but using different language. As neither side could fully understand the other, and they did not make sufficient efforts to overcome the communication barrier, working together for a common goal did not happen.

Finally, one interviewee felt that the biggest obstacle to providing integrated services in Jobstown was the negative focus of service provision. She felt that service providers were "fire brigading" – they only appeared on the scene when something had gone wrong. The crisis orientation of services had two major drawbacks. Firstly, services tended to focus only on the immediate problem, and to deal with it in isolation from other problems or other service providers. Secondly, services were seen as a last resort, and this discouraged people from using them until they were desperate. She thought that if a more positive or proactive approach was taken, then service providers would be more likely to work together to develop an integrated strategy. Also, a more proactive approach should be more holistic, and should empower people to cope with their own problems. This, in the long run, should reduce the workload of service providers.

## **Personal Experience of Integration**

Each interviewee was asked about their own organisation's experience of integration. Five of the six thought that their own service combined with other local services to offer an integrated approach to dealing with young people in Jobstown. All five indicated that the very nature of their work necessitated a significant amount of liaison with other agencies.

Only one interviewee thought that her own organisation did not integrate effectively with other service providers. She described integration in her organisation as patchy and inadequate. She thought that the reason was management styles and culture within her organisation inhibited an integrated approach. She felt that management recognised that staff were overworked and felt liaising with other bodies would add to their workload. She also thought that there was a feeling among management that it was not the job of their staff to liaise with other service providers.

As such, she did not feel in a position to discuss how adopting an integrated approach had affected her work and her clients. Consequently, the next three subsections on the causes and effects of integration summarise the responses of the other five interviewees only.

### ***Factors Leading to the Adoption of an Integrated Approach***

Interviewees were asked what led their organisation to adopt an integrated approach. JISP was specifically set up by the Irish government to foster a more integrated service in Jobstown. As such, the reason for adopting an integrated approach was self-evident. Of the other four interviewees, two reported that it had always been the policy of their service to adopt as integrated an approach as possible. One interviewee described integration as inherent to the work that she does, while another said the change to a more integrated approach arose when a colleague identified gaps that existed in the previous level of (non-integrated) service.

### ***Benefits of Integration***

Of the five other interviewees, all recognised benefits from attempts made by their own organisation to offer an integrated service. Three commented that where some degree of integration was achieved the end result was a far better service. The client was seen as benefiting from a more holistic and more effective approach than could be

offered by service providers working in isolation. Another interviewee described a more integrated approach as offering better value for money, and being able to offer a more flexible approach. Only one interviewee mentioned benefits to *herself* (as opposed to service outcomes). She found that greater liaison with other service providers provided her with a source of advice and access to many services, and to talented people from other services and disciplines. This, she found, made her own job easier.

### ***Problems with Integration***

Only one interviewee indicated that, thus far, she had come across no real problems associated with integrated services. Two mentioned problems with issues of trust. Such issues arose where service providers who were used to working on their own had to adjust to co-operating with other groups, and understanding the language and working practices of other professionals. There was also a certain element of turf wars, although both interviewees felt that territoriality by service providers would diminish as they got used to liaising with other organisations.

Two interviewees thought that getting schools involved in an integrated services process was difficult. Whereas local service providers, and even larger statutory bodies were participating to some extent, their experience was that it was very hard to engage schools in the process. One interviewee thought that the EHB was not as invested in integration as it should be, while another mentioned that she still found it difficult to maintain parental interest. Despite the various service providers coming together to develop a holistic approach to dealing with children, parents were not as involved as she would like.

One interviewee commented that perhaps the biggest problem she found with developing integrated services was the time element. She found activities such as JISP committees time-consuming, although worthwhile in the long term. She felt that those who were already stretched to the limit with work were being asked to participate in many extra activities, meaning that their day-to-day work suffered. Finally, one service provider thought that vertical integration was a problem area. She thought that much work was being done on horizontal integration, and to good effect. However, she thought that vertical integration had somewhat been ignored, and would prove more difficult to achieve.

## **Improving Service Provision**

All interviewees were asked what they believed could be done to improve service provision and integration, both at local and at national level. They were also asked what changes they would make to improve the situation for young people at risk in Jobstown.

### ***Improving Provision Locally***

Three interviewees mentioned the work of JISP. All thought that it would prove to be a very important factor in improving service provision in Jobstown. All thought that JISP had already led to a more co-ordinated approach by local service providers, and expected that further improvements would follow. However, despite the changes brought about by JISP, there was a perception that higher management was not as supportive as those working on the ground. Two interviewees thought that management commitment to integration needed to be improved, particularly in the statutory bodies. Indeed, one suggested that some organisations needed training to change the culture of their organisation, as without a major shift in mindset, they would not be likely to really support integrated practices.

A number of interviewees mentioned the lack of central or attractive facilities for service providers. Many organisations, such as the EHB, were located outside of the area at the time of the case study. As one interviewee pointed out, this not only made the services less accessible to clients, but also meant that service providers had far less knowledge of the area. Those organisations that had premises in Jobstown were typically housed in mid-terrace Corporation housing (in multiple locations around the estates that compose Jobstown). While it was good that service providers had facilities in the area, it was generally recognised that such premises were not the most inviting.

Two interviewees thought that the development of a centralised “one-stop-shop” was vital. One described in detail what she perceived to be the essential characteristics of such an establishment, if it were to be successful. She thought that the premises had to be highly visible, in a central part of the area. Indeed, she thought that one of the reasons why locals did not currently make full use of service providers was that they simply did not know of their existence. She thought that the facility should be pro-active in approach, engage in outreach work, and offer emergency

support services. In relation to this, she suggested that opening hours should be responsive to the needs of service *users*, not the typical 9 to 5 day designed to suit service *providers*.

One interviewee specifically mentioned the Gardaí as an example of an organisation that should have premises within the area. She commented that Jobstown was the size of a large town, had a high crime rate and no police station. Parents complained that when joyriders took over streets police did not respond to calls, but that when their Johnny had no light on his bike he would be hassled by the Gardaí. She said that whether this was true or not was irrelevant, as it was the perception that mattered. People needed to see the positive side of the services as well as the emergency front. In her opinion, if the Gardaí were seen locally, their image would improve.

Two interviewees mentioned a lack of sports facilities in the area. They thought that this needed to be addressed as sport was a healthy way to use up the excess energy levels of children. One interviewee then broadened her criticism to outline the relative lack of out-of-school activities in Jobstown, particularly during the summer.

Two interviewees suggested consulting clients about their requirements. One thought that the best way to do so might be through a Youth Forum. This would allow young people to raise issues of concern to them. The other interviewee simply commented that the biggest problem was that nobody bothered to ask their clients what it was they wanted. As she saw it, the majority of service providers were from a different background, or class than their clients, and were not from the area. Therefore it was highly unlikely that they would come up with any great solutions without consultation.

Finally, one interviewee thought that the development of a database that would allow at risk children to be tracked by the relevant services was the single most important organisational change necessary. Of course, even the creation of such a database would require considerable co-operation between service providers. However, she felt that those who currently fall through the cracks would be identified far more easily were a centralised database in place.

### ***Improving Provision Nationally***

Given that only one interviewee (the JETS co-ordinator) was school-based it was surprising that many of the national-level suggestions centred on schools and the education system. Some suggestions related to changing the ethos of schools, and the attitudes of teachers, while others made more specific suggestions. In this section, school-based suggestions are outlined first, followed by broader suggestions.

#### **School-based Suggestions**

At a general level, one interviewee criticised the attitude of schools towards parents. She commented that she, as a middle class mother, had often felt talked down to by her children's teachers, and imagined that working class parents would be even less likely to be treated as equals. She said that schools often complained that parents never participated in school events. However, if people never used the service offered by *her* organisation, they would change their strategy until more people became involved. This was what schools had to do. In her opinion it was illogical for schools to run a parents' course and expect the same people that that had been ignored or criticised all year to turn up just because teachers felt it was a good idea. She believed that teachers must make opportunities for positive interaction with parents.

Another interviewee saw the development of a client-centred, holistic approach as crucial. She believed that intervention in schools happened too late, was piecemeal, and militated against individualised responses. In her belief, a more flexible approach was vital. Unfortunately she thought that current teacher training practices discouraged flexibility, and taught teachers to be somewhat rigid in their approach. Therefore, she believed that teachers would require training to allow them to become more flexible in their work practices. Allied with a more flexible approach, she believed it was fundamental that people and the communities from which they come are given respect and are seen to be respected by all who work with them.

Two interviewees criticised the standard school curriculum. One referred to what she saw as the current narrow focus of the school curriculum. She thought that the curriculum should be broader, with a greater number of practical subjects forming part of the core curriculum. In her opinion, the school system was geared towards getting students into university, not with educating them in a broader sense, or providing them with skills for adult life. Another interviewee expressed the view that

the examination system is biased against at risk students – “‘standard tests’ are used to examine ‘non-standard pupils’”.

On a more practical level, one interviewee identified what she saw as a major gap in the Irish education system: the split between primary and post-primary school. She thought that there was insufficient linkage between the two school systems, and insufficient handover of information. Where information was shared, it was often because of local initiatives, and not supported by official policy. She thought that this was an area where dramatic improvements could be made with some administrative effort.

The same interviewee thought that schools should be given the capacity to deal with problem pupils. One way to do this would be to have a number of small, flexible units within schools into which children could temporarily be put. She believed that any solution would require “unattached” teachers (meaning that at any given timetable period, some teachers should be scheduled to deal with problem children). She also thought that teachers should become mentors, and that they should try to deal with parents at an interpersonal level.

### System-wide Suggestions

Two interviewees thought that while the push for more integrated services was beginning to take effect on the ground, it was primarily because of the work of individuals and local initiatives. They believed that there was insufficient communications among statutory services at a local or departmental level. They thought that the services provided by statutory organisations were poorly integrated and that this adversely affected the activities and efforts of other locally based service providers, due to a number of factors; not least of which is the way in which statutory services have been designed, developed and delivered. For a more integrated approach and service to become the norm, they believed that integration needs to be prioritised as a ‘core objective’ at a higher level.

One interviewee suggested more outreach by services. She thought that services were seen as a last resort, and often not used by those who needed them most. If services providers could link together to present their services to clients in a positive light, and tailor service provision to suit the needs of clients, the end result would be more effective. She believed that professionals such as child guidance staff should be calling out to homes, rather than waiting for clients to travel to them during office hours. She also strongly believed that services needed to be linked into the children’s

environment. In Jobstown, almost all services were located outside the area, and not part of a child's or young person's concept of their neighbourhood.

The current system of dealing with potential or actual early school leavers was criticised by one interviewee. As Jobstown (like most of Ireland at the time of the case study) is outside of the area covered by School Attendance Officers, schools had to rely on the Gardaí to follow up pupils and students who were not attending school. She felt that this was not an appropriate way to deal with non-attenders. To her, it was not a sensible approach to criminalise young people for non-attendance. She thought that a more preventative strategy should be adopted, with more regular contact from a school attendance official or HSCL teacher at the early stages of poor or non-attendance.

Finally, one interviewee thought that more resources needed to be allocated to service providers dealing with early school leavers. In particular, she thought that greater allocations of staff would free up some time for staff to liaise and co-ordinate with staff from other service providers. She felt that current workloads for service providers meant that it was very difficult for them to find time to work together with other service providers.

## **General Comments**

As a final question, interviewees were asked if they had any general comments to make about the treatment of at risk children, either at local or national level. All had some comments to make.

One interviewee thought that funds should be directed more towards innovative projects such as the JETS project. She also repeated her earlier comments. She thought that service integration (or at least an integrated approach) was slowly being developed in Jobstown. One of the main reasons this was happening was because local organisations were working hard to promote communication between services at a local level. However, she thought that the ways in which statutory agencies were designed and managed were hindering service integration. Unless the management of statutory bodies changed the way they viewed work practices, particularly in relation to integration, integration would remain elusive.

Another interviewee had similar opinions. In her opinion, the huge personal commitment and effort of the majority of front line staff was not always matched by

interest from management. She also thought that the Child Care Act was not being fully implemented, and that 'at risk' was a concept not taken seriously enough. In a related vein, another interviewee thought that the assessment process for at risk young people needed to be updated and expanded. She also believed that more residential services should be available.

The lack of adequate intervention at an early stage was commented on by one interviewee. She thought that the perceived gap in services from the first year or so of a child's life until s/he entered school should be redressed. At the other end of the age range, she thought that young students should be more exposed to vocational settings. In her opinion, the closer links between the formal education system and the wider workplace would promote a greater understanding among young people of how academic attainment relates to occupational activity. The same interviewee also commented again that teachers needed to be trained to be more flexible in their approach to dealing with at risk young people.

Another interviewee picked up on a similar point. Earlier in her interview she had criticised schools for being too insular, and the education system in general for providing a very restricted curriculum. When asked for any general comments she said that schools needed "a re-jig" in the way they taught, and the manner in which they interacted with other agencies. She also believed that service providers should try to share premises and facilities, as she believed that this promoted understanding between organisations, and eventually led to a more effective and integrated service. Finally, she commented that numerous surveys and studies had already been carried out in Jobstown, but that she had yet to see any great change in practice as a result. She thought that that however relevant the findings of a study might be, unless the political will was there to make high level organisational changes, little would change in practice.



# Teacher Interviews

## Selection of Schools

Within the Jobstown area, there are three primary schools and one post-primary school. One of the primary schools is St Maolruain's Church of Ireland school, while the other two primary schools are St Thomas' JNS and St Thomas' SNS. As the focus of the research is on 8- to 15- year olds, and St Thomas' JNS has enrolment to 2<sup>nd</sup> class only, the school was not selected for teacher interviews. Instead, Knockmore SNS, a school adjacent to Jobstown and serving some of the Jobstown school-going population, was chosen.

Jobstown Community College is the only post-primary school in Jobstown. As interviewing in only one post-primary school might have given rather limited picture of teachers' opinions and attitudes, Killinarden Community School, again adjacent to Jobstown and serving some of the Jobstown school-going population, was also chosen.

It was intended to interview the principal and one other teacher in each school. However, in one school only the principal was interviewed, as the principal felt that whatever knowledge or experience she had of local service provision was likely to be almost identical to that of the rest of the staff. In total, five principals, one HSCL teacher, one support teacher, one Year Head and one deputy principal were interviewed.

## Awareness of Services

Given the variety of service providers in Jobstown, the teachers interviewed had a good familiarity with what is available. For the two schools which were located outside Jobstown, knowledge of smaller, Jobstown-based services was not as detailed. This was particularly so when the interviewee was not the school principal. However, teachers from the Killinarden schools tended to be familiar with the Killinarden-based equivalent of the Jobstown schemes. For example, neither vice-principal had heard of the 8- to 15- Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative based in St Thomas' but mentioned the Killinarden Education Enrichment Programme (KEEP), a similar initiative in Killinarden.

All of the teachers interviewed had heard of larger organisations such as Tallaght Youth Service, FÁS, and South Dublin Chamber of Commerce. However, smaller service providers such as Jobstown Community Council, South Dublin URBAN Initiative, Shanty, the Lucena Clinic, Barnardos Youth Action Project, JETS and Garda Helen Gralton were also known by all teachers. The service least likely to be known was Rathminton Health Centre (four teachers had not heard of it). Three teachers had not heard of Citywise, Youth Horizons, the 8- to 15- Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative or NTDI.

Teachers reported gaining knowledge of services in a variety of ways. Typically they became familiar with available services when seeking help for a child. However, they also knew about services from other teachers or from hearing their pupils talk about them. The teachers who were interviewed were unlikely to be representative of the general level of knowledge among teachers. Indeed, many mentioned that other (typically class) teachers would not know as much about what was available in the area. Depending on the school, class teachers seek help for children through the principal, vice-principal, and HSCL teacher or guidance counsellor. Therefore, teachers in these roles have built up knowledge about local services. The typical class teacher would not have similar levels of knowledge.

When asked what services they had used, or knew that other teachers in their school had used, all nine interviewees mentioned FAS. Eight teachers had some involvement with the Lucena Clinic, Tallaght Youth Service and the Juvenile Liaison Officer. Other services with which over half of the teachers had contact were Barnardos, JADD or Community Against Drugs, South Dublin Chamber of Commerce and Shanty. Services that teachers were least likely to have dealt with were Jobstown Estate Management Group, NTDI, and Brookfield Young Mothers Group.

### **Adequacy of Service**

Teachers were asked how they rated the adequacy of services for children and young people in Jobstown. One teacher rated local service provision as excellent, while four rated it as good and four rated it as poor.

***Positive Aspects***

In general, teachers thought there were many services available to people in the area, and that the services were staffed by dedicated individuals. In particular, two types of service were praised. Firstly, school-based initiatives offering a co-ordinated approach, such as JETS, the 8- to 15-Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative and their Killinarden equivalents were seen as effective. Attempts to provide a more integrated approach, such as JISP, Tallaght Partnership and the Killinarden Education Network also gained praise.

One principal praised the VEC Psychological Services, saying that they generally responded quickly to requests for assessment, and gave comprehensive feedback to teachers. Most felt that, with the exception of the EHB, service providers responded quickly to requests for assistance. The Juvenile Liaison Officer was praised as someone who was not only good at her job, but also made a point of linking in with other service providers.

***Negative Aspects***

Teachers commented that the level of services is very dependent on individual personalities. For example, while the Juvenile Liaison Officer for Jobstown was highly praised, it was generally accepted that this was because of the individual rather than because of her job definition. Where integration and co-ordination of services happened, it was seen to be because of the good working relationships between individuals more than due to official policy. Two teachers also complained of lack of a centralised source of information. However, others did not see this as a problem.

Due to the number of service providers operating in or for the Jobstown area, good communication was perceived to be essential. Four teachers commented that there was not enough communication between the various agencies dealing with at-risk children and their families. This resulted in some families being contacted by more than one service provider, often offering a similar service to each other. However, there was general consensus that service providers were working towards a more co-ordinated approach. Nonetheless, the lack of co-ordination had resulted in a certain amount of overlap in services.

One of the biggest criticisms of the services available was that intervention was too late and too slow. Teachers felt that children should have help before they went

from “at risk” to “in trouble”. However, current strategies were generally aimed at dealing with children after they began to manifest problem behaviour, rather than adopting a prevention approach. A post-primary teacher pointed out that half of the first year intake in his school had reading levels at least two years below the norm. To him, this was the clearest evidence that intervention did not occur at a sufficiently early age.

Also, three teachers felt that when problems arise, response times are often very slow. For example, one teacher spoke of a pupil living with a psychotic mother who was frequently incapable of feeding or clothing her daughter. The teacher has often had to feed the child, to provide clothes for her, and to “rescue” her from her own home. Despite repeated attempts to get help from EHB social workers (by the teacher, the JLO and the Public Health Nurse), no action has been taken.

Two teachers criticised services as not meeting the needs of their clients. They believed that services did not fully consult with clients about their requirements, and therefore, did not address the real issues facing people. None of the teachers interviewed thought that services were accessible to families. Two felt that local people were often afraid to access services, and that services needed to change in order to become less intimidating, and more inviting to locals. One teacher believed that service providers needed to publicise their activities more, as many locals and teachers did not know what services were available.

Seven thought the fact that many services were located outside the area, typically in Tallaght Village, made them inaccessible to families in Jobstown. Although the Village is only one to two miles away from Jobstown, most of those seeking help would not have access to a car. Public transport links the Village with Jobstown, but some teachers felt that parents were more reluctant to access services outside of their local area. One teacher felt that early school leavers were likely to be ignored by statutory agencies, as they are seen as the schools’ problem. Another teacher highlighted the lack of co-ordination between schools and organisations such as Youthreach.

One teacher thought that current interventions were too narrow, and that service providers needed to explore more innovative ways of dealing with young people. She also believed that a more practical approach (such as extra tuition for numeracy and literacy, computer courses and organised sports activities) would be more beneficial than what she characterised as the “airy-fairy” ideals of some local

services. The same teacher stated that far more use should be made of school facilities, which, although extensive, lie unused in the evenings and during the summer.

At the time of the interviews (June, 1999) Jobstown did not have an EHB premises in the estate, but construction work had begun on a new Health Centre. Hope was expressed that when opened, the new premises would improve service provision by the EHB. Current levels of provision by the EHB were criticised by all but one teacher. Four main types of criticism were directed at the EHB:

- High staff turnover on cases
- Difficulty in sourcing information or help
- Ownership of problems
- No crisis intervention.

High staff turnover was cited as a problem by three of the nine teachers. The issue was raised in the context of difficulties experienced when trying to access help for at-risk pupils and students. One teacher mentioned that a pupil in his school had dealt with 18 social workers over a two-year period. He hypothesised that the high rate of turnover on the case was partly due to staff leaving, and partly due to poor management by the EHB. The high turnover was partly related to the next criticism – not knowing where to access information. Again, three teachers specifically referred to difficulties in getting information and help from the EHB. Schools did not seem to have a contact person in the EHB, and found it difficult to establish a relationship with EHB personnel due to the high turnover.

A related problem was lack of ownership of problems. Not only was there a perception of being passed from one office to another when looking for help, but also that nobody would accept responsibility. Even when children were being helped by EHB staff, there was no sense of anyone looking after the child as a whole. EHB staff were perceived as dealing with specific problems, but not with taking responsibility for children, or helping to progress an individual case. Finally, the lack of crisis intervention, and the generally slow response of the EHB were criticised.

## **Focus of Intervention**

Teachers were asked if they believed that services in Jobstown were geared towards treating individual cases, or if they adopted a whole family approach. Responses were mixed, with four teachers indicating that services focussed on the individual child. All

four thought that dealing with the whole family would be a more fruitful approach. Two teachers thought that services tried to treat the whole family. Of these, one thought that this was the best approach to take, while the other teacher thought that it depended on the level of co-operation from the family. Finally, three teachers thought that the approach depended on the services in question.

As mentioned in the previous section, intervention was seen as happening too late in a child's life. All teachers interviewed believed that services did not intervene at a sufficiently early stage. All would have preferred to see a more preventative strategy in place, rather than the current situation whereby no action is taken until something goes wrong. This criticism was not directed at specific service providers, but at the system in general. Two teachers pointed out that although children can start in school as early as four years old, schools are not in a position to seek help for them until they reach six. This creates problems as, by that stage, children are increasingly lagging behind their classmates.

A problem related to the focus on "in trouble" rather than "at risk" was that only certain types of children received help. Those who engaged in acting out behaviours and who got into trouble with the school or the law were likely to get some type of help. However, those who were withdrawn and did not engage while in school were frequently passed over by service providers. One teacher commented that her school has identified this as a problem and will be targeting the more withdrawn students in the next academic year.

## **Overall Coherence of Services**

Teachers were asked if they thought that Department of Education and Science-sponsored schemes to combat educational disadvantage worked well, and if they linked together to form a co-ordinated approach. Five teachers thought that the schemes worked well and offered an integrated approach, one teacher was unsure, and three thought that they were not integrated. Of those that thought Department of Education and Science schemes worked well, all referred to operation within their school, rather than to a co-ordinated approach to the local area. Schemes such as JETS were particularly praised for offering a rounded approach to dealing with at-risk children. The general perception was that the degree of co-ordination between schemes had increased in recent years.

Of those that thought schemes were not well integrated, the main criticism was that the Department of Education and Science funded schemes in isolation, rather than looking at the school and what was already in place. One principal thought there was a tendency to fund more small pilot schemes, rather than to improve on what was already in place. He indicated that he would prefer a school-centred approach, whereby the school was grant aided as a unit, rather than grant aid being assigned to multiple, unconnected pilot projects. While there frequently was good communication between the co-ordinators of various schemes, this happened at a personal, unofficial level, and was not supported by official policy.

When asked about the degree of integration between other projects in the local area, three teachers thought that there was a good level of co-ordination between projects. All three thought that co-ordination had improved in the recent past, and mentioned the efforts of groups such as the Partnership as being responsible. One teacher felt he did not know enough about other schemes to comment, while one felt that her school was not kept informed of what schemes were available. Four teachers thought that other (particularly EU-funded) schemes did not co-operate sufficiently. There was a sense that service providers external to the school did not share information with teachers. For example, two teachers mentioned that when they referred pupils for assessment to the Lucena Clinic, they received no feedback. Also, one teacher mentioned that EU-funded schemes were seen as receiving lots of money and having little or no accountability.

Teachers were asked if they thought that, at any given time, children received reasonably coherent care and assistance from service providers. Responses were mixed, with only one giving an unqualified positive response. Three characterised horizontal integration as OK, although they believed that it could be improved, while two thought that horizontal integration only happened when the school co-ordinated efforts. One teacher believed that, with the exception of the EHB, most services offered an integrated approach at any given time, while one teacher did not believe horizontal integration was a feature of service provision in Jobstown.

Horizontal integration was seen to be a relatively recent phenomenon in the area. Two teachers mentioned that problems arose when parents were not willing to participate. For example, one teacher told of sending a student to the Lucena Clinic. As neither of the student's parents accompanied him, he was sent away and the case was closed. While full parental involvement may be the ideal situation, it means that

when parents do not want to become involved, their child will not receive help. As the two teachers pointed out, these are often the children who need the most help.

Teachers were far less positive when discussing care for children over a period of time. Only one teacher gave an unqualified positive response. Two thought that while vertical integration might be a feature of service provision for younger children, older children and early school leavers tended to be ignored or to drop through the net. Five thought that vertical integration did not happen. Finally, one teacher believed that vertical integration was starting to come about in Jobstown.

All schools had in place some type of Transfer Programme, to facilitate children making the transition from primary to post-primary. Primary schools also flagged at-risk children before they transferred to post-primary school. However, other services were not perceived to have similar “hand-over” mechanisms. In particular, teachers identified a lack of progression route once a student was 14 or 15 years old, and a lack of support for younger early school leavers. While a student could drop out at any age, they could not join courses such as Youthreach until they turned 15. By that stage they had often wasted a number of years and were harder to motivate.

One teacher also pointed out that the basis of any integrated approach should involve sharing client data. However, he said that schools and other service providers were worried about whether the Data Protection Act allowed such sharing of information.

## **Quality of Service Providers**

Interviewees were asked a number of questions about the quality of service providers in Jobstown. In general, responses were positive. One teacher, while not citing any specific organisation, wondered aloud about the level of qualifications and experience among service providers in Jobstown. That individual aside, the general perception was that local service providers were staffed by dedicated people, who had a good knowledge of Jobstown and its population. However, social workers employed by the EHB were a notable exception to this. Again, the quality of service provided by the EHB was criticised, for not being “school-friendly”, for having little local knowledge due to high staff turnover, and for not getting involved in cases where teachers had requested assistance.

Teachers were asked if they thought that local service providers had adequate staff to deal with their workload. Two teachers thought that they had, while seven thought that they did not. In particular, the perceived high turnover of staff in the EHB was mentioned by five teachers. Two teachers thought that Tallaght Youth Service was understaffed, and two thought that extra Gardaí or an extra JLO was needed. One teacher mentioned that an extra Public Health Nurse was needed while another thought that the VEC psychological services were understaffed.

When asked about the type of funding supplied to local service providers, one teacher thought that organisations were given ample funding, but managed it badly, while another teacher thought that they received sufficient funding. Three teachers thought that service providers were poorly funded and that sources of funding were unstable. In particular, one teacher mentioned that many organisations in Jobstown relied heavily on EU funding, which was expected to come to an end within a year. He saw this as having an impact on the type and quality of work being done by service providers. Two thought that while some services were well-funded, others were not, while one did not feel she knew enough about the funding of services to comment.

Teachers were asked if they thought services in their area offered a team approach to dealing with at-risk children. Responses were mixed, with two teachers unsure. Four teachers thought that a team approach was not offered and one further teacher thought that where team approaches did happen, it was because of the efforts of school staff, not of other services. Two of the teachers thought that the reason a team approach was not offered was because of a lack of personnel and of financial resources. Another teacher thought that there was no attempt made to offer a team approach, pointing out that service providers in Jobstown do not even share offices. Another teacher thought that a team approach was not possible due to the organisational structures of the service providers.

Of the three teachers that thought a team approach was offered, one commented on the good feedback given to schools by services, while another commented that the team approach was a relatively recent approach. Finally, one teacher agreed that a team approach was being put in place, but thought that some sort of overall co-ordination was needed.

## Role of Teaching Staff

All felt that teachers in their area were doing a good job, but were working beyond the scope of the role for which they are trained. While there was agreement that teachers should have a role in identifying at-risk children, many felt that they were being left to hold things together, due to inadequate service provision. One teacher commented that teachers in her school were often doing the job of a social worker. The issue was raised, less as a complaint of overwork, than as a concern about professional competency in areas for which they had little or no training. Another pointed out that when teachers tried to educate themselves (for example, attending counselling courses) they did not perceive their efforts to be supported (particularly financially) by the Department of Education and Science.

All teachers agreed that there needed to be consultation and interaction between schools and other service providers, and seven thought that current levels of interaction were not sufficient. Five teachers suggested that basing at least some services within the school would be more effective than the current situation. School-based services would be less daunting to pupils, and would remove some of the stigma of attending them. Also, by virtue of being in the same location, communication between service providers would be improved.

When asked if teachers were kept well informed when a pupil is receiving help from a service provider, responses were mixed. Three teachers thought they were kept well informed, two thought that some information was passed on to them, and four thought that they were not kept informed by service providers. Feedback also arose as an issue when trying to define what a teacher's role should be. Five teachers thought that in order to properly help their pupils, teachers and service providers needed greater two-way communication. However, another teacher thought that communication only needed to be improved between service providers and specific teachers (such as the guidance counsellor). One teacher would like to see teachers play a greater role in helping at-risk children, but thought that extra training was required. Finally, one teacher suggested that time should be built in to teachers' schedules that would allow them to liaise with external service providers.

## General Comments

Teachers were asked if they had any more general comments to make about the treatment of at-risk children, either locally or nationally. All had some comments to make, and responses covered a variety of issues. Two repeated that the school should become more centrally involved. Services should centre more on the school, and teachers should be involved in case conferences. Two teachers also pointed out that it is possible to identify problems early in primary school, and that children should not be transferring into post-primary school with the same problems.

Two teachers raised issues related to the school programmes in place to prevent early school leaving. Both were worried that those whose behaviour and attendance was good in school would feel discriminated against. Those involved in programmes such as JETS and the 8- to 15-Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative had access to things such as out of school activities that other pupils in the school did not. The two teachers were afraid that other pupils would feel that the school rewarded “bad” behaviour. One of the teachers was particularly pleased that the ACE programme was now in place, as students who worked hard were also rewarded. She felt that instead of singling out potential early school leavers for special attention, the curriculum should be changed. She thought that early school leavers might be encouraged to stay in school if a more skills-based and practical curriculum was introduced as an option. Also, sports should form a greater part of the school week. The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme was a step in the right direction, but was not sufficient.

One teacher thought that early school leaving was primarily perceived to be a school problem. She felt that this was one of the reasons the problem was not being successfully addressed. To deal with early school leavers, she felt that you had to deal with the family as a whole. Unfortunately, not enough effort was concentrated on getting family participation. Another teacher criticised the manner in which services were set up. She felt that they often did not deal with the real needs of the target client group. Parents were likely to feel intimidated by services and often preferred to stay outside the system.

One teacher highlighted a recent problem that he had noticed. Due to the current economic climate, many women who would never have worked outside the home now had paid jobs. However, the jobs did not pay particularly well, and certainly not well enough for the women to be able to afford childminders. As there were no subsidised crèche facilities locally, the oldest daughter was frequently asked to

stay at home to mind her younger siblings. Although initially the student might be kept at home only one day per week, usually the number of days missed increased as students fell behind in their schoolwork. Typically, the school sent a letter to the parent, followed by a visit from the HSCL teacher. Often, this was not effective, leaving no other option but to send the Juvenile Liaison Officer. Luckily, the JLO in Jobstown was very good at her job, but the teacher thought that, in general, the Gardaí should not be involved at this stage. He hoped that the situation would improve somewhat when the National Education Welfare Board began to operate.

Another teacher commented on the lack of a sense of community in the area. She also thought that the lack of a Garda presence was a factor in the high crime rate in Jobstown. Jobstown does not have its own police station, as it is under the aegis of the main Garda station in the Square in Tallaght. Locals had the impression that Gardaí rarely appeared in Jobstown, and that community policing did not exist. This situation allowed certain individuals and families to exert a disproportionate amount of control over the area.

The issue of aggressive parents and children was also raised. Some teachers commented that parents will sometimes not report if their child is being bullied because they are afraid of the bullying child's family. Also, teachers themselves may be unwilling to approach certain parents about problems, as they think that the parents will become aggressive. One teacher gave an example of a child who complained of being bullied by a classmate. The school disciplined the bully, who then tried to set fire to the bullied child's house.

## Parent Interviews

As part of the case study, some parents were interviewed in order to get their perspective of local service provision. St Thomas' SNS was chosen as the location for a group interview. The meeting was organised by the HSCL teacher, who absented herself once the discussion began.

St Thomas' is one of the schools selected for inclusion in the 8- to 15-Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative. The 18 pupils who are enrolled in the pilot project had a special concert and party for themselves and their parents to mark the end of the school year. After the party, two researchers spoke to seven women who had children in the pilot project.

To begin, the women were shown a short list of some of the services available in the area. The list was as follows (school-based schemes listed first):

- Early Start
- Breaking the Cycle
- Home School Community Liaison Scheme
- JETS
- 8- to 15- Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative
- Dept. of Education and Science Psychological Services
- The Lucena Clinic
- Tallaght Youth Service
- Barnardo's
- Citywise
- Juvenile Liaison Officer (Garda Helen Gralton)

### Knowledge and Opinion of Services

All seven women seemed to know about the school-based schemes, although two or three were unsure about Breaking the Cycle. However, once the scheme was described, all agreed that they were aware of the scheme. All were very positive about the school-based schemes. There was less knowledge of other services. Typically, the women knew the name of a service, but very little about what it did.

In particular, the mothers thought that the 8- to 15-Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative (ESLI) was an excellent scheme. Some said that prior to the introduction of the scheme, their child did not want to go to school, and was talking of dropping out. All noticed behavioural and attitudinal changes in their children since the introduction of the scheme. The children now wanted to go to school, and their reading and writing had improved dramatically in the past year. One woman said that prior to the scheme her child had started experimenting with drugs, and that she had tried everything to change his behaviour, but to no avail. However, once her son started the scheme he stopped taking drugs and was like a different child.

Two mothers had children who were also enrolled in the Jobstown Education and Training Strategy (JETS) scheme. They commented that the ESLI and JETS schemes were quite similar, and that both were very good schemes. The mothers thought that the smaller class sizes in Breaking the Cycle were a good idea, and that Early Start was a worthwhile scheme. However, worry was expressed over the duration of the ESLI scheme. It was thought that while the children would benefit greatly from the scheme in their first year in post-primary school, they would find it difficult to assimilate into normal classes after first year. All thought that the scheme should continue until the children had completed Junior Cycle.

## Use of Services

When asked about the ease or difficulty in accessing help for their children, all agreed that the primary source of information for them was the school. In particular, the teacher counsellor and the HSCL teacher were seen as the main point of contact. The mothers felt that school staff were very helpful and knew how to help children with problems. They also praised the manner in which school staff raised issues. Mothers did not feel that they were being blamed for their children's problems.

That aside, the women interviewed recognised that while they were now comfortable in the school environment, some parents were still afraid to come near the school. The women thought that the bad memories some parents had of their own school days made it very difficult for them to see the school as a non-threatening environment. This issue was highlighted when discussing a centralised location for services in Jobstown. Some thought that the school would be the best place to locate services while others disagreed. All agreed that, for the *children*, the school was the

best place as it was a familiar location and they would not be too removed from their normal routine. However, some thought that *parents* would not be as comfortable if services were centred on the school.

When asked if somewhere like a local community centre would be a better location, all disagreed. The disagreement seemed based on a dislike of the Jobstown Community Centre and its ethos, rather than a belief that, in general, a community centre was a poor choice of location. All agreed that a community drop-in centre, located near the school would be a good idea.

The Community Centre seemed to be very unpopular with the mothers for a number of reasons. It was seen as one of the few places in Jobstown that could provide activities for children out of school hours. Despite this, they thought that it offered only a limited range of activities, all of which charged fees. While the fees (50p or £1.00 per session) were reasonable for those with one child, those with three or four children found the costs prohibitive. One woman described the difficulties her son experienced when booking a room for indoor football (every day for three weeks he was told to come back the next day).

In general, the centre was seen as not allowing locals to use the facilities, not getting parents involved, and not being very welcoming. Also, a scheme for young local addicts was located next door to the centre. The mothers all thought it set a bad example for the children. Children could see that the scheme for addicts provided a variety of activities, free of charge, to addicts while they had to pay for a more limited range of activities. The mothers thought that this was rewarding bad behaviour and that their children felt addicts were at an unfair advantage.

## **Role of Parents**

In general, those interviewed were happy with the school-based services in St Thomas'. They felt that they were well-run and that parents were kept informed of what was happening. The teachers (particularly HSCL and teacher counsellors) and the schools were described as excellent. The women felt that their children's needs were being addressed and that parents were treated as important participants.

Some mothers regularly helped out in class (with reading) during the school year. In general, the women all seemed to know each other quite well because of their child's involvement in the programme, and seemed to be able to discuss any problem

their child might have with each other as well as with teachers. They seemed to have a high degree of involvement in the activities of the ESLI programme, and to be very interested in their child's education. However, fathers were conspicuously absent, both from the group who agreed to be interviewed, and from references made to parental involvement in the programme.

It is difficult to know how involved a typical parent (rather than a parent of a child in the ESLI programme) is in the activities of the school. Those who were interviewed commented that while they were very involved in their child's activities, not all parents would have the same level of interaction with the school. They also pointed out that many parents in the area were afraid of school, primarily because of their own past experiences. That aside, all agreed that the school was very understanding of parents' needs and tried to encourage parental involvement.

## **Role of Teachers**

Those interviewed felt that it was very important that teachers tried to understand the problems faced by many parents. They needed to realise that some were very uncomfortable in a school environment, as their own memories of school might not be happy ones. Also, they thought that it was important that teachers did not try to assign blame, or make the parents feel that it was their fault for any problems their child might have.

Teachers in St Thomas' were praised for being able to deal with parents in a manner that was not condescending. Most of those interviewed did not have children attending post-primary school. Of those that did, few comments were made about how post-primary schools dealt with them. However, it was apparent that parents were not as comfortable in a post-primary environment as they were in a primary one. Contact with the post-primary schools seemed to be mainly negative. For example, parents were brought in to discuss their child's misbehaviour, and possible suspension, rather than parents being invited to the school to discuss the child's general behaviour.

## General Comments

When asked what they would do to reduce early school leaving in Jobstown, the mothers could not reach agreement. Some thought that a type of wage should be paid to those staying in school beyond Junior Certificate. However, others thought that this would encourage a “welfare” state of mind, whereby their children would expect handouts. As one woman said, the last thing she wanted was for her children to be dependent on handouts before they even left school.

All of the women agreed that there was little for their children to do in the evenings or during school holidays. In particular, there seemed to be few activities for those aged over 15. This, they felt, was causing children to get into trouble, because they had no legitimate outlets for their energy. Some women mentioned that until recently, there were a large number of horses on local common ground. While not everyone was keen on the horses being there, it gave local children something to do. When the Corporation removed the horses, the level of local joyriding increased dramatically. The group seemed to be of the opinion that if local children had access to affordable activities, they would be less likely to get in trouble, and would be more likely to stay in school.

Affordability was a major issue. Parents could not afford to pay for many activities. Also, as activities were often located outside the area, they were perceived as inaccessible or not affordable. Therefore, children were often keen to earn their own money so that they could finance their pastimes. The women felt that once children started to earn their own money, it became harder to encourage them to stay in school.

One other strategy was suggested, to increase the sense of community within the area. This suggestion received general agreement. Some women commented that while Jobstown formerly had a very strong sense of community, this was no longer the case. People were less likely to interact with or even know their neighbours than was the case a few years ago. This had implications not just for social outlets but for minimising antisocial behaviour and for keeping an eye on children. Previously, most of the women in a given street would know all the children and would act as proxy mothers if problems arose. The lack of a sense of community had led to greater isolation and to social problems.

As a way of increasing community spirit, one woman suggested reviving the tradition of street parties. Each street should have its own annual street party, where

all the neighbours came and met each other in a pleasant environment. Interestingly, the residents were not seen as primarily responsible for organising such an activity. It was suggested that the impetus and some funding should come from an outside source (The Partnership or the Community Centre).

# Recommendations for Service Provision in Jobstown

In this chapter, service provision for Jobstown at the time of the case study will be analysed, and recommendations made for improvement. As with all of the case studies, issues that relate to national rather than local policy or practice will be discussed only in the concluding chapter *Recommendations for Service Provision for At Risk Children*.

Jobstown is a fairly typical disadvantaged suburban area, composed primarily of local authority housing, large open spaces, few facilities and little commercial activity. The population is young, many are unemployed and one third of houses are headed by lone parents. It is likely that many of the recommendations for the area can have wider applicability. This chapter will analyse service provision for Jobstown under the following headings:

- Current Provision.
- Degree of Service Integration.
- Allocation of Funds.
- The Role of Schools.

## Current Provision

This section examines services currently available to the population of Jobstown.

Provision will be analysed by:

- Location of services
- Involvement of local people
- Innovative service providers
- Gaps in provision
- Overlap in provision.

## **Location of Services**

Two problems were identified with the location of services for Jobstown. Firstly, many services were located outside the area, and secondly, services within the area were not purpose-built or centralised, being typically located in multiple terraced houses within the estate.

### **Services Located Outside the Area**

Most of the teachers interviewed thought that too many services were located outside the area, and that families often did not know what was available. Indeed, many services for the Jobstown population were located in Tallaght Village or The Square. Jobstown has tended to be treated as part of the larger Tallaght area, rather than as a separate entity.

In general, the centralising of services has much to offer. However, the Tallaght area has a larger population than Galway city and almost as large as Limerick city. As such, it would seem to be too large a unit for the centralising of services in one area. It would be more logical if service provision for Tallaght was located around smaller population groups, and locally recognised subdivisions of the area. For example, areas such as Jobstown, Fettercairn and Springfield each have populations in excess of 5,000, an adequate client base to justify more localised service provision.

As discussed earlier, the EHB<sup>1</sup> was building a purpose-built Health Centre in Jobstown at the time of the case study. The new premises should make a significant difference to service provision in the area. However, other service providers might also consider establishing a stronger presence in Jobstown, particularly FÁS and An Garda Síochána. Similarly, while Tallaght Youth Service offers many activities to young people from Jobstown, they have no publicly accessible premises in the area (their youth worker shares facilities in a terraced house with a number of other service providers). The TYS Youth Information Centre is located in Tallaght Village, and is unlikely to be used by many from the Jobstown area. This problem is recognised by TYS, but they do not currently have funding to allow them to establish similar premises in Jobstown. It would be preferable if these three organisations in particular

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<sup>1</sup> The EHB has been subsumed under the Eastern Regional Health Authority since March 2000. However, the name 'EHB' will be used throughout this chapter to refer to the relevant Health Board for the population of Jobstown, as it was the Health Board at the time of the case study.

established premises in Jobstown that were more readily accessible by members of the public.

### Type of Accommodation for Service Providers

Services with premises in Jobstown are, for the most part, located within terraced houses. While it is helpful that services are located in the midst of their clients, many of the premises are not really suitable for their current purpose. Furthermore, services located in standard houses do not really stand out, and many locals are unaware of their activities. Certainly, there are no signposts providing directions to any of the services, and indeed, most do not even have a sign on their premises. From an outsider's perspective, attempting to locate various services in Jobstown proved difficult. Even larger premises, such as the Community Centre and the new Health Centre, are not signposted.

While service providers might argue that local people are aware of what is available, and where services are located, interviews with parents would suggest otherwise. At the very least, signposting presents a more welcoming approach to a building, and partially offsets the effects of commonly found shutters and railings.

As services are located in various houses around the estate, there is no clear starting point for someone seeking help. Services in Jobstown should be located in more suitable premises, preferably in a centralised location within the estate. Ideally, the new Health Centre should also offer space to other service providers. Services located within such premises should also invest more effort in advertising their activities, as current provision lacks a high profile among residents.

### ***Involvement of Local People***

Both teachers and service providers interviewed believed that more consultation with the local community about service provision was required. At the time of the case study, many services were located outside the area, and staffed by people who were not from the area. As a result, some felt that local people did not have enough input. This is a valid point. More effective provision is likely if it meets the actual needs of the target population, rather than needs as perceived by outsiders. Therefore, giving locals a greater voice should be one of the aims of organisations catering to the Jobstown population.

Similarly, it would be welcome if service providers attempted to increase the participation of locals in the *provision* as well as the receipt of services. As noted, most of those engaged in service provision are not from Jobstown, or even from the wider Tallaght area. While it may be difficult to find suitably qualified local people, service providers could make greater use of schemes such as the Community Employment scheme to employ and train locals. In particular, the community-building aspect of employing local people would be maximised by the inclusion of some form of skills transfer and accreditation as an integral part of such employment. Ideally, involvement by local people should also include some greater participation in decision-making processes.

### ***Innovative Service Providers***

During the case study, it became apparent that although many service providers were praised, two (JISP and JETS) were recognised as offering an innovative approach.

#### **Jobstown Integrated Services Process (JISP)**

As discussed previously, JISP aims to bring about a more co-ordinated approach to meeting the needs of disadvantaged families in Jobstown. As the JISP progress report for 1999 stated “Integration is by no means a new concept to the Jobstown area, but the development of a process to ensure that integration can happen, rather than the development of a number of integrated projects is new, and was considered slightly revolutionary in the early days of the process” (Morley, 1999, p.3).

The methods employed by JISP to achieve their aims have been quite diverse. At the initial stages there was wide consultation with local residents, service users, service providers (voluntary, community-based and statutory) and policy makers. JISP formed an implementation team with broad representation from statutory agencies, in order to act upon some of the outcomes of the consultation process. More focussed task groups were set up to address specific identified issues (such as early school leaving), while a Forum (composed of a large number of service providers, users and residents) was set up to inform the priorities and outcomes of the process.

At the time the case study was being carried out, much of the activities of JISP were in the early stages. Therefore, it was not possible to judge how effective the process might be once it moved from planning to implementation. However, among the service providers interviewed, all were positively disposed to the process, and felt

that it would make a significant improvement to service provision in the area. Certainly, it seemed to have improved what was already good communication between various agencies, and helped to create a focus on the bigger picture.

While the long-term benefits of the process remain to be seen, more recent evidence seems to suggest that it has already achieved some of its goals. The second progress report on the ISP to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion stated that “The evaluators found that the ISP has facilitated more co-ordinated and effective service provision within the four pilot areas resulting in real and tangible benefits for the communities concerned” (2000, p.9).

### **Jobstown Education and Training Strategy (JETS)**

JETS offered a different approach to dealing with potential early school leavers, involving a linking of primary and post-primary schools, and the active involvement of a variety of other service providers. The project offered participants a reduced class size, after-school activities, a homework club and summer holiday activities. It also worked to maximise parental involvement, and to improve relations between school and family. The post-primary teacher assigned to JETS met fairly regularly with the pupils in their final year in primary school. As a result, the participants did not find post-primary school to be as much of a culture shock as do many students. Also, as they stayed together as part of the same class, the transition was easier.

At the time of the case study, JETS had one year left to run. However, initial indications were that it would prove to be a very successful project<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, a later project (also involving St Thomas’ NS and Jobstown Community College) funded under the 8- to 15 Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative is essentially a replication of the model developed by the JETS project.

### ***Gaps in Current Provision***

Examination of services in Jobstown and interviews with relevant parties revealed a number of gaps in current provision.

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<sup>2</sup> Communication with the co-ordinator in June 2000 indicated that of the 18 original participants, one had died, 13 had sat the Junior Certificate and 2 were expected to do so in 2001, leaving only 2 without qualifications. Also, at least 10 were expected to enrol in Senior Cycle.

## Early Intervention

Both St Thomas' JNS and Knockmore JNS are included in the Early Start and Breaking the Cycle schemes. Other interventions tend to be targeted at older children and adolescents. For example, Barnardo's Youth Action Project targets 9- to 14-year olds, Citywise targets 10- to 16-year olds, and Youth Horizons those aged over eight years. Similarly, most of TYS activities tend to be targeted at older children and adolescents.

All teachers interviewed believed that services did not intervene at a sufficiently early stage. Certainly, projects that are not school-based appear to focus mainly on older children. While it may be that this is the age at which children start to manifest major problems, it is also likely that intervention aimed at younger children might prevent some problems appearing at all.

## Childcare and Crèche Facilities

Jobstown has a distinct shortage of childcare and crèche facilities. This creates great difficulties for parents who wish to take up employment, but who cannot afford private childcare. As a result, some have resorted to occasionally keeping older children at home to mind their younger siblings. Clearly, this is unsatisfactory from the point of view of parents, the students being kept at home, and the younger children who are in receipt of such care arrangements.

Absenteeism is associated with an increased risk of early school leaving (Rumberger, 1995). Those who miss school to mind younger siblings frequently find that they are unable to keep up with their classmates, and gradually disengage from school. Therefore, measures need to be taken to ensure that students are not being kept out of school. Rather than punishing or criminalising parents who may feel that, from economic necessity, they have no choice, it would be preferable if adequate childcare was made available to the population of Jobstown. If necessary, crèche and playgroup facilities could be prioritised for those who are in employment or in training courses and employment schemes.

## Activities During Summer Holidays

Although Jobstown has a number of schemes dealing specifically with potential or actual early school leavers, most do not operate during the summer months. This means that, when they have the most free time, children and adolescents are left to their own devices. One service provider commented on how she could always feel the

tension building up over the summer months, as young people got more bored and lacked any socially acceptable outlet for their energy.

Some service providers (such as Citywise and JETS) offer a summer activities programme for a limited number of participants. However, these programmes tend to target only a small percentage of the young population of Jobstown. More than one service provider commented on the fact that school buildings in Jobstown were typically not used from June to September. Given that the schools are locations with which local children are familiar, and which have a wide range of facilities, this could be seen as a major waste of resources. It would be preferable if more activities were organised during school holidays, and if greater use was made of school facilities.

### Activities for Young People

There is a shortage of socially acceptable activities for young people in the Jobstown area. Indeed, the JISP survey of needs for the area found that, among the 150 residents surveyed, the most commonly identified need in the area was for youth clubs and after-school clubs (JISP, 1998). Similarly, the community and voluntary organisations surveyed identified services and amenities for young people as the biggest need in the area.

The Community Centre was not seen as welcoming of local young people, and there was little available in the evenings for those not involved in one of the projects operating in the area. Parents interviewed commented that many local young people had been involved in activities with horses. With the removal of horses from the area, incidences of joyriding were perceived to have increased. While parents agreed that the horses had brought a number of problems, they believed that it indicated that if local young people had some opportunities for positive behaviour, they would be less likely to get into trouble.

Funding a drop-in centre for young people would do a great deal to reduce the level of boredom, and consequent misbehaviour among local youth. A properly supervised drop-in centre where young people could meet is infinitely preferable to the current situation in which young people congregate on street corners. It would also be a facility that would benefit all young people in the area, rather than those who have been identified as at risk.

### Provision for Younger Early School Leavers

A frequently reported criticism was that once individuals dropped out of school, there was no support available until they reached 16 years of age. While the theoretical minimum school-leaving age (at the time) was 15, the reality was that many leave at much younger ages. While efforts should be made to encourage early school leavers to return to school, there are those who simply cannot or do not want to cope in the standard schooling system. Currently, all schools can do is to refer these young people to the JLO, thereby criminalising them. A side effect of lack of services for younger dropouts was that by the time they were old enough to avail of services, they had quite often lost what motivation they had.

Jobstown would benefit from greater provision for younger dropouts, either attached to post-primary schools or in a separate facility.

### Health Board and Psychological Services

Jobstown Community College is under the auspices of the CDVEC, and as such, can avail of CDVEC psychological services. Other schools in the case study area cannot. There were clear differences in ratings of availability and usefulness of psychological assessments, with the two teachers interviewed in the CDVEC school expressing satisfaction, both with speed of assessment and outcome. Teachers from other schools who mentioned psychological services were less satisfied, commenting on long delays in getting pupils assessed, and limited feedback. However, this was ascribed to lack of personnel, rather than to any incompetence on the part of the psychologists in question. It is clear that the number of psychologists funded by the Department of Education and Science to deal with pupils in Jobstown is inadequate.

Service providers, with the exception of the EHB, were generally rated by teachers as offering a quick response to requests for help. However, the EHB was criticised as being very slow to respond, with no provision for crisis intervention. Some also outlined cases where there was a clear need for intervention by the EHB, but little or nothing had been done. Social workers in the EHB were described as understaffed, with very high turnover, and with a high burnout rate as a result. Three of the nine teachers interviewed also complained about the difficulty in getting information from the EHB as there was no designated contact person for schools, and many of the social workers had no real knowledge of the area.

The establishment of more effective channels of communication between schools and the EHB would be facilitated by the latter designating a contact person for each school. This should not require any major change in staffing levels, but would improve the service offered. Staffing levels for social workers should be increased significantly.

### An Garda Síochána

An Garda Síochána have no station in Jobstown, despite the area having a population similar in size to towns such as Wicklow, Enniscorthy and Skerries (all of which have a Garda station) and a significantly higher crime rate. The lack of a physical Garda presence has done little to redress the generally negative view of the force among the Jobstown population<sup>3</sup>. Both teachers and other service providers suggested that Jobstown would benefit from a Garda station within the estate. The view expressed was that it would help to establish the perception of Gardaí as members of the community. They would no longer be perceived as only appearing when there was trouble.

Parents who were interviewed were more forceful in their opinions. They indicated that locals viewed the Gardaí as isolated from reality, tending to remain close to the large station in Tallaght (locally viewed as a much safer area), and complained that Gardaí frequently did not respond to calls from Jobstown, particularly when joyriders were involved. At the same time, they felt that while unwilling to deal with 'real criminals' they picked on young boys for minor infringements.

This may not be an accurate representation of the behaviour of the Tallaght Gardaí. However, the fact that this is how it is perceived is obviously a problem. Locating a station within the area could lead to a more visible police presence, and help establish the force as a part of the community. It would also help to shorten the response time to complaints about issues such as joyriding, and might lead to a reduction in crime and anti-social activity, thereby improving the quality of life for all residents.

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of the case study interviews, a Garda sergeant was set on fire by a man who forced his way into Tallaght Garda station. The Garda subsequently died in hospital. One service provider commented that the local response was "... to put it politely, less sympathetic than you might hope".

### ***Overlap in Current Provision***

Few specific overlaps in current provision were identified, primarily because most interviewees felt that the level of provision was inadequate. However, some teachers pointed out that service providers did not communicate sufficiently, leading to a situation whereby the same family could be targeted by multiple service providers, with little or no communication between agencies. Although agencies might not have precisely the same aims or methods, they frequently duplicated much of each other's work. Interviewees felt that greater communication would lead to a more co-ordinated and efficient approach, allowing more families to avail of a more effective range of services.

It would seem that with greater co-ordination between agencies, the frequency of families being dealt with, in isolation, by multiple service providers would decrease. The work of JISP may assist in bringing about such a change. However, the physical location of service providers also has a role to play. If more service providers were located within Jobstown, preferably in more centralised locations, it is likely that inter-agency co-ordination would improve, and overlap in provision would be reduced.

### **Service Integration**

The analysis of service integration in this section is based on the situation in Jobstown at the time of the case study (1999). It is to be expected that the relationships between service providers will change somewhat with the opening of the EHB Health Centre, and the work of JISP moves beyond consultation and recommendations to implementation. Nonetheless, many of the issues raised in this section are likely to remain for the foreseeable future.

### ***Lack of a Central Location for Services***

A reasonable degree of communication existed between service providers in Jobstown, despite the location of many outside the area and others in various premises around the estates. It appears that communication has been facilitated by the work of Tallaght Partnership and, more recently, by JISP. Nonetheless, it is likely that communication would be improved by greater centralisation of facilities. Although the planned Health Centre should improve the situation somewhat, more could be done. While the Centre

will include a social work service and a family support centre, it was not planned to have any significant involvement from voluntary and community-based services.

This is unfortunate. As mentioned earlier, services in Jobstown were often hard to find, and people may not know where or how to access help. Clearly, locating multiple services within the same premises would at least make it easier to know where to go for help. In addition to such benefits to service users, service providers would also benefit from sharing premises. One would expect that sharing premises, which facilitated regular formal or even informal contact between agencies, to lead to greater links between service providers. It would certainly represent a more economical use of office resources and administrative supports. The population of Jobstown is clearly large enough to provide adequate numbers of clients for such a premises. Furthermore, a multi-purpose building should be able to accommodate regular part-time use by agencies currently based outside the area, such as Tallaght Youth Service.

### ***The Role of Government Departments and Statutory Agencies***

Four of the six service providers interviewed commented on a lack of communication between agencies. Statutory agencies and government Departments, in particular, came in for criticism. Some of those interviewed complained that even within the same statutory agency or government Department, communication between different sections was limited. While those working on the ground, and those involved in JISP, had invested considerable time and effort in integration, management levels in statutory agencies had yet to show any real interest in it or commitment to it.

One interviewee said that those employed by statutory agencies who became involved in the process of integration were often sidelined within their own organisation, as they were seen as taking a soft option. Some of the service providers interviewed complained that although JISP was a worthwhile idea, it was probably seen by some government Departments as a way to save money rather than as a way to improve provision. Two others believed that the manner in which statutory agencies were designed militated against integration, and that without radical overhaul of the core objectives of such agencies, integration would prove elusive.

## Eastern Health Board (EHB)

The EHB, one of the largest service providers dealing with the population of Jobstown, came in for heavy criticism by those interviewed. At the time of the case study, there was a small Health Centre within the area, but a much larger, purpose-built facility was expected to open in 2000. Many of those interviewed thought that the EHB was understaffed, and that there was a high rate of staff turnover on individual cases, as well as a generally high rate of turnover for social workers.

Interviewees (particularly teachers) identified these factors as militating against service integration. Staff shortages make liaising with other service providers very difficult, while rapid staff turnover militates against the development of the interpersonal relationships and local understanding that foster integration. Some teachers commented on the slow response time of EHB staff to requests for intervention, as well as poor feedback following it. Teachers also referred to the difficulty they had experienced in getting information and help from the EHB.

It would appear that the EHB could foster greater links with other service providers, particularly in terms of feedback and designating contact people for schools. One of the service providers interviewed believed that the EHB's method of allocating cases to social workers (caseload management rather than being assigned to a specific geographical area) contributed to the EHB's relative isolation. As staff were not assigned to a specific area, they did not get the opportunity to build knowledge of an area and relationships with other local service providers.

To improve links with other service providers, the EHB will require adequate staffing levels, and staff should be retained in the same post for longer periods of time. In particular, the EHB needs to improve its relationship with schools in Jobstown. At a minimum, certain staff members should be designated to liaise with schools, and to act as a source of advice and referral. A geographical allocation of cases might also help to reduce turnover, as it might lead to the establishment of better links with other service providers and a more effective (and consequently, more satisfactory) work environment.

## Allocation of Funds

In this section, funding of service provision in and for Jobstown will be examined.

### ***Short-term Nature of Funding***

Many of the services for Jobstown had relatively insecure sources of funds. Some were part- or whole-funded by the EU, and expected their funding to cease in December 1999. Others were funded by government Departments or by charitable donations. A number of those funded by the former came under various initiatives, typically short-term in nature.

The short-term nature of funding created a number of problems for service providers. For example, those that were primarily funded by the EU expressed considerable uncertainty about their future, an uncertainty that made it very difficult to plan future activities. Up until at least August 1999, most services in this situation had little idea of their potential funding after December 1999. Not surprisingly, the uncertainty was beginning to have a negative effect on staff morale. Some of those interviewed were worried about the future of other organisations (primarily Tallaght Partnership) which were seen to play a key role in service provision for the area. Clearly, such a situation does not encourage effective use of funds. If funding bodies expect service providers to function optimally, then a service's future funding prospects should be clarified as far in advance as is practicable.

Problems also arise in the case of pilot projects. For example, the 8- to 15-Year Old Early School Leavers project is a close replication of the JETS pilot project. Indeed, it was referred to by more than one interviewee as "Son of JETS". JISP also was a pilot project, as were a number of FÁS-managed projects (supported by Youthstart funds). JADD was a pilot offshoot of Tallaght Drugs Task Force (another pilot project), while URBAN, a funding source for many local projects, was, in itself, a short-term, EU-funded pilot project designed to finance pilot actions and innovative measures.

While there is nothing inherently wrong with pilot projects, they should not preclude the possibility of mainstreaming or permanence. If a pilot project is successful, then replacing it with another pilot project (while it may be common practice) does not seem to be the most sensible option. However, all too often what happens is that funding is allocated for another pilot project which 'builds' on its predecessor (for example, JETS and its successor). As a result, projects have no long-term vision and staff never feel secure in their jobs.

Furthermore, it becomes difficult to engage in any long-term strategic planning at an area level. This is because, quite simply, it is often not known what projects will

still be in receipt of funds in a year or two. For example, Tallaght Partnership has been a major force in promoting integration and supporting smaller services in Jobstown. However, at the time of the case study, the Partnership did not know what its future would be.

### ***Coherence of Funding***

A common complaint was that there was no coherence in how money was allocated to services in the area. Some interviewees complained that funding did not take into account pre-existing services, while others thought that methods of funding meant that service providers chased grant money, even if a proposed project was outside their areas of expertise. Some thought that the short-term nature of funding had led to insecurity among service providers, while one provider indicated that lack of coherency in funding meant that, despite large sums of money being allocated to the area, funders were not getting value for money.

Current funding strategies by government Departments and other sources such as the EU were seen by some as fostering competition between local service providers. More importantly, how funds should be spent had often been already decided, without reference to the specific problems of the area. Some service providers believed that local knowledge, or at a minimum, an awareness of current provision, should form an element of funding allocation. In Jobstown, the Tallaght Partnership is perhaps the best-placed organisation to supply local knowledge, and possibly, to distribute funds. While JISP has garnered considerable local knowledge, involvement in the allocation of funds is outside the remit of the integrated services process. However, statutory agencies at local level could also play a role in the allocation of funds.

### **The Role of Schools**

In this section, the relationship of the schools with other service providers will be examined, as will the relationship between schools and local families. Although schools from Killinarden were included in the case study, the focus in the section will be on the four Jobstown schools (St Thomas' Junior and Senior National Schools, St Maelruain's National School and Jobstown Community College).

### ***Schools' Interaction With Other Service Providers***

There were distinct differences between schools in the manner in which they interacted with service providers. St Maelruain's was notable by its omission from conversations with service providers. While the principals of the other three Jobstown schools were members of the JISP task force dealing with early school leaving, there was no representation from St Maelruain's. JISP literature also indicates that none of the St Maelruain's staff was involved in the initial consultation phase of the process, nor (in June 1999 at least) was there any representation from St Maelruain's on the JISP Forum. Indeed, the only involvement of St Maelruain's was a brief telephone conversation with the chairman of the Board of Management.

It may be that St Maelruain's was somewhat isolated due to its small enrolment, because it did not have a HSCL co-ordinator, or possibly because, as a Church of Ireland school, it was viewed as having an enrolment that stretched beyond the Jobstown area. Whatever the reason, it is apparent that St Maelruain's and local service providers need to establish closer ties to ensure that all young children in Jobstown can access support measures. Service providers also need to be aware that because St Maelruain's has a teaching principal, arranging meetings or liaising with the principal is more constrained than it is in other local schools.

St Thomas' Junior and Senior schools appeared to have relatively good relationships with local service providers. This was reflected in both the attitudes of teachers and service providers. In contrast, Jobstown Community College did not appear to have as close a relationship with service providers. One of the service providers interviewed commented that her organisation had some difficulty in accessing the facilities available within schools. Indeed, she found the Community College to be particularly territorial in this regard.

More generally, two service providers stated that they had found the relatively low involvement of schools to be an obstacle to integration, while another two complained that schools liked to retain control of supposedly joint initiatives. Perhaps the latter is not an entirely unfounded view, as more than half of the teachers suggested that basing more services in the school would improve provision and increase communication between schools and service providers.

While most teachers praised local service providers, they believed that they were understaffed and did not provide sufficient feedback to teachers. Service providers had mixed views on schools, with some believing that schools preferred to

remain "independent empires". However, the consensus was that improvements had been made in the interaction between schools and other service providers.

It would be preferable if all schools serving the Jobstown population became more involved in the network of service provision, and if school facilities were more freely available to other service providers. The information flow between teachers and service providers needs to be improved and to become more formalised. The work of JISP may facilitate this. In particular, the relationship between schools and the EHB, now part of the ERHA, needs to be improved. The establishment of a designated contact social worker for each school would be one obvious step to take.

### ***Schools' Interaction With Families***

Those parents interviewed were parents of pupils attending St Thomas' schools, some of whose older children were attending or had attended Jobstown Community College. Therefore, it is not possible to comment on the interaction between staff at St Maelruain's and parents of their pupils. In this section, primary and post-primary schools' interaction with families will be dealt with separately.

#### **Primary**

St Thomas' schools, particularly the senior school, were highly praised by parents, who described teachers as being approachable and willing to discuss problems, without assigning blame or adopting a condescending attitude. While the staff in general were praised, the HSCL co-ordinator and teacher counsellor were singled out as being the main sources of information and advice for parents. This was reflected in the report on the JISP consultation process, which stated that "St Thomas' Senior School was singled out as a model of good effort in its dedication to surmounting the basic lack of resources and for maintaining a positive liaison with parents and community" (1998, p.55).

Although the parents of those participating in the 8- to 15 Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative may not be a representative group of parents, they are the parents that many schools find hard to involve. Their children have been selected because of their low engagement in school and because they have been identified as at high risk of early school leaving. Despite these factors, school staff members appear to have helped the parents to become involved in their child's education. Some helped

out with reading in the classroom, while all appeared to have had at least a reasonable level of involvement in school activities.

### Post-primary

Not all parents interviewed had children attending post-primary school. Therefore, fewer comments were made by parents about their interaction with Jobstown Community College than about interaction with the primary schools. The post-primary school seemed to be viewed more negatively than the primary schools by parents, who appeared to feel more intimidated in Jobstown Community College than in the primary schools. They also reported that the interaction they had with Jobstown Community College staff tended to be related to problems. For example, parents were asked to come to the school if their child was misbehaving.

While these criticisms came from only a small number of parents, they seem to be reinforced by comments from the JISP report cited earlier “The Jobstown Community College was poorly regarded in many respects and needs to improve its profile and to develop effective strategies to deal with educational disadvantage in the context within which it operates” (1998, p.56). It would thus appear that Jobstown Community College needs to make greater efforts to engage parents. While this task generally appears to be more difficult for post-primary than for primary schools, this does not mean that efforts will not prove at least partially successful. The school must try to establish a better and more equal relationship with parents, by creating opportunities for positive interaction. Parents should not feel that the only time they are asked to come to the school is when something is wrong.

## Summary of Main Recommendations

This section provides a brief summary of the main recommendations for Jobstown that have already been described in more detail in the chapter.

### ***Current Provision***

1. Too many services for Jobstown are located outside the area. Jobstown should be treated as an area in its own right, rather than as part of the wider Tallaght area.
2. Services within the Jobstown area should be located in more suitable premises, preferably in a centralised location, and adequately signposted.

3. The involvement of local people in service provision should be increased and should be complemented by adequate skills transfer and accredited training.
4. JISP and JETS are considered locally to be effective and innovative projects. Their long-term future needs to be considered.
5. Inadequate current provision needs to be addressed in the areas of sports and leisure facilities, Health Board and psychological services, early intervention, childcare and crèche facilities, activities for young people, particularly during school holidays, younger early school leavers, and Garda presence.
6. Many service providers are targeting the same families, without adequate communication, resulting in lack of co-ordination in intervention. Greater communication between service providers is required to improve co-ordination and reduce duplication.

### ***Service Integration***

1. A centralised location for service providers, in a purpose-built building, would facilitate the provision of a more integrated service.
2. Government Departments and statutory bodies need to communicate more effectively, both with other organisations and within their own organisation.
3. Service integration needs to be prioritised at management level in government Departments and statutory bodies.
4. The EHB should be in a position to offer a more effective service if allocated an expanded staff, who would be maintained in posts for sufficient time to establish good working relationships with other service providers.
5. Caseload allocation for EHB social workers should be replaced by a geographically based allocation of cases.

### ***Allocation of Funds***

1. Future funding prospects for service providers should be clarified as far in advance as is practicable. Organisations should not have to wait until one phase of funding has been completed before discovering if they are eligible for the next phase.
2. Repeatedly piloting variants of the same projects should not be seen as preferable to establishing some projects on a more permanent basis.

3. Funding in Jobstown lacks coherency. Statutory agencies at local level and Tallaght Partnership should be involved in disbursement of funds.

### ***The Role of Schools***

1. St Maelruain's NS needs to be incorporated more into the service network in Jobstown.
2. A certain amount of mutual mistrust exists between teachers and service providers. Greater and more formalised communication between both groups would reduce this and improve the co-ordination of services.
3. Some teachers expressed difficulty in accessing information from the EHB. To address this issue, each school should be assigned a designated contact social worker.
4. School facilities should be more freely available for use by other service providers, particularly during school holidays.
5. Jobstown Community College needs to develop greater parental involvement and to create more opportunities for positive interaction with parents.



# Profile of The Glen

## Location

The Glen is an area located in the North East inner city area of Cork, surrounded by Ballyvolane, Blackpool and Mayfield. The area recognised by most Cork people as The Glen mirrors the District Electoral Division (DED) of The Glen A. The DED of The Glen B is locally known as Ballyvolane, with quite different population characteristics. Therefore, the case study focuses exclusively on The Glen A DED, and uses Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) for the DED from the 1996 census to build a profile of the area.

In the late 1960's Cork Corporation acquired land in The Glen, and built a scheme of flats and houses, leaving a narrow valley for The Glen Park. There were a total 654 local authority dwellings built, composed of 420 houses and 234 flats. Most of the buildings in the area date from 1972. The area is divided into six Corporation Estates and one private housing estate. Cork prison and Collins Army Barracks as well as a small number of army houses are located on the Southern edge of the estate.

A number of the houses and flats in The Glen are currently boarded up, and a refurbishment scheme for the flat blocks began in 2000. The poor quality of housing is perceived to be a major problem by locals. For example, a 1997 study of educational needs in The Glen described housing as "the single most important problem identified by the focus groups" (Mulcahy, p.26). Residents believe that the apparently high levels of asthma and bronchitis in The Glen are related to the poor quality of buildings. Mulcahy (1997) reported that in cold weather the walls in the flat complexes release fumes which affect breathing.

Also, as the heating system is centrally controlled, residents can not adjust room temperatures to their own needs. This means that during winter the buildings can be extremely cold during the day (as experienced by both researchers on this project).

## Population

Between 1971 and 1979, the population of The Glen rose considerably, from 861 to 3,415 (CSO, 1982). However, from 1979 to the most recent census (1996) the area has shown a slow but steady decline in population, with SAPS from the 1996 census indicating that 2,629 people were resident in the area (a decline of 23% since 1979).

The percentage of the population aged 15 years or under is quite similar to the national percentage (25.22% versus 23.7% nationally) (CSO, 1997). However, in other ways the population characteristics of The Glen are quite atypical. Almost one third of households in The Glen are headed by lone parents compared to 16 % nationally.

## Travellers

There are a number of Traveller families housed in The Glen area. There is one unofficial halting site in the area, usually containing about 10 – 15 families, and an official site just outside the area.

## Education Facilities and Attainment

There are two national schools in The Glen, St Mark's (97 male pupils<sup>1</sup>) and St Brendan's (117 female pupils). Both are designated as disadvantaged and are included in Breaking the Cycle and HSCL scheme, sharing one HSCL teacher. There is no post-primary school in the area so most pupils transfer to Mayfield Community School (599 male and female students) or to St Patrick's College (268 female students). A small number transfer to other schools, mainly the North Monastery or North Presentation schools in Farranree, St Aiden's Community College in Dublin Hill, or St Vincent's Secondary School, located between Blackpool and Gurrabraher

Education attainment levels in the area are low, with 53.3% of those aged over 15 years having completed only primary school (compared to 29.5% nationally) and 54% having left school at 15 years or younger. Only 5.98% of those whose full-time education had ceased had some form of third level qualification, compared to 19.69% nationally.

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<sup>1</sup> School sizes are based on the 1998/99 returns made by schools to the Department of Education and Science.

## Socioeconomic Activity

The unemployment rate in The Glen is considerably higher than nationally, with 41.01% of the labour force (versus 14.78% nationally) classified as unemployed or first time job seekers (CSO, 1998b). Of those unemployed, just over half (53.69%) have been unemployed for more than three years. Youth unemployment is particularly high, with 50.18% of the labour force aged 15 – 24 classified as unemployed or first time job seekers, compared to 22.5% nationally.

Among the employed, males were most likely to be employed in the occupational groups of manufacturing (22.64%) or services (17.61%). Females were most likely to be employed in services (21.26%), followed by sales and commerce (18.84%). Less than one percent (0.87%) of The Glen's population were categorised as belonging to Social Class 1, compared to 5.35% nationally (CSO, 1998b). However, The Glen contains a higher than average number of people categorised as belonging to Social Class 5 or 6 (27.8% versus 21.34% nationally). Interestingly, according to 1996 census data, 34.58% of The Glen's population were classed as Social Class 7, a residual category used when precise allocation is not possible. This is far higher than the national figure of 12.43%. Whatever the reasons for such a high percentage of uncategorisable responses, it is likely that a sizeable proportion belong to Classes 5 and 6.

## Sports & Leisure Facilities

The infrastructure of the area is compiled mainly of Corporation dwellings, with little or no community based facilities or commercial units. There is little opportunity for the local people to create local enterprise, to access employment or even to grocery shop within their own community. The Glen has no Post Office, chemist or post-primary school. It has one small grocery shop, but no large (or even medium-sized) supermarkets. There is no focal meeting point for community activity.

Sports and leisure facilities in The Glen are somewhat limited. Residents must travel outside of the area to avail of most facilities. The local Roman Catholic Church has a community hall in its basement, and this is used for some activities, such as sports clubs and Scout/Guide meetings. A plan to provide a Resource Centre for the area has been developed by a local group, Magnet. The facility is being developed in the grounds of St. Mark's BNS. The development includes outdoor playing pitches

with dressing rooms and indoor sports facilities. The Resource Centre will also house a Public Health Nurse, a crèche, a Community Development Project and the Glen Action Project (described in the chapter on service provision for the area). The Resource Centre is due for completion in June 2000. It is partly funded by URBAN. As part of the refurbishment of the flat complexes, a new premises for Youth Services is being built for a group of service providers (currently housed in rooms in various flat complexes). The new premises is expected to be built within the next two years.

### ***Transport***

The main ways in which people in the area get to work and school are by foot (53%) or by bus (11.91%). Only 28% of those aged 5 years and older travel to school or work by car compared with 44.94% nationally. There is a limited bus service in The Glen area running from 8.00am – 10.00 am and from 3.00pm to 6.00pm.

### ***Crime and Drugs***

Tenant groups, community groups and the Gardaí agree that there are ongoing problems with crime in the area, particularly joyriding. A number of people have been killed as a result of joyriding accidents. Indeed, while conducting the parent interviews, one woman reported that a drunk joyrider had crashed into her son's car the previous night. Mulcahy's (1997) survey of local residents identified the easy availability of drugs and alcohol and joyriding as some of the main problems facing the community. Similarly, all of the nine paid service providers interviewed in the survey identified alcohol and drugs as a major problem facing the area.

## Service Provision for The Glen

There are a considerable number of services for The Glen population, with most based in the area. In this section the services are listed and briefly described. While the list is as comprehensive as possible, given the many services in operation, some may have been inadvertently omitted. Services based within schools are described first, followed by other services available to the area. Much of the information in this section has been compiled using *The Glen Directory of Services and Activities*, a booklet produced for local residents by The Glen Directory Group.

### School-based Provision

Schools in The Glen are included in many of the Department of Education and Science's schemes to combat educational disadvantage. Inclusion in the more general schemes is outlined first, followed by a description of an initiative peculiar to the area.

#### *Primary Schools*

Table 2.1 summarises primary schools' involvement in Department of Education and Science-sponsored schemes. As can be seen, both St Mark's and St Brendan's are designated as disadvantaged and are included in the HSCL scheme (the two schools sharing a HSCL post). Neither school has an Early Start programme, although both are included in Breaking the Cycle. Both schools have access to a remedial teacher, but neither have a teacher counsellor.

Table 2.1. Involvement of primary schools in Department of Education and Science schemes to redress educational disadvantage.

School	Designated Disad.	HSCL	Early Start	Remedial	Teacher Counsellor	Breaking the Cycle
St Mark's	✓	✓	No	✓	No	✓
St Brendan's	✓	✓	No	✓	No	✓

#### *Post-Primary Schools*

There are no post-primary schools located in The Glen. Most children from the area attend either Mayfield Community School or St Patrick's College. Mayfield is designated as disadvantaged, and has the services of a remedial teacher and a teacher

counsellor. The school also offers the Transition Year Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. In contrast, St Patrick’s is not designated as disadvantaged (all though all of the school’s ‘feeder’ primary schools are so designated). St Patrick’s also has a remedial teacher and a teacher counsellor, but offers neither the Transition Year, nor the Leaving Certificate Applied Programmes.

Table 2.2. Involvement of post-primary schools in Department of Education and Science schemes to redress educational disadvantage.

School	Designated Disadvantaged	HSCL	Remedial	Teacher Counsellor	TYP	LCAP
St Patrick’s College	No	No	✓	✓	No	No
Mayfield Community School	✓	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓

### ***Education and Training Support Project***

The project is a pilot project funded by Cork City Partnership, targeting 12 young people aged eight to 14. The participants have been identified, by schools and other service providers in the area, as being in danger of leaving school due to behavioural problems and learning difficulties. The project operates in St Brendan’s, St Mark’s, Mayfield Community School, and St Patrick’s College.

Intervention takes place in the school and the home. The project supplies a part-time psychologist and a part-time support teacher. The former identifies learning difficulties, develops learning programmes and provides advice, guidance and counselling. The support teacher works with the target group in learning situations, helping them to acquire learning skills and group skills.

### **Other Service Provision**

Table 2.3 summarises service provision for The Glen. Services are described in terms of purpose, funding and location of premises. As can be seen, most do not specifically target either the prevention of early school leaving, or actual early school leavers. Approximately half are located within the area, with larger services more likely to be located outside the area. Of those located within The Glen, none are in purpose-built accommodation. However, in the near future, most will be re-located to purpose-built accommodation, either in the Resource Centre or the Youth Services building.

Table 2.3 Service providers for The Glen, described by primary focus, main funding source and type of premises.

Service	Focus	Funding Source	Location
The Glen Youth Development Project	Potential ESL	Government	In flat complex
The Glen Neighbourhood Youth Project	Potential ESL	Government + Charity	In flat complex
Glen Action Project	Other	Government	In flat complex
Glen Summer Recreation Scheme	Other	Government	None
Youthreach	Actual ESL	Government + EU	In flat complex
The City of Cork VEC	Other	Government	Outside Area
Glen Reading Improvement Programme (GRIP)	Other	Government	In flat complex
Southern Health Board	Other	Government	Outside Area
Estate Management in The Glen	Other	Government + EU	In flat complex
Traveller Visibility Group	Other	Government	In flat complex
Magnet	Other	Government + EU	None
Neighbourhood Watch	Other	Government	None
Northside Community Enterprises Ltd (NCE)	Other	Government	Outside Area
Cork Local Drugs Task Force	Other	EU	In flat complex
Cork City Partnership Ltd	Other	Government + EU	Outside area
Cork Community Development Institute (CCDI)	Other	Government + EU	Outside area
Cork City URBAN	Other	Government + EU	Outside area
Blackpool Community Centre	Other	Government	Outside area
The Glen Community Crèche	Other	Government	In flat complex
The Glen Pre-school	Other	Government + EU	In flat complex

### ***The Glen Youth Development Project (YDP)***

The Glen Youth Development Project, operated by Foróige and funded by the City of Cork VEC, is a comprehensive project which caters for young people and unemployed early school leavers. It was set up in 1988 to engage young people in their personal development and help develop their teamwork skills, primarily through activity based learning.

The main activities organised by YDP are as follows

- **after-school programmes**

These are on their own premises, and cater for a total of 38 young people.

YDP try to target potential early school leavers, but other young people and those who have already left school may attend

- **school based programmes for potential early school leavers**

This programme is based in three post-primary schools on the outskirts of The Glen. They encourage the children through activity-based learning and try to improve their image of school.

- **transition course for final year primary school pupils**

YDP provide a 6/7-week programme to help prepare children about to go into post-primary school. This programme consists of informing the children of the set-up and rules of post-primary school, and trying to give them some understanding of what post-primary school is like.

### ***The Glen Neighbourhood Youth Project***

The Glen Neighbourhood Youth Project is one of a number of neighbourhood youth projects established by the government on a pilot basis in 1977 in disadvantaged areas of Dublin, Cork and Limerick. The aims of the project are to work intensively with young people between the ages of 6 – 16 in order to help them to solve their personal, family and social problems, and to facilitate community development in solving local problems. The project was originally funded directly by the Southern Health Board, but now receives National Lottery funding which is channelled through the Health Board.

The project is primarily staffed by social workers who use a variety of methods, including group-work, individual work, and case-work with families and family therapy. The project runs a book and games library for local people, and

operates an open-door policy so that people may seek help at any time. The project also runs a Youth Club, a Social Skills group, a Homework Club for both primary and post-primary pupils, and a Leadership Course for local 18-22 year olds, to enable them to become involved in the clubs for younger children.

The Community Employment Scheme facilitates the involvement of local people in the running of the project, and provides them with literacy training and the skills to teach others to read and write. The project workers have become involved in a variety of community activities in The Glen, and liaise with other professional and voluntary workers in the area. There is co-operation with The Glen Youth Development Project in particular.

### ***Glen Action Project (GAP)***

The programme is aimed at young people at risk in the 10 – 21 age group. The programme runs in the evenings and involves an outdoor programme of activities, including soccer competitions summer programmes, outdoor pursuits. GAP is funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

### ***Glen Summer Recreation Scheme***

The summer scheme is a 2 weeks programme run in early July. It is organised by a voluntary committee who are affiliated to Ogra Chorcaí. The scheme is for children aged between 4 – 13 years. The activities include: days trips , swimming, discos, arts and crafts and sports.

### ***Youthreach***

Youthreach is a compensatory form of education intended for young people over the age of 15 who have left the formal school system without any qualifications and are not in full- time employment. The programme aims to provide participants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to successfully make the transition to work and adult life. Each Youthreach programme offers a Foundation Year and a Progression Year, which combine to provide participants with both basic and general skills and occupational and job-specific skills. The objective is to prepare young people to enter employment or further education once they have been through the

Youthreach programme. Participants are paid a weekly allowance, the amount of which depends on age.

In The Glen Youthreach subjects include computers, art, photography, tourism, cultural studies, literacy, and health. Participants also do the Vocational Preparation and Training course in Hotel, Tourism and Catering Studies.

### ***The City of Cork VEC***

The City of Cork Vocational Education Committee is one of the principal sponsors of adult and community education in Cork City, and provides support in the form of teaching hours to a variety of groups running adult education courses on the Northside. These groups range from Family Centres and literacy schemes to community development groups and groups catering for older people.

### ***Glen Reading Improvement Programme (GRIP)***

The City of Cork Vocational Education Committee provides support (in the form of teaching hours) to GRIP. The programme is primarily targeted at adults who have literacy and / or numeracy problems. The main activities of the programme are:

- Individual and group work in literacy and numeracy
- Courses to assist individuals to progress to third level education
- Training for literacy tutors.

### ***Southern Health Board (SHB)***

The SHB provides health care and social services to the people of Cork and Kerry. Some specialist services are also provided to other areas of Munster. The SHB does not have a Health Centre located in The Glen. However, a Public Health Nurse works from a room in a flat complex in The Glen one morning a week. For other services, residents must travel to Health Centres outside the area.

### ***Estate Management in The Glen***

Estate Management is a new approach to housing management with tenant participation. It aims to encourage and enable people to become involved in their estates. It is a partnership between the residents and Cork Corporation.

The Estate Management Project in The Glen is funded through Cork City URBAN Ltd. It started in January 1998, when different Residents Associations were contacted about the project. It provides an information service for tenants, letting people know of activities that will be happening in the estate (for example, road works due to repairs by Eircom). The Estate Management project also provides information on other issues, such as Tenant Purchase Schemes, and works to increase communication between service providers (such as the Gardaí) and tenants.

### ***Traveller Visibility Group***

The Traveller Visibility Group is a Community Development project for Travellers. It was established in 1992 and deals with issues which affect Travellers such as equality, education, health and housing. The group have a resource centre located in The Glen. It also supports (in conjunction with the National Youth Federation) a youth group for teenage Traveller girls, which caters for the five halting sites in Cork city.

The main aims of the group are to

- Promote the recognition of Travellers as having a distinct culture and lifestyle
- Promote Traveller self-determination
- Work for real change and improvement in Travellers' living circumstances.

### ***Magnet***

Magnet is a voluntary networking group made up of local representatives and professionals working in The Glen. The group was set up in 1993 to provide support to local groups and to facilitate the exchange of information between groups in The Glen. Magnet has been involved in the following projects:

- Development of a community crèche, which is now established as a limited company with its own FAS scheme.
- Procuring site and funding for the Glen Resource Centre.
- Inclusion of the Glen in the Blackpool Valley Plan.
- Encouraging City Hall to ensure that residents of the Glen are consulted about refurbishment plans.

### ***Neighbourhood Watch***

Neighbourhood Watch is a group of people who work to raise awareness of criminal activity in the area, for overall protection of the community. There are about 20 co-ordinators in the whole Glen area. The group meet every 6 to 8 weeks, and are supported by the Community Garda.

### ***Northside Community Enterprises Ltd (NCE)***

Northside Community Enterprises is a key provider of a wide range of community services across the Northside of Cork City. These services include:

- **Employment experience, training and development.** This is done through Community Employment Programmes (FAS)
- **Community Enterprise Development.** NCE works to provide security and safety service to those that need them most, including the elderly and low income families.
- **Crèche services.** The crèche caters for more than 45 children aged between 2 and 7 years and employs several people.

### ***Cork City Local Drugs Task Force***

Cork City Local Drugs Task Force is one of 14 Local Drugs Task Forces (LDTFs) set up to facilitate a more effective response to drug problems in areas experiencing the highest levels of drug misuse. LDTFs are a partnership between statutory, voluntary and community organisations. They are mandated to prepare and oversee the implementation of all drug programmes in their local area and to identify and address gaps in provision. The LDTFs are funded by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion.

In The Glen, Cork City LDTF funds one project worker who is attached to the offices of NYP. The project worker primarily engages in preventative work, such as a Peer Education Programme, whereby 15-18 year old students complete a Leadership and Drugs Awareness programme, but also acts as a referral and support source for drug users.

***Cork City Partnership Ltd***

Area-based Partnerships were established in 1991 as a targeted response to problems of long-term unemployment and social exclusion in areas of significant disadvantage around the country. The Partnerships involve different sectors in the local community (state agencies, unions, farmers, employers, community and voluntary organisations) in identifying and meeting local needs. The companies are located in, owned and run by the community, receiving resources from the Government and the European Union to implement their multi-annual Action Plans.

Cork City Partnership was established in 1995 to fight disadvantage and to support community development on a city-wide basis. In particular, Cork City Partnership seeks to develop effective, community-based responses to long-term unemployment, educational disadvantage, skills shortage and environmental dereliction. The current core activities of the Partnership include:

- Community development
- Enterprise development
- Research
- Information
- Services to the unemployed
- Education and training.

In relation to education, the Partnership finances a part-time psychologist and part-time support teacher, manages homework groups (financed by URBAN) in both Glen primary schools and works to raise awareness of third level colleges for students.

***Cork Community Development Institute (CCDI)***

CCDI is an independent voluntary organisation which believes that social change is necessary and can be achieved through community development approaches and methods. CCDI promotes community development with groups who have a commitment to full participation and are working to improve their communities , socially , economically and educationally. The group is funded through EU and Government sources.

### ***Cork City URBAN***

URBAN is an EU-funded initiative aimed at improving disadvantaged urban areas. Approximately £5 million has been allocated under this programme to the Northside of Cork, although funding will cease in June 2000. The Glen Resource Centre Project is one of the projects being funded by URBAN.

URBAN's activities are quite varied, and they finance a number of projects in The Glen, although projects are typically managed by other organisations. For example, URBAN finance supervised study, homework supervision and supplementary tuition at primary and secondary level, although each project is managed by Cork City Partnership. They also finance alternative education and training supports to prevent early school leaving, and facilitate adult education. URBAN are involved in a project aimed at the rehabilitation of young offenders. Finally, they fund the Estate Management project, offer support to community groups, and generally act as a source of information.

### ***Blackpool Community Centre***

Services include doctors, adult education, community welfare officer, citizens information centre, group meetings and sporting and social activities. Although outside The Glen, the centre is accessed by many Glen residents, particularly for the services of the community welfare officer.

### ***The Glen Community Crèche***

The Glen Community Crèche deals with children aged 8 months upwards, whose parents are employed on CE Schemes or taking up further education. The crèche is funded by the SHB and FAS.

### ***The Glen Pre-school***

The Glen Pre-school is one of a number of pre-schools financed by CCDI, as part of their community outreach programme. It has been in operation since 1974, and aims to provide a safe, secure and stimulating environment for the children. The pre-school encourages parental participation, and hopes that from involvement, parents will learn a variety of parenting skills.

# Service Provider Interviews

## Interviewees

Four service providers were selected for in-depth interviews. Services were chosen to reflect both large and small organisations, offering a mixture of direct and indirect services. The services chosen, with interviewees and their job title in brackets, are shown below:

- The Glen Neighbourhood Youth Project (Noelle Corcoran, administrator)
- The Glen Youth Development Project (Marian Naughton, youth worker)
- Community Garda (Garda John English)
- Cork City Partnership (Mary Linehan, education co-ordinator).

The activities of each of the organisations are described in the section entitled *Service Provision for The Glen*. One of the selected organisations (Cork City Partnership) could be described as offering a broad range of services, including supporting direct services for young people, such as a homework club. The other three dealt directly with young people.

Interviews will be summarised as a whole, rather than reporting what specific individuals said. Also, all interviewees will be referred to as 'she' or 'her', in order to provide some anonymity for the sole male interviewee. Interview time varied from person to person, but typically took between 90 –120 minutes.

## Relationships with Other Service Providers

In order to gain insight into the degree of co-operation between the interviewee's organisation and other local service providers, interviewees were shown a list of service providers in or for The Glen and asked a series of questions about their interaction with each. More specifically, they were asked to indicate with which (if any) of the groups did they:

- Share client information
- Engage in joint training
- Jointly tender for funding
- Engage in joint planning
- Share a premises.

### ***Sharing Client Information***

Three of the four interviewees reported that their organisation shared client information with other service providers. Three stated that sharing occurred mainly in the form of informal conversations, in order to ensure that the same clients were not in receipt of assistance from multiple service providers, but also to refer clients. One interviewee reported that her organisation shared client records with other organisations.

### ***Joint Training***

Three of the four interviewees had engaged in joint training with other local service providers. Some of the training sessions had been organised by Cork City Partnership, but the organisations had also arranged their own training sessions. One interviewee pointed out that some service providers in The Glen had attended weekend training sessions at a location outside The Glen. She had found this to be very helpful, not only because of acquiring new skills, but also because it improved relations between the various organisations and allowed an opportunity to plan for the area as a whole. Those service providers who had engaged in joint training had trained *with* other service providers, and some had also provided training courses *for* other organisations.

### ***Joint Tendering for Funds***

Through the work of Magnet, all local service providers in The Glen had been involved in sourcing funds for the new Resource Centre. Aside from this, only one interviewee reported that her organisation had engaged in joint tendering for funds with another local service provider. She had found it to be a useful approach, and thought that their joint application had a better chance of success than if they had applied separately for funds.

Aside from joint tendering for funds, Cork City Partnership acts as a funding source for smaller local projects, and also assists service providers in developing applications for funding.

### ***Joint Planning***

All interviewees reported that their organisations had engaged in joint planning with other local service providers. All are members of Magnet, which engages in planning for the area as a whole. All had found the experience to be useful, particularly in light of the fact that a Resource Centre for the area was one of the main outcomes of joint planning sessions. However, one interviewee criticised Magnet for being composed of too many professionals and not enough local people. She thought that for proper planning for the area, local people must be given a greater voice.

Aside from participation in Magnet, three interviewees reported that their organisations had engaged in joint planning with other local organisations. Two of these organisations shared a similar client base, and worked together to ensure that their services were evenly distributed. They also attempted to schedule their activities to allow for maximum participation from their target groups. The other interviewee's organisation had engaged local groups in planning how a new project should operate.

### ***Shared Premises***

Two of the service providers interviewed shared a premises with other organisations, while one had shared premises in the past. All three agreed that sharing premises had led to a greater degree of co-operation between the organisations involved. One commented that many service providers sharing premises was something to aspire to, as centralised services were more attractive for clients. Another thought that sharing premises had not only led to greater co-operation, but also to a better understanding of what other services actually did. The sole interviewee whose organisation did not share premises also thought that shared premises was likely to lead to more information-sharing between services.

### **How Funding Affected Organisational Activities**

Three of those interviewed were funded by the Irish Government, while one was funded by the EU. Two organisations were annually given a set amount of funds and did not have to tender for additional sources of funds. One had been funded for a set period of years, and the funding source was due to cease shortly after the time of interview. Finally, one was funded on an annual basis from one main funding source, but also engaged in sourcing considerable extra funds, as the main source was

inadequate to support their activities. The latter interviewee reported that a considerable amount of her time was spent sourcing additional funds.

All interviewees indicated that the manner in which they were funded had a significant impact on their organisation's activities. Three reported that the short-term nature of funding meant that their organisation could not engage in long-term planning, with one stating that even short-term planning was problematic. Indeed, the latter reported that her organisation had almost closed for a few months because their funding for the year had run out. One interviewee commented that purchase of more expensive equipment (which would be beneficial over a number of years) was not possible because the duration of the project was uncertain.

When asked how funding affected flexibility, one interviewee felt that it did not interfere unduly with the organisation's activities. However, the other three interviewees felt that they were restricted in activities. Once funding had been received there were strict criteria as to how the money was spent, meaning that they could not respond to new demands that arose. Also, the limited amount of money available meant that there were many activities that service providers simply could not afford to engage in.

All interviewees thought that their organisations were lucky in the calibre of the staff they had attracted and maintained. However, one interviewee expressed fear that the contract nature of employment meant that some staff members might reasonably seek more secure work elsewhere. Also, she thought that it was not always possible to attract the most suitably qualified staff for contract work.

## **Funding Service Provision in The Glen**

All four interviewees were critical of the manner in which funds were allocated to services in The Glen. One criticised the lack of co-ordination, which she saw as due to the multiplicity of funders. She thought that there was no attention paid to what was already in existence in the area, and what was required. Instead money was allocated to "those who shout loudest". She also described funding as piecemeal, with never enough allocated to really tackle the problems in the area. In her opinion, service providers were very wary of funders, and were often worried that an honest approach would result in a loss of funding.

Another interviewee also criticised the lack of co-ordination, resulting in a situation whereby some organisations had very generous funds, while others barely scraped by. She criticised what she referred to as “flavour of the month funding”, meaning that Government pumped large amounts of money into specific types of activities for a short period of time. In her opinion, there were two main problems with such an approach. Firstly, most problems in The Glen were longstanding, and were unlikely to be solved within the space of two or three years. Problems such as early school leaving required a long-term strategy. Secondly, such funding encouraged service providers to chase money and engage in activities outside their primary focus, rather than continuing with activities in which they had a proven track record. The same interviewee believed that service providers were not encouraged to jointly source funds, which she saw as the best approach to adopt. In The Glen, service providers generally competed against each other for what funds were available. This had led to a duplication of services, whereas a joint approach would offer a broader range of services.

One interviewee believed that the amount and method of allocation of funding had improved in the recent past. However, there was a fear that smaller, local groups would find it harder to raise funds than they had done in the past. In contrast, another interviewee believed that the method of allocating funds in the area had worsened of late. The interviewee thought that some local service providers were unhappy that the GAP project seemed to have considerably more funds than other projects and that they were not seen to spread the money among other service providers. However, the interviewee thought that GAP was not in a position to share funds, as it was a funded directly by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. In the interviewee’s opinion, the issue of how GAP is funded should be more transparent, as this would help to dispel some of the resentment.

## **Integration of Services**

When asked how integrated an approach service providers in The Glen offered to at risk young people, the responses were mainly positive. Two interviewees described the degree of horizontal integration as good or very good, one stated that it was OK, while one interviewee thought that integration was poor in the area. However, interviewees were less likely to think that vertical integration was a feature of service

provision in The Glen. Only one interviewee thought that vertical integration happened in The Glen, with one claiming that there was *some* vertical integration, one claiming that it was lacking, and one who was unsure.

The interviewee who characterised service integration as very good believed that residents in The Glen benefited from both horizontal and vertical integration. She thought that all services are accessible, and that clients would always be directed to the most appropriate place for help. She felt that clients did not need to go from one place to another looking for help and that there was handover as a young person matured. The interviewee who described the level of integration as good held very similar views. She mentioned the high level of referral from one agency to another and believed that when presented with a potential client, service providers frequently referred them to another agency if it was more suitable to the client's needs. She also pointed out that agencies conferred to ensure that a small number of clients were not in receipt of all available support, to the exclusion of others. However, she thought that vertical integration was not as advanced.

The interviewee who characterised the level of horizontal integration as OK also mentioned referral, pointing out that her own organisation had many clients referred from other agencies. She was unsure if vertical integration took place or not. Finally, the interviewee who described integration as poor thought that while service providers were trying hard to offer an integrated approach they had not succeeded as yet. She thought that the small size of the area made it easier for service providers to get to know each other, and that this familiarity fostered integration. She believed that horizontal integration was more likely to occur than vertical integration, but that both were rare in The Glen. In particular, she pinpointed SHB policies as having a negative effect on attempts at integration, believing that social workers were moved around too often to build a good working relationship with other service providers.

Interviewees were asked if they thought that services in The Glen offered a whole family approach or if they focussed on the individual child. One respondent felt unable to answer the question, while the other three thought that the focus was generally on the individual child. The three agreed that some services try to deal with the whole family, but that this would be the exception rather than the norm.

## Obstacles to Integration

As mentioned, one interviewee thought that an integrated approach was already in place in The Glen. The interviewee believed that this was due to the good networking and liaison between service providers, particularly through the work of Magnet. One of the reasons Magnet had proven to be effective was because the service providers working in The Glen were sensible enough to see that an integrated approach was a more effective approach. However, she did not think that such a commonsense attitude was prevalent at managerial level in service providers. Overall, she believed that the main obstacle to integration in The Glen was a lack of time to meet with other service providers, a point that was repeated by another interviewee.

Three mentioned that funding and how it is allocated was an obstacle. One thought that more funding need to be allocated, while one thought that funding was inadequate, short-term and unstable. The latter believed that it took time for a service to build up the trust of its target client group, but usually by the time this happened in The Glen, funding had run out. Not only that, but she thought that while service providers had worked together to lobby for funds for a Resource Centre, there was no evidence that they jointly tendered for other funds. Instead, she thought that service providers in the area were more likely to see each other as being in competition for the same funds. Finally, one interviewee believed that the method of funding had a negative impact on service providers, as some would not share planning information in case ideas were stolen and used in grant applications by other service providers.

One interviewee found that Magnet had made a huge difference but also criticised the group for having too much professional representation and not enough representation from local people. In general, she thought that communication between most service providers was good, but that Cork City Partnership did not engage in adequate consultation with either local service providers or inhabitants. This had resulted in duplication of services, and an official complaint had been made to ADM, resulting in a slight increase in consultation. In her opinion, Cork City Partnership was hindering, rather than fostering, integration.

Another interviewee believed that competition between service providers hindered integration. She thought that some were protective of their turf and were careful about what information they shared with other service providers, as it might give other services “an angle”. Finally, she thought that lack of a Resource Centre and facilities, as well as inadequate service provision made it difficult to develop an

integrated approach. Finally, one interviewee believed that it was difficult to liaise with service providers from outside the area. She thought that such organisations tended to be larger and less easily accessible. In particular, the contact person in such organisations tended to change frequently, making it difficult to build up relationships.

## **Personal Experience of Integration**

Each interviewee was asked about their own organisation's experience of integration. All agreed that their own organisation combined with other service providers to offer an integrated approach. All mentioned referring clients to, and also dealing with clients referred from other agencies as an example of how they provided an integrated approach. Aside from referrals, one mentioned that her organisation tries to ensure there is no overlap in assistance provided to clients attending more than one service.

## ***Factors Leading to the Adoption of an Integrated Approach***

Interviewees were asked what led their organisation to adopt an integrated approach. One reported that it was the policy of her organisation, while two reported that the decision had been made at local level. Finally, one reported that the decision resulted both from a National-level policy and a decision at local level.

## ***Benefits of Integration***

All thought that both they and their clients had experienced tangible benefits as a result of adopting a more integrated approach. Three mentioned that it was beneficial to themselves and their own organisation to avail of outside input and expertise, while one also mentioned that she found it personally helpful to share experiences with other service providers, who understood the issues she faced. One interviewee summed it up by saying that it was impossible to deal with everything yourself, so it made sense to involve other service providers.

Regarding benefits to clients, all thought that clients were now referred to the most appropriate services. Also, due to greater communication between service providers, locals were more aware of what services were available. One interviewee gave the example of how staff from one service provider had helped to staff a short project run by another service provider, meaning that more clients could avail of the service than would otherwise have been the case.

### ***Problems with Integration***

Two interviewees raised issues related to inter-agency politics as being a negative aspect of the attempt to offer an integrated service. Of these, one thought that clashes of personality between the staff of different agencies sometimes occurred, as well as problems arising from the different goals of the various service providers. She thought that the latter problem could be overcome by more of a focus on the bigger picture, with an examination of how each organisation could contribute in their own way. The other interviewee thought that integration involved an amount of “playing ball” with other service providers, meaning that you sometimes had to go beyond the strategy of your own organisation. She also thought that some service providers might try to get other organisations to do their work.

One interviewee pointed out that to liaise with other service providers and keep up-to-date on what is happening in the area takes time, which can be difficult to obtain when many service providers are already overworked. Another interviewee reiterated an earlier point about the difficulty in dealing with service providers located outside the area.

One interviewee thought that a problem facing those who tried to adopt an integrated approach was that there was a hard core of clients who wanted to be involved in all projects. Not only did she see this as a bad idea for those clients (as they never learned to stand on their own feet), but it also meant that many others were denied access to support. While service providers in The Glen had managed to distribute their services more equitably, some clients were disgruntled that they could not use all available services. Finally, one interviewee thought that the only problem associated with an integrated approach was with referrals from one agency to another, where sometimes there was a time delay before the client received assistance.

### **Improving Service Provision**

Interviewees were asked for their ideas on what could be done to improve service provision and integration, both at local and at national level. They were also asked what changes they would make to improve the situation for young people at risk in The Glen.

### ***Improving Provision Locally***

Three interviewees discussed the lack of infrastructure and facilities in The Glen. Quite simply, there was nowhere for children to go apart from one of the activity-based projects, and these could only offer services to a limited number of children. Hope was expressed that the new Resource Centre would make a difference. However, at the moment there were no play areas or meeting points for children apart from street corners. In a related vein, two interviewees believed that the area needed more locally-based services to deal with the many problems of the area. They felt that current service provision was inadequate for the demand. One commented that children from disadvantaged areas should have the same opportunities and facilities as those from other areas. In order to achieve this, and to allow service providers time to develop more co-ordinated services, funding to the area should be increased.

Two interviewees believed that a more co-ordinated approach needed to be adopted locally. Of these, one suggested the appointment of a locally-based manager or community development officer, whose main role would be to facilitate integration and co-operation. The other interviewee believed that service providers needed to clarify their aims and to be led by their aims rather than by funding. She believed that services needed to develop long-term goals and that these goals had to be developed in consultation with local people and other service providers. She also believed that a plan for the area as a whole should be developed. In a related vein, one interviewee believed that statutory agencies were not integrated with other service providers, and were unlikely to become so without Local Government reform.

One interviewee thought that services in the area needed to become more 'child driven', taking into account the home and family situation. Another interviewee said that she would like to get more local people involved in services as volunteers. She thought that funding did not allow for enough staff for service providers, but that if local people volunteered, services would be able to reach a far greater number of young people. Finally, one interviewee wanted to see an increase in the number of activity-based and personal development projects, and guidance classes organised for young people in the area. The same interviewee thought that the SHB should intervene more in home situations in The Glen, and that SHB-organised parenting courses should be more freely available.

### ***Improving Provision Nationally***

Two interviewees raised issues related to funding. One simply suggested that an increase in funding would allow more services to be set up. The other interviewee who raised funding as an issue was more concerned about the manner in which funds were allocated. She believed that funders should visit the areas in receipt of funds in order to gain a more practical understanding of what a disadvantaged area is really like and how service providers operate in such areas. Her main complaint about funding allocation was that it was very short-term in nature. This not only stopped individual organisations from engaging in long-term planning, but also meant that a coherent plan for the area was not possible. Although she agreed that the amount of funding was inadequate, she believed that the “drip-fed” nature of funding was perhaps even more problematic.

The same interviewee believed that funding should take into account necessary administrative and other supports. For example, funding might be allocated for a youth worker, but not for an office, equipment or administrative support. She pointed out that in her own organisation there was no funding provision for cleaners, despite the fact that their premises had a high volume of clients. As a result, professional staff spent some of their time doing the cleaning, making them “the most expensive cleaners in Cork”. In her opinion, this was an example of a funding body trying to save money, but actually wasting it instead.

Two interviewees discussed the importance of analysing current provision before making decisions about future provision. One thought that research on the current situation, identifying gaps and possible solutions was required instead of simply doing more of the same. The other interviewee shared these views, suggesting that models of best practice should be developed, and that service providers should be able to learn from each other’s mistakes and successes. She believed that procedures should be in place to evaluate the work of service providers in order to ensure that they were offering value for money. However, she thought that outcomes, and client opinions should be used to evaluate efficacy, rather than the number of clients dealt with in a given period.

Finally, one interviewee believed that there needed to be greater integration between government departments. She thought that if integration began to happen at the highest level that it would make it more likely that it could occur at local level.

## General Comments

At the end of the interview, those interviewed were asked if they had any other comments to make about the treatment of at risk children, either locally or nationally. Two made reference to the role of the Health Boards. One thought that Health Boards should have a more proactive role in counteracting the effects of a poor home environment, but assumed that staff and funding shortages had curtailed Health Board activities in such situations. The other interviewee thought that the current health service offered totally inadequate provision for specialist services dealing with drug abuse, psychological problems and sexual abuse. She believed that psychological services should be available to schools, even for younger children, and that early intervention was the key to success. She believed that a suitable qualified person, such as a social worker, should have links with the school, as a person in this type of role would enable early identification of problems.

One interviewee reiterated that funding that did not allow for proper support structures was not providing value for money. She thought that funding bodies needed to re-examine what structures needed to be in place for a project to run effectively, and to include the cost of these structures in funding allocations.

One interviewee discussed how post-primary school often proved problematic for disadvantaged children. She thought that children from The Glen found it difficult attending post-primary schools outside the area, as the socioeconomic mix often made it hard for them to adapt. She thought that the reputation of The Glen preceded children when they entered post-primary school, and that post-primary teachers might benefit from a greater understanding of what it is like to live in the area. Finally, one interviewee believed that service providers should try to employ local people on CE schemes. She thought that this facilitated the development of skills among local people, and that locals working on a project could offer insight that outsiders would not have. She also stated that integration should be easier in The Glen than other areas due to the compact nature of the estate.

## Teacher Interviews

### Selection of Schools

There are two primary schools within The Glen – St Mark’s BNS and St Brendan’s GNS. Teachers from both were selected for interview. As there is no post-primary school in The Glen schools outside the area but attended by students from The Glen were selected. The post-primary schools selected were St Patrick’s Girls Secondary School and Mayfield Community School. In each school the principal and one other teacher were interviewed. In total, four principals, one HSCL co-ordinator, one career guidance teacher, one support teacher and one resource teacher were interviewed.

### Awareness of Services

There are a large number of services available to the population of The Glen, and most of those interviewed were aware of the majority of services. In particular, the teachers interviewed from the two primary schools located within The Glen were aware of all the services available to the area, while those from post-primary schools outside the area had a less extensive knowledge, particularly of smaller, local services (such as the pre-school).

All interviewed had heard of the following services: The Glen Neighbourhood Youth Project; Youthreach; SHB; and Cork City Partnership. However, only the four teachers from The Glen primary schools had heard of each of the following: Estate Management; Magnet; Cork City URBAN; and The Glen Pre-school. Six interviewees stated that their pupils or students had used each of The Glen Neighbourhood Youth Project and the Homework Club supported by Cork City Partnership, while five mentioned The Glen Action Project and The Glen Summer Recreation Scheme.

Teachers had become aware of services in a variety of ways<sup>1</sup>. For example, three teachers were aware of the range of services primarily through their involvement in Magnet, while four stated that they had extensive local knowledge from working in the area over a number of years. One teacher mentioned the HSCL co-ordinator as a

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<sup>1</sup> Totals sum to more than eight as some interviewees mentioned more than one way in which they had developed their knowledge of services.

source of information, while three mentioned that they had become aware of available services through service providers visiting schools.

Those interviewed were asked if they believed that other teachers in their school would be aware of the range of services available to at risk children in The Glen. Seven thought that some teachers would be aware of services, while one thought that few or no teachers in their school would be aware of what was available. In general, interviewees thought that those who were principals, HSCL co-ordinators, or year heads would have a better idea of what services were available than a typical class teacher.

### **Adequacy of Services**

Teachers were asked how they rated the adequacy of services for children and young people in The Glen. One rated the level of service provision as good, four rated it as fair, and two rated it as poor.

### ***Positive Aspects***

Five interviewees stated that the individuals working as service providers in the area were a positive aspect of service provision for The Glen. They were seen as dedicated and approachable, with good local knowledge. This made it more likely that local people would avail of services. One teacher thought that through the work of Magnet, schools were reasonably integrated into the service provider network, and that this was very important.

In general, those interviewed were happy with the availability of information and referral sources in the area. Seven of the eight interviewed believed that they would know where to go for information, and thought that service providers would direct them to further sources of help, where necessary. One teacher queried whether someone new to the area would find it easy to access help, but thought that the recently published *The Glen Directory of Services and Activities* would be a useful aid. Only one teacher criticised the availability of information, stating that one had to go through a number of individuals or sources to get the information required.

All teachers interviewed agreed that most services were physically accessible to local people, with almost all services being located within the estate. However, one teacher thought that locals did not always know what the service providers actually

did, while another pointed out that services are typically run by people from outside the area, making it less likely that they will have the trust of locals. One teacher, while agreeing that services were physically accessible, thought that some disadvantaged families might be unwilling to use them. Finally, one interviewee believed that services outside of the area were not as accessible to families, both physically and in terms of whether they would be comfortable using them.

One teacher thought that the large number of activities offered by service providers was a positive feature of service provision, while another thought that GAP was a particularly welcome project, as it offered activities in the evenings, after the schools and other services had closed. Finally, one interviewee saw the schools as being a strong point in local service provision, believing that school-based provision was more cost effective.

### ***Negative Aspects***

Three interviewees discussed lack of service co-ordination as a problem in The Glen. For example, one believed that follow-up was poor because services did not properly co-ordinate, while another stated that services needed to realise that if they did not work together, then poor consultation would lead to overlap, less feedback and a less effective outcome. One interviewee spoke at length about the lack of integration between services, describing current provision as “a little bit here, a little bit there, a little bit everywhere”, with no coherent plan for the area.

In a related vein, five interviewees identified overlap of services as a problem with provision for The Glen. Four pointed out that there was a plethora of activity-based projects in The Glen, with the NYP and YDP in particular targeting similar clients with similar methods. Despite the apparent replication of activities, interviewees agreed that the activity-based projects in The Glen were currently not adequate to meet demand. Also, one felt that the overlap offered variety and options to the targeted client group. One interviewee felt that Cork City Partnership was responsible for some of the replication of services in The Glen. She thought that they had not consulted with local service providers or inhabitants, and had foisted their services and ideas on the area, replicating some pre-existing projects. In her opinion, the Partnership did not really know what was going on in The Glen, and had not bothered to ask anyone who might know.

Four teachers thought that the speed of intervention by service providers could be quite slow. Of these, two referred to psychological assessments taking a long time, while two referred to the SHB as being slow to react. Four teachers also criticised the SHB's lack of sensitivity regarding the role of the school. They thought that while the school tried very hard to remain neutral when social workers were involved with families, sometimes schools were unnecessarily implicated. In particular, the practice of naming teachers who had asked for involvement from the SHB was seen as placing teachers in the role of informers, resulting in parents losing the trust they had placed in the school. One interviewee pointed out that although schools went to great lengths to present the school as a safe haven for parents and children, social workers did not seem to recognise this when dealing with referrals from schools. The same interviewee also talked about a "culture of blame" among social workers, who were seen as more intent on blaming parents than producing solutions.

Three of those interviewed raised issues related to early intervention. One thought that it was too late to start intervening in post-primary school, as attitudes to school were already well formed by that stage. Another pointed out that there were no support services in The Glen dealing with 5 – 9 year olds, and that it would make sense to target this young age group. Finally, one interviewee thought those aged less than 15, who could not be managed within the standard school system, were being ignored. He believed that there should be a service dealing with such children at a younger age, offering a small group situation and one-to-one attention. Currently, such young people have to wait until they are 15 before they can avail of an alternative educational model, such as Youthreach.

Two interviewees believed that there should be more services and support available within the school – for example, support for teachers within the classroom rather than letting children struggle in school and then trying to remedy the problem outside of the school. They thought that services in the area were unfavourably weighted towards out-of-school supports. Two interviewees stated that lack of after-school and evening activities for children was a problem, while another commented that there was a lack of infrastructure and facilities for children in the area.

Two teachers discussed high staff turnover among some service providers, with one specifically referring to turnover among social workers. Turnover was perceived to be a problem, not only because of loss of continuity or experience, but also because any trust built up was lost. A further two interviewees discussed issues related to

payment to Youthreach attendees. Both felt that these payments could, in some cases, encourage young people to leave school.

Two interviewees raised funding as a problem. One believed that service providers were underfunded and that this limited their effectiveness. The same interviewee thought that service providers should (finances permitting) begin to focus on personal development and social education, training young people to become good citizens. The other teacher who mentioned funding was worried about the risk of the Partnership losing its funding, which would in turn impact on the services it supported in The Glen.

One teacher stated that a major gap in service provision for The Glen was the lack of a drugs awareness group, pointing out that there was a drug problem in the area and that there was currently nothing in place to deal with it. Finally, one teacher highlighted the difficulty in accessing those most at risk. She felt that sometimes services did not actually reach those who most needed intervention.

## **Focus of Intervention**

Teachers were asked if they believed that services in The Glen were geared towards treating individual cases, or if they adopted a whole family approach. Responses were mixed, with three believing that a whole family approach was offered, one that services focussed only on the individual child, and four believing that some services dealt with the whole family at least some of the time. All were agreed that dealing with the whole family was a more effective approach.

Only one of those interviewed believed that services intervened at an early enough stage in the child's life. However, she also pointed out that teachers may sometimes be slow to draw a family to the attention of the SHB or Gardaí, particularly when the child is younger (as problems may be less immediately apparent). The other seven teachers interviewed thought that intervention for at risk children happened too late. Two believed that intervention should occur even before primary school, either in the format of a pre-school or more support from agencies such as the PHN. In a related vein, another teacher commented that the reason intervention was generally too late was because schools thought that they could deal with disadvantaged children without help from other agencies. Therefore, intervention happened only after a child

was enrolled in school, and typically, some time after a child enrolled rather than in Junior Infants.

In general, there was agreement among those interviewed that early intervention prevented children slipping further behind their classmates. As one commented, attitudes to school are well formed by the time a child enrolls in post-primary school. One teacher thought that it was particularly important to offer remedial assistance with literacy and numeracy as early as possible, preferably before Second class. One interviewee believed that it was possible to offer effective intervention in 1<sup>st</sup> year in post-primary school – provided that one-to-one help was offered – but that intervention in primary school was more effective.

When asked about the type of pupil or student that received help, opinions were mixed. Two teachers stated that only those who went from being at risk to actually manifesting clear problems were helped, while another teacher pointed out that sometimes teachers do not realise a child is at risk until they manifest some sort of problem. Four believed that help was available for those who were at risk, while one thought that recent initiatives by service providers such as NYP and GAP meant that those at risk were now being reached before their problems escalated.

Overall, the speed of intervention by service providers in The Glen was rated as fairly slow, with psychological assessments taking the longest to occur. Four stated that there was a long wait for psychological assessments, while one stated that the SHB took a long time to respond. However, one teacher rated the speed of response by the SHB as reasonable. Four teachers commented that locally based service providers were quick to respond, particularly those offering activity-based programmes, but that larger services outside of the local area were much slower to react to a request for intervention.

## **Overall Coherence**

When asked how well Department of Education and Science-sponsored projects integrated, six teachers were generally positive, while two were critical. Three teachers thought that the HSCL co-ordinator helped greatly in facilitating integration, with one teacher pointing out that in a small school it was very easy to link schemes and personnel together.

As mentioned, two teachers were critical of the degree of integration between Department of Education and Science schemes. One thought that services for disadvantaged schools were not evenly spread, and that children attending some schools did not benefit from sufficient extra supports. The second teacher was extremely critical of the level of integration between schemes. She thought that schemes were planned and operated in isolation by the Department of Education and Science. Indeed, she commented that she had telephoned the Department of Education and Science on occasion with queries about a particular scheme in which her school was involved, only to discover that those dealing with her query either did not know about the existence of the scheme in question, or did not know that her school was included in the scheme. Therefore, she found it difficult to imagine how they could claim to be integrating schemes when they did not even know what schemes existed.

When asked about the degree of integration between other (non-Department of Education and Science) schemes in The Glen, half of those interviewed thought that projects integrated well, and half thought that they did not. Two interviewees mentioned that organisations protecting their own turf was a problem in the area, and one of these also thought that services were slow to share information or to react to information passed on by other services. One teacher felt that those who dropped out of school were frequently not picked up by other schemes in operation, leading her to the conclusion that the level of integration was inadequate. One interviewee felt that links between services were limited, simply because service providers did not have enough time to liaise with each other. Despite this, she felt that Magnet had improved the coherence of service provision and the level of communication between organisations in The Glen. Two other teachers also praised Magnet for improving communication between service providers, although one also commented that mutual awareness did not necessarily mean that service providers were forging strong links.

When asked how well they thought that service providers liaised with each other to provide an individual child with continuity and coherence of care at any given time, responses were mainly negative. Five teachers thought that horizontal integration did not happen in The Glen, while one was unsure, but thought it might not, particularly given that even schools did not always liaise with other services. Of those who believed horizontal integration was not a reality, one thought that efforts had been made to offer a more integrated service, but that what was available was still 'bitty'. One thought that turf wars was one of the reasons for a lack of integration, while two

cited a lack of adequate communication between schools and the SHB (for example, insufficient number of case conferences, with insufficient sharing of information).

Two teachers thought that there was a good level of integration at any given time, with one pointing out that the small and close-knit nature of the area made it easier to identify and target those in need of help, and to share information. However, the second teacher who thought that there was a reasonable degree of horizontal integration also believed that it applied mainly to primary school children, as post-primary schools were outside the area, and service provision for these children tended to be less coherent.

Primary school and post-primary schools were seen by four teachers as the main agents in vertical integration. The four agreed that there was good communication between the two types of schools about transferring pupils, and efforts were made to make the transfer as easy as possible for pupils – for example, post-primary year tutors visited primary schools to talk to Sixth class pupils. The same four interviewees thought that other services in the area did not promote vertical integration to the same extent. Of the other four interviewees, one did not know if vertical integration happened, while three thought that it was lacking in The Glen.

## **Quality of Service Providers**

Interviewees were asked a number of questions about the quality of service providers in The Glen. In general, those interviewed were positive about the quality of work being done by service providers in the area. Seven of the eight interviewed thought that local service providers were well run, while one thought that some were well run, but that others were not. Six also commented on funding levels for services, with two interviewees believing that service providers had sufficient funding. Three interviewees thought that the level of funding supplied to service providers was inadequate for the work they were doing (and the work they could be doing) while one criticised the short-term and insecure nature of funding.

One interviewee believed that staffing levels were adequate for service providers, one was unsure, one thought that they were probably inadequate, and five thought that staffing levels were definitely inadequate to meet demand. In particular, one interviewee believed that SHB employees such as the PHN and social workers were severely understaffed.

Three of those interviewed did not think that staff turnover levels in service providers were high, four believed that there was high staff turnover, and one interviewee thought that *some* organisations were characterised by high turnover among staff. Of those who commented on high staff turnover, two specifically referred to the SHB as having a high turnover of staff. One interviewee also mentioned that the Community Garda is assigned to the post for a maximum of three years, which in her opinion was too short a time period, as the postholder would only be beginning to gain the trust of locals by that time.

Five interviewees thought that service providers were in touch with local needs while one interviewee did not know if this was the case or not. One interviewee thought that service providers were generally from outside the area, that they had a middle class bias and did not really understand the needs of people in the area. As a related issue the same teacher thought that locals were less likely to trust outsiders, and that the trust that might be built up over time was usually wasted due to the short-term nature of many projects in The Glen.

Interviewees were asked if they believed that there was adequate communication between service providers. Only two interviewees gave an unqualified positive response. Three thought that there was definitely not adequate levels of communication, with one commenting that while some service providers worked together, others clashed. One teacher believed that Magnet had led to a good degree of communication at a high level, but that this was still not reflected in the service provided at an individual level. One teacher believed that communication was reasonable but could be improved by, for example, having more case conferences, while another thought that smaller, local service providers communicated, but that larger organisations from outside the area did not.

## **Role of Teaching Staff**

There was unanimous agreement that teachers were doing work beyond their defined role. The teachers interviewed thought that the work faced by teachers on a day-to-day basis was far broader than that in which they were trained. One talked about having to be “a nurse, doctor and social worker”, while another talked of how teachers can be sucked into performing the role of social worker, a role that was beyond their qualifications. One teacher was particularly worried about the effect the extra

demands on a teacher's time was having on classes. She felt that teachers had to take time out of classes to liaise with other professionals, or even to talk to parents, and that this meant less teaching time.

When asked what they felt the role of teachers should be, all felt that the main focus should still be to teach, but a number also talked about redefining the role to incorporate a broader focus. More specifically, two teachers thought that their role should be redefined to allow time to communicate with service providers, while a further two thought that *some* teachers should be given time to liaise with service providers. In particular, the year tutor and career guidance teachers in post-primary schools should have sufficient flexibility in the scheduling of their time to be able to act as a liaison between subject teachers and service providers. One thought that teachers needed to liaise with service providers, but only where it assisted with teaching practice, while another thought that the role of teachers was to support service providers, and vice versa. There was general agreement that, at present, teachers do not have time to liaise with service providers.

Finally, one teacher thought that the best way to deal with the extra demands on teachers in disadvantaged primary schools was to have a "floating teacher". Such a post could provide cover for class teachers who needed to attend case conferences, to liaise with service providers or to talk to parents. In particular, she felt that teachers were not really available to parents at the moment, as they constantly had to keep an eye on the class, and that parents therefore felt that the teacher was not really giving the conversation their full attention.

Interviewees were asked if they thought that teachers were typically kept well informed when pupils or students were receiving help from other agencies. Three thought that the level of feedback from service providers was poor while one thought that it was good. A further three teachers thought that some or all of the locally based service providers (such as NYP) were good at providing information and feedback, but that agencies outside the local area were not as helpful. Two teachers mentioned that the SHB in particular was very poor at giving feedback to schools, with one commenting that while they were quick to ask for information from schools, they were slow to provide information in return. Two teachers believed that the service providers tended to operate independently of the school system, rather than supporting it. A further two believed that feedback supplied by service providers was only on an informal basis and due to the individuals involved rather than to policy.

All eight interviewees stated that there should be consultation between schools and service providers, rather than each operating separately. One thought that service provision should be co-ordinated from the school, but that this was not feasible in the current education system. He believed that services based in schools could be more effective in terms of cost and outcome. However, he did not think that school-centred provision would work unless extra support structures, such as administrative and managerial support, were also put in place. Another believed that schools should take more of the initiative in making referrals. However, another thought that while more consultation was required, it should only take place where it helped in teaching a child in the classroom. In her opinion, teachers were already under enough pressure and she did not want to have consultation where there were no tangible benefits to the teacher.

## **General Comments**

Teachers were asked if they had any more general comments to make about the treatment of at-risk children, either locally or nationally. All had some comments to make, and responses covered a variety of issues.

Four raised issues related to dealing with the family as a whole, pointing out that unless a poor home situation was improved, there was little that could really be done. Two mentioned that developing parents would be beneficial, for example, by providing parenting courses, while one thought that the whole family approach to service provision needed to be emphasised. The fourth interviewee believed that the main weakness in service provision was that it was not capable of really intervening in the home. She believed that there are a small number of children that no amount of after-school or in-school supports could help, because of an unstable home situation. In such cases she believed that services should be able to go into the home, and to act as a surrogate parent, ensuring that children were clothed and fed at the very least. She thought that the agreement of the biological parents would have to be achieved, and that parental participation should be encouraged, with attempts made to educate the biological parents in whatever way possible. She suggested the concept of a contract or shared goals to be agreed upon, and to involve the whole family.

The two interviewees from St Patrick's school also raised the issue of disadvantaged status for schools. St Patrick's is not designated as disadvantaged, although all its 'feeder' primary schools are so designated. Both felt that this was not

only illogical, but had a major impact on the facilities the school was able to offer. St Patrick's does not have a HSCL co-ordinator, which both felt would be of immense use. Also, because it does not qualify for extra grant aid, it is unable to afford extra support facilities that a disadvantaged school might have. Despite this, the school has a low dropout rate. However, one teacher was adamant that their success in keeping students in Senior Cycle should not be used as an excuse for not assigning the school disadvantaged status. This, she felt, would be punishing teachers for achieving good results against the odds.

Two interviewees thought that intervention must begin at an earlier age. As one teacher put it, it is far easier to change the attitudes and opinions of a young child than that of a teenager. Another thought that it was important to lower the pupil-teacher ratio in schools, in order to be able to give more attention to those who had trouble keeping up with their classmates. She also thought that study groups in both primary and post-primary schools worked well, and that students should be able to attend such groups in their own schools, rather than at an out-of-school location.

One teacher thought that teaching principals were overstretched, particularly in larger and disadvantaged schools – “The whole idea of a teaching principal in a disadvantaged school is off the wall.” She thought that teaching principals were not able to give sufficient teaching time to their own class, and that this was not fair to the pupils. The same teacher reiterated the need for a “floating teacher” who would provide cover for teachers when they needed to engage in activities outside of the classroom (such as meeting service providers or parents).

One teacher commented on what she saw as the point where many parents disengaged themselves from their child's education – post-primary school. In her opinion, many parents had never been to post-primary school themselves, and therefore did not understand the requirements, and were unable to really support their child educationally. She suggested that post-primary schools could do more to engage the parents at the start of first year. The same teacher thought that most teachers were middle class, and, as such, did not really understand disadvantage. She believed that they saw things from their own perspective, and found it hard to picture things from the view of a disadvantaged child or parent. The most important attitudinal change she felt necessary was for teachers to show basic respect to all parents, not just 'good' parents. Such understanding sometimes came about from spending a long time dealing with the disadvantaged and building up trust.

Some interviewees made suggestions that referred to broader based policy issues, and to service provision unconnected to schools. Two interviewees thought that one of the main problems was that while there were many agencies dealing with at risk children and their families, there was nobody, or rather *no body* with ultimate responsibility. Indeed one believed that because there was no one Government department dealing with disadvantaged young people, overall policy was poor. This, she felt, was reflected in the dearth of state-sponsored crèche facilities, the poor facilities for young people, and a general lack of coherence in policy. She also thought that funding for work with disadvantaged young people was scattered and piecemeal in nature.

One interviewee criticised the support structures for at risk children as being too rigid. Currently, there is provision from professionals such as social workers from 9 – 5 only, whereas needs often arose outside of these hours. He felt that structures needed more flexibility, meeting the client needs rather than what was convenient for service providers. Another thought that families that moved from area to area often slipped through the support net, and that there needed to be some sort of tracking of these families. One teacher thought that families could be encouraged to support their children's education by the paying of an increased Children's Allowance to parents of older children who remained in school.

One interviewee believed that psychiatric and psychological services for the general community in disadvantaged areas needed improvement. He believed that there should be drop-in community counselling centres where people could come for advice and help. These centres could advise on issues such as parenting, personal development, addiction counselling and career guidance.

One interviewee believed that community-building helped create a more stable environment, whereby educational aspirations would be raised in the long-term. She thought that community-building should happen at a lower level than it is currently pitched. Instead of looking at The Glen as a whole, service providers should focus on small units such as streets. She thought that organisations such as Estate Management have some good ideas, but should try to build streets as communities. For example, a street could work to create a more pleasant environment (such as through a landscaping or gardening project). Such an activity would help neighbours to meet each other and promote a sense of community. She also thought that it was vital for locals to become involved in the decision-making process. Outside agencies making

all the decisions not only led to solutions that might not deal with what locals saw as the important issues, but also led to a sense of powerlessness.

Finally, one interviewee thought that it was important to emphasise that not all children who came from The Glen were disadvantaged. There were many children from the area who would not be classified as at risk, and that it was important not to generalise.

## Parent Interviews

In consultation with the HSCL co-ordinator in The Glen primary schools, two group interviews with local parents were organised. The first group interview was held in the evening, at a time when an upholstery class for parents was normally held in St Brendan's GNS. The interview was held in the school staff room, and three mothers of children attending St Brendan's agreed to be interviewed. The second interview was a morning meeting held in the Parent Room of St Mark's BNS, at a time when many parents drop in to chat with each other or the HSCL co-ordinator. Six mothers agreed to be interviewed.

Some of those interviewed also had children currently attending Mayfield Community College or St. Patrick's College while some had children who had formerly attended St Aidan's Community College, North Monastery and North Presentation post-primary schools. Eight of those interviewed lived in The Glen, while the ninth had lived in the area but was residing in the neighbouring area of Ballyvolane at the time of interview.

### Knowledge and Opinion of Services

To begin, the women were shown a short list of some of the services available in the area. The list was as follows (school-based schemes listed first):

- Home School Community Liaison
- Breaking the Cycle
- Remedial Teacher
- The Glen Youth Development Project
- Glen Action Project
- The Glen Neighbourhood Youth Project
- The Glen Summer Recreation Scheme
- Youthreach
- The Glen Health Centre
- The Glen Pre-school
- The Glen Community Crèche
- The Glen Reading Improvement Scheme
- Community Garda.

All those interviewed had heard of the services, apart from one woman who had to be reminded of what the Community Garda did. In addition, all mothers had a working knowledge of what each service did.

The interviewees were then asked how well the school-based services were operating. These schemes included the Breaking the Cycle, Home School Community Liaison Scheme, and remedial teachers. All believed that the children were benefiting from the Breaking the Cycle scheme, they praised the reduced class sizes, and the day trips the children were taken on. They had particular praise for the HSCL scheme, stating that the HSCL co-ordinator was very approachable and that they were often much more comfortable talking to her than to the class teachers. One mother also praised the remedial teacher service, stating that the one-to-one attention was very beneficial to the children.

Some of those interviewed also mentioned the “Thinking of College – Parents Initiative”, funded by Cork City Partnership, which was aimed at encouraging children from communities like The Glen to attend third level education. This was praised as opening both parents and children's eyes to alternatives and opportunities and for making third level education seem like an interesting and non-threatening option. Finally, some women praised the Applied Leaving Certificate Programme as offering a more practical alternative to the Leaving Certificate. They thought that it was a good enough, and interesting enough course to keep in school many young people who would otherwise have dropped out post-Junior Certificate.

## **Use of Services**

The interviewees were then asked if local parents would know where to go for help if their children were having problems or were potential early school leavers. They stated that most parents would have a good idea where to go, and cited the Neighbourhood Youth Project, Youth Development Project, Estate Management Group, and Youthreach as good sources of help and information. More specifically, they all agreed that the individuals working for these organisations were well-known locally and are considered to be very approachable. Some of the women pointed out that the primary school, especially the HSCL co-ordinator, would often be the first point of contact. They stated that it was much easier to approach the primary school than the post-primary school.

The interviewees did not believe that parents had to go from service provider to service provider before they received help, nor did they think that most parents would be too embarrassed to seek help. They stated that the new services centre, which was due to be built soon, would be of great help, with most of the services being located under one roof. They also voiced support for the soon to be opened resource centre, though hoped that it would not be priced out of the range of the local community. This fear was based on what had happened when community facilities were opened in adjoining disadvantaged areas. The services had proven to be popular but expensive, with the result that facilities were often used by people from outside the target area, as locals were unable to afford the cost of using the facilities.

When asked how to make it easier to get help for a child with a problem, all the mothers interviewed stated that the schools should be made more approachable. In the main, they found the two primary schools in The Glen to be very approachable, although two women did have some negative comments to make about specific instances where they had found that one or other school was not prepared to be flexible. That aside, there was general recognition that almost all parents in the area would be happy to talk to either the HSCL co-ordinator or the principal of either of The Glen primary schools.

In contrast, schools outside of the area (post-primary schools in particular) were not seen as approachable. Not only were these schools seen as having less knowledge of The Glen, but they were also perceived as too formal and rigid. The formality of post-primary schools was compounded by the fact that many parents from The Glen had never attended post-primary school themselves, and felt a little out of their depth. One post-primary school was universally seen as the most approachable, and the most likely to make parents feel welcome.

At the other extreme, one post-primary school was seen as having an active policy of excluding children from The Glen. Although many of the pupils from The Glen had transferred to the school in the past, parents noticed a change in the attitude of the staff about six years ago. The change was mainly seen as due to the principal, who was perceived as being rude and condescending to Glen parents. They stated that one year he attempted to exclude all 6<sup>th</sup> class Glen pupils from applying for enrolment. One mother discussed how she was “terrified” of the principal, as she felt he only wanted to humiliate her. She refused to go to parent-teacher meetings in that particular

school, although she had no problem attending them in primary and post-primary schools attended by her other children.

Other women present discussed how parents were not welcomed by most of the teachers, presumably adopting the same attitude as the principal. Consequently, no more than one or two pupils from The Glen now transfer to the post-primary school in question.

As a result of post-primary schools being perceived as less approachable than primary schools, parents were often not aware of how their child was getting on. Those interviewed thought that post-primary schools tended to inform parents only when their child had a definite problem. They believed that this meant problem behaviour was allowed to blossom, and also that parents felt that post-primary schools only ever contacted parents with bad news. This meant that teachers and parents never really worked together.

The parents were fairly unanimous in their support for a one-stop shop, where all the service providers were located under the one roof. However they thought that it was best if this was community-based. They believed that if it was school-based there could be problems in terms of local parents accepting it. Many of the parents had negative memories of school and were less likely to use school-based services. In addition, they stated that a community-based centre would offer a better opportunity for privacy. Many felt that other people would know their business if they went to the school to sort out a problem.

## **Role of Parents**

The interviewees did not believe that parents were encouraged to get involved when their child had a problem. However, they all believed that the parents should be involved. They stated that young parents were more likely to be interested in helping out than older generation parents were. Some of the parents were interested to see what happens within the classroom and thought that it would be a great opportunity if they could help out in a classroom. They believed that it would be easier to help out in primary than in post-primary school, as the children in post-primary school would not want their parents around. Another problem with encouraging parents to help out in the classroom was that many do not have the time, as they have other children to take care of or they may have work commitments.

The parents did not think that the schools kept them well informed if their children were having problems. They thought that this was especially so for post-primary school where there was very little communication with parents. They stated that when a child has a problem in post-primary school, the parents are often informed too late, for example when the child has been suspended. They thought that the situation with primary schools was better, though it depended on the school. The schools based in The Glen usually kept the parents informed, while those based outside were not as reliable. They cited the example of the primary schools in The Glen each having a parent's room, while other schools did not have such facilities.

Those interviewed also discussed the difficulties parents face when trying to force a child who hates school to attend on a daily basis. One woman discussed her nephew, who would throw up with fear every Sunday night at the thought of going back to school. She said that while it was easy to say that parents should make their children go to school, it was extremely painful for parents to do so in some situations. Sometimes teachers and a specific child have a personality clash, and there is nothing that can be done about it. If in primary school, parents can only wait for the year to end and hope that the child gets on better with the next class teacher. If in post-primary, parents can try to limit the dislike to one specific teacher (and, unfortunately, to that subject) rather than to school in general.

## **Role of Teachers**

Those interviewed believed that there should be more liaising between the teachers and parents. They thought that the post-primary schools were too impersonal compared to primary schools, for example in primary school parents and teachers may be on a first name basis, whereas in post-primary school it was always much more formal.

Some interviewees also thought that post-primary schools should be more flexible in their dealings with students. They offered the example of students being forced to make Junior Certificate examination subject choices in first year, when they may not know enough about the subjects. The interviewees believed that if a child was stuck in a class they did not like, this could lead to problems between the teacher and child, and in some cases to the child eventually dropping out of school. Unfortunately, parents often did not know enough about subjects to be able to help their children to pick their options. Some felt that schools should explain more to parents about what is

involved in each subject area. They would then (knowing their children's interests better than post-primary teachers) be able to help choose subject areas.

In particular, the issue of students having to remain in classes where they had clearly made the wrong subject choice was raised as an issue. If a student was not interested in a given subject, or had a personality clash with the subject teacher, then there should be some flexibility about them moving to another class, or of using the time as a study period. One woman thought that while a student not studying the full amount of subjects might not be ideal, it was better than him/her hating school and dropping out. The women appreciated that it might be difficult timetabling different subject options, and that there had to be some control over who attended what classes, but felt that some of the rigidity was there for no real reason.

Interviewees believed that too often post-primary schools were too strict and that they expected students to act as adults as soon as they arrived in the school. They all believed that the approach of the primary schools was much better and treated the children in a better or nicer manner. Again, a specific post-primary school came in for criticism, with some of those interviewed believing that the school was almost encouraging certain children (particularly those from The Glen) to drop out.

Another issue that the interviewees raised was that of matching teachers to classes. Many felt that some teachers were unsuitable to be teaching a certain grade level, for example they thought that stricter, more stern teachers should be teaching children in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class, while teachers who take a softer approach should be teaching pupils in Infants or 1<sup>st</sup> class. One woman discussed how her daughter, who was attending an Infants class, was frightened by the class teacher who was perceived by the child as very stern and with a shouting voice. The woman did not think that the teacher in question was a bad teacher, merely that she was unsuited to dealing with children so young.

Some interviewees stated that primary school has a big influence on a child's long-term perception of school. The child has to like going to school and teachers should be encouraged to talk to the children rather than talking down to them, as so many seem to do, according to the parents. The view was expressed that if a child disliked primary school, there was little or no chance that they would like post-primary school. Therefore, it was important that the first experiences a child has of school are positive and enjoyable ones. In particular, some thought that a good Infants class

teacher was important – a good teacher being defined as someone who was lively, enthusiastic, colourful and able to make things seem like fun rather than a chore.

When asked how schools, especially post-primary schools, could be made more approachable, the interviewees suggested that perhaps parents could be invited into the school to meet the teachers. This could be done over a cup of tea and a chat rather than at the open days the schools organised. The parents believed that these open days were too structured and that it was very hard to get to know any of the teachers due to the large number of parents in attendance. They suggested that there could be art displays or exhibitions of what the children had made during school time. The parents could then be invited in and talk informally to the teachers. This could be done on a class basis rather than for a specific year, so that smaller numbers would allow greater interaction. Another suggestion was that sporting activities, or choral events, were another opportunity to interact with teachers in a less formal situation. One school invited parents to participate in choir practices with the children, and those who had attended these found them to be a good way to get involved in their child's schooling.

## **General Comments**

Finally, the interviewees were asked how they believed the number of early school leavers in The Glen could be reduced. All reiterated the point that post-primary schools need to be made much more accessible. They believed that the parents should be informed as soon as their child was having a problem, and that there was a need for much more interaction between parents and teachers.

A number of interviewees also pointed out that it was easier for children to play truant from post-primary school. Students did not have the same teacher all day, and absences were less likely to be noticed. Some women interviewed gave examples of situations where parents of regular truants had brought the child to school every morning. Having done this, they thought that they had solved the problem. However, the school would contact the parents a few days or a week later to enquire about the child's whereabouts. The interviewees thought that schools should let parents of poor attenders know straight away if the child did not attend school.

Another suggestion was that, because the approaches of primary and post-primary schools differ so greatly, the children should have more preparation for post-primary school. This could involve small group/individual sessions in sixth class and

again in 1<sup>st</sup> year. Some parents believed that it should be part of the curriculum in first year of post-primary school, so that the children's progress could be monitored during this vital transition phase. It was also suggested that some of these monitoring classes during 1<sup>st</sup> year could actually take place back in the primary school, where the children may feel more comfortable and more likely to discuss how they really felt about post-primary school.

The mothers believed that there was a need for a more focused career guidance system, which should begin earlier in post-primary school. They stated that at present it was too haphazard and often started too late to be effective, for example after the Junior Certificate examination had been completed. At this stage, a significant number of students would already have dropped out of school, and would never receive any guidance. The parents believed that the children also needed more help with their subject choice and in addition, the parents needed to be helped so that they could aid their children with subject choices.

The interviewees discussed the format of current curriculum for post-primary school, and thought that it was administered in too structured a manner for many children. While the standard school day and classes suited most, it did not suit all children. Those interviewed thought that, at present, there was no leeway allowed – you were either 100% in school or 100% out of school (either suspended, mitching or a dropout).

For example, some students made poor subject choices, or simply did not get on with a specific subject teacher. At present, they either had to sit through these classes in order to participate in other classes, mitch, or be suspended from all classes for misbehaving in the disliked class. The women interviewed were adamant that this was not a sensible way to deal with the situation. If a student could not be accommodated in a class (for whatever reason) they should have the option to move to another class or to have a study period.

In a related vein, some women also stated that there needed to be an alternative to the standard curriculum within schools, such as a type of half-way scheme. With this, the children could attend school part-time, and they could participate in other activities (either work, sporting or different types of educational activities) for the rest of the time. One interviewee suggested paying the children for attending school, though there was a mixed response to this from others present.

Those interviewed were quite critical of the facilities available for young people in The Glen. There is currently no community centre, no youth club, no safe play areas and nowhere for young people to meet in the evenings and at night. Even the Glen Recreational Area (an adjoining park) had access from The Glen fenced off recently, so that Glen residents now had less access than residents from other areas. They thought that groups such as NYP and YDP were excellent, but that they were not available at night. In this respect, GAP was the only service offering late evening activities (which, as some indicated, was when they would be most worried about the whereabouts of their children). As a result, some reported that they would not let their children out after dark because the only activities in which they could engage in locally were likely to get them into trouble.

One woman discussed efforts she had made to start a drama group for children. She had obtained use of a room in the basement of the local Roman Catholic church (currently the only meeting place in The Glen outside of the schools), but had to discontinue her efforts due to lack of interest. Most of those present agreed that this was due to lack of advertising and set-up finances. Interested parents who wanted to get more involved in the community and to offer activities for children did not know how to go about it. Interviewees suggested that there should be an individual or group who could help any locals who wanted to set up a new project, such as a youth group. Such help could include advice on how to apply for funding and how to advertise activities and promote interest, as well as practical support such as access to a photocopier (for producing promotional material).



# Recommendations for Service Provision in The Glen

In this chapter, current service provision for The Glen will be analysed, and recommendations made for improvement. As with all of the case studies, issues that relate to national rather than local policy or practice will be discussed only in the concluding chapter *Recommendations for Service Provision for at Risk Children*.

The Glen is a fairly typical disadvantaged housing estate, and many of the recommendations for the area can have wider applicability. This chapter will analyse service provision for The Glen under the following headings:

- Current Provision.
- Degree of Service Integration.
- Allocation of Funds.
- The Role of Schools.

## Current Provision

This section examines services currently available to the population of The Glen.

Provision will be analysed by:

- Likely impact of new facilities
- Involvement of local people
- Gaps in provision
- Overlap in provision.

### ***Likely Impact of New Facilities***

As discussed earlier, service provision in The Glen was about to undergo considerable change at the time of the case study. The Glen Resource Centre was nearing completion, and work was due to begin on a new building to house a number of local service providers. The changes should significantly improve the infrastructure and facilities of the area. The premises currently occupied by most service providers are not very fit for their purpose. They are located in flat complexes, are not wheelchair accessible, and are quite cold during the day, which is primarily when they are used.

The Resource Centre should provide much needed leisure facilities. At the time of the case study, the only real facility in the area was a room in the basement of the local Catholic church, which was sometimes used for community activities. Rooms in both primary schools were also used by community groups, primarily for meetings, and for adult education organised by the HSCL co-ordinator. The addition of new sports facilities and pitches should make a significant difference to the leisure options available to young people.

In general, those interviewed looked forward to these changes. However, some expressed a fear that local people would be "priced out" of the Resource Centre, as had happened in neighbouring areas. This is a real fear. As the Resource Centre has been funded partly to redress the lack of facilities in the area, it is vital that local people and groups are given priority in the use of its facilities.

The housing of multiple service providers in one purpose-built premises is very likely to heighten the profile of services, and to make it easier for residents to know where to access help. In general, service providers in the area already have a reasonable public profile, judging by the level of awareness demonstrated by the parents who were interviewed. The recent publication of *The Glen Directory of Services and Activities* will no doubt help to maintain that profile. Nonetheless, it is important that those who move to the new premises ensure that local people are made aware of the services that will be provided.

To maximise public awareness and use of services, the new premises should try to adopt an open-door policy, which would allow people to drop in to see what is available, and get information on various services. This will require some type of general information facility. Although this will add cost, a rationalisation of administrative costs arising from the sharing of premises should help to offset it. Ideally, it should not be necessary for a person to require an appointment or have a specific request to enter the building. More importantly, people should not feel this to be the case.

Service providers who use the building should not merely share premises. They should also be required to establish structures to improve communication between agencies, not only at a planning level, but also at the level of individual clients.

### ***Involvement of Local People***

There is some involvement of local people in the provision of services for The Glen. Some service providers employ locals as part of CE or similar schemes. For example, some locals are employed in the NYP, Youthreach and in both schools. The Community Crèche also employs local people. However, the majority of service providers are staffed by and run by people who live outside the area.

In general, it would be welcome if service providers attempted to increase the participation of locals in the *provision* as well as the receipt of services. In particular, the community-building aspect of employing local people would be maximised by the inclusion of some form of skills transfer and accreditation as an integral part of such employment. Involvement by local people should also include some greater participation in decision-making processes.

Magnet was criticised by one interviewee for being primarily composed of professionals. However, analysis of the composition of Magnet members indicates that half are local residents. Therefore, the criticism does not seem to be well founded. Any area level planning and needs analysis requires adequate local representation to be effective, and Magnet should strive to maintain participation from local people.

### ***Gaps in Provision***

As stated earlier, facilities in The Glen were undergoing major change at the time of writing. While it is hoped that the opening of the new Resource Centre will at least partially address some of the current gaps in provision, there will still be many aspects of provision that could be improved, or developed.

#### **Access to Sports and Leisure Facilities**

Parents interviewed were highly critical of the lack of facilities for young people in the area. The Glen had no Community Centre, Youth Club or safe play areas. Some services offered after-school activities for children, but only GAP offered late evening activities. Thus, apart from the small number of young people catered for by GAP, the only activity available in the evenings was to play on the street.

A large park known as The Glen Recreation Area borders The Glen. The name would suggest that the park and its facilities are available to the population of the area. However, parents stated that access to the Recreation Area from The Glen had recently been fenced off by Cork Corporation, making it difficult for residents to get there.

Access which had previously been through the construction site of the new Resource Centre was lost when building began. Another access route was recently blocked when new houses were built.

The actions of the Corporation were very much resented by the parents. While they agreed that some young people from The Glen were engaging in antisocial behaviour (mainly drug-taking) in the Recreation Area at night, they did not understand why access could not at least be maintained during daylight hours. Although the Corporation have been engaging in negotiations with Glen residents regarding access, the issue has not been solved to local satisfaction. The re-establishment of the Recreation Area as a safe area with easy access from The Glen would be greatly welcomed by residents.

### **Health Board and Psychological Services**

Five of the eight teachers interviewed referred to delays when referring pupils for psychological assessment or to the SHB. They observed that the number of psychologists funded by the Department of Education and Science and Health Boards was totally inadequate to meet the level of demand. Cork City Partnership provided support to four of the schools by funding a part-time psychologist, who worked with a small number of pupils. Despite this extra support, many felt that current allocation was totally inadequate.

Many teachers stated that the SHB was understaffed, and had a high staff turnover, particularly where social workers were concerned. Some were also unhappy with the amount of feedback from the SHB to schools, which may be due to the fact that high turnover precludes the establishment of a good working relationship between social workers and teachers. Furthermore, the SHB does not have a Health Centre in The Glen (although a PHN works from the premises occupied by The Glen Community Crèche on one morning a week). Health Board staff have no base in the area, making it more difficult for locals to access help themselves. To redress the current shortage in provision, the SHB will require adequate staffing levels, and must try to ensure that staff are retained in the same post for longer periods of time.

### **Provision for 5- to 9-Year Olds**

The Glen has a number of activity-based programmes for children. However, with the exception of a pre-school and a crèche, intervention tends to be targeted at older children and adolescents. In particular, there is a dearth of services for children aged

between five and nine. The YDP deals with those older than 11 and GAP deals with 10- to 21-year olds, while the NYP, although offering some provision for those aged as young as six, primarily caters for adolescents. The only project catering for younger children is The Glen Summer Recreation Scheme, which is a two-week summer project for those aged 4 to 13. The project's future was in doubt at the time of the case study, which would leave little or no support for 5- to 9-year olds.

As far as school-based intervention for younger children is concerned, both primary schools are included in the *Breaking the Cycle* scheme, but not in *Early Start*. Seven of the eight teachers interviewed believed that intervention began too late, and that younger children were not getting the help they needed. It would seem that services in The Glen need to initiate measures to address the needs of younger children.

### Information and Support

One of the parents interviewed discussed how she had tried to set up a drama group for children in the area, but had failed to elicit sufficient interest. Others thought that the main reason for failure was insufficient advertising of the group. All agreed that had she been able to access advice on setting up a group, as well as basic support such as photocopying facilities, her efforts would probably have been more successful. At present, there are no advice facilities for those who would like to initiate voluntary groups. Such a facility would be useful.

The logical location for such a facility would be in the Resource Centre, or perhaps in the new premises for service providers. The facility could be quite basic, supplying general set-up advice, including how to attract participants, advice on supervision and insurance, and basic office support (such as access to computers and photocopiers). If a general information facility is included in the Resource Centre, an information and support service similar to that just outlined could form part of that facility.

### **Overlap in Provision**

Currently, there are a number of activity-based projects operating in The Glen. For example, there are the YDP, the NYP, the GAP and the Glen Summer Recreation Scheme. While it could be argued that the total number of clients being dealt with by all of these services is still below the total target population, it is also likely that some

overlap occurs. There is a considerable amount of liaison between the various service providers to minimise overlap and to ensure that a small group of clients do not monopolise services to the exclusion of others. However, if multiple organisations are carrying out similar work, it is inevitable that a certain amount of competition for resources, and possibly for clients, will occur. Certainly, some of those interviewed felt that this was the case.

It is probable that some consolidation of services would lead to a more effective use of funds. For example, as mentioned earlier, 9- to 16-year olds are targeted by multiple activity-based projects, while those aged under nine are relatively ignored. At a minimum, services could jointly develop an overall strategy that ensures each organisation's aims, methods and target clients are complementary, rather than a replication of each other.

Unfortunately, organisational aims and methods are sometimes partly controlled by funding agencies, which may be unwilling to accept wholesale change to services. Nonetheless, insofar as possible, the activity-based services in The Glen should strive to develop a broad-based plan of service delivery, with each supplying component parts, rather than three or four services each engaging in similar work with similar clients. Identifying overlap is not to suggest that service providers do not currently offer a valuable service, merely that a reduction in overlap would lead to a broader range of services accessible by a wider population.

## **Service Integration**

In many ways The Glen is an ideal location for developing integrated provision of services to young people and their families. The area is geographically distinct, has a small, close-knit population, and most services are located within the area. In the near future, many service providers will be sharing a purpose-built premises, while a Resource Centre will be available for local use.

In this section, the degree of integration apparent at the time of the case study will be analysed. While this will undoubtedly alter significantly with the opening of new facilities, it is likely that many of the suggestions in this section will still be applicable.

### ***Insufficient Area Planning***

It is apparent that there is a reasonable level of communication between most of the service providers in The Glen. However, most of the communication relates to *individual* clients (for example, ensuring that clients are passed on to other services, and that a small number of clients do not monopolise services), rather than to wider issues affecting the area as a whole.

For example, while the level of communication about clients is good, it partly stems from the fact that there are a number of agencies targeting the same client group using similar methods. To minimise duplication in dealing with individuals, and indeed, to avoid treading on other agencies' turf, communication is vital. If The Glen had a more coherent area strategy, and a spectrum of services in place, services would not be tripping over each other dealing with the same clients, and would probably not feel the need for the same level of communication.

Of course, services could reasonably argue that they are simply 'following the funding'. If funding becomes available for, for example, early school leavers, then services are quite entitled to apply for money for a new project, even if a similar project already exists. It is at this level that area planning becomes important. Ideally, applications from the area should be the result of a co-ordinated effort from all relevant service providers. New services should learn from, or link with, pre-existing services. However, such an ideal situation does not come about without the support of a strong co-ordinating body at local level. Currently, The Glen lacks such a body.

### **Co-ordinating Body**

Magnet is a voluntary networking group made up of local representatives and professionals. Since its inception it appears to have increased liaison between agencies, and has, to some extent, promoted area-based planning. In particular, the work of Magnet led to funding being provided for a Resource Centre, and the development of a community crèche. It appears to be well regarded by teachers and other service providers.

However, Magnet is not a funding body and is not in a position to develop *and implement* an area plan. Although it has promoted greater liaison between service providers in the area, it has little or no resources, not even having a premises. Thus, while Magnet can make suggestions as to how the area should be developed, there is a limit to what it can do to bring about such changes. This is not to criticise the work

done by Magnet. It is simply a fact that as provision is currently construed, a group with no major financial backing is constrained in the influence it can exert.

Cork City Partnership is in many ways in a better position to implement plans for the area. It is a large organisation with significant resources, and community development forms a significant part of its brief. It has invested some resources in The Glen, including funding the Education and Training Support Project and the Thinking of College – Parents Initiative. Service providers in The Glen have also availed of the Partnership’s Community Development Unit, which provides training, facilitation and technical advice to community groups, and assists with local development plans.

Despite this, one of the teachers and one of the service providers interviewed criticised the Partnership for its lack of consultation skills. They believed that it had set up additional services in the area without consulting local service providers or residents, resulting in some duplication of services. Some service providers had officially complained to ADM about Cork City Partnership’s methods, leading to some improvement. It would seem that although the Partnership is reasonably placed to implement a plan for The Glen, it has not done so. There is a need for the Partnership, or a body such as the newly formed Cork City Development Board, to take a strong role in directing service provision for The Glen. However, it is essential that this involve comprehensive consultation with all relevant parties. In particular, co-operation with Magnet should form a central part of the consultative process.

### ***Statutory Bodies and Government Departments***

There is a considerable amount of interaction between the smaller service providers in The Glen. Services share some information on clients, while, through the work of Magnet and Cork City Partnership, they have engaged in joint training and some strategic planning for the area. This co-operation is not as evident in larger organisations, or in government Departments. Indeed, one of the service providers interviewed commented that she did not believe statutory agencies would ever integrate without significant local government reform.

Some felt that although those ‘on the ground’ were committed to integration, higher management did not see it as a major goal. One teacher pointed out that, in her opinion, the Department of Education and Science did not even seem to know about its own schemes. Consequently, she found it difficult to believe that it could consult with other government Departments to develop a coherent approach to service provision.

Another interviewee gave the example of how the Community Garda is assigned to an area for a maximum of three years, making it difficult to build the trust of residents or to establish a good working relationship with other service providers. Similarly, the apparently frequent redeployment of social workers by the SHB inhibits the process of integration.

It would seem that the quality of communication between smaller service providers and government Departments or statutory bodies could also be improved. For example, the NYP was formerly funded by National Lottery funds, channelled through the SHB. They are now funded by the SHB, but only recently discovered that this was the case, as nobody in the SHB had informed them of the change.

The trend among those interviewed was to see service integration as something local service providers were working towards, but with little help, and occasional hindrance, from larger organisations and government Departments. Indeed, all of the service providers interviewed were critical of the manner in which government Departments allocated funds to The Glen. In particular, the short-term nature of funding designed to combat longstanding problems, and what was described as “flavour of the month funding” were criticised. A more detailed discussion of funding allocation in The Glen will follow in the section entitled *Allocation of Funds*.

### ***Southern Health Board***

The SHB is one of the largest service providers dealing with the population of The Glen. As mentioned, there is no SHB Health Centre in the estate, and residents normally use the Health Centre in Blackpool, a short distance away from one end of the estate. While the limitations of services offered by the SHB have already been discussed in the section on *Gaps in Provision*, the same limitations also affect the degree of service integration in The Glen. Therefore, they will be repeated here.

Many of those interviewed thought that the SHB was quite understaffed, with a shortage of social workers and PHNs in particular. Some teachers commented on the slow response of SHB staff to requests for intervention, as well as the poor supply of feedback following intervention. One interviewee also believed that social workers were moved around too often to build a good working relationship with other service providers. Such factors obviously militate against service integration. Staff shortages make liaising with other service providers very difficult, while rapid staff turnover and

redeployment make it difficult to develop the interpersonal relationships and local understanding that foster integration.

It is apparent that the SHB could foster greater links with other service providers, particularly in terms of feedback. To achieve this, it is necessary that the SHB have adequate staffing levels, and that staff be retained in the same post for longer periods of time. Of course, it is also essential that SHB management perceive service integration to be an organisational priority, and that work practices are defined in such a manner as to facilitate this. Furthermore, it would be beneficial if the SHB could establish an adequate presence in the estate, for example, by making use of the facilities in the new Resource Centre.

Finally, as mentioned in the summary of interviews conducted with teachers, some concerns were raised about the manner in which SHB social workers dealt with referrals from teachers. This will be dealt with later as part of *The Role of Schools*, in a section entitled *SHB and Confidentiality*.

## **Allocation of Funds**

In many ways the allocation of funding to services in The Glen mirrors the situation found in other disadvantaged areas around the country. Many projects are short-term pilot projects, operating on a reasonably tight budget. Funding comes from multiple sources, including a variety of EU and Irish government funding strands. In this section, the manner in which funds are allocated to the area will be discussed.

### ***Coherency of Funding***

Some interviewees pointed out that projects were funded without taking into account pre-existing services or the needs of the area as perceived by those who live or work there. They believed that current provision should be analysed before further funds were allocated, and that models of best practice should be developed. This does not appear to happen at present. Local knowledge should have a role to play in deciding what funds are allocated and how they are spent. While a co-ordinating body, such as the Partnership, could become involved in the distribution of funds, statutory agencies could also take more responsibility at local level.

Current funding strategies by government Departments and other sources such as the EU could be seen as fostering competition between local service providers, who

scramble to access the same limited funds. How funds should be spent is decided at national or EU level, without reference to the specific problems of the local area. One interviewee believed that funding strategies led services to chase money and consequently, to engage in activities outside their primary areas of expertise. It may be that this type of flavour of the month funding has led to areas such as The Glen having a number of activity-based projects dealing with young adolescents, while other types of services are under-resourced or nonexistent.

### ***Adequacy of Funding***

While some organisations in The Glen receive adequate funding to support their activities, there are others for which finances are both insufficient and insecure. Some service providers spend a considerable amount of their time sourcing funding, thereby diverting time from their core activities. Indeed, one interviewee's organisation had recently almost closed for three months due to lack of finances. While adequate funding may be supplied to pay core staff wages, one interviewee complained that other expenses such as administration and office rental and equipment were not taken into consideration. In her agency, no funds were allocated to pay for a cleaner, meaning that core staff cleaned the offices. Clearly, this is not the most effective use of funds.

As well as the actual amount of funding provided, the security of funds also impacts on activities. Some of the service providers interviewed criticised the fact that funding was allocated in a piecemeal fashion, with some not knowing from year to year how their project would be funded. Again, this is not the most effective use of funds, as it precludes the possibility of long-term planning for the organisation, which in turn affects planning for the area as a whole.

It would be beneficial if funding bodies financed the proper running of a service, including administration, rather than providing a core amount which staff must supplement from whatever sources they can. Similarly, if funding bodies expect service providers to function optimally, then a service's future funding prospects should be clarified as far in advance as is practicable.

## The Role of Schools

In this section, the relationship of the schools with other service providers will be examined, as will the relationship between schools and local families.

### *Schools' Interaction With Other Service Providers*

In general, schools in and for The Glen have a reasonable level of interaction with service providers, particularly with smaller, locally-based groups. It is clear that the fact that both primary schools are involved in Magnet has helped to integrate them into the service provider network, and has facilitated communication. Despite this, there are many improvements that could be made. While there is reasonable sharing of information between the primary schools and local service providers, it is primarily informal and is based on personal relationships with individual staff working in local services.

Sharing of information should become more formalised and should extend more to post-primary schools located outside the area. One of the teachers indicated that integration of services diminished as children transferred to post-primary schools. This would seem to be the case, and may be due to post-primary schools having an enrolment from a much larger catchment area. To counteract this, post-primary schools and services in The Glen should establish better and more formalised communication about students.

Both primary schools in The Glen have teaching principals, both of whom raised lack of time to liaise with service providers as a problem. The schools did not have a sufficiently large enrolment to qualify for an administrative principal post. Nonetheless, due to the high number of disadvantaged pupils, both principals spent a considerable amount of time liaising with service providers and with parents. This results in the unsatisfactory situation whereby they must leave their class at regular intervals. The principals in both schools would benefit from some form of part-time support that would allow principals to be released from teaching duties for a day or two per week.

Although interaction between schools and service providers is generally positive, the primary schools' relationship with the SHB has been problematic.

## SHB and Confidentiality

As mentioned earlier, four teachers discussed a perceived lack of sensitivity on the part of the SHB regarding the role of the school. Specifically, the practice of naming teachers who asked for SHB involvement was an issue of concern for teachers.

Currently, there does not seem to be a clear national policy on protecting the identity of reporters of potential child abuse cases. Much is at the discretion of the local Health Board. The Freedom of Information Act established a legal right for people to access information held about them by public bodies. However, this right has to be balanced with the rights of the reporter and the question of whether the child will be negatively affected by the release of the reporter's name.

The Department of Health and Children pamphlet *Child Abuse! What can I do?* clearly states that "While the health boards cannot guarantee confidentiality, they will not normally reveal the names of members of the public who report suspected child abuse unless they have permission to do so." (1999, p.3). While such a policy does not guarantee confidentiality for reporters, it is implicit that efforts will be made to maintain it. No teacher in any of the other case study areas referred to teachers' names being divulged. This would suggest that the SHB does not make as strenuous an effort as do other Health Boards to maintain confidentiality. Unfortunately, given such a situation, it is likely that teachers may be less willing to refer cases to the SHB. At the very least, the SHB needs to have greater consultation with schools about the issue of confidentiality and the rights of reporters.

## ***Schools' Interaction With Families***

There were clear differences in how parents described the attitude of the various local schools in dealing with disadvantaged students and their families. Apart from the distinction between primary and post-primary schools, there were major differences in how parents described the latter. In this section, the role of primary and post-primary schools will be discussed separately.

### Primary

The vast majority of parents interviewed were very happy with the manner in which the two primary schools in The Glen dealt with children and their families. The schools were recognised as being very welcoming, and having a friendly and informal atmosphere. In particular, the Parents' Room and the HSCL co-ordinator were praised

as helping parents to become involved in their children's education. Indeed, most thought that a typical parent would turn first to the primary schools (specifically, the HSCL co-ordinator) if their child was having problems. A few specific complaints were raised about past inflexibility, but they were accompanied by comments that the schools had since become more open to the different situations of pupils.

While parents were quite happy with the atmosphere of the schools, some expressed the wish to become more involved in the practical aspects of schooling. More specifically, some thought that parents should be occasionally brought into classrooms to help them understand what went on during their child's school day. Some also stated that they would enjoy assisting with classes, and thought that parents and pupils would benefit from such an activity. Neither primary school in The Glen uses parents in the role of classroom assistant, or brings parents into the classroom to assist with teaching on a regular basis. Since there is a willingness by some parents to support teachers in the classroom, schools should seriously consider a response.

### **Post-Primary**

There were major differences in how the post-primary schools serving the area were described by parents, although all were agreed that post-primary schools in general were less welcoming of parents than were primary schools. The general criticisms raised about post-primary schools mainly concerned the lack of feedback given to parents. Most of those interviewed felt that post-primary schools serving the area only got in touch with parents when clear problems arose.

For example, parents were contacted when their child was about to be suspended, rather than at an earlier stage to let them know that their child was beginning to misbehave. Similarly, some complained that students could play truant for up to a week before parents were informed. Some told of parents who, aware that their child had been playing truant, brought the child to school each day. However, the child would then leave school without attending classes, but the school would not inform parents until a later date. Based on such reports, it would seem that post-primary schools serving the area need to improve the level of feedback supplied to parents. More specifically, in cases of unexplained absences (particularly when the student is a known truant) parents should be informed much sooner than they are at present.

Parents expressed the wish for more meetings with teachers, preferably in smaller groups than at a typical parent-teacher meeting or school open day. They

believed that meetings at class level, in which all parents of students in a given class were invited to the school would be more effective. Many parents from The Glen have not attended post-primary schools themselves, and find the large schools, and many teachers to be intimidating. Smaller groups and a more informal atmosphere (such as inviting parents to view students' artwork) would make many feel more comfortable in the post-primary environment.

One post-primary school was particularly criticised by parents. A number of years previously the principal was perceived to have actively excluded children from The Glen in order to raise the school's status. The policy of excluding students who come from part of the school's catchment area is contrary to Department of Education and Science policy. Furthermore, the principal was reported to have been rude and condescending to parents, which is clearly inappropriate behaviour.

The school's policy appears to have changed in recent times (the change was ascribed by those interviewed to falling enrolment and the opening of a competing school within a short distance). Nonetheless, only a small minority of pupils from either primary school in The Glen transfers to the post-primary school in question, as resentment lingers among parents in the area. At the time of the unofficial exclusion policy, parents felt that they had no recourse in the face of such a stance by the principal. It would appear to be incumbent upon the Department of Education and Science to develop a more parent-friendly system of complaints and appeals.

### ***St Patrick's College and Disadvantaged Status***

St Patrick's College is an anomaly among the schools included in the case study, as it is the only school (primary or post-primary) that is not designated as disadvantaged under the Department of Education and Science's *Scheme of Assistance to Schools in Designated Areas of Disadvantage*. Both teachers interviewed from St Patrick's indicated that all the school's 'feeder' primary schools are designated as disadvantaged, suggesting that the school itself has a significant proportion of disadvantaged students. Given this, it is unclear why St Patrick's is not designated as disadvantaged.

From interviews with parents in The Glen, it would seem that St Patrick's is perceived to have less facilities and support than other post-primary schools serving The Glen's population. Therefore, parents are less willing to send their children to the school than to neighbouring schools. It is likely that some of the perceived lack of facilities in St Patrick's derives from the school not being designated as disadvantaged,

and consequently, not being able to avail of the extra financial support. With designated disadvantaged status, St Patrick's would be better able to meet the needs of students from The Glen.

## **Summary of Main Recommendations**

This section provides a brief summary of the main recommendations for The Glen that have already been described in more detail earlier in the chapter.

### ***Current Provision***

1. While the new Resource Centre should significantly improve service provision in The Glen, this will only happen if efforts are made to ensure that local people are given priority in its use, and that facilities are affordable to the local population.
2. The new premises for service providers should adopt an open-door policy, and specify that greater communication between occupying services is a condition of residence.
3. The involvement of local people in service provision could be increased and should be complemented by adequate skills transfer and accredited training.
4. Current provision is lacking or limited in the areas of: sports and leisure facilities; Health Board and psychological services; provision for 5- to 9-year olds; and, an information and support facility.
5. Multiple service providers are offering similar activity-based provision to a similar target group. Some rationalisation of services would lead to a more effective use of funds.

### ***Service Integration***

1. The Glen would benefit from a properly resourced co-ordinating body, which could help to develop and implement an overall service strategy for the area.
2. Government Departments and statutory bodies need to communicate more effectively, and to prioritise service integration.
3. The SHB would be able to offer a more effective service if allocated an expanded staff, who would be maintained in posts for sufficient time to establish good working relationships with other service providers.

### ***Allocation of Funds***

1. Funding in The Glen lacks coherency. Statutory agencies at local level and a local co-ordinating body should have involvement in disbursement of funds.
2. Inadequate and insecure funding has a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of service provision. Funding should be sufficient to cover core organisational activities, and future funding prospects should be made known at as early a stage as possible.

### ***The Role of Schools***

1. Schools, particularly post-primary schools, need to improve channels of communication with other service providers and to formalise existing channels.
2. Both primary schools in The Glen have teaching principals. Some part-time support is needed to allow the principals to liaise with service providers and parents.
3. The SHB needs to make greater effort to maintain confidentiality in the case of teachers who report suspected child abuse or neglect. At a minimum, the Health Board needs to consult with schools about confidentiality issues and the rights of reporters.
4. Both primary schools should continue to foster parental involvement in school activities, and explore new methods of increasing such involvement, including having parents assist in classrooms.
5. Post-primary schools serving The Glen need to develop greater parental involvement and to increase communication between school and parents about children.
6. The inclusion of St Patrick's College in the *Scheme of Assistance to Schools in Designated Areas of Disadvantage* would be of benefit to the school in meeting the needs of students from The Glen.



## Profile of Muirhevna Mór

Muirhevna Mór is a large local authority housing estate situated to the south east of Dundalk town centre. Building began in 1975, and at that time it was planned to be the Republic's largest single housing scheme, with 1,800 homes. Due to funding and policy changes regarding sizes of local authority estates, only 721 houses were built, with the last phase of building completed in 1985. The majority (81%) of houses in the area are two-storey, terraced. Most (76.5%) are three-bedroomed, with the remainder a mix of one-, two- and four-bedroomed dwellings. Approximately three-quarters of the houses are rented from Dundalk Urban District Council (Ait na Daoine, 1994).

Muirhevna Mór is a geographically distinct area. To the north it is bordered by a main thoroughfare; to the south by the main Dublin road; to the east by the Dublin-Belfast by-pass and industrial estate, and to the west by a link road between the Dublin road and the by-pass. The area is perceived by locals as divided into 3 parts, each seen as a community in its own right.

At the time of the 1996 census, Muirhevna Mór formed a minority part of two DEDs. Therefore, it was not possible to use Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) derived from the 1996 census to establish demographic characteristics of the area. However, it would be recognised locally as being, along with the nearby estate of Cox's Demesne, the most disadvantaged area of Dundalk. Ait na Daoine, a local service provider, carried out a survey of residents in Muirhevna Mór in 1994. All statistics reported subsequently are based on this survey.

### Population

In 1994, Muirhevna Mór had a population of approximately 3,000. A significant percentage of the population were families from Northern Ireland who left Belfast and surrounding areas in the Seventies and Eighties. The area had a very young population, with 63.5% under the age of 25 years, and 37.4% under the age of 12 years. The average household size was 4.2 persons, compared to the national average of 3.14 (CSO, 1997).

## **Travellers**

There is a significant Traveller population housed in Muirhevna Mór and the wider Dundalk area. Louth County Council has a policy that one in every 20 council houses built is for members of the Travelling community. There is a 10-bay halting site on the outskirts of the estate and also a purpose built housing estate that houses 10 families.

## **Educational Facilities and Attainment**

Based on the 1994 survey by Ait na Daoine, 30% of the population had primary level education only, while 23% had completed post-primary school. Only 5.5% had attended third level education, 0.5% had a professional qualification, and 0.5% had a trade qualification. Although the comparability of data is unclear<sup>1</sup>, it is nonetheless useful to compare the Ait na Daoine survey with data from the CSO. CSO data indicate that nationally, 29.5% completed primary school only, while 29.9% completed second level, and 19.69% had some form of third level qualification (CSO, 1998a). This would suggest that, even allowing for possible differences in survey method, the percentage of the population with third level qualifications is considerably lower in Muirhevna Mór than nationally. Also, the Ait na Daoine survey indicated that 70% of adults in Muirhevna Mór had left school by the age of 15, compared to 34.8% nationally.

There are two primary schools and no post-primary school in the estate. The primary schools are Gaelscoil Dhún Dealgan (Scoil Chríost Rí) and St Joseph's NS. Scoil Chríost Rí is the only gaelscoil in the Dundalk area, and has an enrolment of 185 boys and girls. St Joseph's has an enrolment of 404 boys and girls.

As there is no post-primary school in Muirhevna Mór, students from the estate tend to attend three nearby post-primary schools. The main schools are O'Fiaich College (a VEC, mixed sex school, with 822 students), St Vincent's (an all-girls convent school, with an enrolment of 749 girls) and Coláiste Rís (a CBS, with 510 primarily male students).

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<sup>1</sup> As it is implied, but not stated, in the survey that these data referred to adults, it is difficult to know how comparable the data are to CSO data (which are based on those aged over 15 years, who are no longer in full-time education).

## Socioeconomic Activity

The Ait na Daoine survey found that 29.7% of adults in Muirhevna Mór were unemployed and seeking work, compared to the national average of 14.78%. The survey also found that 67% of those unemployed had been unemployed for more than four years, and that 63.5% of households in Muirhevna Mór had no employed household member. Eighty-eight percent of adults in the estate were classified as 'manual workers', while 12% were classified as 'white collar workers'.

As the classification of occupations used by the survey differed from that used by the CSO, precise comparisons are not possible. However, white collar workers could be considered as roughly comparable to Social Classes 1, 2 and 3 (professional workers, managerial and technical, and non-manual workers). These three Social Classes comprised 45% of the population in 1996 (CSO, 1998b), considerably higher than the 12% found in Muirhevna Mór. The classification of 'manual workers' can be compared with Social Classes 4, 5 and 6 (skilled manual, semiskilled, and unskilled). These three Social Classes form 41.8% of the national population. Therefore, it would seem that Muirhevna Mór has a considerably higher rate of unemployment than is found nationally, and that workers tend to be highly concentrated in the lower Social Classes.

## Transport

There are two bus services (one run by Bus Eireann, and one privately) that link Muirhevna Mór with Dundalk town. Buses stop at three parts of the estate to accommodate all areas. The service is reasonably frequent, with buses every 30 – 60 minutes during the week. There is no service after 8 pm.

## Sports and Leisure Facilities

Dundalk Urban District Council Sports Complex is on the edge of the estate, but caters for all of Dundalk. The centre offers a variety of sports facilities but is infrequently used by the community in Muirhevna Mór as prices are locally perceived to be too high. However, local community groups use the complex on a sessional basis for boxing, soccer, Gaelic football and hurling. Dundalk UDC have plans to develop a new sports centre and swimming pool closer to the centre of Dundalk town. At the

time the case study was carried out there was a degree of uncertainty as to the future of the Muirhevna Mór complex.

Muirhevna Mór Community Council has sourced funds for a Community Resource Centre, which will be built on grounds adjacent to the sports complex. The facility will house a Health Centre, a crèche and playgroup, a coffee shop, some enterprise units, and outreach offices to be shared between a number of service providers. At the time of writing (May, 2000), final plans were being drawn up for planning approval. It is expected that the new facility will open in early 2002.

Within the estate, there are plenty of green areas. However, these do not have any play facilities, and cannot even be used for informal sports activities, as they are generally humped in shape, thereby precluding most sports. There are a small number of groups within the area set up by residents which offer sport and leisure activities.

## **Crime and Drugs**

Crime is perceived by local people to be a major problem. The Ait na Daoine survey found that 20% of respondents thought that joyriding was a problem, while 18.5% considered vandalism a problem. A further 7% cited both the presence of vigilantes and the level of crime as problems. Finally, locals perceive drugs as a growing problem in the estate, with 25% of adults surveyed in 1994 stating that the availability of drink and drugs was a problem.

## Service Provision for Muirhevna Mór

There are a considerable number of services, mostly voluntary, in the Muirhevna Mór community. There is also a variety of service providers located on the grounds of St Joseph's NS, providing a relatively centralised location for many smaller service providers. In this section, all identified services are listed and briefly described. Services based within schools are described first, followed by other services available to the area.

### School-based Provision

Schools in Muirhevna Mór are included in many of the Department of Education and Science's schemes to combat educational disadvantage. Inclusion in the more general schemes is outlined first, followed by a description of some initiatives peculiar to Muirhevna Mór.

#### *General Schemes*

##### Primary

Table 3.1 summarises primary schools' involvement in Department of Education and Science-sponsored schemes. As can be seen, both schools are designated as disadvantaged. St Joseph's has access to a full-time HSCL teacher, while, at the time of the case study, Chríost Rí had a half-time HSCL post. Neither school had an Early Start programme, although both had crèches associated with the school. St Joseph's has a full-time remedial teacher, while Chríost Rí has a half-time remedial post.

Table 3.1. Involvement of primary schools in Department of Education and Science schemes to redress educational disadvantage.

School	Designated Disadvantaged	HSCL	Early Start	Remedial
St Joseph's	✓	✓	No	✓
Gaelscoil Chríost Rí	✓	✓	No	✓

## Post-primary

As shown in Table 3.2, all three post-primary schools are designated as disadvantaged, and are include in the HSCL scheme. All also have remedial teachers and teacher counsellors. Aside from the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Programmes O’Fiaich College and St Vincent’s offer the Transition Year Programme, while O’Fiaich also offers the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. Coláiste Rís offers neither the Transition Year programme nor the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme.

Table 3.2. Involvement of post-primary schools in Department of Education and Science schemes to redress educational disadvantage.

School	Designated Disadvantaged	HSCL	Remedial	Teacher Counsellor	TYP	LCAP
O’Fiaich College	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
St Vincent’s Secondary School	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	No
Coláiste Rís	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	No

## Specific Schemes

### 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan

The aim of this project is to prevent early school leaving through an integrated, inter-agency response. It is part of the Department of Education and Science’s 8- to 15-Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative. The project involves a wide range of actions, including the tracking of attendance, reward and incentive programmes, personal development delivered by Dundalk Counselling Service within the schools, after-school youth groups, homework support, inservice for teachers and joint parent-child activities. The targeted young people are exposed to activities such as art and craft, cooking, video work, drama and outdoor pursuits.

A variety of schools, statutory and voluntary agencies participate. The schools involved are St Joseph’s NS, two other primary schools from outside the Muirhevna Mór area, and O’Fiaich College. Other agencies involved include Muirhevna Mór Community Youth Project, Louth Youth Federation, County Louth VEC, North Eastern Health Board (NEHB), members of the Gardaí, the Probation and Welfare

Service, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, and Dundalk Employment Partnership.

### Stay in School Initiative

O’Fiaich College is one of 58 schools who have been invited to participate in the first phase of the Stay in School initiative. Schools will, on average, receive approximately £40,000 each to implement an individualised retention plan developed by the school and the Department of Education and Science. This will provide for a range of targeted measures directed at the particular needs of the school, together with clear projected outcomes in terms of increased retention. A key requirement of the individual retention plans will be that the school operates on a multi-agency basis and establishes appropriate cross-community links in delivering on its commitments.

Suggested types of intervention include:

- systematic tracking of absences with follow-up action
- additional teaching hours targeted at pupils at risk of leaving the system
- after-hours initiatives
- significantly enhanced Home/School and Community outreach provision
- induction programmes for 1<sup>st</sup> year students
- sport and leisure clubs
- individual support with numeracy and literacy.

### Early School Leavers/Disadvantaged Programme

The Early School Leavers/Disadvantaged Programme is based in Coláiste Rís and is funded by the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. A consortium of local organisations, including Dundalk Employment Partnership, Louth Youth Federation and the Society of St Vincent de Paul manages the programme.

The programme incorporates a transition programme for incoming 1<sup>st</sup> year students and a leadership and mentoring training course for 5<sup>th</sup> year students. However, the main focus of the programme is aimed at 11 students in 1<sup>st</sup> year that have been judged to be at high risk of dropout. Those in the programme take one Junior Certificate subject less than their classmates and take in its place personal development and activity-based learning classes. The main aim of the project is to retain at least 7 of the 11 students until they have completed the Junior Certificate.

## Other Service Provision

Table 3.3 summarises the main service providers for Muirhevna Mór. Services are described in terms of primary focus (whether they target early school leavers or a broader client group), funding and location of premises. As can be seen, most do not specifically target either the prevention of early school leaving, or actual early school leavers.

Table 3.3 Service providers for Muirhevna Mór, described by primary focus, main funding source and type of premises.

Service	Primary Focus	Funding	Premises
Ait na Daoine	Other	Government	Old church
Muirhevna Mór Springboard Initiative	Other	Government	School grounds
Dundalk Employment Partnership	Other	Government + EU	Outside area
NEHB Health Centre	Other	Government	Purpose-built
Community Parenting Programme	Other	Government	Outside area
Traveller Primary Healthcare	Other	Government	Outside area
Muirhevna Mór Community Youth Project	Other	Government	Terraced house
Moving On	Other	Government	Terraced house
TEAM project	Other	Government	Terraced house
Dundalk Resource Centre for the Unemployed	Other	Government	Terraced house
Gardaí Community Relations Section	Other	Government	Outside area
Holy Family Development Group	Other	Government	School grounds
Holy Family Community Crèche	Other	Government + Peace and Reconciliation	Old church
Líos na nOg	Other	Government	Terraced house
Naonraí Dún Dealgan	Other	Government	Sports Centre

Service	Primary Focus	Funding	Premises
Right Start	Other	Government	School grounds
Muirhevna Mór Community Council	Other	Government	Old church
Muirhevna Mór Job Club	Other	Government	School grounds
Cúchulainn	Other	Government	Outside area
Louth Youth Federation	Other	Government	Outside area
Ógra Dún Dealgan CTW	Actual ESL	Government	Outside area
Youthreach	Actual ESL	Government	Outside area
Tara Training Centre	Other	Government	Outside area
Second Chance	Prevent ESL	Government + EU	Outside area
Youth Initiative in Partnership	Other	Government + Peace and Reconciliation	Outside area

As can be seen from Table 3.3, there are many services available to the population of Muirhevna Mór, and the majority are located within the estate. The services will be described in more detail in the remainder of this section.

### ***Ait na Daoine***

Ait na Daoine is a FÁS-sponsored community development project, which was set up to address social, economic and cultural issues in Muirhevna Mór. It acts as a resource centre to empower local groups and individuals and provides information, support, services and training. More specifically, it provides training courses and accreditation in areas such as parenting, crafts, computers and community group management courses. It also offers administrative support, advice about funding and other issues, and access to office equipment to both new and established community groups in the area. Ait na Daoine staff are represented on the boards of some other local service providers.

For the general public, Ait na Daoine provides a Community Resource Library containing recent publications, reports from statutory agencies, newsletters,

information on adult education, back-to-work schemes and similar material. It runs a Community Forum twice yearly to get feedback on issues relating to the community, and produces a Community Newsletter for every house in Muirhevna Mór.

### ***Muirhevna Mór Springboard Initiative***

Springboard is a 3-year pilot initiative set up in June 1999 by the Department of Health and Children. Its primary functions are to provide a co-ordinated response to the needs of families in Muirhevna Mór, with a particular focus on children aged 0 to 10 years. The initiative is located in a prefab at St Joseph's NS. It is funded by the NEHB, but is managed locally, with participation from statutory, voluntary and community groups. Currently, the project deals with 15 families and expects to be dealing with 30 families in three years time. Families are referred through various agencies. At the moment, most families have been referred through St Joseph's NS, but families have also been referred from the Child Protection Agency and the community crèche.

Springboard uses both direct work with families and community development to achieve its aims. The type of services Springboard offers includes:

- individual work with parents
- programmes on diet, health and nutrition
- support work with children
- parenting initiatives
- advice on household and money management
- joint work with other agencies promoting the well-being of children.

### ***Dundalk Employment Partnership***

Area-based Partnerships were established in 1991 as a targeted response to problems of long-term unemployment and social exclusion in areas of significant disadvantage around the country. The Partnerships involve a variety of sectors in the local community (state agencies, unions, farmers, employers, community and voluntary organisations) in identifying and meeting local needs. The Partnerships are located in, owned and run by the community, and receive resources from the Government and the European Union to implement their multi-annual Action Plans.

Dundalk Employment Partnership, as its name would suggest, has the creation of employment as its main aim. It has concentrated on activities such as enterprise

creation and development, the development of a local employment service, and education and training, particularly for the long-term unemployed. However, the Partnership is also involved in community development, and spends 21% of its budget supporting community-based initiatives such as the Muirhevna Mór Community Youth Project.

### ***North Eastern Health Board (NEHB)***

The NEHB is the health board responsible for the counties of Louth, Meath, Cavan and Monaghan. Like all regional health boards, the NEHB offers a variety of services to its clients, including access to social workers, psychologists and public health nurses. Within Muirhevna Mór, the NEHB operates a Health Centre, and offers targeted programmes such as the Community Parenting Programme and a Traveller Primary Health Care Project, each of which will be described in the next sections.

#### **Health Centre**

The NEHB operates a Health Centre from purpose-built premises in the centre of Muirhevna Mór. The centre offers the following facilities:

- Dental clinic (children only)
- a Public Health Nurse
- a Community Welfare Officer
- a Child Care Worker
- GP service.

#### **Community Parenting Programme**

The Community Parenting Programme is funded by the NEHB and operates from offices in Dundalk town centre. The service is available to people from all areas of Dundalk. The aim of the programme is to encourage parents to enjoy and participate fully in their child's development.

#### **Traveller Primary Health Care Project**

The Traveller Primary Health Care Project is designed to improve the health of members of the Travelling community. It is a peer-led initiative which focuses on improving awareness, knowledge and uptake of health services in County Louth. The project is funded by the NEHB, and was set up in 1998 on a pilot basis. It is run by women from the Travelling community, who also liaise with health service providers.

### ***Muirhevna Mór Community Youth Project***

The Community Youth Project aims to develop a community-based response to the needs of young people within Muirhevna Mór. The project is managed by Louth Youth Federation, and is funded by Dundalk Employment Partnership, FÁS and the EU Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. The project adopts a two-pronged approach to dealing with young people's needs. It engages in direct work with young people, but also works with adults.

The project offers a variety of activities throughout the day, with afternoon and early evening set aside for young people, and mornings and late evenings for adults. It offers after-school activity and homework groups for children ranging from 4 to 12 years of age. The project also offers courses to adults on topics such as personal development, cookery and art. Apart from these activities, the Community Youth Project runs two other projects – Moving On and TEAM – which are described below.

#### **Moving On Project**

FÁS and the NEHB fund the Moving On project. Its aim is to enable young mothers (aged 16-25) to gain access to employment education or training by developing and delivering needs-based accredited pre-vocational training. The programme was funded as a two-year pilot project, and initial funding ended in December 1999. However, it is hoped that alternative sources of funding will be found, enabling the project to continue in 2000.

#### **TEAM**

TEAM is a scheme funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Its aim is to divert young people at risk of getting involved in crime, substance and drug abuse, or those already so involved, from anti-social activities. In Muirhevna Mór, the scheme caters for 90 young people, aged between 9 and 19 years. Of these, 60% have been referred to the scheme through their involvement in crime.

Though primarily a crime prevention measure, TEAM is also intended to reach young people likely to drop out of the education system prematurely, those in need of emotional support due to family circumstances, and those unable to participate in other youth activities because of behavioural difficulties.

TEAM works with local service providers:

- to identify young people at risk and assess intervention programmes to service their needs

- to promote productive and creative use of the target groups' leisure time with a view to enabling their integration into mainstream youth activity groups
- to liaise closely with parents, schools, other agencies and the community in general.

### ***Dundalk Resource Centre for the Unemployed***

The Resource Centre was set up to provide a wide range of services to people with queries regarding welfare issues, rights and entitlements. It also supplies information on education, health and unfair dismissals. Although normally located outside Muirhevna Mór, the Resource Centre also operates for a few hours per week within the estate.

### ***Garda Community Relations Section***

As with all Garda Community Relations Sections, the aim is to formulate, implement and evaluate all crime prevention programmes and measures utilised by An Garda Síochána. The section also strives to promote a more positive image for An Garda Síochána and better relations with the local community. The main activities of the section in Muirhevna Mór are the Juvenile Liaison Officer role, the Garda Schools Programme and involvement in the TEAM project.

### ***Holy Family Development Group***

The Holy Family Development Group is a FÁS-funded project to aid in the development of skills among local people, with a view to gaining employment. The group provides training and employment on CE schemes to 60 people. The main types of employment offered are youth work, childcare, classroom and special needs assistants, and caretaking and administration work.

### ***Holy Family Community Crèche***

The Holy Family Community Crèche offers an affordable childcare service to people living/working in the Holy Family Parish (Muirhevna Mór). It gives preference to those returning to education. The crèche is funded by the NEHB, ADM, EU Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, and by subscriptions from parents.

### ***Lios Na nÓg***

Lios Na nÓg provides both a playgroup and after-school service for children within the community. The playgroup caters for children aged between 2 ½ and 4 years of age, and runs five mornings per week. The after school service runs five afternoons a week, and both services supply lunch to attendees. Lios Na nÓg is funded by fees from parents of attendees and some local fundraising events. Attendees referred by the NEHB have their costs covered by that organisation.

### ***Naonraí Dún Dealgan***

Naonraí Dún Dealgan offers a pre-school service to children within Muirhevna Mór. The service is linked to Gaelscoil Dún Dealgan. The Department of Education and Science funds one part-time worker, and the project receives some additional funding from the NEHB.

### ***Right Start***

Right Start offers a pre-school service specifically aimed at Travelling children. It is designed to recognise the importance of Traveller culture while preparing children for primary education. The service operates five mornings a week. The pre-school is located in the grounds of St Joseph's NS, and is funded by the Department of Education and Science.

### ***Muirhevna Mór Community Council***

The Community Council is the representative body of voluntary and community organisations operating in the area. It is an umbrella group that aims to create positive attitudes towards Muirhevna Mór, and to develop a joint approach to achieving goals for the area. The group meets monthly, and meetings are attended by up to 40 representatives from local groups. While the case study was being conducted, the Community Council sourced funding for a Community Centre for Muirhevna Mór. Funding will be supplied from a number of sources, including the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The new Community Centre will be located in the premises currently occupied by the Dundalk Sports Centre. Building work is expected to begin in June 2000, when the Sports Centre will move to a new, purpose-built facility.

### ***Muirhevna Mór Job Club***

The Job Club is located on the grounds of St Joseph's NS, and aims to enable long term unemployed people to acquire job-seeking skills. It provides advice on topics such as interview techniques and C.V. preparation.

### ***Cúchulainn Project***

The Cúchulainn Project is a project recently initiated by the Probation and Welfare Service. Funding is provided by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. A consortium of groups, including the Garda Community Relations Section, Louth Youth Federation, the Probation Board and representatives from local community groups, will manage the project.

It was scheduled to commence work in Muirhevna Mór in April 2000. The project is designed to engage with young offenders and their families, and will cater for Dundalk and the surrounding area. The objective of the project is to reduce re-offending and to support access to education, training and employment. Cúchulainn plans to use a "holistic" approach mixing group and individual work with a programme of creative, outdoor and indoor activities.

### ***Louth Youth Federation***

Louth Youth Federation is part of the National Youth Federation, Ireland's largest youth work organisation. It is a charitable company owned by its members. The aim of the National Youth Federation is to promote and facilitate personal development and social education for young people. The main activities in which Louth Youth Federation is involved are:

- tackling educational failure
- helping young people in trouble or at risk
- fostering political education and community action.

### ***FÁS***

FÁS is the national Training and Employment Authority, established in 1988 to provide a wide range of services to the labour market in Ireland. It has responsibility for numerous training programmes for early school leavers. In Dundalk, it provides a Community Training Workshop, a Youthreach course and a Traveller Training Centre.

### Ógra Dún Dealgan Community Training Workshop

Ógra Dún Dealgan was set up to provide training and education to approximately 20 early school leavers through in-house and employer-based training. The scheme is designed to enable young people to identify their vocational interests, to introduce them to a variety of skills, and to help them overcome literacy and numeracy problems.

### Youthreach Dundalk

Youthreach is a specially designated programme which provides basic training leading to Foundation Certification either through FÁS or the NCVA. There are no entry requirements and the training, which is full time, covers a range of vocational skills, general education and work experience. On the attainment of Foundation Level Certification, participants can advance to specific skills training or higher vocational skills training. In Dundalk, there are approximately 25 places annually on the Youthreach programme, which is funded by FÁS and County Louth VEC.

### Tara Training Centre

FÁS and County LOUTH VEC fund the Tara Training Centre. It provides training to approximately 12 Travelling women in personal social and practical skills.

### **Second Chance**

Second Chance is a pilot project that deals with a very small targeted group of probable or actual early school leavers. The project caters for boys and girls, aged between 12 and 15 years, who are too young to avail of supports such as Youthreach but are unlikely to stay in or to return to normal schooling. Although located in Cox's Demesne, Second Chance also deals with children from the Muirhevna Mór area (currently five of the 13 attendees are from Muirhevna Mór).

Participants attend school until 11am, then spend the rest of the day in the Second Chance centre, where they engage in activities such as computer training, personal development, literacy and numeracy, work experience and leisure activities. Clients include those referred by local schools, the Probation and Welfare Service, outreach workers, and by the NEHB. Youthstart primarily funds the programme, with assistance from Louth Youth Federation, NEHB, the Probation and Welfare service and Dundalk Employment Partnership. Youthstart funding was scheduled to end in December 1999, leaving some doubt over the future of the project.

### ***Youth Initiative in Partnership (YIP)***

The YIP project is funded by the NEHB and the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. Its primary activities are providing information, advice, medical referral, shower facilities, laundry facilities, cooking facilities and help with problems, to young people aged 12 to 22 years. It was set up in response to a perceived need to deal with under-age prostitution in Dundalk town centre. However, it also deals with young homeless people.



# Service Provider Interviews

## Interviewees

Five service providers were selected for in-depth interviews. Services were chosen to reflect a diversity of aim and approach, with a mixture of recently developed and more established services. The services chosen, with interviewees and their job title in brackets, were:

- Second Chance (Brian Doyle, Co-ordinator)
- Ait na Daoine (Joanne Murphy, Community Development Worker)
- 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan (Clodagh O'Mahony, Co-ordinator)
- TEAM (Michael Stokes, Teenage Co-ordinator)
- Springboard (Alice Malone, Project Manager).

The activities of each of the organisations were outlined in the section *Service Provision for Muirhevna Mór*. One of the selected organisations (Ait na Daoine) offers services to the whole community, while the other four deal directly with young children and adolescents. Second Chance is located in Cox's Demesne, a large housing estate a short distance from Muirhevna Mór, but deals with a number of young people from the Muirhevna Mór area. The other four services are located within Muirhevna Mór.

Interviews are summarised as a whole, rather than reporting what specific individuals said. Interview time varied from person to person, ranging from 90 to 140 minutes.

## Relationships with Other Service Providers

Interviewees were shown a list of service providers in or for Muirhevna Mór and asked a series of questions about their interaction with each. More specifically, they were asked to indicate with which (if any) of the groups did they:

- share client information
- engage in joint training
- jointly tender for funding
- engage in joint planning
- share a premises.

### ***Sharing Client Information***

As Ait na Daoine is more focused on community development than on dealing with specific clients, the question about sharing client information was not asked. Of the four interviewees who answered the question, all indicated that their organisation shared at least some client information with other local organisations. All four mentioned informal conversations about clients with other local service providers. These conversations generally involved another agency suggesting a potential client to the interviewee's organisation (or vice versa) or discussing issues associated with a common client. Three interviewees also indicated that their service formally shared client information with other services. In such cases, the information typically involved revealing part of a client's records, or a formal referral to another service.

### ***Joint Training***

All interviewees stated that their organisation had engaged in joint training with other organisations in the area. Most had also provided training to other service providers in the area.

### ***Joint Tendering for Funds***

Two organisations (Springboard and 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan) are directly funded by Government departments and have a set budget. Thus, the issue of jointly tendering for funds with other service providers does not arise for these two projects. However, many local service providers were involved in the initial set-up stage of both projects.

Of the three remaining organisations, Second Chance is located outside of Muirhevna Mór, and therefore had not jointly tendered for funds with service providers within the area. Both TEAM and Ait na Daoine had successfully engaged in joint tendering for funds with other service providers from Muirhevna Mór.

### ***Joint Planning***

As Springboard had been set up only a short time before the time of interview, the organisation had only done a small amount of planning with other local service providers. However, the interviewee pointed out that many local service providers had been involved in planning the activities that Springboard would undertake. Second

Chance, located in Cox's Demesne, had undertaken joint planning with only a small number of Muirhevna Mór-based organisations.

The three remaining interviewees indicated that their organisations had engaged in a significant amount of joint planning with other organisations in Muirhevna Mór. All three mentioned that they themselves or other members of their service attended meetings aimed at co-ordinating services in the Muirhevna Mór area, and that part of the function of these meetings was to plan for the area as a whole.

### ***Shared Premises***

Four of the service providers currently shared premises with at least one other service provider, while the other interviewee's organisation had previously shared premises. The latter did not think that sharing premises in the past had led to any noticeable increase in co-operation between the service providers in question.

Of the four interviewees whose organisations were currently sharing premises, three felt that this brought clear benefits, while one had noticed no such benefits. One of the main benefits identified was a greater knowledge of what other organisations did, which meant that it was easier to know where to refer clients and that areas of service duplication were less likely. Another benefit identified was a greater level of interaction with individuals working for the other organisations, facilitating co-operation between organisations.

### **How Funding Affected Organisational Activities**

The service providers interviewed were funded in a variety of ways, reflecting the general funding situation in Muirhevna Mór. Two were funded directly by Government departments, two by a mixture of EU, Government and other funds, and one by EU funding alone. All five interviewees represented services that were funded on a short-term basis. Springboard and 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan are 3-year fully-funded pilot schemes which started in 1999, while Second Chance was part-funded as a 2-year Youthstart pilot project, with funding scheduled to end in December 1999. Both TEAM and Ait na Daoine apply to have their core funding renewed on a yearly basis, and would be considered to have a reasonably secure basic core funding in the short- to medium-term.

As the questions on funding were answered very differently, depending on the nature of an organisation's funding, interviewees comments on funding are divided into those who regularly had to apply for funding and those who did not.

### ***Organisations with Adequate Funding***

Two interviewees indicated that their organisations are fully funded for the duration of the pilot projects on which they are currently working. Both found that this freed up a great deal of their time which might otherwise have been spent looking for funds. One commented that working on an adequately funded project was a novel experience, and made for a far more efficient use of resources. Rather than having staff spend their time fundraising or worrying about lack of funding, all energies could be directed into core activities. The second interviewee found it a relief not to be competing for limited funds with other local organisations and believed that the competitive funding environment could sometimes drive a wedge between service providers in an area.

Both interviewees whose organisations were fully funded for a pilot phase also thought that this impacted on flexibility. One believed that the organisation could meet needs as they arose, rather than adhering to rigid funding guidelines. The same interviewee also believed that since the project had secure funding for a fixed time period, it was easier to attract and maintain well-qualified staff, and to engage in short-term and long-term planning. However, the other interviewee criticised the fact that staff allocations were decided at the start of the project, and that funding criteria had not allowed the newly funded project to liaise with a pre-existing project of a similar nature.

### ***Organisations Without Adequate Funding***

Three interviewees stated that they did not have an adequate and stable source of long-term funds. Therefore, all three reported having spent a significant amount of time trying to source funds for their organisations. All believed that fundraising had diverted time from core activities, although one interviewee felt that applying for funds was "a learning experience" that informed the work done by the organisation.

One interviewee reported that his organisation had recently closed down some allied services as they did not have funding to replace staff that had left, and that they were unable to venture into new areas of work. Another interviewee felt that time

spent applying for funds was stopping him from engaging in new areas of work, but thought that in general, there was a reasonable degree of flexibility as to how the allocated funding was spent. The third interviewee did not feel that the amount of fundraising required had a major impact on her organisation's provision of services, nor did it impact on the organisation's flexibility.

When asked about the impact of funding on planning, responses were varied. One interviewee said that until recently, staff were unsure of the future of their project, as the funding Government department had initiated a number of new measures and they were unsure how this would affect their own funding. However, staff were now reasonably sure that funding would continue, and this made it easier to engage in long-term planning. Another interviewee found himself unable to engage in any long-term planning, as there was considerable uncertainty about the future funding of the project on which he worked. Finally, another interviewee found it much easier to plan long-term, as an increase in core funding had created a greater sense of organisational stability.

## **Funding Service Provision in Muirhevna Mór**

In addition to questions relating specifically to the manner and adequacy of funding for their own organisations, interviewees were asked what they thought of the manner in which funds were allocated to services in areas such as Muirhevna Mór. Three interviewees commented that there was a good deal of money allocated to activities in Muirhevna Mór, and that funding allocation for the area had increased in recent times. However, two of the interviewees who commented positively on the amount of funding thought that, relative to other disadvantaged areas, Muirhevna Mór might be getting more funding than the area 'deserved'.

Four interviewees made points relating to the lack of coherence in the manner in which funds are allocated to an area. Two thought that funding was given out in dribs and drabs. This meant that there was no overall coherence to funding at a high level, and that those working on the ground were not able to engage in coherent planning of services (within their own organisation or for the area as a whole). Another interviewee thought that some statutory agencies could take more local responsibility in allocating funding more evenly, rather than engaging in piecemeal

funding. Another interviewee mentioned the need for local consultation, and a full evaluation of what is already available to the area, before new initiatives are set up.

Finally, one interviewee was particularly scathing of the way in which funds are allocated in Muirhevna Mór, describing it as “brutal” and “haphazard”. She thought that those working in the voluntary sector in particular were reduced to scraping money together from anywhere. This had a huge impact on the range and stability of activities offered.

In her opinion, funding was decided at a national (or even EU level) with no consideration of local needs. As an example she gave the recent funding allocated to dealing with the issue of early school leaving. Different areas around the country, and different organisations within the same area then competed for whatever funding was available. This not only promoted competition between service providers, but focussed on a discrete problem, which was not always the major problem for some areas. The interviewee believed that services had become funds-driven rather than needs-driven, chasing grant money, because there was no funding mechanism for looking at what Muirhevna Mór as a whole would benefit from. In sum, she thought that current funding procedures promoted adversarial attitudes among service providers, and failed to examine the needs of the community.

## **Integration of Services in Muirhevna Mór**

None of the five individuals interviewed believed that service providers in Muirhevna Mór offered an integrated service, although one did believe that integration was beginning to happen, due to networking by local activists . Three mentioned that an integrated approach is sometimes adopted by local service providers, but that it is very much an informal, hit and miss affair, and depends more on the efforts of the individuals concerned than on policy. As one person put it, where integration occurred, it was more accidental than planned.

Two interviewees mentioned that the NEHB does attempt to respond to crises by having case conferences involving most of the relevant parties. Both saw this as a useful approach, but as only occurring in response to a crisis. In the opinions of the interviewees, vertical integration was even less likely to occur than horizontal integration. One interviewee commented that it was easy for young people to get lost

in the system, while another thought that the only real follow-through across time was by the schools and the families themselves.

All five interviewees thought that the focus of services was typically on the individual child, rather than dealing with the whole family, although three interviewees thought that this focus would change when the Springboard project began to have an effect. One interviewee also expressed the belief that not only was the individual child the normal focus of intervention, but that the *negative* aspects of a child were all that were examined. Specific problems that an individual child manifested were the focus of attention, with little or no attention being paid to the child as a whole, let alone the whole family.

### **Obstacles to Integration**

Turf wars were identified by three interviewees as being one of the main obstacles to service integration in Muirhevna Mór. One identified a number of features of service provision that exacerbated the problem. She believed that funding methods, and under-resourcing in general, led to a certain amount of hostility between service providers. Organisations were afraid to liaise with other organisations in case the other service provider infringed on their 'patch', or was able to produce better grant applications. This point was also raised by another interviewee, who thought that it was particularly true for newer organisations, who were often viewed as competition by older, more established service providers.

Another interviewee noted that some services in Muirhevna Mór were duplicated. Services were offering similar activities without adequate consultation between them. In general, services needed to sharpen their focus, define their objectives more clearly, and adopt a 'holistic' approach. They also needed to communicate with each other in order to reduce the amount of duplication. The interviewee believed that service provision in Muirhevna Mór was funding driven, rather than needs driven. Service providers were chasing grants, rather than looking at the needs of the area and coming up with a plan. This was partly a function of the manner in which funding was allocated, and partly because the service providers did not have sufficiently clear goals.

Two interviewees thought that service integration was not seen as an organisational priority. Both believed that as a result of this, those with an already

heavy workload were less likely to work towards an integrated approach. Another interviewee highlighted the issue of token representation on boards of projects. She thought that some service providers seemed to feel that sitting on a board was all they had to do in terms of integration. They were not prepared to follow through with practical measures to produce a more integrated service for the area. Another interviewee mentioned that some individuals sat on boards simply to pick up tips and ideas for their own agency, rather than with the intent of engaging in any constructive dialogue.

Another obstacle identified was that many of the services offered in Muirhevna Mór are extremely targeted. Therefore, as one interviewee explained, service providers feel that the siblings or parents of their target group are not their responsibility. Furthermore, clear mechanisms for staff to deal with individuals who fall outside their targeted group are lacking. Another interviewee identified lack of ownership of the process of service integration as a problem. She believed that many (particularly statutory bodies) believed that sitting on a committee was sufficient to ensure integration. However, they did not tend to take the next step, and engage in any practical integration of the various services.

One interviewee believed that the main reason for the poor level of service integration was because of “the political lay of the land”. Because of high immigration from Northern Ireland, the population of Muirhevna Mór is not typical of a Republic of Ireland housing estate. Punishment beatings (although decreasing in frequency) were still continuing in Muirhevna Mór at the time of interview, and there was a culture among many in the area that in times of trouble you did not turn to the authorities for help, but to paramilitary groupings. For example, young people engaged in joyriding or taking drugs were often more likely to be reported to paramilitaries than to the police.

The interviewee believed that some locals and even service providers were afraid to step out of line or to criticise others because of underlying political tensions. Against this background, people were unwilling to rock the boat. Not only that, but political differences made it difficult for service providers to trust each other, or to engage with each other.

Another interviewee believed that a North/South divide was one of the obstacles to integration, but believed that the problem was more one of radicalism versus conservatism. Many individual service providers who were from Northern

Ireland had a far more radical approach to community activism than what the interviewee described as the conservative approach typically taken by service providers in Ireland. While service providers with a more traditional outlook wondered about the ‘real’ motivations of individual service providers with a Northern Irish background or with paramilitary associations, they had also been extremely skeptical of the more radical ideology underpinning activities. However, as much of the work done had benefited the Muirhevna Mór community, the interviewee believed that the level of mistrust between the two sides had decreased.

### **Personal Experience of Integration**

Interviewees were asked about their own organisation’s experience of integration. All five thought that their own service combined with other local services to offer an integrated approach to dealing with young people in Muirhevna Mór. Two mentioned that offering an integrated approach was one of the main policies of their service, while another stated that the service had been set up with the specific intent of developing an integrated approach. One interviewee commented that adopting an integrated approach was a natural and logical approach for his organisation to take, as it would not otherwise be able to function, while another had adopted an integrated approach based on previous employment experience.

### ***Benefits of Integration***

Interviewees were asked how integration had worked for them and for their target client group. Four mentioned the greater level of expertise available to them once they started linking up with other agencies. Networking among the various service providers had made it easier to know where to locate information and assistance, and personal contact between those involved in service provision made it easier to draw on the services of other agencies.

One interviewee mentioned that communication between agencies facilitated the handover of clients from one service to another, and made it easier to follow up on client long-term outcomes. In a related vein, two thought that a more integrated service meant that outcomes became clearer, successes were more obvious, and service providers had to develop clearer role definitions for themselves. Finally, one interviewee noted that the greater degree of co-operation between agencies meant that

clients get to be more familiar with the services available, and are more likely to use services. Furthermore, service providers develop a greater knowledge of what is happening in the local community, and therefore, learn what services are required and by whom.

### ***Problems with Integration***

Interviewees identified a number of problems that their organisations had faced as a result of trying to adopt a more integrated approach to service provision. Two pointed out that initiating an integrated approach was time-consuming, one emphasising that it was a long process, and that people often expected immediate results from little input. Another interviewee expressed frustration at the fact that while a good deal of work was being put in at local level, Government departments did not seem to engage in any integration. This made it difficult to find the motivation to attempt integration at local level.

Three interviewees commented on issues involving relationships between agencies. One complained that some organisations sent token representation to inter-agency boards. She found this disheartening for those who were committed to an integrated service. Another said that it was difficult to bridge the initial stage of mistrust between organisations, while another found the politics of dealing with different agencies and their various sensitivities somewhat annoying.

## **Improving Service Provision**

Interviewees were asked for their ideas on what could be done to improve service provision and integration, both at local and national level. They were also asked what changes they would make to improve the situation for young people at risk in Muirhevna Mór.

### ***Improving Provision Locally***

Two interviewees discussed the work involved in bringing about an integrated approach to service provision. One suggested that a key worker, whose job it was to facilitate integration between service providers, should be appointed for the area. The interviewee thought that the key worker should be someone with appropriate

experience and qualifications, rather than someone who was appointed because of local knowledge. The other interviewee criticised the amount of committees that had developed in Muirhevna Mór as a result of efforts at integration. She felt that the area now had too many inter-agency committees, some duplicating others, and all requiring extra work.

One interviewee highlighted the lack of a central meeting space for service providers in Muirhevna Mór. This, she believed, made it more difficult for service providers to liaise with each other, and also meant that service users did not have a clearly identified place to go for help. She also believed that the area suffered from the lack of a community centre, and from safe play areas for children. The same interviewee thought that there was little or no after-school provision in Muirhevna Mór, a point repeated by another interviewee.

Two interviewees commented on the need for a community led or ‘bottom-up’ approach to designing service provision. Of these, one believed that the Dundalk Employment Partnership had developed a youth policy without consultation with local groups. The Partnership should be one of the conduits for locally developed ideas but did not incorporate community development into its own work practices, tending to impose structures, rather than asking locals what they wanted.

Two interviewees referred to political divisions between service providers. The political differences were seen as largely responsible for a perceived high level of mistrust between some service providers. Indeed, one interviewee stated that the most important change that could happen at a local level was to “take the politics out of service provision”. The same interviewee had noticed improvements since the IRA ceasefire in Northern Ireland, but thought that “certain elements” still needed to learn how to deal with issues in a less threatening manner.

One service provider interviewed thought that the location of services within the ‘campus’ of St Joseph’s school was a model which should be supported. The school is surrounded by a variety of service providers, and the school staff liaise closely with these agencies. The interviewee felt that there was less stigma attached to receiving help when the service provider was located on a school campus. Furthermore, the proximity of so many organisations had led to greater integration. On a related note, another interviewee thought that it was important for statutory bodies to have a presence in the area. In particular, she felt that social workers should be based in Muirhevna Mór, and not isolated in NEHB offices.

One interviewee thought that Second Chance was an excellent service, and that a similar project should be set up to cater exclusively for Muirhevna Mór. However, the interviewee also expressed the fear that the arrival of the 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan project would mean that funding for Second Chance would cease. In the interviewee's opinion, this would be a shame as both projects were effective, and it would be beneficial if both could do some work together, rather than functioning separately, as funding requirements demanded.

Finally, one interviewee complained that a major gap in service provision for Muirhevna Mór was the lack of any night service. The NEHB did an adequate job during the day, but did not supply emergency cover at night.

### ***Improving Provision Nationally***

Two interviewees discussed the need for a National Youth Service. Both thought that there were too many Government departments involved in dealing with at-risk young people, but nobody to take charge or to look at the big picture. One expressed the belief that a National Youth Service (with voluntary and statutory participation) should direct government policy at both local and national level. This would create some coherency in policy, and remove the current focus on numerous small, unrelated, short-term, targeted schemes. The other interviewee cited Foróige and the National Youth Federation as examples of the problems arising from the lack of an official organisation 'in charge'. In the interviewee's opinion, both Foróige and the National Youth Federation engage in similar work, but neither is the official national body for young people. Because neither wants to be relegated to the position of a secondary organisation, both expend their energy competing with each other rather than in developing a strategy.

The issue of a lack of co-operation between Government departments was raised by three interviewees. Indeed, two pointed out that the Departments of Health and Children (Springboard), Justice, Equality and Law Reform (TEAM), and Education and Science (8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan) all had projects in Muirhevna Mór targeting roughly the same families. Because each project relied on a separate funding strand, and because there was a perceived lack of inter-departmental communication, each project had been set up in isolation, with little or no reference to other projects. While there was no suggestion that each project was not worthwhile, the interviewees felt it was only sensible that they should combine in some way.

Based on situations such as that just outlined, one interviewee commented that although she knew that inter-departmental committees existed, she had yet to see much evidence of this at local level.

In relation to funding, there were a number of criticisms of the manner in which funding is allocated. One interviewee felt that more secure funding, rather than the possibility of a yearly renewal of funds, would allow service providers to plan ahead and offer a better service. Two interviewees thought that the Government should adopt a more hands-on approach to funding, meaning that they should have a better understanding of how what is funded impacts on a local community. One pointed out that some funders are now starting to engage in consultation with local service providers before awarding funds, and felt that such a strategy could be adopted by the Irish Government. Another felt that the models adopted by Partnerships were useful, as they incorporated local knowledge when allocating funds.

One interviewee was particularly critical of the manner in which funds are allocated to service provision to combat disadvantage and social exclusion. The interviewee described the “the drip-feeding of money into disadvantaged areas” as a major problem, and as almost representing a deliberate policy by Government to maintain a social underclass. An industry had built up around dealing with marginalised people, and Gardaí and other related jobs relied on an underclass to maintain their employment. In the interviewee’s opinion, the political will was not there to really deal with the problem of disadvantage. There was a tendency to pay lip service to disadvantage, but not to engage in any real action – “zero tolerance is the biggest gimmick of the whole lot.” The interviewee also criticised the short-term nature of funding, pointing out that it took years to resolve problems such as early school leaving, but that most projects were funded on a short-term basis.

## **General Comments**

Two interviewees expressed the belief that voluntary agencies were better placed than statutory agencies to deal with disadvantaged clients. Both thought that voluntary agencies had a better understanding of the people with whom they were dealing, and were perhaps more approachable and child-friendly than statutory agencies.

In a related vein, two interviewees thought that the current school system often marginalised the disadvantaged. One commented that a child could be marginalised

from his or her first day at school, based on family background, address or accent. Both thought that schools often focussed on the negative, and tried to make a child fit the norm, rather than treating each child as an individual. One proposed that rather than punishing a child for coming late to school (when, in the interviewee's opinion, it was a miracle that some children managed to come to school at all), schools should offer practical support, enabling the child to turn up on time.

One interviewee criticised the fact that schools had control of most of the measures in place to combat early school leaving. In the interviewee's opinion, since the education system had already failed early school leavers, it was illogical to assume that another school-based measure would succeed. Innovative schemes such as Second Chance were more likely to succeed. The interviewee believed that schools liked to take over schemes, and did not like to work in partnership with other agencies, giving the HSCL scheme as an example. HSCL staff were always qualified teachers, whereas, in the interviewee's opinion, other professionals such as youth workers would be equally suited to the position.

The same interviewee criticised the lack of backup support for voluntary agencies. At present, if a group such as the Muirhevna Mór Community Council got into trouble (for example, due to legal problems) the organisation would probably cease to exist. Community organisations do not have the political clout or the backup supports to help them in times of trouble. There should be some sort of support from a local inter-agency body (such as the Partnership), that could offer legal advice, mediation, and similar services to voluntary and community organisations which do not have such resources.

Another interviewee commented on the difficulty in accessing funding for activities not seen as 'developmental' work. For example, funding for an evening drop-in centre for young people would be of great benefit in Muirhevna Mór. Such a centre might make a small improvement in general quality of life for a large number of young people in the area. However, it is much easier to access funds for small, targeted programmes that would affect only a few young people, because funders can quickly show a significant effect of such programmes. In the long-term, however, something like a drop-in centre might be of more benefit to the community. The same interviewee believed that more emphasis should be placed on outreach programmes, and that outreach, in conjunction with more coherent policies, should move the focus of service provision from crisis intervention to prevention.

A number of other issues were raised. One interviewee thought that more money should be given to schools for intervention, and that attempts should be made to get parents to appreciate the value of education. Another interviewee expressed a fear that the Second Chance project would cease to be funded, and thought that this would be a shame, as it was a worthwhile project, but was suffering because it did not fit with the Department of Education and Science's rigid funding criteria. Finally, one interviewee was of the view that it was important that whatever changes in service provision for Muirhevna Mór came about, service providers should be staffed by professionally qualified and adequately supervised people. While it was a worthy idea to employ local people on projects, they needed proper training and supervision.



## Teacher Interviews

### Selection of Schools

There are two primary schools within Muirhevna Mór - Gaelscoil Dhún Dealgan (Scoil Chríost Rí) and St Joseph's NS. Teachers from both were selected for interview. As there is no post-primary school in Muirhevna Mór, schools outside the area attended by students from Muirhevna Mór were selected. The post-primary schools were O'Fiaich College, St Vincent's Secondary School and Coláiste Rís. In each school the principal and one other teacher were interviewed. In total, five principals, three HSCL officers, one support teacher and one resource teacher were interviewed.

### Awareness of Services

There are a large number of services available to the population of Muirhevna Mór, and the teachers interviewed were familiar with the vast majority of them. Teachers working in post-primary schools outside the estate were less likely to have as extensive a knowledge of services as were those working within Muirhevna Mór.

Teachers were asked what services they (or other teachers in their school) had used. Seven mentioned the Garda Community Relations Unit, while six mentioned Louth Youth Federation and Dundalk Employment Partnership. Five indicated that they, or some teacher in their school, had contact with the following services; 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan, the Holy Family Development Group, Second Chance, Muirhevna Mór Community Youth Project, the NEHB Health Centre, and Youthreach. While services such as the Community Crèche, Naonraí Dún Dealgan and Right Start were well known, only primary teachers tended to have contact with these groups. Similarly, while Youthreach and Ogra Dún Dealgan were well known, only post-primary teachers would have dealt with them.

Teachers became aware of services from referring pupils, from their own local knowledge, or because other teachers had mentioned services. In a small number of cases, services had approached the schools to make teachers aware of their activities. Those interviewed were asked if they believed that other teachers in their school would be aware of the range of services available. Three thought that most or all teachers would, three thought that some teachers would, and four thought that few or no teachers in their school would be aware of what was available.

## **Adequacy of Services**

Teachers were asked how they rated the adequacy of services for children and young people in Muirhevna Mór. Six rated the level of service provision as good, while four rated it as poor.

### ***Positive Aspects***

Two interviewees mentioned that much of the work done in Muirhevna Mór was by local, voluntary groups. In their opinion, these groups had good local knowledge and brought enthusiasm to their work. This made them more likely to understand the problems faced by those using the services. Two interviewees believed that a major positive feature of service provision in Muirhevna Mór was that there was a strong level of awareness of the problem of early school leaving. This meant that people were more motivated to address the problem. Four teachers thought that it was good that a large amount of the services for Muirhevna Mór were based within the estate.

Three interviewees mentioned specific service providers as being a positive feature of local service provision. Of these, two thought that the Springboard initiative was a good example of a service offering a more coherent and co-ordinated approach. The other interviewee thought that the Second Chance project was an innovative way of dealing with students that cannot cope in a normal school environment, and felt that the project was so effective that it should be mainstreamed. Finally, one interviewee thought that a positive feature was that, once a child was identified as having a problem, resources could usually be found to intervene. The same interviewee believed that the educational psychologist was a valuable resource.

### ***Negative Aspects***

The teachers interviewed highlighted a number of weak points in service provision for Muirhevna Mór. All thought that lack of co-ordination was a major problem. Three thought that schools were not kept informed by service providers (either about what services were available, or about what was happening to individual pupils or students who were being helped). Five teachers thought that there was a degree of overlap in the services available. Three thought that this was largely due to lack of adequate communication between service providers, one believed that it was due to lack of adequate recognition from Government, and one did not offer any reasons. Six

teachers thought that lack of co-ordination among services meant that it was difficult for teachers and service users to know where to access information or help. Another mentioned that some service providers are wary of sharing information about clients with other agencies due to the sensitive nature of information.

Five teachers mentioned difficulties experienced in referring a child to a psychologist. There was a feeling that the number of psychologists was totally inadequate to deal with the demand. One teacher mentioned that the waiting list was up to two years. Therefore, schools often did not refer those who were in need of help, or made arrangements for private appointments. One teacher discussed the need for a counselling service in primary schools.

The NEHB came in for criticism. Six interviewees said that they had experienced considerable delay when referring a child. Indeed, one commented that he had referred a child whose father was ill, as he thought the family needed help in coping with the illness. By the time the NEHB responded the man was dead. A further two teachers mentioned that the NEHB was grossly underfunded and inadequately staffed, leading to very slow response times. In a related vein, three interviewees stated that feedback from the NEHB was not always forthcoming, and tended to take a long time.

Two interviewees commented on the high turnover among NEHB social workers. One thought that this was partly due to underfunding, but also to the nature of the work. She believed that it made it difficult for schools to establish a good working relationship with NEHB staff. The other interviewee who raised high turnover as an issue was particularly concerned about the effect it had on clients. She believed that it made it difficult to build up trust and that young children found it upsetting to deal with a number of different social workers.

Another interviewee mentioned that the Public Health Nurse was “swamped” in Muirhevna Mór. The teacher believed that the PHN was ideally placed to act as a resource for young mothers, with an emphasis on preventative care. She believed that more PHNs should be appointed and that the role should be expanded. The same interviewee discussed the crisis management approach of the NEHB. She thought that the approach was to deal with one crisis case after another, with no long-term plan or attempt to engage in preventative work. She also believed that the NEHB had a tendency to focus on the negative, examining a child’s problems in isolation from the whole personality, and only focussing on what was wrong. Finally, one teacher

pointed out that the NEHB tended to operate from 9 to 5, with no after-hours service. This he saw as a major weakness in service provision.

Although services for the Muirhevna Mór population are generally located within the estate or fairly close by, some teachers were not convinced that they were accessible for service users. Three thought that availability of services did not mean that those most in need were likely to access them, while one thought that many locals did not know what services were available. One teacher thought that families felt there was a stigma attached to dealing with the NEHB and with social workers. They were, therefore, often unwilling to seek help from the NEHB, but had no other real source of help.

Teachers identified a number of other weaknesses in service provision for Muirhevna Mór. Three commented on the fact that there were too many pilot programmes being funded, and not enough mainstreaming of activities. Of these, two thought that projects such as Second Chance and 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan should be mainstreamed, while one thought that 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan and an educational psychologist should be available to all schools. In particular, it was seen as unfortunate that the future of Second Chance was uncertain because of doubts over future funding sources.

A further two interviewees identified a North/South divide as causing problems in the delivery of services. One thought that some people were unwilling to use services that were associated with Sinn Féin activists, while the other interviewee believed that the immigrants had brought their own “social problems” with them, but did not elaborate on this.

One interviewee thought that services for early school leavers started too late to be of help. In this respect, he believed that the 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan was a good scheme, as it targeted early school leavers at an early age. In contrast, another interviewee commented on the lack of provision for at risk post-primary students.

One teacher believed that another problem with service provision in Muirhevna Mór was the lack of professional service providers. He thought that there were many enthusiastic groups offering services, but that they would benefit from a more professional approach. However, another interviewee thought that most service providers did not do enough to involve locals in running their own community or to transfer skills. The same interviewee thought that two particularly neglected areas of service provision were money management and fathers. Debt is a huge problem in

Muirhevna Mór, and parents needed help in managing their money. As for fathers, she thought that parenting courses were generally aimed at women, but that it was also important to get fathers involved in raising their own children. Finally, one interviewee thought that a major problem facing teachers and other service providers was the difficulty in getting parental support when trying to access help for young people.

## **Focus of Intervention**

Teachers were asked if they believed that services in Muirhevna Mór were geared towards treating individual cases, or if they adopted a whole family approach. Four thought that services dealt only with individual young people, four teachers thought that some services concentrated on individuals while others (such as Springboard) dealt with the whole family, and two were unsure as to the focus of service providers. Two teachers thought that adopting an initial focus on the individual child, followed by work with the whole family, was the best approach. All other interviewees thought that dealing with the family as a whole was the best model to adopt, with two also mentioning that service providers needed to deal with the community as a whole.

Teachers were asked about the point at which services intervened in a child's life, and if they believed that intervention happened at an early enough stage. Two teachers were unsure if intervention happened early enough, while eight believed that it happened too late. Three teachers thought that intervention should start as early as pre-school, as many children are educationally disadvantaged even before they come to school. Three thought that more focus should be placed on primary schools, as early school leavers could be identified and targeted at that stage, rather than leaving intervention until post-primary school, when it was often too late.

In a similar vein, most teachers thought that at risk children were less likely to be helped than were those who were manifesting clear difficulties or acting out in class. Seven teachers indicated that it was those in trouble who received help, with two pointing out that quiet children often got little or no help, even if they really needed it. One teacher thought that, with the exception of the 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan project, at risk children were not helped, while another thought that *schools* tried to help all children at risk. Two teachers believed that service providers generally only intervened in a crisis, with one suggesting more effort should be directed towards

at risk children. More specifically, she thought that courses on personal development and dealing with problems should be a part of the basic school curriculum.

When asked to rate the speed of intervention, all thought that services took too long to respond. Five teachers specifically mentioned the NEHB as having a long waiting list, while three discussed how difficult it was to get an evaluation by a Department of Education and Science psychologist.

## **Overall Coherence**

Teachers were asked if they thought that Department of Education and Science-sponsored schemes to combat educational disadvantage worked well, and if they linked together to form a co-ordinated approach. Responses were quite varied, and somewhat contradictory. For example, two teachers thought that the 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan project was a good example of a scheme that offered a co-ordinated approach. However, they did not think the HSCL scheme was as effective as it could be. One thought that it was too narrow in definition and needed to deal with children as well as parents, while the other thought that it had not yet succeeded in getting sufficient parental participation. Another teacher criticised the HSCL scheme for being too tied to Department of Education and Science policies and not allowing enough flexibility locally. In contrast, three interviewees thought that the HSCL was a very worthwhile scheme. One of these also praised the 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan initiative, and one praised the Transition Year programme. Two thought that the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme was excellent and was instrumental in keeping in school many students who would otherwise have dropped out after completing Junior Cycle.

Six teachers were happy to discuss individual schemes, but did not really discuss how schemes did (or did not) work together in a school. Four teachers had opinions on how Department of Education and Science schemes worked together. One believed that while individuals within schools often worked to co-ordinate the efforts of different schemes, this was not supported by Government policy. Another teacher believed that Department of Education and Science schemes were not co-ordinated and that this was one of the reasons they were proving to be ineffective. However, one teacher thought that schemes sponsored by the Department of Education and Science were achieving their goals, and that it was the job of individual schools to ensure that a

co-ordinated approach was offered. Finally, one believed that part of the role of the HSCL officer was to co-ordinate schemes within the school, as well as school-based and other schemes.

When asked about schemes to target disadvantage funded by other sources, teachers again had very mixed opinions about how well service providers linked together. Two teachers (both from the same school) indicated that they did not know if schemes linked well together, as they had little or no contact with outside agencies. Three thought that non-Department of Education and Science funded service providers did not link well together in Muirhevna Mór. One thought that services did link well, while one believed that *some* services (particularly Second Chance) linked well. Another interviewee thought that services linked where necessary, and that Second Chance was the best example of how a service could co-ordinate with other service providers. One interviewee thought that services only linked together at the instigation of the school. Finally, one interviewee thought that service providers in Muirhevna Mór linked only when something went wrong, and that they tended to adopt a “fire brigade” approach.

Interviewees were asked if they believed that service providers worked together to provide individuals with coherence of care at a given time. Four teachers indicated that they did not know enough about how service providers operated to be able to answer the question. Three thought that sometimes an individual would get coherent care from service providers, but that this was most likely to happen where the school took a central role. Two teachers thought that at any given time there was a reasonable degree of integration in the services provided, while one thought that services did offer an integrated approach in response to a crisis.

Opinions were reasonably similar with regard to vertical integration. Again, four teachers felt they did not know enough to answer the question. Two thought that services did offer an integrated approach across time, one thought that sometimes an integrated approach was provided, and one thought that vertical integration happened only where the schools instigated it. Finally, two teachers thought that those in older age groups were not as likely to have as many services available to them, and that those services were not as likely to offer an integrated approach.

## Quality of Service Providers

Teachers were asked for their opinions on the staffing and organisation of service providers in Muirhevna Mór. Eight expressed the view that service providers in the area were understaffed, with one commenting that he did not think that such services would ever have enough staff. One interviewee thought that service providers probably did not have enough staff but was not sufficiently familiar with their activities to give a definite answer, while one interviewee thought that staffing levels were sufficient.

In general, interviewees were positive about individuals working in Muirhevna Mór, recognising that they were trying to achieve positive outcomes. Four thought that service providers in the area tended to have a very good local knowledge and to have a good relationship with the local community. However, the fact that many organisations were at least partly staffed by local people on CE schemes also brought problems. Five interviewees raised the issue of lack of qualifications. They felt that while it might be a good idea to involve local people in service provision, it was important that service providers should either have adequate qualifications to do their job, or be given training to ensure that they could do their job in a professional manner. One teacher commented that organisations had problems attracting qualified staff to poorly paid jobs because of the current economic boom, and that this meant that some organisations were not run in a very professional manner. However, two interviewees felt that local service providers were sufficiently qualified, while one did not feel she knew enough to comment (but presumed that qualifications were adequate).

Five teachers commented on staff turnover, with four thinking that it was very high and one that it was not particularly high among local service providers. One teacher thought that the high rate of staff turnover among social workers was partly due to burnout, and believed that it was very important for professionals to look after themselves as well as clients. However, another interviewee thought that high turnover was due to Dubliners taking jobs in Dundalk to get experience, then leaving when they were able to get a job in Dublin.

A number of criticisms were raised about the manner in which organisations were run. Only one interviewee felt unable to offer opinions about how well service providers were run, as he was only familiar with Springboard, which he thought was well run and well funded. Five identified inadequate funding as a problem, with the Second Chance project being mentioned as a particular example by three interviewees.

They saw the project as highly effective, but were worried that it would cease to function because the project's current funding was about to run out and it was known locally that the Department of Education and Science would not fund future work.

Another interviewee commented that while some service providers are poorly funded, others seemed to know how to access grants and attract funds. However, he thought that this was more a reflection of 'grantsmanship' than an indication of the actual work done by services. Finally, one interviewee thought that short-term funding of projects had led to staff being employed on contracts, which in turn contributed to high turnover and a loss of valuable expertise.

Almost all teachers interviewed agreed that communication between service providers in Muirhevna Mór could be improved, with only one stating that the current situation was satisfactory. As an illustrative example, one teacher described phoning a social worker about a particular family only to learn that the children had previously been taken into care. Two teachers thought that there most definitely was not adequate communication, particularly between other service providers and teachers. Two teachers doubted that there was adequate communication between services, while three thought that there was some informal communication but that it could be improved and formalised. Two teachers believed that some organisations engaged in sharing information and adopting a team approach, but that others did not.

## **Role of Teaching Staff**

When asked about the role currently played by teachers in dealing with at risk young people, responses were quite varied. Three thought that teachers did a great deal of work, and that much of it was not recognised or part of their job description, while three teachers indicated that *some* teachers do a lot of unpaid and unrecognised extra work. Three teachers raised the issue of doing work beyond what they are qualified to do – for example, taking on the role of a counsellor. One thought that teachers needed extra inservice training to gain a better understanding of how to deal with disadvantaged young people, while another talked of being out of her depth trying to deal with issues such as glue sniffing.

Two interviewees believed that teachers can be effective in helping children if they encourage parental participation in school activities. For example, getting parents employed on CE schemes within the school can help the parent, and also help them to

appreciate the benefits of education for their children. Another teacher talked of the difficulties in teaching middle-class lessons to pupils who have a different frame of reference. She said that even reading phrases such as “Mammy and Daddy are in the car” can be problematic in an area with a high number of single parent families.

Most expressed a wish for teachers to play a greater part in situations where their pupils were receiving help from other service providers. In particular, seven teachers stated that they wanted more feedback from service providers, with two giving examples of cases where they found out by accident that children were being helped by a service provider. While criticising lack of feedback, there was an acceptance by interviewees that lack of time was one of the main reasons that service providers did not provide teachers with more information. One interviewee raised the issue of confidentiality, saying that some service providers were very concerned about passing on any information. However, in his opinion they should be able to supply schools with more information than was currently the case. Two teachers also discussed the importance of teachers feeding back information to service providers, and thought that this did not happen enough. In contrast, one interviewee thought that teachers did not really need to know how a student was getting on with a service provider (or even if a student was receiving help), unless it impacted on classroom behaviour.

All teachers interviewed believed that good communication between schools and other services was necessary, but opinions were divided as to whether this was actually the case. Four believed that service providers tended to function independently of schools, while one believed that post-primary schools and other service providers functioned independently, with primary schools having better external links. Two teachers thought that there were good links between their school and local service providers, but that this was mainly because the school had instigated the links. Finally, three believed that schools and other service providers worked well together. Of these, one pointed out that it was often difficult for teachers to participate fully because of time constraints, while another noted that confidentiality issues could affect communication.

Two teachers commented positively on the effect the HSCL role had in improving communication between schools and other services, while another stated that this was an aspect of the role that should be emphasised. One teacher pointed out

that some service providers had excellent links with the school, citing Second Chance as a model of how schools and services could work together.

One interviewee believed that for proper integration between schools and other agencies, the impetus must come from within schools. However, in his opinion schools frequently do not work well with outside agencies, as teachers often feel threatened when faced with involvement by parents or community groups. He has found it difficult to get support from teachers for new ideas or ways of working. He also believed that service providers may sometimes be afraid to initiate contact with schools, as they feared that schools would try to “take over”.

## **General Comments**

At the end of the interview teachers were asked if they had any other comments to make about the treatment of at risk children, either locally or nationally. Four commented on the financing of schemes – more specifically, about inadequate or short-term funding. One teacher believed that it was time the Department of Education and Science began to fund more schemes to combat early school leaving, and to take the weight of care off voluntary groups. Another believed that it was time to stop piloting schemes and to follow through on funding for those that have been successful. In particular, she mentioned the Second Chance scheme as being a good example of a successful pilot, which did not look like it would continue to be funded. Finally, one teacher commented that although many new schemes were being set up, they were still all underfunded, while another thought that while it was good that new schemes were starting, they should have been funded years ago.

One teacher stated that intervention should begin as early as possible, and cited the 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan initiative as a good example of early intervention. Another thought that intervention should begin even before primary school, stating that state-sponsored pre-schools should be available. The same interviewee believed that from 6 to 18 years, the formal school system should care for the social and emotional, as well as the academic needs, of children. In his opinion, post-primary school currently deals only with the academic needs, and this is why many children that have been nurtured through primary school drop out of post-primary school after a few weeks. In a somewhat contradictory view, another teacher thought that it was time people realised that certain children would never fit into the formal schooling system.

Once this was admitted, more effort would be put into examining alternative forms of education for these children.

Three raised issues relating to parents. One thought that teachers should be given training on how to deal with parents, while another thought that sanctions should be applied against parents who did not ensure that their children attended school. Finally, one teacher thought that schools should look at other ways to achieve parental involvement – for example, employing parents within the school on CE schemes as classroom assistants or caretakers. The same teacher believed that teachers needed training in areas such as teamwork and conflict resolution.

Two interviewees raised the need for more feedback from service providers, with one pointing out that the Department of Education and Science needed to adjust teachers work time to allow for scheduling of meetings with other agencies. The same interviewee believed that schools and service providers needed to formalise links, that there should be a directory of services available to teachers, and that areas of overlap in service provision should be reduced. One teacher thought that the issue of student employment was becoming a major problem. Students were coming to school tired and unable to focus on schoolwork. She thought that students should not be employed. One teacher thought that all schools should have access to a full-time counsellor, and that the Department of Education and Science needed to review the changing needs of schools. In particular, the training and incareer development of teachers should be modified to take into account the new issues faced by teachers. Finally, one teacher believed that all schoolchildren from age 4 to 18 should be taught under the same roof. This, he believed, would lessen the trauma of transferring from primary to post-primary school.

## Parent Interviews

In consultation with the HSCL co-ordinator in St Joseph's primary school, two group interviews with local parents were organised. The first was held in the Parents Room, after a choir practice for parents. There were 10 women present at the start of the interview, of whom five remained until the interview was completed. The second interview was also held in the Parents' Room of St Joseph's, and was composed of eight people (seven women and one man) who were employed in the school on FÁS schemes. All but one were also parents of children attending St Joseph's.

Some of those interviewed also had children currently attending O'Fiaich College or St. Vincent's Secondary School, while some had children who had formerly attended these post-primary schools, or Coláiste Rís. All but one of those interviewed lived in Muirhevna Mór, and the woman who lived outside the area was familiar with the estate, both from working in the school, and from friends in the area.

### Knowledge and Opinion of Services

To begin, the parents were shown a short list of some of the services available in the area. The list was as follows (school-based schemes listed first):

- HSCL co-ordinator
- Remedial teacher
- 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan
- Second Chance
- Coláiste Rís Early School Leavers Initiative
- Leaving Certificate Applied Programme
- Springboard Initiative
- Muirhevna Mór Community Youth Project
- TEAM project
- Garda Community Relations Section
- Louth Youth Federation

There was a considerable difference between the two groups of interviewees as regards knowledge of services. Parents who were attending the choir practice had heard of all the services, and had a reasonable understanding of what they did. In

contrast, the FÁS workers were unfamiliar with most of the names of services shown to them. However, when prompted with the name of the person or persons running the service, they generally knew what services were offered.

The least recognised service was the Garda Community Relations Section, even when it was explained that this referred to the Community Garda, or when he was referred to by name. Approximately five of those interviewed did not realise that the Second Chance project was open to children from Muirhevna Mór<sup>1</sup>. Most of the FÁS workers had not heard of the Coláiste Rís Early School Leavers Initiative, even when the project was described to them.

In terms of schemes that were well known, the HSCL scheme, 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan and Springboard were recognised by all, and were universally regarded as being very beneficial. The HSCL co-ordinator in St Joseph's was particularly praised. She was considered to be very approachable and friendly, making it easier for parents to discuss issues about their child's education. The consensus was that before the appointment of a HSCL co-ordinator, St Joseph's had been a very different school, with parents knowing little or nothing about what happened in the school. Now, the HSCL co-ordinator visited homes to talk to parents, and parents were made to feel welcome in the school grounds. Interviewees also said that it was easier for parents to discuss their children with the HSCL co-ordinator than with a class teacher.

The first group interviewed thought that the HSCL co-ordinator in O'Fiaich College had made a difference to the school, and that they could talk to her about any problems their children might have. However, the second group, of FÁS workers, did not find O'Fiaich College to be very accessible to parents. They believed that there was very little contact between parents and post-primary schools in the area. However, all regarded targeted projects within the post-primary schools as effective. A number of parents praised the 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan, with two saying that their children who were involved in the scheme would probably have left school if they had not been selected for inclusion in the scheme. The one woman who had a child participating in the Second Chance initiative also agreed that the scheme was helping

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<sup>1</sup> The number is an approximation, as it was not possible, without asking individually, to know exactly how many knew that the project operated in Muirhevna Mór. The approximation is based on the number who murmured agreement when one woman said she thought that Second Chance only operated in Cox's Demesne.

to keep her child in school. The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme was also described as a good idea, allowing those who were not very academic to gain a qualification and practical experience.

The second group of parents (all employed as FÁS workers within the school) thought that employing parents as classroom assistants or support staff within the school was one of the best ways of involving parents in their child's education. All thought that they now had a far better understanding of a teacher's job, and of what was required from their child in school. This gave them a greater appreciation of schoolwork and helped them to help their children. One woman stated that she would have been too embarrassed to visit the Parents' Room prior to her employment by the school, as she was afraid that she would not know anybody. She thought that many parents would have similar inhibitions, but that by employing parents in the school, more would become involved in their child's education.

St Joseph's operates a Breakfast Club, whereby some parents provide a breakfast for a number of pupils. Those involved found this to be a good way to become involved in school activities. They also praised the Parents' Council as a method of including parents in decision-making within the school. Finally, St Joseph's also operates a shared reading scheme, which was praised by all who had participated.

## **Use of Services**

The two groups expressed different views on the availability of information. One group (choir members) stated that the information was there for parents, but that some parents were just not bothered about getting help. They believed that locals *should* know that many services were located on the grounds of St Joseph's, and that people such as the co-ordinator of the 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan project would be recognised locally as a good source of information. Despite this, some people would still claim that they did not know how to access help.

The group of FÁS workers thought that most parents would approach the staff at St Joseph's. They believed that the school welcomed parents and that the HSCL co-ordinator in particular made it easy for parents to seek help and advice. However, if the child was attending a post-primary school, they thought it less likely that parents would know how to access help. They thought that the post-primary schools were not approachable, and that there was little contact between parents and teachers at this

level. In particular, they believed that post-primary schools were unhelpful when parents tried to encourage their children to stay in school after completing Junior Cycle. Whereas schools might inform parents of absenteeism prior to Senior Cycle, they did not seem to be so concerned once the students reached the legal school-leaving age. However, some parents in the choir group thought that post-primary schools were much more approachable than in the past.

In general, there was consensus that help was there for parents of younger children and that such help could easily be accessed either through St Joseph's or through one of the service providers on St Joseph's campus. However, there was some concern that help was not so readily available for those attending post-primary school, as parents might not know who to ask for help. A few parents expressed concern that parents of pupils who dropped out of school would not know what steps to take to support their child. The well-known services were primarily aimed at younger children, and a parent of a 15-year old dropout would have difficulty getting advice.

Interviewees were asked what could be done to make it easier for a typical parent to access help. A number thought that some schemes, particularly Springboard, had put a lot of effort into advertising what they did. However, they believed that still more advertising was required from service providers, describing their aims and their main activities. They believed that this would encourage more families to avail of services. Both groups agreed that employing parents on CE and similar type schemes encouraged parental involvement in their child's education, and made them more aware of the range of services available.

When asked about providing a centralised location for service provision, most pointed out that St Joseph's already had a reasonable number of satellite service providers. Furthermore, plans existed to relocate the Sports Centre and to house a number of service providers in the vacated building<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, all were reasonably satisfied with the current situation regarding centralisation of services in Muirhevna Mór, and agreed that centralising services was a good idea. However, one woman emphasised that it was vital that any central location be inviting to those who were supposed to avail of services.

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<sup>2</sup> This is inaccurate. While moving the Sports Centre was one option explored, it was not the selected approach. Instead, the Sports Centre will remain in its present location, while a purpose-built Community Resource Centre will be built on an adjacent site.

While one group of parents thought that locating services on a school campus was a good idea, the other did not. One group believed that the school was not a good location for services because older children would not want to use services in school grounds, nor would they like to see their parents coming into the school. They believed that centralised services were better located away from the school, while maintaining school involvement. In relation to this, one woman suggested that the HSCL co-ordinator could make herself available for a set number of hours per week within any centralised facility. In contrast, the consensus among the other group was that the school was the best location for services, as it was “the heart of the community”, St Joseph’s was approachable, and locating services within the school might encourage parents to come to the school.

A number of parents raised an issue related to the availability of services. While services were located in the area and physically accessible, parents found that they were unable to enrol their children in many of the programmes. They believed that the same children were participating in many schemes, and staying in the schemes for a long time. This made it very difficult for others to access services. One woman commented that her child did not want to join certain activity-based programmes because he thought that those already attending were very rough, and was a little afraid of them.

## **Role of Parents**

The interviewees agreed that parents were encouraged to become involved with their child’s education while attending St Joseph’s. The school has a Good Behaviour scheme, developed with the help of the pupils. Each pupil has a book in which ‘stars’, based on their behaviour are recorded. The book must be signed weekly by parents. All parents thought this was a good idea, as it let them see at a glance how their child was behaving in school. It also meant that they could see immediately when their child began to experience problems, and could therefore nip problems in the bud. A number also thought that a major advantage of the scheme was that it rewarded good behaviour and effort, whereas many of the measures aimed at disadvantaged children only targeted those who were acting up in class.

Some parents referred to a shared reading scheme run by the school. All who had participated had found it to be a useful experience and felt that their children had

benefited. Some commented that the scheme had helped fathers to become involved with the school, which they felt was of benefit. Five interviewees were employed as classroom assistants, and thought that this was an excellent way to involve parents in their child's education. They felt that not only were they able to assist children in the classroom, but that they now had a better understanding of what was required from their children in school. One group discussed classes run by the HSCL co-ordinator for parents. Most had attended some classes and found them enjoyable, but pointed out that they were only run during mornings, when many parents are working. Overall, the parents interviewed found that St Joseph's involved parents in their child's education as much as possible. Teachers were described as open, and willing to discuss any problems, keeping parents well informed about their child's progress.

In contrast, most parents interviewed did not feel as involved in the post-primary education of their children. One group of parents interviewed felt strongly that post-primary schools did not keep parents informed about what was happening with their children, and did not make enough of an effort to involve parents in the school. They believed that local post-primary schools only informed parents that their child was playing truant in certain cases – typically, a reasonably well-behaved student below minimum school-leaving age. One woman told of how her son had been told to come to school only every second week, because he was creating trouble with another boy (who was to come on alternate weeks). She was not told about the arrangement by the school, and when she consulted the Year Head she was told he would look into the matter on her behalf, as he knew nothing about it. She commented that although this had happened six months prior to the date of interview, she had yet to hear anything from the school.

One group of parents thought that the HSCL co-ordinator in local post-primary schools had made it easier for parents to become involved in their child's education, but the other group thought that while the post had improved parent-teacher relations, a lot more could be done. In particular, it was pointed out that parents can find it difficult dealing with a large number of teachers, and that parents sometimes felt "talked down to" by post-primary teachers.

## **Role of Teachers**

Interviewees thought that it was important for teachers to keep parents well informed about the progress (or lack thereof) of their child in school. Currently, this did not

happen as much as it should. One group of parents interviewed also felt that teachers needed to have a better understanding of disadvantage than they seemed to have at the moment. They believed that post-primary teachers in particular were prone to labelling children based solely on their address. While they agreed that many children from Muirhevna Mór might not be ideal students, there were a number of very bright students from the area who had dropped out of school with either no qualification, or Junior Certificate only. Some believed that teachers had low expectations of children from Muirhevna Mór, and when their expectations were met, little was done to help the children.

Interviewees thought that while post-primary schools might make efforts to retain students from disadvantaged areas until they were 15 years old, they did not make similar efforts for those above the minimum school-leaving age. Three parents referred to specific difficulties they had in attempting to get their children to stay in school when they had completed their Junior Certificate. Even though all three students had done well in their examinations, they wanted to leave school. The parents had found that the schools offered very little in the way of advice or support.

Two parents commented that some post-primary schools do not seem to realise how much extra cost they can add to parents. For example, one school recently got students to order the wrong school books, with the result that parents had to pay for a second set of books in October, adding a significant cost.

On the positive side, one group believed that post-primary schools had made recent improvement in tracking student absences. One post-primary school in the area will phone or send letters to parents after each two-day absence by their child. Thus, parents know immediately if their child is playing truant. The same group thought that school open days were a good way of meeting teachers.

## **General Comments**

There was agreement among interviewees that intervention should occur as early as possible – “from the pram” as one woman put it. All thought that while schemes targeting 14-year olds might change the attitudes of a small number of students towards school, it made more sense to target children as young as possible. One mother told about her son, who was a bright pupil but always hated school, and left on his 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. She thought that if he had been targeted at a young age, and given a

more positive experience of school from the outset, he would have completed his Leaving Certificate examination. Another woman thought that efforts should be made to make school fun and interesting for children, as well as explaining to them why it was important. She thought that too often school was seen as boring, and teachers did not explain the reasons behind lessons.

Parents thought that smaller classes for children having difficulty with their schoolwork was a good idea, and that it was important to offer extra assistance to children as soon as they began to manifest difficulties. This way, they could keep up with their classmates, and not lose self-esteem or begin to hate school because they felt stupid. In particular, classroom assistants were mentioned as a good way to help pupils who were having difficulties. Teachers could not offer the level of individual attention required by some pupils, but a classroom assistant could ensure that pupils learned the foundations in reading and writing. The assistants did not need to have a college education, but should be given some sort of recognised training.

Interviewees thought that there were insufficient activities for children after school and during the summer months. As mentioned earlier, some thought that activity-based programmes tended to be dominated by a small number of children and were not open to all. They thought that there should be more sporting activities on offer and that safe play areas should be developed. Previous play areas had been closed down due to insurance claims, while at the time of interview, the Sports Centre was considered too expensive for local children. One woman quoted the Community Garda as saying that if a child was involved in sport, there was little chance that they would get into trouble. In relation to this, another parent suggested that FÁS could employ a worker to supervise and encourage sports on public pitches.

There was considerable hope that the new Community Centre would be more affordable, and more welcoming of local people. However, there was also some cynicism expressed about whether this would be the case. There was agreement that the new centre should open late at night, providing a safe environment for young people, as currently, there was nothing for local young people to do in the evenings apart from standing on street corners. One woman expressed hope that the new Community Centre would function as an Education Centre, providing a mixture of sporting, educational and personal development activities. She thought that it should become a place that was seen by locals as somewhere to feel comfortable, and where they could ask for help without feeling embarrassed.

Many thought that an initiative similar to Second Chance should be set up in Muirhevna Mór for children with particular difficulties adjusting to school. They thought that the mixture of personal development and normal school curriculum, coupled with small numbers was a good method of dealing with such children.

Among the group of FÁS workers, some anxiety was expressed that it was often the brighter children from the estate that left school before completing Senior Cycle. A number thought that this might be because they were bored in class, either because teachers had low expectations for them or because teachers were trying to pitch the class at less bright children. Parents in the group of FÁS workers thought that teachers should try to deal with children as individuals, rather than basing opinions on older siblings or just on the fact that the child came from Muirhevna Mór.

Some parents commented that when a child insisted on leaving school, parents did not know what alternatives were on offer. For example, most did not know that children from Muirhevna Mór could avail of Second Chance, and there was no clear route to follow once a child dropped out of school. One woman mentioned that career guidance began too late for many such students, as they had already left school before they met a career guidance teacher. Although one group of interviewees was employed as FÁS workers, there seemed to be little knowledge of alternative progression routes such as Youthreach or Community Training Workshops.

One parent pointed out that re-entry into the educational system should be made more feasible. She suggested that the Back to Education Allowance supported by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs should be available to younger people, and that the requirement that the claimant be unemployed for a period beforehand be removed. In her opinion, 18-year olds should be able to avail of the scheme, as by that age many dropouts had realised that completing Second Level education would be of benefit to them. She also thought that many were unlikely to give up a job and sign on for six months in order to be eligible for the scheme, but that if the criterion of being unemployed was removed, many more would apply for the scheme.



## Recommendations for Service Provision in Muirhevna Mór

In this chapter, current service provision for Muirhevna Mór will be analysed, and recommendations made for improvement. As with all of the case studies, issues that relate to national rather than local policy or practice will be discussed only in the concluding chapter *Recommendations for Service Provision for at Risk Children*.

Before making specific suggestions, two factors may be noted. First, a distinctive feature of service provision for Muirhevna Mór is the large number of organisations involved for a population of approximately 3,000 people. Second, the estate is unusual in that it contains a large number of immigrants from Northern Ireland, a situation that has led to a certain polarisation between residents originally from Dundalk and those originally from Northern Ireland. Both factors need to be borne in mind when considering recommendations.

Apart from these caveats, the area is in many ways typical of a disadvantaged housing estate. Therefore, while the content of this chapter relates specifically to Muirhevna Mór, many of the suggestions have a wider applicability. The chapter will analyse service provision under the following headings:

- current provision
- degree of service integration
- allocation of funds
- the role of schools.

### Current Provision

This section examines services currently available to the population of Muirhevna Mór. Provision will be analysed by:

- Centralising of services
- Involvement of local people
- Innovative service providers
- Gaps in provision
- Overlap in provision.

### ***Centralising of Services***

A number of services operate from the St Joseph's 'campus', including 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan, Springboard, Right Start, the Holy Family Development Group, a Job Club, and the Local Employment Service. Some services are also concentrated in other locations within the estate. For example, at either end of the estate is a facility called 'The House'. Each is located in a converted terraced house and between them contain the Moving On, Muirhevna Mór Community Youth and TEAM projects.

In many ways the St Joseph's campus is a model to which Irish policymakers are leaning. The school is locally recognised as welcoming to both parents and children, and as being able to offer a considerable variety of on-site specialised help. The two premises known as The House, while not located within a school, also offer a central location for a number of services. There are many positive features associated with such groupings of services into one location. For example, it frequently not only creates a greater mutual awareness among service providers, but also means that potential clients are more likely to know where to access services. In practice, however, some difficulties have arisen in Muirhevna Mór with the centralisation of services.

Firstly, there seems to be a distinct difference of opinion between service providers on the one hand, and teachers and parents on the other, as to the public profile of service providers. Merely creating a central location is not sufficient to ensure adequate public awareness of services. Parents had not heard of many services, and often did not know what activities were engaged in by those of whom they had heard. It is clear that simply placing services under one roof cannot replace advertising what is available.

There appears to be an assumption among service providers that most residents know what is available. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, particularly with individuals who are somewhat socially isolated, or just new to an area. There is a need for service providers within Muirhevna Mór to increase public awareness, not just of what it is that they do, but of their actual existence.

Indeed, even knowing that there is a facility called 'The House' does not necessarily mean that a potential client can find the building in question. There is no real signposting of facilities, and as many services are located in standard terraced houses, they are not easy to find. The only premises that are signposted are those of

the NEHB Health Centre, which is at one entrance to the estate. In many ways, it is the building least in need of a sign, given its location, and the fact that it is an extremely uninviting purpose-built structure which is immediately noticeable by virtue of its unattractiveness.

Similarly, while there are many services grouped around St Joseph's, there is little external indication that they are anything other than extra classes housed in prefabricated units<sup>1</sup>. While those 'in the know' would be aware of what services are located on the campus, those most in need of assistance are rarely those in the know.

The concentration of services around St Joseph's also needs to be considered in relation to the second primary school in the estate – the much smaller Gaelscoil Chríost Rí. While there are undoubtedly benefits to pupils of St Joseph's in having service providers within the school grounds, a corollary is that pupils of the Gaelscoil may not get the same level of assistance. The Gaelscoil appears to be somewhat isolated from the network of service providers in Muirhevna Mór. This is not to lay blame with the school staff or with other service providers, merely to point out that this is how the current level of interaction was perceived by the researchers from the ERC.

It may be that this relative isolation is inevitable, given the concentration of services around St Joseph's. However, it seems more likely that, with greater awareness, the Gaelscoil could become a more central part of local service provision.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the concentration of services around St Joseph's is similar to the model recently advocated by the OECD in publications such as *Under One Roof* (1998). While such an approach has many advantages, the views of parents also need to be considered. One of the two groups of parents interviewed in Muirhevna Mór was adamant that school-based services were not the best model to adopt. They believed that older children in particular would not be happy to see their parents on school grounds availing of allied services. They believed that a better model would be for a centralised location away from the school, but with the involvement of school personnel, such as the HSCL co-ordinator. It is likely that parents who participated in our interviews were generally comfortable in the school environment. Therefore, it is quite possible that the many parents who do not feel comfortable visiting their child's school would be even less positive about centralising services around schools.

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<sup>1</sup> OBAIR has a small sign at the entrance to the school, but no other sign within the estate. Other service providers have no signs.

In summary, while the trend towards the centralising of services in Muirhevna Mór is positive, problems remain. The situation is likely to change considerably in the near future, as some services re-locate to the new facilities in the Community Resource Centre. This should prove to be of benefit to the area, as long as providers do not assume that residents somehow know what services are available in the complex. The new facility should advertise its activities in as many ways as possible, and have significant input from school personnel.

### ***Involvement of Local People***

A positive feature of current provision is the heavy involvement of local people. This not only suggests that service deliverers may be more likely to have a reasonable understanding of the issues affecting the area, but also that they may be seen as more approachable. Some of those working in service provision may be known to potential clients, and on the basis of conversations with parents, we conclude that this has made it easier for them to approach service providers for help.

However, some problems were also identified. Concern was expressed that unqualified people were carrying out much of the (often sensitive) work being done. While the concept of involving local people in service provision is admirable, and can have a 'community-building' function, it should also be accompanied by suitable training. It is understandable that many service providers simply cannot afford to pay for extra qualified staff, and that schemes such as the Community Employment scheme allow them to engage in activities that would otherwise prove impossible. However, it would seem that subsequent training of staff employed in this manner has been neglected. In particular, the community-building aspect of employing local people is likely to be less than successful if some form of skills transfer and accreditation is not included as an integral part of such employment.

### ***Innovative Service Providers***

During the course of the case study, many service providers were praised by those interviewed. While it was frequently the case that this was because of specific individuals working for the organisations, it was less common for the models of practice adopted by service providers to be praised. However, two organisations (Springboard and Second Chance) were recognised as having an innovative and

successful approach to dealing with at risk children and their families in Muirhevna Mór.

### Muirhevna Mór Springboard Initiative

Springboard's primary function is to provide a co-ordinated response to the needs of families in Muirhevna Mór. Some of those interviewed commented that despite the plethora of services available, a small core of families comprised the client base of most services. Prior to Springboard, families received assistance from multiple sources, but without any tackling of the root problems. Although Springboard had only been in operation for a short while when the case study was conducted, teachers and parents were generally very positive about its effects. While part of this enthusiasm might be attributable to the novelty of a new scheme, it seems that Springboard has genuinely impressed some members of the community.

Interviewees welcomed the holistic approach of Springboard. It is unusual in that it tries to adopt a 'big picture' approach, looking at the problems of families as a whole, rather than individual issues. The type of intervention offered depends on what families request, and is tailored to suit individual needs. As a result, families feel that they are treated as real people, not as cases. The project also liaises with other service providers on behalf of families. Springboard has invested considerable effort in publicizing their activities among local residents, with the result that they have a higher profile than do many longer-established service providers.

The model adopted by Springboard has much to recommend it. Although interventions targeted at particular issues have proven effective, the reality is that basic problems within the family home are sometimes not tackled. Springboard appears to be successful in adopting the role of advocate for the family, and is not perceived by families (as yet at least) in the negative light that NEHB social workers frequently are. The long-term efficacy of the project remains to be seen, but it can be hoped that the more holistic approach adopted will prove a useful addition to the targeted interventions typically found in areas such as Muirhevna Mór.

### Second Chance

Although located in Cox's Demesne, Second Chance deals with a number of children from Muirhevna Mór. The project caters for a small group of 12- to 15-year olds who are unlikely to remain in (or return to) school, but are too young to avail of programmes such as Youthreach. From interviews conducted during the case study, it

would appear that the project has gained a great deal of respect from local residents and teachers. There was recognition that those participating in Second Chance simply did not fit into the standard education system, and that without the project, they would leave school early.

Concern was expressed, particularly by teachers, that the project's precarious funding would lead to it being closed down in the near future. Popular rumour in the area was that the Department of Education and Science had refused to fund the project, and instead set up the 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan project. While there was agreement that the latter was a welcome addition to the area, some felt that the Department's funding criteria were too rigid. They felt that, rather than appreciating the innovative nature of Second Chance, it was seen by the Department as a negative factor. Although some of the praise given to Second Chance may have been related to a fear that the area would lose the project, there was also a clear recognition that it had been successful in dealing with a group that the education system had failed.

The project fills a gap in the current education system. At the moment there is no provision for those who drop out of school prior to age 15. While efforts can be made to encourage early school leavers to return to school, there are those who simply cannot or do not want to cope within the standard schooling regime. Second Chance's combination of normal school work, personal and skills development, and some ownership of the process by participants tries to provide a workable alternative to post-primary school. The project maintains strong links with O'Fiaich College, and participants attend the school during the morning. Because of this, re-entry into the standard educational system is a more realistic option than with alternative progression routes such as Youthreach. Indeed, while none of the participants returned to full-time education in the early years of the project, six of the 20 participants returned during 1998 and 1999.

Aside from re-entry into the formal education system, 26 participants have taken at least some modules of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), while five have completed all seven modules. In a cross-border initiative funded by the EU Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, seven participants completed all modules of CLAIT 1<sup>2</sup>, while six completed all but one module. Although the Probation and Welfare Service refers many of the participants, data on progression

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<sup>2</sup> CLAIT 1 (Computer Literacy and Information Technology: Level 1) is a similar qualification to the ECDL, and is assessed by OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations), a UK awarding body.

routes of Second Chance participants indicate that only three (from a total of 57) were taken into custody after leaving the project.

The model adopted by Second Chance involves considerably more investment on a per capita basis than most interventions. It is based on intensive, small-group work with a variety of extracurricular activities, as well as a transnational element involving some exchange programmes. Second Chance workers have identified the latter element as causing some resentment in the local community. Youthstart monies fund Second Chance, and all projects funded in this manner were required to have a transnational element. However, if the model were to be adopted on a wider basis in Ireland, it is likely that the transnational element could reasonably be dropped without any major impact on the model as a whole.

In summary, the project is an unusual and innovative way to deal with potential and actual early school leavers. Although it requires heavy investment, it seems to be successful in its aim of assisting young people to avail of education and achieve accredited certification (such as the Junior Certificate or the European Computer Driving Licence). The majority of participants would otherwise not gain any qualifications and many of those participating in the scheme have already been in difficulty with the law. Therefore, it could be argued that the cost of a project of this type is likely to be outweighed by its long-term economic and social benefits.

### ***Gaps in Current Provision***

The gaps in current provision identified by interviewees will be summarised in this section. Before that, it may be noted that many interviewees thought that the lack of planning at an area level was the main reason for the gaps in provision. The lack of a co-ordinating body will be discussed in detail in the later section on *Service Integration*.

### **Activities for Young People**

Parents who were interviewed were at pains to point to the lack of facilities for young people within the estate. Admittedly, Dundalk Sport Centre is located in Muirhevna Mór, but many locals cannot afford the fees charged by the Centre. There are numerous green areas throughout the estate, but the fact that most are humped in shape precludes the possibility of young people using them for informal sports activities such as soccer.

TEAM and Muirhevna Mór Community Youth Project offer after-school activities to a small number of children. However, some parents felt that the activity-based programmes dealt only with the same small group of young people, leaving the majority of children with nothing to do. There had been some play areas in the estate, but these had been closed following a number of insurance claims against Dundalk Urban District Council.

There is a clear need for some form of activity to be made available to all young people in Muirhevna Mór. The re-opening of play areas, with adequate supervision, would be welcome. In a related vein, one of the service providers who was interviewed commented on the difficulty in accessing funding for non-targeted measures that would benefit the area as a whole. She believed that funding a drop-in centre for young people would do a great deal to reduce the level of boredom and consequent misbehaviour among local youth. The idea has merit. A properly supervised drop-in centre where young people could meet is infinitely preferable to the current situation in which young people congregate on street corners. It would also be a facility that would benefit all young people in the area, rather than those who have been identified as at risk. It would be beneficial if the proposed coffee shop in the planned Community Resource Centre were to open in the evenings, providing local young people with a supervised location to meet.

### Money Management

One service provider pointed out that many of her client families are coping with debt, and believed that help with money management would be a useful resource in the area. The point was echoed by one of the teachers interviewed, who believed that unmanageable debt was placing a huge strain on a significant minority of parents. The Ait na Daoine survey (1994) examined sources of credit among their respondents, 76% of whom had borrowed money at some stage. Of these, only 4% had borrowed from banks, while 72% had borrowed from Credit Unions. However, almost one in five (19%), had borrowed from unauthorised moneylenders.

There is a Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) located in Dundalk town centre, which is accessible to the population of Muirhevna Mór. Dundalk MABS has a reasonably high profile, and was running an advertisement campaign on local radio at the time of writing. However, although they will visit people in their homes on request, they do not have an office in Muirhevna Mór. Although it is not essential that MABS have an office within the estate, it is likely that uptake of their services

would increase if they had. MABS could well be located within the new Community Resource Centre when it opens.

Most people see MABS as a last resort and will not avail of their services unless they are in dire need of financial assistance – if, for example, they are about to lose their home because they have not paid their mortgage or rent. The service would be likely to be of greater use if it could begin to engage in outreach and preventative work, helping families with money management skills before debt reaches crisis proportions.

### Information on Progression Routes for Early School Leavers

A number of parents made the point that once an individual has dropped out of school, it can be difficult to access advice on alternatives. Most early school leavers do not have career guidance classes, as they typically leave school before they reach the age where such classes are offered. Some of the parents interviewed had tried to find information on courses or training that their child could attend, but found it difficult to know who to ask for help. Again, the new Community Resource Centre in Muirhevna Mór could be a useful location in which to provide information to parents and early school leavers. FÁS, for example, could operate from the complex for a few hours a week, providing information on courses available in the area.

### Early Intervention

Four pre-schools/playgroups operate in Muirhevna Mór. The Holy Family Community Crèche and Lios na nÓg serve the general population of the area, Naonraí Dún Dealgan is linked to the Gaelscoil, while Right Start is targeted at members of the Travelling community. Apart from these, most intervention is aimed at older children and adolescents. Eight of the ten teachers interviewed thought that intervention generally happened too late in a child's life. Many of the parents interviewed also thought that younger children were not sufficiently targeted and that early intervention was more likely to prove successful with a larger number of children. One mother summed it up by saying that intervention should happen "from the pram".

None of the primary schools in Muirhevna Mór is included in early intervention schemes such as Breaking the Cycle or Early Start, though both are designated as disadvantaged. Only St Joseph's is included in the 8- to 15- Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative, which, by definition, only deals with children older than eight. However, both O'Fiaich College and Coláiste Rís are in targeted schemes

to address early school leaving. Without denying the need for intervention in post-primary schools, it is probable that the younger children are targeted, the more effective the intervention is likely to be. Therefore, a greater focus on early intervention in Muirhevna Mór should prove beneficial, particularly between the ages of five and nine, where relatively little attention is currently directed.

Homework clubs and activity-based after-school programmes are rarely directed at this age group, but may be worth considering. Furthermore, classroom assistants are often located in senior classes, where pupils are manifesting clear literacy or numeracy problems. Work with more junior classes (including Infants classes) would allow literacy and numeracy problems to be dealt with as they emerge, and possibly, prevent them from escalating.

### **Health Board and Psychological Services**

Five of the ten teachers interviewed referred to difficulties in obtaining psychological assessments or assessments by speech therapist for pupils. They observed that the number of psychologists funded by the Department of Education and Science and Health Boards was totally inadequate to meet the level of demand, with waiting lists of up to two years. Dundalk Employment Partnership provided funding that allowed schools to access a psychologist and this had helped to alleviate the situation somewhat. Schools sometimes referred pupils privately, but this was very expensive, and not a feasible option in most cases.

Although recent Department of Education and Science changes with regard to the National Educational Psychological Service should improve the situation somewhat, it is clear that teachers feel current allocation is totally inadequate. Even with the assistance of the local Partnership, supply is inadequate to meet demand for assessments.

Six teachers mentioned that considerable delay was typical when a child was referred to the NEHB. There would appear to be staff shortages in the NEHB, and a high turnover among staff, particularly social workers. Feedback from the NEHB to schools was stated to be limited. Part of the reason for this may be because high turnover precludes the establishment of a good working relationship between social workers and teachers. However, it may also be due to how social workers are assigned to cases. There does not seem to be a set 'contact person' for each school, making it difficult for teachers to know who to ask for information. The establishment of more

open channels of communication between schools and the NEHB should not require any major change in staffing levels, but would improve the service offered.

### ***Overlap in Current Provision***

It would be difficult to say that Muirhevna Mór is benefiting from 'too much' of a given type of service. The population of the area is very disadvantaged and has a high proportion of residents in need of support services. Even when a service is provided by more than one agency, demand can still outstrip supply. Nonetheless, it is likely that some consolidation of services would lead to a more effective use of funding and a more coherent provision.

There are many projects aimed at early school leavers (Second Chance, 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan, Stay in School Initiative and the Early School Leavers/Disadvantaged Programme). Generally, they are spread across different schools or aimed at different but somewhat overlapping age groups, and there is little co-ordination of their efforts. O'Fiaich College is involved in 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan, has recently been accepted into the Stay in School Initiative, and is the school associated with Second Chance. Although all three are pilot projects aimed to reduce the number of early school leavers and are based in the same school, they seem to operate independently of each other.

There are four crèches or pre-schools serving the estate, but with slightly different target populations. One caters for Travellers, one for Irish speakers and two are for the more general population. TEAM and Cúchulainn both target young offenders, although TEAM target a slightly younger, but overlapping, age group. Indeed, another organisation (Fáilte Abhaile) in Dundalk also targets older released political prisoners. Finally, FÁS and the VEC operate three different training workshops for early school leavers in Dundalk (a Community Training Workshop, a Youthreach Centre, and, a Traveller Training Centre).

Undoubtedly there are differences in the target clients of the various service providers. However, there are also many similarities, both in target client group, and in the type of service offered. Many of the teachers and service providers interviewed felt that overlap in provision was a feature of services in Muirhevna Mór. They felt that there were a number of services dealing with the same clients in the same manner. Some parents echoed this point.

The degree of overlap creates two problems. Firstly, it appears that a small group of clients benefit from multiple services while others receive no assistance. Secondly, having multiple small organisations carrying out similar work and, to a certain extent, competing for funding and clients, would not seem to be the most efficient way to allocate resources.

From the brief survey of services carried out for the case study, it appears that some consolidation of services would lead to a more effective use of funds. Certainly, greater communication between services and more clearly defined organisational goals could lead to a reduction in overlap. Of course, to a certain extent organisational goals are defined by the funding body, which suggests that the source of overlap is partly due to funding bodies. Finally, identifying overlap is not to suggest that service providers do not currently offer a valuable service, merely that a reduction in overlap would lead to a more effective set of services accessible by a wider population.

## **Service Integration**

The analysis of service integration in this section is based on the situation in Muirhevna Mór at the time of the case study (late 1999 – early 2000). It is to be expected that the relationships between service providers will change somewhat with the opening of the Community Resource Centre. For example, it is possible that the physical proximity of multiple organisations will lead to a greater understanding of the activities of other services. The likely increase in informal communication between service providers may lead to more informal sharing of client information. Nonetheless, most of the problems identified in this section will continue after the new premises open.

Integration of services is relatively limited in Muirhevna Mór. None of the service providers or teachers interviewed believed that services in the area were integrated. Recently, some efforts have been made to offer a more integrated service, and there has been an increase in informal communication between service providers.

## ***Lack of an Overall Strategy***

There are many small service providers operating in Muirhevna Mór, most of whom are working on short-term piloted measures to deal with a specific issue. While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with such projects, a preponderance of them can lead to

a lack of coherence in the service strategy at area level. Some interviewees believed that funding trends, rather than the reality of life in Muirhevna Mór, were influencing the targets set by service providers.

In Muirhevna Mór, there is a sense that few have looked at the ‘big picture’. Indeed, two of the four service providers interviewed believed that there was a need for a community-led approach to designing service provision for the area. Before deciding *how* service providers should operate, it is necessary to analyse the main requirements of an area to discover *what* services are needed. To do this, overall quality of service and service integration need to become central to organisational policy, rather than the ethereal aspirations that they frequently are. In simple language, time needs to be given to plan for Muirhevna Mór as a whole and to liaise with fellow service providers. The onus is on management in larger organisations and on funding bodies to allow staff such time.

#### Lack of a Co-ordinating Body

Many interviewees identified the lack of area-level planning as responsible for the gaps perceived in current provision for Muirhevna Mór. There is no organisation that co-ordinates resources for the area as a whole. One possible candidate for that role might appear to be Muirhevna Mór Community Council, the representative body for service providers in the area. However, the Community Council is not in a position to distribute funds or to influence how funds should be distributed. Although it has undoubtedly contributed towards greater liaison between service providers in the area, and sourced funding for the Community Resource Centre, it is not sufficiently well resourced to bring about any real change. It has limited support services and facilities to offer, and no real political support or clout. In common parlance, it does not have any teeth, nor does it have any carrots to offer.

A more likely candidate for the role of organiser is Dundalk Employment Partnership, which is in many ways in a position to spearhead area planning and act as an instigator of service integration. However, it does not appear to have taken on such a role. It has input from community, voluntary and state bodies, and a budget in excess of £500,000 per annum. The Partnership has been instrumental in setting up networks of groups interested in areas such as Youth, Childcare and Unemployment. It has also developed a Community Resource Unit in its offices, where community groups can access office facilities, training and support for funding applications. However, community groups must pay for the use of such facilities. The Partnership

part-funds a number of services in Muirhevna Mór, including a psychological service for schools, and the Muirhevna Mór Community Youth Project. However, despite all of this, the Partnership seems in many ways to be quite removed from service provision in Muirhevna Mór.

Indeed, one interviewee commented that while the Partnership had developed a Youth Policy for the area, it had done so without consultation with local people and service providers. Perhaps this is not surprising, given that the Mission Statement of Dundalk Employment Partnership is to "... work with long-term unemployed people in the Dundalk area to help them optimise their effectiveness in acquiring education, training and job opportunities". The main focus of the Partnership is employment generation, but it also directs approximately one quarter of its budget into community initiatives and development. While there were few direct criticisms of the Partnership (lack of community consultation being the main one), neither were there many positive references to the organisation. Indeed, the Partnership was only referred to in passing in most of the interviews.

To summarise, no organisation has taken charge of developing a coherent and integrated approach to service provision, with the result that services are clearly not integrated. The Community Council is currently the closest thing to a co-ordinating body in Muirhevna Mór, but has no real power. The Dundalk Employment Partnership has sufficient resources and clout to act as a co-ordinating body, but does not seem to do so.

Muirhevna Mór would benefit from a co-ordinating body, or, as one interviewee suggested, a key worker whose job it was to ensure that services combined more effectively. Such a person or organisation could work to ensure that funding applications from the area were the result of a co-ordinated effort from all relevant service providers and that new services learned from, or linked with, pre-existing services. Whoever filled such a role should also strive to ensure service providers communicate about their aims, target client group and actual clients. Finally, a co-ordinating body should be able to provide service providers with adequate access to training, equipment and expertise.

### Dealing with Individual Cases

As well as planning for the needs of the area as a whole, an overall strategy should incorporate a more co-ordinated method of dealing with individual cases. Too often the current method of intervention was described as a fire brigade approach, with little

intervention until children progressed from being at risk to actually being in trouble. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, all teachers interviewed believed that lack of co-ordination was a problem with service provision in Muirhevna Mór. Either schools were not kept informed by service providers, or service providers did not communicate adequately with each other about individual cases.

Two interviewees discussed how the NEHB initiates case conferences between relevant parties for crisis cases. They found the meetings to be very useful, but thought that they should not be limited to extreme cases. While service providers in the area have begun to move towards an informal sharing of client information, this is still very much at an embryonic stage, and needs to be developed. It is not possible to offer individual clients a co-ordinated service if one service provider does not even know that another service provider is dealing with the same client.

### ***North/South Divide***

Muirhevna Mór has an unusual population mix, with many residents from Northern Ireland. This has led to somewhat of a divide in the area which has carried over, to a certain extent, to service providers.

Some view with suspicion the intentions of service providers originally from Northern Ireland, or who have associations with organisations such as Sinn Féin. One of the service providers interviewed believed that this was due to a more radical approach adopted by such individuals, while another believed that it was partly due to fear (for example, punishment beatings were still an occasional feature of life on the estate). It would appear that the mutual mistrust has lessened in recent years, as service providers from each side of the divide have witnessed effective work carried out by the 'other side'.

It is difficult to know how such mistrust can be further decreased, except by closer working relationships. A more integrated service strategy should lead to greater mutual understanding and clarification of intentions. However, the North/South divide is currently one of the factors inhibiting such a strategy. It may be that the creation of a sufficiently resourced co-ordinating body with adequate representation from all viewpoints would lessen the current mutual mistrust.

### ***North Eastern Health Board***

The NEHB is one of the largest service providers dealing with the population of Muirhevna Mór. It has a Health Centre located within the estate, but social workers are located in the main NEHB offices away from the estate. There was a perception among many of those interviewed that the NEHB was quite understaffed, with some also commenting on the high rate of staff turnover.

Such factors obviously militate against service integration. Staff shortages make liaising with other service providers very difficult, while rapid staff turnover inhibits development of the interpersonal relationships and local understanding that foster integration. Some of the teachers interviewed commented on the slow response time of NEHB staff to requests for intervention, as well as the poor supply of feedback following intervention. These comments were not criticisms of individual social workers (indeed they were generally accompanied by a comment on staff shortages in the Health Board) but on the manner in which the NEHB operates.

It would appear that the NEHB could foster greater links with other service providers, particularly in terms of feedback. For example, the story told by some of the teachers interviewed about how a child was taken into care without the school being informed is a clear instance of poor communication. To improve links with other service providers, it is necessary that the NEHB have adequate staffing levels, and that staff be retained in the same post for longer periods of time.

### ***The Role of Government Departments***

A criticism voiced by a number of interviewees was that while those 'on the ground' were attempting to provide an integrated service, government Departments did not seem to have the same commitment to the process. The lack of co-operation between Departments was seen as blocking the move towards integration. Some pointed out that three Departments (Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Health and Children, and Education and Science) each had projects (TEAM, Springboard and 8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan, respectively) essentially targeting the same families. Each project was set up from separate funding strands, with little or no reference to the other projects. While each was a worthwhile project, it seemed self-evident to the interviewees that combining their activities in some way would be more beneficial.

The manner in which Departments allocate funds to areas such as Muirhevna Mór is also problematic. The majority of services in the area are short-term pilot projects. The insecure and short-term nature of some funding has made it difficult for services to plan for their own activities, let alone engage in any constructive planning with other organisations. The “drip-feeding of money into disadvantaged areas”, as one interviewee put it, militates against coherent or long-term planning. Although only five interviews were conducted with service providers in Muirhevna Mór, there was a striking difference between those whose funding was adequate and secure (at least in the short-term) and those whose funding was not. It was apparent that poor funding limits activities and diverts staff time away from core activities.

The perceived preference for piloting projects has also led to irritation among some of the teachers interviewed. Having seen successful projects in action, they found it difficult to understand why they were not mainstreamed, or why they were replaced by another pilot project. A more detailed discussion of funding allocation in Muirhevna Mór will follow in the section entitled *Allocation of Funds*.

### ***Creation of a Community Resource Centre***

As mentioned at the start of this section, it is hoped that the soon-to-be-opened Community Resource Centre will lead to an improvement in the quality of service provision in Muirhevna Mór. However, it is unlikely that quality of provision will improve much by simply putting a number of service providers under one roof. Furthermore, some of the parents interviewed expressed the fear that the new Centre would become another facility little used by local people.

To maximise the effectiveness of the new facility, a number of steps need to be taken. Firstly, the Centre’s services should be advertised in as many ways as possible. Some parents were adamant that unless locals were made fully aware of the range of services available, it would be of little use. Use should be made of local schools, churches, shops and newsletters to advertise the Centre’s facilities, and a clearly visible list of services should be placed at the entrance to the premises.

Secondly, the Centre should have an open-door policy, allowing people to drop in to see what is available, and get information on services. To achieve this, some form of general information facility will be required, as well as the offices of the various service providers. It should not be necessary for a person to have an

appointment or a specific request to enter the building. More importantly, people should not feel this to be the case.

Thirdly, participation from a wide range of service providers should be sought. Although a small core group of providers will have their offices within the premises, other services should have regular access to office space. For example, the HSCL scheme, FÁS and MABS are just some of the services that have premises elsewhere, but which could avail of office space for, for example, a half day per week.

Finally, service providers who use the building should not merely share premises. A requirement should be that occupying the building leads to greater communication between agencies, not only at a planning level, but also at the level of individual clients.

## **Allocation of Funds**

Relative to other areas, Muirhevna Mór has accessed a reasonable amount of funding to redress disadvantage. Part of the reason for this may be its location in a border town, generally recognised to have suffered economically from its location. Dundalk's location means that service providers in Muirhevna Mór can apply to funding sources unavailable to most other parts of the country, specifically, the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. This is not to say that the area has received more money than it merits, merely that it benefits from a reasonable level of funding.

Unfortunately, while the total amount of funding allocated may be reasonable, the manner in which it is allocated is less than perfect. Muirhevna Mór has multiple sources funding multiple projects, with little overall strategy. Most of the projects in the area are short-term pilot projects, and many have inadequate or insecure funding. In this section, the manner of allocating funds will be examined.

### ***Short-term Pilot Projects***

Muirhevna Mór has a plethora of pilot projects, the majority of which are short-term, and very targeted. While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with such projects, the fact that they form the bulk of activities in the estate makes long-term planning difficult. Again, this is not a criticism of individual service providers, but of the manner in which they are funded.

A common complaint raised by teachers and service providers who were interviewed was that there were too many pilot projects in the area. Rather than supporting or expanding pre-existing services, new funding tends to be allocated to new projects. For example, at the time of the case study, Second Chance was in danger of losing its main source of funds. However, the Department of Education and Science was funding a new project (8/15 Comhnascadh Dún Dealgan), instead of supporting the pre-existing project.

The motives of funding bodies are somewhat understandable. A series of short-term targeted projects with clearly defined aims which can be achieved in a (typically) three-year period provides more kudos for the funding body than a smaller number of long-term, broader ranging projects, the success of which may be harder to quantify. Unfortunately, in an area such as Muirhevna Mór, with its endemic social problems, it can be difficult to effect real change in such a short time frame.

Popular perception is that even where there are pre-existing pilot projects with similar aims and methods, funding bodies allocate grants to new pilot projects, rather than expanding or altering some of those already in existence. The tendency is to fund one pilot project after another, rather than using an effective pilot project as a basis from which a slightly modified and improved version can be funded. If a project has been shown to work and has established a relationship and trust with the local community, the logic of ceasing to fund it while funding a new, and essentially identical project is mystifying to many in Muirhevna Mór.

### ***Adequacy of Funds***

While there are some organisations in Muirhevna Mór that receive adequate funding to support their activities, there are others for which finances are both insufficient and insecure. One of the service providers interviewed commented on how unusual it was to be working on a well-funded project, and how it made for more efficient use of resources. Unfortunately, it would appear that such a situation is more the exception than the norm. Many service providers in Muirhevna Mór spend a considerable part of their time sourcing funding, thereby diverting time from their core activities. Indeed, one interviewee's organisation had recently ceased providing one of its core services due to lack of finances.

As well as the actual amount of funding provided, the security of funds also impacts upon activities. Some services were facing an uncertain future, and were

consequently unable to engage in planning, as they did not know if they would be able to access funds to continue their service. There was a sense that money was given out in dribs and drabs, preventing any long-term vision. It would be beneficial if funding bodies could finance the proper running of a service, including administration, rather than providing a core amount which staff must supplement from whatever sources they can. Similarly, if funding bodies expect service providers to function optimally, then a service's future funding prospects should be clarified as far in advance as is practicable.

### ***Coherence of Funding***

A common complaint was that there was no coherence in how money was allocated to services in the area. As already mentioned, the tendency to fund multiple pilot projects was criticised. However, the lack of local consultation and of needs analysis were also criticised. It would appear that Muirhevna Mór has funding foisted upon it, which although welcome, may not always be targeting the area's most pressing needs.

Current funding strategies, by government Departments and other sources such as the EU could be seen as fostering competition between local service providers, who scramble to access the same limited funds. More importantly, how funds should be spent has already been decided, without any reference to the specific problems of the local area. In this regard, some service providers felt that local knowledge should play a role in deciding what funds were allocated and how they were spent. While a co-ordinating body, similar to that proposed earlier, could become involved in the distribution of funds, statutory agencies could also take more responsibility at local level.

### **The Role of Schools**

Muirhevna Mór is unusual in that it has a concentration of services around one primary school, with a smaller Gaelscoil somewhat isolated from service provision. The three post-primary schools that serve the school-going population are all located outside the estate, but have a reasonable degree of interaction with service providers from Muirhevna Mór. In this section, the activities of schools will be examined.

### ***Schools' Interaction With Other Service Providers***

Due to the location of many services within its grounds, St Joseph's NS has a high level of interaction with service providers in Muirhevna Mór. Unfortunately, the Gaelscoil Chríost Rí is rather isolated from the network of service provision for the area. Whether this is due to the 'campus' around St Joseph's, to the recent appointment of a new principal in Chríost Rí, or to the fact that they have only recently been granted a HSCL post is unclear. Whatever the reason, it is apparent that Chríost Rí and local service providers need to establish closer ties to ensure that all young children in the estate can access support measures.

In general, schools in and for Muirhevna Mór have a reasonable level of interaction with service providers, but certain aspects could be improved. In particular, schools' links with the NEHB should be formalised, allowing for adequate information flow between parties. The majority of teachers interviewed expressed the wish for greater feedback from service providers, but believed that staffing shortages often precluded the possibility of services liaising fully with schools. However, it cannot be assumed that the lack of adequate communication stems purely from service providers. As one teacher pointed out, teachers are often wary of interacting with outside agencies, while service providers may feel that schools like to take over. Perhaps one way to surmount this mistrust would be to ensure that schools participate fully in any strategic planning for the area, and in any co-ordinating body for the area.

### ***Schools' Interaction With Families***

As distinct differences emerged between how primary and post-primary schools were perceived by parents, they will be dealt with separately.

#### **Primary School**

Since only parents of children attending St Joseph's NS were interviewed, only this school will be dealt with here. In general, parents were very positive about the ethos of the school, and believed that parents were encouraged to participate in their children's education. The employment of parents on CE schemes (particularly as classroom assistants) was perceived to have improved the level of parental involvement, and is a model that could be followed by other schools. The Good Behaviour Scheme was popular with parents, not only because it provided up-to-date knowledge of children's progress, but also because it rewarded good behaviour.

Although the scheme may be time-consuming to implement, the fact that it rewards improved behaviour and work, rather than being directed at those who are falling behind in class or misbehaving, was seen as a positive feature.

### Post-Primary School

The degree of parental involvement in post-primary schools serving Muirhevna Mór was noticeably less than that in primary school. Some parents did not feel that post-primary schools kept parents adequately informed about the progress (or lack thereof) of their child. While the appointment of HSCL co-ordinators to the three post-primary schools had improved communication and the perceived approachability of schools, many parents believed that there was still plenty of room for improvement. In particular, some mentioned feeling that they were being talked down to by post-primary teachers and that many simply did not know how to deal with students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

There is a need for greater communication between post-primary schools and parents. In particular, schools need to address the perception that teachers unfairly label students based either on their address or on older members of their family, and that only some parents are adequately informed of their child's progress. Some felt that post-primary schools only informed parents when a reasonably well-behaved student played truant, leaving more troublesome truants to their own devices. Whatever the accuracy of this perception, post-primary schools not only need to endeavour to treat all students fairly, but to be seen to do so. If communication with parents is insufficient, or only limited to 'good parents', then such perceptions will flourish.

Many of the parents interviewed commented on the difficulty in dealing with a large number of teachers, particularly in an environment in which they do not feel comfortable. While increasing the number of open days or parent-teacher meetings may be of some benefit, it might prove more fruitful to promote one-to-one relationships between parents and teachers. For example, while schools have roles such as Year Head or Class Tutor, many parents do not know of such roles or understand their function. If each set of parents had a designated contact teacher, whom they had met, then they might feel less intimidated when contacting the school.

Post-primary schools were also perceived as not worrying about dropout when it occurred after the Junior Certificate. Some parents spoke of efforts they had made to convince their child to stay in school, but believed that the schools had done little to

support them. Of course, such students are typically older than the minimum school-leaving age, and there is no legal requirement to keep them in school. However, it may be that schools could adopt a friendlier approach in such cases, giving both parents and student advice on the available options.

## **Summary of Main Recommendations**

This section provides a brief summary of the main recommendations for Muirhevna Mór that have already been described in more detail earlier in the chapter.

### ***Current Provision***

1. Although the centralising of services around St Joseph's has advantages, it has also contributed to the relative exclusion of Gaelscoil Chríost Rí from the network of service providers. The new Community Resource Centre would be more acceptable to the local population as a centralised location for services.
2. Involvement of local people in service provision is high in Muirhevna Mór, but must be complemented by adequate skills transfer and accredited training.
3. Springboard and Second Chance are considered locally to be effective and innovative projects. Their long-term future needs to be considered.
4. Current provision needs to be expanded in the areas of activities for young people, advice on money management, information on progression routes for early school leavers, early intervention programmes, and NEHB and psychological services.
5. Multiple service providers are offering similar services to the area. Some consolidation of services would lead to a more effective use of funds.

### ***Service Integration***

1. Muirhevna Mór would benefit from a properly resourced co-ordinating body, which could help to develop an overall service strategy for the area as well as a more integrated approach to dealing with individual clients.
2. The North/South divide between residents is partially reflected in service provision and should be addressed.

3. The NEHB would be able to offer a more effective service if allocated an expanded staff, who would be maintained in posts for sufficient time to establish good working relationships with other service providers.
4. Government Departments need to communicate more effectively, both within and between Departments.
5. The new Community Resource Centre should advertise extensively, adopt an open-door policy, have participation from as wide a range of service providers as possible, and specify that greater communication between occupying service providers is a condition of residence.

### ***Allocation of Funds***

1. Where pilot projects have been proven to be effective they should be continued rather than replaced with another pilot project.
2. Inadequate and insecure funding has a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of service provision. Funding should be sufficient to cover core organisational activities, and future funding prospects should be established at as early a stage as possible.
3. Funding in Muirhevna Mór lacks coherency. Statutory agencies at local level and a co-ordinating body (if set up) should have involvement in disbursement of funds.

### ***The Role of Schools***

1. Gaelscoil Chríost Rí needs to be incorporated more into the service network of Muirhevna Mór.
2. Schools and other service providers need to improve channels of communication and to formalise existing channels.
3. St Joseph's NS has done much to encourage parental participation, and some of the school's initiatives could be effectively used in other similar schools. Specifically, consideration should be given to extending the employment of parents on CE schemes and the creation of a Good Behaviour Scheme since these appear to be useful ways to increase parental participation.

4. Post-primary schools serving Muirhevna Mór need to develop greater parental involvement and to become more sensitive to the variety of needs of families living in disadvantaged areas.
5. Post-primary schools serving Muirhevna Mór provide greater support to students who wish to drop out of school after the Junior Certificate.



# Profile of Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser

## Location

Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser are two adjacent rural District Electoral Divisions (DEDs) situated between Westport and Newport, in County Mayo. Kilmeena covers an area Northwest of Westport, and its western periphery encompasses the coastline from the North of Westport Bay to the South of Newport Bay. The area stretches from the village of Carraholly in the South to Moyna in the North. Due to its proximity to Westport, Carraholly has become a popular place for people working in Westport to live. Consequently, the houses built in Carraholly in the last few years are primarily large two-story houses, and house and site prices in the area have risen dramatically. Other parts of the DED remain quite rural.

Kilmaclasser is situated in an area Southeast of Newport and Northeast of Westport. The DED is bordered on its Southern periphery by the village of Druminabo and at its Northern edge by Drumilra village, and the village of Fahy is located in the centre of the DED. In contrast to parts of the Kilmeena DED, Kilmaclasser appears to be much more remote and does not have the same level of development. However, there is a new National School currently under construction in Fahy.

Both DEDs are quite rural, and are primarily composed of small farm holdings and villages. The majority of housing in each is privately owned, and mainly composed of a mixture of older farmhouses and newer houses, primarily bungalows. Mayo County Council, though unable to quantify the number, confirmed that each area contains a small number of council houses. There are no public housing estates in either area.

Overall, the DEDs are quite similar in composition. Therefore, for the purposes of this profile they will be treated as one unit, with any notable differences highlighted. Much of this profile is derived from Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS), which were produced by the Central Statistics Office from the 1996 census data.

## Population

Based on SAPS from the 1996 census, Kilmeena had a population of 967 and Kilmaclasser had a population of 490, giving a combined total of 1,457 (CSO, 1997). In the period between 1991 and 1996, the population of Kilmeena increased by 5.7%, while Kilmaclasser's population size remained exactly the same as in 1991. Both DEDs had a higher percentage of males, young people and old people, and a lower percentage of single parent households than the percentages found in the State as a whole.

Males were overrepresented in both areas, comprising 53.3% of the population, compared to 49.6% nationally. The percentage of the population aged 15 years or under was quite similar to the national average (23.5% versus 23.7%), as was the percentage of the population aged over 65 years (14.9% versus 11.4%). The percentage of the population aged over 65 was higher in Kilmaclasser than in Kilmeena - 18.16% versus 13.24%, respectively. Just over one eighth (12.9%) of households were made up of single parents, lower than the national average of 16%.

There are no official halting sites in either DED, nor are there any traditional unofficial halting sites. At the time of the case study, no refugees or asylum seekers had been housed in the area. Both areas could be characterised as having a fairly stable long-term population. Most of those currently residing in the areas were born locally, and the level of migration to either DED is low. An exception to this is Carraholly, where a reasonable proportion of the population has moved to the village in recent years.

## Educational Facilities and Attainment

Kilmeena has two primary schools serving the local population. These are Carraholly National School (40 pupils<sup>1</sup>), and Moyna National School (94 pupils). Fahy National School (55 pupils) serves Kilmaclasser. All three schools are mixed sex. Although not designated as disadvantaged, all three are participating in the rural component of the Breaking the Cycle scheme. There are no post-primary schools in the Kilmeena/Kilmaclasser area. The closest post-primary schools are located in Westport town

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<sup>1</sup> School sizes are based on the 1998/99 returns made by schools to the Department of Education and Science.

(Rice College, Sacred Heart School, and Westport Vocational School). Children from Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser tend to transfer to one of these three schools. Of the three, only the Sacred Heart Secondary School is designated as disadvantaged, and this school also has an allocated Home School Community Liaison co-ordinator.

Educational attainment in the area is relatively low, with 35.9% of those over 15 having left school at the end of primary school, compared to 29.5% nationally (CSO, 1998a). There are clear differences between the two DEDs as regards educational attainment. Only 30.95% of the population in Kilmeena left school after completing primary school, compared to 45.4% in Kilmaclasser. Almost half (48.9%) the population of Kilmaclasser left school at age 15 or younger, compared to only 33.4% in Kilmeena, and 34.8% nationally. While the percentage of those in Kilmeena (17.8%) with a third level qualification is close to the national figure of 19.7%, Kilmaclasser residents had a much lower uptake of third level education (10.7%).

## **Socioeconomic Activity**

The unemployment rate in the Kilmeena/Kilmaclasser area was 17% in 1996, slightly higher than the national average of 14.78% (CSO, 1998b). Although similar percentages of the total population in each DED were unemployed, there were some differences when age was considered. Compared to Kilmaclasser, a noticeably higher percentage of the Kilmeena population aged between 15 and 24 were unemployed or first time job seekers (28.8% versus 17.65%, respectively).

Of those who were unemployed, 46.05% were unemployed for more than three years, which was close to the national average of 47.5%. Almost two thirds (62.5%) of those unemployed in Kilmaclasser had been so for three years or more, compared to 38.5% in Kilmeena. Although the official unemployment rate is above the national average, Westport (the main centre of employment for both DEDs) was experiencing labour shortages at the time of the case study. Much of the employment available to the population of Kilmeena/Kilmaclasser is in farming, building and the tourism industry. According to local opinion, a considerable number of those claiming unemployment benefit or assistance in the area are actually working in the 'Black Economy', in one of the three sectors mentioned.

The distribution of social classes for this area is similar to the national distribution. Social Class 1 is represented by 3.02% of the Kilmeena/Kilmaclasser

population, compared to 5.35% nationally, while Social Class 5 and 6 represent 24.78% of the population, compared to 21.34% nationally. In Kilmaclasser there is a higher proportion of the population represented in Social Classes 5 and 6 - 29.39%, compared to 22.44% in Kilmeena.

Area Development Management commissioned a report to provide baseline statistical data for each Area Partnership Company. Based on the information from South West Mayo Development Company (SWMDCo), Kilmeena was assigned a deprivation score of 6 on the Haase Index of Relative Affluence and Deprivation, while Kilmaclasser was assigned a score of 9 (P. Kirkpatrick, personal communication, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2000). The Haase Index provides a single measurement of the overall deprivation of an area. The index uses 1996 Census data on social class, levels of education, levels of unemployment and long-term unemployment, proportion of lone parents, the extent of small farming and the age dependency rate to rank DED's from 1 to 10. Kilmeena's Rank Factor Score of 6 indicates that it has a higher disadvantage score than 60% of DEDs, while Kilmaclasser's score of 9 indicates that it is among the most disadvantaged 20% of DEDs.

## **Transport**

Due to the rural nature of the area, the population is primarily dependent on private transport. Almost all households own a car with some having two or more vehicles. According to results from the 1996 Census, travel by bus (20.51%) and by car (52.3%) are the two most common modes of getting to work or school in these areas (CSO, 1998a). Only 5.65% of the population travel to work or school by foot, compared to a national average of 20.28%. There is no public transport available to Carraholly or Fahy primary schools and children walk or are driven to school by parents. Moyna has a bus service for some pupils. This originated because of a compulsory closure of a nearby primary school in the late 1960's. The government provides transport to Moyna for the pupils who had been served by that school.

A school bus service caters for most students in second level education. In addition to this the Westport-Achill bus passes by the Kilmeena area three times a day during the months of July and August, and twice a day for the rest of the year.

## **Sports & Leisure Facilities**

There is one GAA pitch in Kilmeena village, but none in Kilmaclasser. Westport Sailing Club and Rugby Club are situated just outside Carraholly, as is one of the two golf courses in the Kilmeena DED. Other than these facilities, there are little or no sporting or leisure facilities in Kilmaclasser or Kilmeena. Because they live only a few miles away, Carraholly residents tend to use facilities in Westport.

Moyna and Fahy both have local community centres. Fahy community centre also houses the local youth club. The club organises indoor games and quizzes in the community hall, with supervision provided on a voluntary basis by parents and members of the community councils.

## **Drugs & Crime**

There does not appear to be a significant drug problem in either DED. However, underage drinking is relatively common and is perceived as a problem by many parents. Finally, there is no major evidence of crime in the area.



## Service Provision for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser

Direct service provision for early school leavers in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser is sparse compared to typical urban areas. However, there are a number of service providers that indirectly help potential or actual early school leavers. In this section, all identified services are listed and briefly described. Services based within schools are described first, followed by other services available to the area.

### School-based Provision

Primary schools in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser are included in only a small number of the Department of Education and Science's schemes to combat educational disadvantage. The schemes in which they are involved are described below. During the course of the case study, no locally run programmes dealing with at risk children were identified.

#### Primary

Table 4.1 summarises schools' involvement in Department of Education and Science-sponsored schemes. As can be seen, neither of the three primary schools in the area are designated as disadvantaged. In addition, none of the schools have a Home School Community Liaison co-ordinator or are involved in the Early Start programme.

However, all three participate in the rural component of Breaking the Cycle and share a Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator with three other schools. All three primary schools share the same resource teacher. Fahy and Moyna share a remedial teacher along with three other primary schools, while Carraholly has its own part-time remedial teacher.

Table 4.1. Involvement of primary schools in Department of Education and Science schemes to redress educational disadvantage.

School	Designated Disad.	HSCL	Early Start	Breaking the Cycle	Remedial Teacher	Resource Teacher
Fahy NS	No	No	No	✓	Shared	Shared
Moyna NS	No	No	No	✓	Shared	Shared
Carraholly NS	No	No	No	✓	PT	Shared

## Post-primary

Table 4.2 summarises the involvement of Westport post-primary schools in Department of Education and Science sponsored schemes. Of the three schools, only the Sacred Heart Secondary School is designated as disadvantaged. This school is also the only school involved in the HSCL scheme. Apart from the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Programmes, all three post-primary schools offer the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, while both Rice College and Sacred Heart Secondary School offer the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. Westport Vocational School is the only school in the area that does not offer the Transition Year Programme.

Table 4.2. Involvement of post-primary schools in Department of Education and Science schemes to redress educational disadvantage.

School	Designated Disadvantaged	HSCL	TYP	LCAP	LCVP
Rice College	No	No	✓	✓	✓
Sacred Heart	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vocational School	No	No	No	No	✓

## Other Service Provision

Table 4.3 (overleaf) summarises the purpose, funding and location of premises of the main service providers for the Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser area. As can be seen, none specifically target the prevention of early school leaving, while only one targets actual early school leavers after they have left school.

### ***Fahy Youth Club***

Fahy Youth Club is based in Fahy community hall. It aims to help children's social development and keep them out of trouble. Participants range in age from nine years to the early twenties. The main activity taking place in the hall is badminton. The youth club also organises golf outings, and engage in fundraising a few times each year, for local people with learning disabilities.

Table 4.3. Service providers for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser, described by primary focus, main funding source and type of premises.

Service	Primary Focus	Funding	Premises
Fahy Youth Club	Other	Voluntary + Fundraising	Community Hall
Community Council, Moyna	Other	Voluntary	Community Hall
Community Council, Fahy	Other	Voluntary	Community Hall
Riverside Youth Centre and Club, Newport	Other	Voluntary + Fundraising + EU grant	Community Hall
WHB: Social Workers; School Medical Team; Psychologists	Other	Government	Outside Area
Homework Project, Westport	Other	FÁS	House
Community Garda	Other	Government	Newport Garda Station
Juvenile Liaison Officer	Other	Government	Outside Area
Meitheal Mhaigheo	Other	EU funding/ADM	Outside Area
Foróige	Other	Government	Outside Area
Youthreach	Actual ESL	FÁS	Outside Area
South West Mayo Development Company	Other	EU funding	Offices in Newport
Western Care	Other	Fundraising + Government Grant	Offices in Westport
Obair	Other	Government	Offices in Westport

### ***Moyna Community Council***

Moyna Community Council is composed of ten representatives from the local community. All of those involved have an interest in local issues and participate on a voluntary basis. The Community Council manages activities in the local community hall, and other sporting events.

### ***Fahy Community Council***

The Fahy Community Council consists of seven representatives from the local community. The members of the committee are also involved in other local voluntary committees, such as the GAA, the local school, and the church. They hold their meetings in the community hall, which is close to Fahy National School, and the local church. The council participates in the funding of local events, for example the local youth group, and it fundraises for Fahy National School. In addition it also supervises the running of the community hall, which is utilised by the national school as a sports hall.

### ***Riverside Youth Centre and Club, Newport***

The Riverside Youth Centre and Club targets children in primary school, from 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class, and students in post-primary school. It provides a facility where young people can meet and engage in such activities as football matches and outings to Castlebar to the cinema, bowling, or go-karting. It is open on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights and sometimes on Saturday. It is run on a voluntary basis and is co-ordinated by the local Community Garda.

### ***Western Health Board (WHB)***

The main activities of the WHB for Mayo are located in Castlebar, in the County Clinic. The Clinic offers a range of services while a more limited range of services are available in Health Centres in Newport and Westport. Services offered in the Westport Health Centre include Community Welfare Services, Dental Services, Community Nutrition Dietetic Service, a Public Health Nurse, and Speech Therapy Services. The Newport Health Centre offers a Community Welfare Officer, a GP service, Psychiatric Clinic, and a Public Health Nurse. As the County Clinic in Castlebar is located between 10-15 miles away, the population of Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser are more likely to make use of these health centres.

### **Community Playgroup**

The WHB sponsors a community playgroup in Westport, which is used by some parents from the Kilmeena area, though not in great numbers. This playgroup is currently in temporary residence on the Kilmeena side of Westport, waiting to be

housed next year in a purpose-built facility in Westport town. It opens from 9 am to 12.30 pm from Monday to Friday during the school year.

### ***Homework Project, Westport***

The Homework Project was initially funded by Meithal Mhaigheo, though is currently funded and run by FÁS. It operates from a house in an estate between Westport and Carraholly. Its primary aim is to help local primary school children with their homework after school. It caters for between 25-30 children and is staffed by FÁS trainees and people on Community Employment Schemes.

### ***Garda Community Relations Section***

The Garda Community Relations Section encompasses the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme (commonly known as the Juvenile Liaison Officer scheme), the Garda Schools Programme, and a Crime Prevention unit. The section aims to formulate, implement, and evaluate all crime prevention programmes and measures utilised by An Garda Síochána.

#### **Community Garda**

The function of the Community Garda is to improve relations with the local community and to present a positive image for An Garda Síochána. The activities of the section include the Garda Schools Programme and crime prevention programmes, such as Neighbourhood Watch. The Community Garda for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser is based in Newport Garda Station. He is also actively involved in running local discos and the Riverside Youth Centre and Club, also based in Newport.

#### **Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO)**

The Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer Scheme was set up in 1963, as a system to caution young offenders as an alternative to them appearing before a court. The National Juvenile Office, based in Dublin, supervises the Garda JLO Scheme on a national basis. The JLO programme is a subsection of the Garda Community Relations Section, which was detailed in the previous service provider description.

Those cautioned under the programme may be subject to supervision by a JLO. Supervision involves a range of activities, including contact between the juvenile, the

family and the JLO. The JLO programme is designed primarily to deal with young offenders, in order to prevent further criminal activity and to educate them on their responsibility to society.

The JLO for the Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser area works from the Castlebar Garda Station. As there is no School Attendance Officer for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser, the JLO frequently functions in that role.

### ***Meitheal Mhaigheo***

Meitheal Mhaigheo is the Partnership company for County Mayo. Because of the size of the county, Meitheal Mhaigheo primarily acts as an administrative company that governs five smaller Local District Partnership companies. The role of the Partnerships is to help train unemployed people, in order to enhance their employment opportunities; to offer support and advice to businesses; to offer educational support (e.g. for early school leavers); to enhance community development; and to facilitate environment and estate management initiatives.

### **South West Mayo Development Company (SWMDCo)**

The SWMDCo is the company name for the South Mayo LEADER Company. It was set up as part of the LEADER programme, an EU rural development initiative. It is a subsidiary of Meitheal Mhaigheo, and, as the name suggests, SWMDCo focuses on South Mayo. Its objectives are to help maintain and develop the people, the communities, the resources, and the environment of South Mayo, in addition to creating and fostering employment and economic opportunities through the suitable use of the local resources. In relation to community development their objective is "to increase the capacity of local communities in South Mayo to participate fully in local development and to work to counter social exclusion and disadvantage" (Duffy & Kirkpatrick, 1996, p.36). SWMDCo are primarily involved in the funding of local groups or initiatives, but also offer advice and assistance to those they fund.

### ***Foróige***

Foróige is a national voluntary youth organisation, whose main aim is to engage young people in their own development and in the development of society. They try to support young people to involve themselves in developing their character, establishing

new friendships or relationships, acquiring knowledge and skills for life, and improving the local community. The services Foróige offer are provided by way of clubs, youth services, youth development projects, and youth information centres. Apart from young people their services are also used by such clients as voluntary youth leaders and organisations, parents and local communities, statutory youth serving agencies, and specific target groups, among them potential and actual early school leavers. Until relatively recently Foróige organised youth clubs in both Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser. Currently however, Foróige limits its services to a youth club in Westport, while their regional offices are located in Castlebar.

### ***Youthreach***

Youthreach is a specially designated programme, which provides basic training leading to certification either through FÁS or the NCVA. To be eligible one must be between 15 and 18 years of age. The full-time training includes a training allowance, and covers a range of vocational skills, general education and work experience. The nearest Youthreach office for early school leavers from Kilmeena or Kilmaclasser is located in Ballinrobe, 20-25 miles away. Travel expenses are given though there is no direct public transport link between Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser and Ballinrobe. The courses on offer in Ballinrobe include Horticulture, Metalwork, Woodwork, Computers, Technical Drawing, Technical Graphics, English, Maths, Literacy and Numeracy, Art, Craft and Design, Motor Mechanics, and Physical Education. There are 25 places on the programme each year, however, there is limited uptake of the Youthreach courses amongst early school leavers from Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser, as the service does not seem to be well known in these areas.

### ***Western Care Association (WCA)***

The WCA is a voluntary organisation set up in the 1960s to provide education, training, and support services to adults and children with learning and associated disabilities throughout County Mayo. It has a voluntary structure made up of regional and area branches, as well as a board of directors. They are funded by countywide fundraising and receive a grant from the government. WCA has approximately 350 people working with them at any one time, 275 of whom are full-time employees.

They offer early childhood services and services for children with autism or with learning disabilities, and also offer adult services.

The WCA has 35 day centres and group homes, for both adults and children, all over County Mayo. They have a number of clinical support departments, such as social workers, psychologists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapy, and a sport, leisure, and recreation department. Teachers and principals can refer at risk children to these services, though WHB psychologists must have completed a prior assessment. To provide for the Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser area there are two group children's homes and one day centre, along with three adult group homes and one adult day centre in Castlebar. In addition, there are also two adult group homes in Newport, one in Westport, and one adult day centre in each of Westport and Newport. The head office and most of the main services are located in Castlebar.

### ***Obair - Local Employment Service***

Obair is primarily a service offered to long-term unemployed people. It assists them in gaining employment by providing a one-to-one guidance counselling service, access to customised education, training and temporary employment programmes, and a post-recruitment service. Although priority is given to the long-term unemployed, the service is also available to dependent partners of long-term unemployed people, lone parents, people with disabilities, and early school leavers.

There is an Obair office located in Westport, though a staff member reports that they very rarely deal with early school leavers and was unsure if youths from Kilmeena or Kilmaclasser had ever used the facilities.

## Service Provider Interviews

### Interviewees

Five service providers were selected for interview in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser. They were primarily selected as they were believed to be the most relevant to providing for the needs of at risk children. In addition, they offered a mixture of both voluntary and non-voluntary representation for the area. Two of those interviewed work in a voluntary capacity for local youth clubs, while the others are employees of national or regional organisations that serve the area. The services chosen are listed below, along with the representatives interviewed and their job title:

- South West Mayo Development Company (SWMDCo) (Sandra Duffy, Community Development Worker)
- Foróige (Shane McGuire, Regional Youth Officer)
- Fahy Youth Club (Sal O'Connor, Youth Club Voluntary Leader)
- Riverside Youth Centre and Club (Jim Corrigan, Youth Club Leader, and also Community Garda)
- Western Health Board, Social Worker Office (Anna Gill, Team Leader).

An outline of the work carried out by these groups can be found in the previous chapter entitled *Service Provision for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser*. The only provider interviewed that does not provide a direct service to young people is SWMDCo. As a result some of the questions from the interview with the representative of this organisation were redundant, for example type of records kept on clients.

To maintain as much anonymity as possible, the interviews will be summarised as a whole, rather than reporting what specific individuals said. Interview time varied from person to person, but typically took between 90 –120 minutes.

### Relationships with Other Service Providers

In order to gain some insight into the degree of co-operation between the interviewee's organisation and other local service providers, interviewees were shown a list of services that operate in or provide for the Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser area and asked a

series of questions about their interaction with each. More specifically, they were asked to indicate with which (if any) of the groups did they:

- share client information
- engage in joint training
- jointly tender for funding
- engage in joint planning
- share a premises.

### ***Sharing Client Information***

Of the four service providers that offered direct support, only one maintained substantial records of their clients. This involved personal details on hand-written files, and general records kept on computer files.

Overall, there was very little sharing of client information between the service providers. Only one actually shared information in a formal manner with other service providers such as the HSCL co-ordinator and Youthreach. This sharing took the form of meetings to discuss best ways of providing support. Two service providers stated that there was no sharing of information with any other providers. Another one stated that there was sharing of information but this took the form of informal conversations.

### ***Joint Training***

Two of the service providers had no experience of joint training with any other local organisation. However, one of these groups had received training from other local service providers when it was being established in the area. The other three interviewees stated that they had engaged in some form of joint training with at least one other service provider, typically in the area of Youth Leadership skills. Two of these respondents had taken part in the same training course.

### ***Joint Tendering for Funding***

In relation to tendering for funds the SWMDCo was excluded from this part of the interview as their primary role was the distribution of European Union LEADER funds to local organisations. Only one of these four service providers had ever obtained funding through the SWMDCo and this was as a start up grant to help establish the

organisation in the area. The SWMDCo had also helped other service providers set up or tender for funds, though these were outside the area of the case study. None of the service providers had ever jointly tendered for funds with another organisation.

### ***Joint Planning***

In relation to planning the SWMDCo had engaged in joint planning with one other organisation in the local area, though this was in more of an advisory, guiding role than one of actual joint planning. Two of the interviewee's organisations had been involved in joint planning in conjunction with a number of other local groups, in relation to a programme for at risk children (located outside the case study area). One of the organisations that had been involved in this planning had also been involved in planning with such groups as Youthreach, in dealing with young at risk children. Two of those service providers interviewed had no experience of joint planning.

### ***Shared Premises***

Only one of the five service providers had shared premises with another local service provider and did not believe that this led to greater co-operation between them.

## **How Funding Affected Organisational Activities**

The service providers for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser are funded in a number of ways. The government funds two directly, and two are voluntary organisations which engage in their own fundraising, though one of these has received funding through the EU LEADER funds. Finally, one is primarily supported by EU funds but from time to time gains additional project-specific monies from the government.

All five of the interviewees stated that they find the method of funding restrictive on the services or activities they can offer and on the flexibility of their organisation. All stated that if they had more funding on a firmer basis they could offer enhanced services. One of the respondents stated that the uncertain nature of the funding led to services being reactive in nature rather than proactive, making them less effective in dealing with at risk individuals. One interviewee stated that the time spent sourcing and applying for funds amounted to a great deal of work and limited the provision of the organisation's services.

Two of the interviewees reported that as a result of inadequate funding they have to depend on members of the local community to volunteer as staff, and that at times there was a shortage of such volunteers. One service provider believed that they had enough staff, and that there was a low turnover despite no long-term security. Another interviewee stated that they were totally understaffed, and that there was a big turnover of staff, due to the nature of the work and the rural location. The fifth interviewee stated that he did not know the effect of funding on the staffing of the organisation.

## **Funding Service Provision in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser**

All five interviewees believed that the method of funding services in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser did not allow for any definite form of long-term planning. One interviewee said that their organisation had no long-term planning, two stated that they had a very limited form of long-term planning as they were funded by EU grants, which only last for 3 years at a time. The other two stated that they would like to engage in long-term planning but could not as they were only certain of their funding on a year-to-year basis.

In relation to the manner in which funding was allocated to the area, the service providers did not believe that it was occurring in a satisfactory manner. Two of the five interviewees believed that there was not enough funding being provided for the area. Another two stated that the allocation of funding was not "transparent" in the area, meaning that there was a difficulty in knowing where to access any available funds. They believed that service providers have to search for the funding and even at that people were not skilled in sourcing the funds and compiling adequate action plans. One of the service providers, who believed that there was not enough funding for the area, also agreed that the problem may stem from the issue of not knowing where or how to access funds.

## **Integration of Services in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser**

The interviewees were next asked whether there was integration between the local service providers. Three believed that there was no horizontal integration between the services, while the fourth was unsure. Only one of the service providers believed there was any horizontal integration. However, she stated that it only occurred between the

staff of the same service provider (WHB), for example, social workers and community workers may meet in a case conference to discuss how to deal with a specific child. Four interviewees did not believe that there was any vertical integration between the service providers, while the fifth stated that she did not know if any integration occurred.

One of the service providers criticised a lack of "consistency of approach" between services. He said that at a given time there could often be overinvolvement by agencies. For example psychologists, social workers, and the JLO may all deal with one child at the same time but not in a co-ordinated fashion, and over time this can lead to overdependence by the client.

In relation to the focus of the service providers, one interviewee believed that service providers were focused on the individual, while one thought that the focus was on the family. One of the service providers believed that *some* services focused on the individual while *some* focussed on the family. The remaining two service providers stated that they did not know enough to comment on the approach adopted by other service providers.

Each individual was then asked why they believed the services for the area did not provide an integrated approach. Two of the respondents thought that there was not an integrated approach because of a lack of understanding between agencies as to the role of each others' personnel. One of these stated that nobody knew who was responsible for providing a service - for example, should it be the job of the school or the Department of Education and Science to provide for at risk children? Another interviewee suggested that there was a lack of integration because service providers had such a large workload. Therefore they did not have time to liaise or integrate with others. The final two interviewees did not know why services were unable to offer an integrated approach. One of these interviewees was unable to respond to the question, as they had never been involved in any form of integration and did not have much contact with other service providers in the local community.

## **Personal Experience of Integration**

Three interviewees believed that they co-operated with other local service providers. One of these stated that the only form of co-operation they engaged in was in conjunction with a local Community Council, when they organised sporting activities.

This individual stated that this approach resulted from an individual decision and concern for the local children. Another interviewee stated that he co-operated with schools and youth clubs to organise youth events and activities, and this approach has been adopted as it was part of the interviewee's job. The third respondent stated that she attended meetings to co-ordinate an approach to deal with individual clients, for example case conferences. They were led to this approach by internal organisational policy, following government guidelines for dealing with children.

The other two interviewees believed that they co-operated sufficiently with other services to offer an integrated approach. Both of the service providers had in the past worked together in developing youth projects. Both had also worked with other agencies to develop schemes and projects, though some of these were outside the case study area. One of the two offered an integrated approach because it was part of their organisational brief and this had been led by government policy. The other offered an integrated approach as a result of a local level decision leading toward more networking and because they were in regular contact with the other local service providers.

### ***Benefits of Integration***

One service provider believed that her involvement with a local Community Council had helped enhance the self-confidence and self-esteem of participants. Another individual stated that the benefits to the clients were that there were now more resources to get things done and that there were trained leaders to carry out the work, though not necessarily in the case study area. The third respondent stated that by offering an integrated approach and jointly organising activities, children could be kept off the streets and therefore out of trouble. He believed that by organising youth events, such as discos, with other local agencies that it offered young people an alternative to hanging around with nowhere to release their energy.

The fourth service provider believed that services were now easier to get hold of and were more accessible, though this development had not occurred without difficulties, as can be seen in the next section. The fifth interviewee reported that the individual client benefits because service providers interact to offer a more efficient service, rather than the client having to venture from one provider to another without support.

### ***Problems with Integration***

One interviewee believed that despite the fact that there were more resources in the area problems arose because of the short-term nature of funding and the voluntary nature of youth leaders. Inadequate or short-term funding often means that service providers cannot pay youth leaders, and this may diminish interest among some of the local people. If there was more secure funding the services could offer a better range or more organised activities, and local people may be more likely to become involved.

The interviewee who believed that services were now easier to get hold of, also believed that too often issues of territoriality arose. She believed that people were afraid of "stepping on each other's toes", and that this primarily stemmed from the fact that there had been no attempt at integration in the past. However, she concluded that very slowly the culture was changing toward an understanding of the need for integration.

### **Obstacles to Integration**

In relation to what the service providers saw as the obstacles to integration, two believed the main obstacle was a lack of money. Of these, one also believed that the lack of money was combined with both a lack of time and parental involvement in the organisations. The other believed it was compounded by a lack of interest in at risk children from elected officials in the area. This thought was echoed by another respondent who stated that there was a lack of recognition from the government of the value of preventative work. He also stated that lack of funding was also an obstacle, in that extra funding would allow for extra staff.

A fourth interviewee believed that there was a shortage of people to act as leaders for youth groups, and that this was related to a lack of time and commitment from members of the local community. A similar issue was raised by another individual who believed that there was a lack of qualified personnel to deal with the treatment of at risk children in this locality.

The latter also stated that there was a lack of knowledge among services as to what other service providers in the area actually do. She also stated that the rural area in which they operated acted as an obstacle to integration. There was no central location for service providers, and even if there was there would still be problems related to transport for their clients. The interviewee also stated that there was not

enough focus on educational issues in Meitheal Mhaigheo, and that there was too much money and time wasted on administration rather than service provision. She added that the culture in the area was such that a person could not go to their neighbour for help, because of pride. However, she stated that there was now an understanding of the need for the linking and integration of service provision among local service providers, though it will take time for integration to actually occur.

## **Improving Service Provision**

The interviewees were asked what could be done at local level and at national level to improve service provision for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser.

### ***Improving Service Provision Locally***

Only one service provider believed that there was good co-operation between the services in the area and offered no suggestions for improvement. One interviewee suggested that there should be more encouragement for local children to become involved in activities and parents to become more involved as leaders, though no suggestions were offered as to how this could be brought about. The same interviewee also suggested that there was a need for some form of trained community worker for rural areas who would encourage parents to become more involved when their child was at risk. Another wanted to see more training and information available to the public to help enhance their knowledge of what services were available and how to access them.

Finally, two service providers believed that a group or individual needed to be appointed to assess the local area and find out what the local needs were. Such an assessment would identify what was already available and where the gaps were. The appointed person or agency should then design an integrated plan of changes that needed to be implemented. These changes could be both physical, in terms of actual buildings, and social, in terms of new services to deal with identified social issues. Of the two interviewees that suggested a needs assessment, one thought that a centrally located office for service providers could be a worthwhile change. The other suggested that once the needs of each community were identified, a parish co-ordinator could be appointed and could implement a plan for the community. The interviewee

also suggested that the community plan would not have to be the same for each location, as they would each have their own needs.

### ***Improving Service Provision Nationally***

Four of the five interviewees thought that, nationally more funding needed to be provided. They also stated that the funding should be targeted at groups that were already in place in the area rather than setting up new service providers. One group suggested that extra funding could be used to encourage more involvement by local children and adults. Another interviewee asked that funding be provided to the "people on the ground" rather than as an election promise, meaning that money should actually be given to groups or organisations working with at risk children rather than the current situation whereby money was often promised, but rarely received. Two service providers believed that the role of the HSCL co-ordinator should be granted more importance. One of these suggested that there should be more HSCL co-ordinators while the other suggested their role should be expanded. One of these service providers also suggested that there should be more school-based services, in addition to the extra HSCL co-ordinators.

### **General Comments**

When asked how they would re-organise how young people at risk are treated in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser or if they had any general comments to make, four of the interviewees made a response. One interviewee stated that the Partnership should place more emphasis on education. Another indirectly echoed this when he suggested that Meitheal Mhaigheo should devise a policy to deal with at risk children in the region, indicating that there were currently no targeted interventions to deal with at risk children. A third individual agreed that there was a need for targeted interventions for at risk groups in this area, possibly after-school clubs or more classroom support. One interviewee believed that the role of the HSCL co-ordinator could be vital in targeting at risk children, as they could help focus on those most in need of help and offer a more proactive service than was presently available.

Another interviewee pointed out that there was a need for more funds for the provision of expertise to community groups, to help them devise plans and provide more youth projects in the area. The same interviewee suggested that there was a need

for more places for young people to go and that there should be access to night courses for young people in the area. He stated that "drink causes all problems" and that if there was something for young people to do in the evening, it would help counteract the problem. One interviewee suggested that there should be more after-school activities for children and more supportive services for families as a whole.

One interviewee also suggested that the role of education needed to be prioritised among parents and potential early school leavers. This could be brought about through the use of extra remedial teachers and curriculum changes, to make education more relevant to potential early school leavers in a rural environment. Another respondent also believed that the importance of education for their children should be emphasised to parents, through education awareness projects.

One interviewee also believed that at risk children should be integrated into the community rather than segregated. The example he gave was that the present education system did not accommodate children with learning or behavioural problems. To help improve this situation, more funds should be made available for psychological services in post-primary schools, rather than just career guidance. He also thought that services should be more proactive. In a related vein, one individual stated that there was a need for more remedial teachers to work with those with learning difficulties and literacy problems.

Another individual suggested that the service provision for at risk children that should be established in the area, needs to do so without "stepping on others' toes". She believed that while there is a need for improved service provision in the area, it needs to occur in consultation with the existing organisations. Any improvements that need to be made should not be superimposed on existing services.

One interviewee stated that there was not enough personnel to deal with early school leaving in County Mayo. She stated that the impression schools gave was that they were either too busy or did not care enough to deal with early school leavers. Another respondent concluded by stating that services in Mayo only focused on Castlebar and Ballina and neglected the rural areas. She cited the fact that there was only two Juvenile Liaison Officers serving the whole of Mayo, one in Castlebar and the other in Ballina.

# Teacher Interviews

## Selection of Schools

Within the selected rural district electoral divisions (DEDs) of Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser, the three primary schools were - Fahy NS, Moyna NS, and Carraholly NS. A teacher and principal were interviewed in Moyna and Carraholly National Schools. In Fahy NS, only the principal was interviewed, as both of the other two teachers in the school felt that they did not know enough about service provision for the area to partake in an interview. There are no post-primary schools located in either DED and children from the area attend post-primary school in Westport. The principal and a teacher were selected for interview from three post-primary schools in Westport. The selected schools were Rice College, Westport Vocational School, and Sacred Heart Secondary School. Overall, six principals, three teachers, one HSCL co-ordinator, and one guidance counsellor were interviewed.

## Awareness of Services

Although there are few services for at risk young children in the area, teachers had a reasonable level of knowledge about those that did exist. In general, there was little difference in the degree of awareness shown by primary and post-primary teachers. This may be because many of the services for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser are in fact located in Westport or Castlebar.

The services with the greatest level of recognition were Western Care, Foróige, Meitheal Mhaigheo, JLO, Fahy Youth Club and the WHB psychologists (each being recognised by all eleven interviewees). At the other extreme, only three of the eleven interviewees (all primary school teachers based in schools nearby) had heard of the Riverside Youth Centre and Club.

The teachers were asked what services they (or other teachers in their school) had used. A total of nine teachers had utilised the services of the Western Health Board, typically accessing psychologists, social workers, or the school medical team. Seven also mentioned using Western Care Association services. Both the Juvenile Liaison Officer and Youthreach were more likely to have been used by post-primary

teachers than by primary teachers. Foróige, the Community Garda, and the Homework Project in Westport had been utilised by at least three teachers.

Teachers had become aware of services mainly through their own local contacts, which they had built up over years of living and working in the area. Four of the teachers had become aware of the services either through work colleagues or through contact with some of the service providers. When asked how many of the other teachers in their schools were aware of the services available to at risk children, six teachers believed that all teachers would be aware of the services. A further two thought that some teachers would know, while three believed that few or no other teachers in their school would be aware of what services were available.

### **Service Adequacy**

When the interviewees were asked how they rated the adequacy of service provision for the Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser area, six rated it as poor, two rated it as good, and three did not know.

### ***Positive Aspects***

Five teachers mentioned the availability of services for the area as a strong point. Two singled out the range of services that the WHB offer for praise. Another two stated that they believed the HSCL scheme was a positive aspect of service provision in the area. One of these interviewees also reported that the services of private counsellors were excellent.

Another respondent stated that the people working within the services were well intentioned and that there were a good number of specialists working in a variety of fields. Of the remaining two teachers, one believed he was unable to comment because he had never used any of the services, while the other teacher did not believe there were any positive aspects to the services for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser.

### ***Negative Aspects***

Six teachers pinpointed the lack of educational psychologists serving the area as a major issue. According to the teachers, the waiting list for assessment was far too long and this was the result of a huge workload. Both the WHB and Department of

Education and Science psychological services came in for criticism. An example raised by a teacher was of having to wait one full year for feedback after a referral to a psychologist in the WHB. One of the teachers criticised the "mere tokenism" of psychological services, and stated that their school had only one visit per year from a psychologist. Two teachers referred to the fact that clinical psychologists were being used, when the situation required an educational psychologist. They also pointed out that in the past they have had to get at risk children referred to private psychologists or counsellors outside the area, at a financial cost and high level of inconvenience to the families and schools involved. Another teacher stated that because of the expense of private consultations, the use of psychological services was beyond the means of many needy families and individuals.

One teacher stated that the WHB services, in general, are a particular source of weakness. The waiting lists were too long, the time elapsed between referral and assessment was too long, and there was a lack of continuity between personnel. In particular teachers thought that social workers had a high turnover of staff, and that no one individual stayed long enough with a family to develop a sense of 'story' on a case. One teacher criticised the fact that there was a lack of professionals to diagnose a problem and that therefore the school was unable to adequately deal with the individual.

In addition, two teachers stated that within the WHB nobody seemed to know who was responsible for providing a service. They believed that an individual or family may be receiving help from more than one section of the WHB, but the personnel involved would not realise this unless the situation developed into a crisis, and a case conference might be called. One of these teachers stated that even when a case conference was called, the number of personnel involved was a problem. He said that there were up to 13 staff at a case conference and he felt that it was too many, as it made it difficult to interact and consult with this number of people.

Four teachers mentioned problematic overlaps in general service provision for the area. One teacher stated that an individual might be receiving help from several sources, but that these sources were lacking co-ordination. The interviewee did not believe that this was the fault of the various organisations or individuals but that it was a problem with the system that was in place. Another teacher echoed this point and she cited the example of what she identified as an overlap between the HSCL co-ordinator's role and that of the social workers. One teacher mentioned that schools

often found themselves competing against Youthreach for some students. The teacher who raised this point thought that the education and training sectors should work in tandem.

Another weak link in service provision that was pinpointed by a number of teachers, was the lack of awareness among both teachers and families as to what services were there to help children or families at risk and how to access the services. One of the teachers believed that people were unaware of the existence of many of the services. Another teacher pointed to the difficulty in distinguishing between the role and services of a psychology department compared to that of a psychiatry department. He stated that some teachers did not know which department to approach and ask for help. Two teachers complained that the services that were available were very difficult to source, especially for a rural population, while another two teachers stated that the services were available but that they were centralised in Castlebar, well outside the area and therefore not easily accessible. They stated that teachers were left to their own devices in trying to find the required service provider, and that this could be a difficult process as they found themselves being passed from one provider to another. In a similar vein, another teacher voiced the opinion that there was a lack of networking between the agencies. According to two teachers, knowing what services need to be contacted depended upon your own knowledge and experience and the information you received from colleagues.

One teacher pointed out that schools were not designed to provide psychological or social services. This point was also raised by another teacher, who stated that at risk students often needed one-to-one attention to help keep them within the education system, but that teachers were not trained for such a role. A further criticism raised by this teacher was that there were no links between the services and the school. One principal stated that the schools have to seek out the services, and that all of the available services were reactive in nature. Three teachers believed that even when the services did react, they were very slow to diagnose a problem and that they were slower still in following through after assessment. In addition, another teacher thought that the schools did not get enough information back from service providers regarding the level of the problem.

Another interviewee believed that the resources that were available for the area were not focused enough on the changing world and culture. He stated that there was a need for more people, for example social workers or teachers, to compete against the

"zap culture" of today. He stated that some children have concentration problems, and that current personnel were unable to compete with the influence of television, video, and computer games on children. He believed that schools were not psychological or social services and were not geared to deal with problems of this nature.

Two teachers echoed the point that there was a need for extra staff, both within schools, in the form of resource teachers or attendance officers, and outside school, in the form of qualified people to deal with specific problems, for example speech therapists. One of these teachers pointed out that there was no service dealing with those who displayed persistent absenteeism. He stated that the area had no recognised attendance officer, and despite regular talk about it by the Department of Education and Science, there had been no action yet. He noted that all the schools could do was contact the absentee's parents, but that there was no back-up for the school or family to help them get the child back to regular school attendance.

One further teacher stated that she believed that at risk students in the area did not use the services that were available, for example youth clubs or sporting clubs. She felt that the facilities that were available were unrelated to the needs of the target group. The final interviewee was unable to comment about the negative aspects of the service providers, as he had never used any of them.

## **Focus of Intervention**

Teachers were asked if they thought the services available for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser were geared toward the individual or the family. Four teachers believed that the services were geared toward the whole family, while only two thought that they were geared for the individual. One teacher believed that the services provided for both the individual and the family, while four teachers stated that they did not know or were unsure as to the focus of service provision. Of the eleven interviewees, ten believed that the better approach was in dealing with the families, with only one teacher stating that the best approach was focusing on the individual.

Teachers' opinions were mixed about when service providers should intervene compared to when they actually intervene. Four of the primary school teachers believed that services intervened early enough in a pupil's life. Of these, three stated that the services intervene early enough when called upon to do so by the school. Only one of the primary school teachers believed that the services should intervene any

earlier. In relation to the post-primary teachers, all six thought that the services did not intervene early enough in the life of a student, and that the time to respond was at primary level. One teacher stated that services are curative rather than preventative.

When questioned as to what type of pupil or student receives help, seven teachers responded that the individual had to be 'in trouble' rather than 'at risk'. Only one teacher believed that at risk pupils do not need to progress to being 'in trouble' before they receive help. One teacher believed that both 'at risk' and 'in trouble' pupils receive help equally, while another teacher thought that most children that needed help were getting it. One further interviewee believed that it was up to the school to identify a problem and then intervene and push the parents and various agencies to help the child.

Four teachers rated the speed of response by service provider as too slow, with one commenting that the situation for the child often worsens while waiting for a response. Two teachers believed that the services were improving, though one also pointed out that WHB psychological services are still very slow. A further three teachers stated that they believed speed of intervention depended on the particular case. If, for example, it was a very urgent case, or one was willing to pay for a private consultation, then there was usually immediate action. Otherwise a child could be waiting months when put on a WHB waiting list. One of these teachers also mentioned the fact that actually knowing the person responsible for providing the required service has helped improve response times. Another teacher believed that the services respond quickly when they are alerted to a case. The final teacher did not contribute to this question, stating that he had had no experience of dealing with a case.

## **Overall Coherence**

The only Department of Education and Science targeted scheme in operation at primary school level in the area was the Breaking the Cycle project. All primary school teachers interviewed stated that they thought that the Breaking the Cycle project was working well. However, two teachers mentioned that it had no links with other schemes in the area, such as the HSCL scheme. Another teacher criticised the fact that the Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator had too much work to do. In addition, she stated that there was no passing on of information from the primary to the post-primary schools.

Three of the six post-primary schoolteachers interviewed stated that there was no linking between any Department of Education and Science funded schemes for the area, such as Breaking the Cycle or the HSCL scheme. One of these teachers complained that there were no reports on Breaking the Cycle pupils from the primary schools, for example indications of behaviour or ability. Another teacher echoed one of the primary teachers when she stated that there was no formal links between the primary and post-primary schools. Two teachers believed that the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme was an excellent addition to the curriculum, and that the extra resources were beneficial to the school. The final teacher stated that she had recently had some contact with the Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator and that this was long overdue.

Five teachers stated that there was very little integration between non-Department of Education and Science schemes. Two of these teachers stated that the EU-funded schemes do their own thing, while another teacher believed that there was very inadequate planning of EU projects. A further five teachers stated that they were unaware how well EU-funded schemes operated or co-ordinated. One of these teachers mentioned that teachers were not given information regarding operations of such schemes.

None of the interviewees believed that horizontal integration was a feature of service provision for the area. One teacher stated that the WHB and Western Care offered good services for an individual but did not link with one another. Another interviewee stated that there was no co-ordination between departments within the WHB, for example social workers and psychologists. One further teacher stated that she had heard of one child for whom the service providers held a case conference. She thought that this was a good approach to adopt, but that unfortunately, it did not seem to happen very often.

In relation to vertical integration, four of the five primary school teachers stated that they did not know what happened when the pupils moved on to post-primary school. The fifth primary school teacher stated that there was no effort at co-ordination and follow-up as the pupil leaves national school and moves onto post-primary school. Five of the post-primary school teachers believed that there was no vertical integration between service providers in the area. The sixth teacher stated that he presumed there was some form of vertical integration but was unsure if it actually

occurred. Two of the post-primary teachers did state that services were available to the young people as they mature but that they did not link with each other.

One teacher stated that there was a proposed local education committee to be set up later in the year, by the Department of Education and Science as part of the HSCL scheme. She stated that this will involve representatives of various local agencies, along with teachers and parents and should help improve communication and co-operation in the area.

## **Quality of Service Providers**

Nine of those interviewed believed that the service providers in the area did not have an adequate number of staff to deal with their workload. The other two teachers did not know if there was enough staff for the workload. Three of the nine teachers believed that staff shortages were particularly noticeable "on the ground". One teacher complained that the WHB had too many administration staff and not enough staff to deal with the public. When asked for their general opinions about staffing, five teachers stated that there was a high turnover of staff within these organisations. Two of these teachers specifically pinpointed social workers as having a high turnover, with one believing that this was a result of the heavy workload. The second teacher stated there was a high turnover because many of the social workers were trained in England and were unfamiliar with the system here. Another teacher believed there was a high level of turnover within the WHB, and apportioned the blame to a heavy workload and job dissatisfaction. Another teacher stated that the high turnover of staff leads to a lack of continuity, and dissatisfaction amongst service users.

Six teachers believed that the staff of local service providers were well or adequately qualified. Three of these teachers pointed out that the staff were well experienced in dealing with at risk families or individuals and were familiar with their needs. Another of these six teachers stated that while the staff of these organisations was adequately qualified, one can never have too much experience. Only one teacher believed that the service providers were not adequately qualified or experienced. Four of the teachers stated that they did not know if the staff of local service providers were adequately trained or qualified.

In terms of the organisations themselves, five teachers believed that they were well funded but still had organisational problems. Four teachers stated that they were

unsure or did not know about the funding of local service providers, while one further teacher believed that the WHB should prioritise the way it allocates its funds.

Only two teachers believed that service providers were well run, while three stated that they did not know whether they were well run or not. The remaining six teachers believed that the organisations needed many improvements. One teacher stated that the service providers did not have enough staff. Another teacher believed that there was a need to improve internal communications within some organisations, such as the WHB. Another teacher also stated that the WHB was very bureaucratic and not in touch with the local needs, and they only appeared in times of crisis. One further teacher stated that, generally, services in the area were out of touch with local needs. Another interviewee believed there was a feeling within the WHB that the Department of Education and Science should be responsible for educational psychologists, rather than dividing responsibility between both of them.

Only one of the interviewees believed that there was adequate communication between the service providers, though she did state that this only occurred in times of crisis. Eight teachers stated that there was not enough communication between the organisations. However, two of these did believe that the situation was improving and had begun to move in the right direction. One teacher thought that the service providers all acted independently of one another and that no one took responsibility for at risk children. Another teacher echoed this point when he stated that all the service providers acted in isolation. Two teachers stated that they did not know or were unsure whether service providers communicated with each other

## **Role of Teachers**

All of the interviewees believed that, as teachers, they were working beyond the scope of what they were trained to do. A number of teachers suggested that they needed more support from outside agencies, such as social workers or psychologists. One teacher pointed out that the only support they got was from resource teachers or classroom assistants. Another teacher believed that teachers needed to play a greater role when dealing with service providers. However, another teacher pointed out that they were trained in education and cannot be expected to be social workers as well as teachers.

Nine of the teachers believed that the service providers and teachers should be helping each other in dealing with at risk children. They suggested that there should be feedback from the service providers as a child received help and instructions on how to deal with children at risk. Only one teacher suggested that teachers needed to play a greater role when a child was receiving help. He believed that an holistic approach to treating people was the most effective. One teacher was unsure what the role of teachers should be when dealing with at risk children or families, but stated that it depended upon the individual teacher and the pastoral care system that operated within the school. The final teacher stated that when they spotted a problem, they should inform the principal and let her or him deal with it from there.

When specifically asked about the level of feedback from service providers, only five teachers believed that they were kept well informed. Two of these teachers, however, pointed out that initially they may have been given some feedback or advice but that they did not hear from the service provider again, until they contacted them. Another of these teachers stated that they were only kept well informed in times of crisis. Six teachers thought that they were not kept well informed, with one teacher stating that it was often left to the parents to inform the teachers that their child was receiving help.

Only two of the eleven teachers had ever been asked to help a local service provider. One had been asked to help with a social services committee, while the other had helped with Foróige, organising sport and health promotion activities.

In relation to school and service provider interaction, four teachers believed that there was some support from services. However, of these, two teachers stated that only some of the service providers interact with the school, such as WHB and Western Care. One of these teachers stated that the school has had written contact with the WHB and some limited personal contact with Western Care personnel. One further teacher stated that on an individual level she had had contact with some service providers, such as the social workers in Castlebar, and that this was part of her job as the school's HSCL co-ordinator.

Seven teachers believed that the service providers and schools acted independently of each other. Three of these teachers stated that the services only offer support when there was a crisis or when called upon. One further teacher stated that there was no interaction between services and schools, and that this was in addition to the fact that there was no interaction between primary and post-primary schools.

Ten teachers believed that ideally the schools and service providers should offer a team approach, or at least interact with each other to a greater extent. Three of these teachers thought that if the relations between school and services could be formalised, for example offering personal plans, then this would benefit children and their families. Finally one teacher believed that the role of the schools and service provision should be kept independent of each other as schools did not have the necessary expertise to deal with non-school issues.

## **General Comments**

When asked how they believed services in the area could be improved, ten of the eleven teachers had comments to make, while one did not think the services needed improving. Two teachers pointed out that there was a need to make it clearer what services were on offer and who was providing them. One teacher suggested that more information should be given to principals, so that they would be better informed and hopefully speed up the process of dealing with at risk children. Another teacher suggested that there was a need for better selling of the services and that they needed to be more user friendly. Two teachers mentioned the fact that access to the services should be faster and that waiting lists should be reduced.

Five teachers suggested improvement within the services, in terms of staffing and quality of service. Three of these teachers believed that there should be more "people on the ground", especially for WHB services. Another teacher believed that there was a need for more one-to-one attention for at risk children. She believed that this could be in the form of extra resource teachers. One teacher believed that there was a need for on-going support and guidance for teachers from psychologists and other services, while another teacher believed that there was a need for better communication between school and service providers. A fourth teacher proposed that there was a need for more networking, co-operation, and funding directed toward psychological services, both educational and clinical.

One teacher suggested that parents need to be targeted while the children were in primary school. They need to be encouraged to understand the benefits for their children of attending post-primary school and at least completing the Junior Certificate. Two teachers were of the view that lack of co-operation from parents was a problem. One of these teachers believed that some parents were afraid of the stigma

attached to getting assistance from service providers such as psychologists. The second teacher believed that the unwillingness of some parents or guardians to recognise and accept that their child was having a problem was an obstacle to progress for the child. One teacher also believed that education as a whole needed to be made more attractive to rural pupils, for example, by including farming-related topics on the curriculum.

One teacher suggested that the whole system of service provision needed to be overhauled. He suggested an approach like that taken in Swedish towns. Here, he stated there was plenty of funding and goodwill and he believed this was the ideal approach. He stated that the Swedish approach was team-centred with the team focusing on students' needs. Each town has their own team of support people with regular case conference type meetings and regular follow up.

A post-primary teacher stated that there appears to be no continuity between Department of Education and Science schemes in operation in primary schools and those operating in post-primary schools. He pointed out that pupils from Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser come from schools involved in Breaking the Cycle, while only the all-girls school in Westport was designated as disadvantaged and had been allocated a HSCL co-ordinator. He queried why only one of the single sex schools was deemed to be disadvantaged and not both of them. He stated that the two schools were sourcing students from the same families from the same areas, and having only one single sex school deemed disadvantaged would not adequately deal with the problems of at risk children.

One of the final comments of a post-primary schoolteacher was that the services were letting at risk children down. He stated that teachers could often pick out from day one in post-primary school those students who were not going to make it and forecast very accurately who will end up in jail. Unfortunately, at present teachers were almost totally helpless to do anything about it.

## Parent Interviews

To organise two groups of parents for interview, local primary schools in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser were contacted. Only primary schools were contacted, as the post-primary schools serving the area were located in Westport. Given that these schools were attended by children from a much wider area than that covered by the case study, it would have been difficult to select a sub-group of parents from Kilmeena or Kilmaclasser. Also, the primary schools were located where parents lived, while all would have had to travel to Westport for the interview sessions. This alone might have prevented or discouraged some parents from attending.

Fahy National School was the first school contacted. The principal was extremely helpful and offered to arrange an interview session with parents of ex-pupils who were currently attending post-primary school, as well as parents of pupils currently attending Fahy NS. Unfortunately, there was considerable resistance to the idea among parents, and none consented to be interviewed. Therefore the principals of Moyna and Carraholly National Schools were contacted and one group interview was arranged in each school.

In Moyna, five locally based mothers were interviewed, all of whom had children in the primary school and some who had children in post-primary school in Westport. However, these five parents may not be a representative sample of the local rural population as none were originally from the area, and four of the five were self-employed. In Carraholly National School only three mothers agreed to be interviewed, and only two eventually attended on the day of the interview. Both parents had children attending the primary school, and one of the mothers was also a classroom assistant in the school.

### Knowledge of Services

To begin each of the interviews the parents were asked about their knowledge of the following services:

- Breaking the Cycle
- Remedial Teacher
- Resource Teacher

Leaving Certificate Applied Programme

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator

Western Health Board Social Workers

Western Health Board Psychologists

Homework Project, Westport

Community Garda

Juvenile Liaison Officer

Foróige

Youthreach

Western Care Association.

The parents had a reasonable knowledge of the school-based schemes. While only one parent did not know what the Breaking the Cycle scheme was, all of the parents were uncertain as to the role of the local co-ordinator. Some parents stated that when he first started he talked of home visits, but that none of them had ever received a home visit. There was also some discussion as to whether home visits were appropriate, as it was believed that some parents or families may have found them too intrusive. Overall however, the parents praised the Breaking the Cycle scheme. They thought that the extra resources and activities were excellent and that they had brightened up the school. The parents in Carraholly believed that the school had "blossomed" since the Breaking the Cycle scheme came into being.

The remedial teacher (who was shared between a number of local primary schools) was praised in both Moyna and Carraholly as a warm person that children enjoyed receiving help from. A couple of parents stated that they could see an improvement in the children post-remediation, and that there was little or no stigma attached to the service as the teacher was so popular. In fact, some parents distinguished between the teacher and her job. They believed that she made the difference in terms of making remedial classes interesting, rather than it just being the role of a remedial teacher. Apart from these Department of Education and Science schemes, the parents in Carraholly also praised the courses for parents that had been run in the past at the national school.

The interviewees had very little knowledge of post-primary school schemes, with many asking for details about the Leaving Certificate Vocational and Applied Programmes. The parents in Moyna had heard of the HSCL scheme and thought that it was quite useful. They stated that the HSCL co-ordinator had helped to organise meetings for parents of students in the same class, and they thought that she was the most approachable person in the post-primary school.

In relation to services not based within the schools, none of the parents interviewed in Moyna had heard of the Homework Project, while both parents in Carraholly had. The latter two believed it to be very helpful for the children who used it. Indeed, one had worked on the project before becoming a classroom assistant. Most parents had little or no knowledge about the role of the Community Garda or the Juvenile Liaison Officer. However, some recognised the names of each Garda when they were told. They believed that the Community Garda had done some helpful work in the area, especially by organising discos for the young people.

The parents had heard of Foróige, but only because they had made use of it when they were younger. They explained that Foróige was no longer active in the area, primarily as a result of a lack of parental interest and of adequate facilities. Those who had used it in the past had good memories of the activities and regretted the fact that it was no longer operating in the area. Most interviewees had not heard of Youthreach and its role had to be explained to them. When it was explained they thought that it was a very good idea and that it was unfortunate that there was no centre closer than Ballinrobe. While Western Care had been heard of, its activities were not fully understood by the parents.

## **Use of Services**

The majority of parents admitted that they would not know where to go or who to approach if their child was having a problem, and they believed that this would also be true of most parents in the area. They stated that their first approach in such a situation would probably be to the school, particularly the primary school. Both sets of parents were of the opinion that the teachers in the primary schools were very approachable but that this had not always been the case. Most parents thought that if the teachers were unco-operative, they would not know where to go next. The parents in one

school believed that the principal would do his best to help them but that he might not have sufficient expertise or experience to do so.

Post-primary schools were not seen as a good source of advice or assistance. One of the parents from Moyna NS said that post-primary teachers liked to assign blame, so that if you asked for help for your child, it became a question of "What did you do wrong to make it happen?" The majority of those interviewed in Moyna believed that the problems started to manifest themselves in the first year of second level education. They thought that schools did not keep enough of a close check on their students, and that often they did not inform the parents of problems (for example, drinking or mitching). Transition year was seen as a source of some trouble, in that students abused the year by regularly mitching and taking on jobs that interfered with their schoolwork. This led to them leaving school, and they were often encouraged to do so by employers who needed the staff. The employers also realised that the young students were often the only people willing to fill the positions they had available. They may also entice the young people to work by offering them a regular wage.

As stated, parents acknowledged that they would not know where to go apart from the school. They believed that there was no obvious place for help and that there seemed to be a lack of any network of service providers. Even if contact was made with one service provider this did not lead to contact with other relevant services. One parent cited the example of her experience when trying to get help for her dyslexic child. She stated that she had been in contact with both the remedial teacher and a speech therapist in relation to helping her child, but that there was no interaction between them. Eventually she had to organise for the two of them to come together and devise a development plan for her child.

All of the parents interviewed believed that most people in the area would not be too embarrassed to look for help. The interviewees in Moyna NS stated that as they all had only moved to the area in recent years, locals might see things differently and be more reluctant to look for help. Both of the Carraholly interviewees believed that the situation had changed over time and that in the past people would have been very reluctant to seek help, but now it was their impression that all parents wanted the best for their children. The parents in Moyna pointed out that currently the only way for a parent to get help seemed to be through the Gardaí. The Gardaí were often seen as a last resort and somewhere to call when a person was in serious trouble. Contacting

them in relation to individual or family problems might seem a bit drastic and many would be embarrassed to use this option.

### ***Improvements***

When asked how it could be made easier for the average parent to get help if their child was in need, the parents in Moyna suggested attaching a room to the offices of FÁS or OBAIR in Westport, or setting up a totally independent office. An individual could be based in this office, where parents could avail of information booklets or advice on who would be the appropriate person to approach for help. The parents suggested that this office should be located in Westport rather than in a local community hall as it would allow anonymity, and in addition Westport is much more easily accessible to the vast majority of the local population than Castlebar, where most services were currently based.

The parents also suggested that the Juvenile Liaison Officer and Community Garda could develop more of a facilitator type role rather than the often intimidating image of the Garda in uniform. They believed that the average student would be less likely to need help in the first place if the legal drinking age was fully enforced. They also queried why the school could not help clamp down on the mini black market for alcohol. For example, they knew that older post-primary school students were buying alcohol and selling it on to younger students for £5 a can. If they, as parents, knew this, the school obviously knew too, yet the school did nothing and did not even warn the parents.

Some parents suggested that a non school-based individual (for example, a counsellor) should invite parents to come to the school to talk about their children. A thorough analysis of what each child was like and what his or her needs were could be built up with full input from both sides, particularly the parents. In such one-to-one situations it was believed that parents might open up and ask for advice or assistance. To avoid the possibility of stigma, it was suggested that every parent in the community should be invited.

In relation to locating services within schools, most parents thought that children would not want to see their parents in school, and teenagers in particular would be embarrassed.

## Opinion of Services

In the opinion of the parents interviewed, the service providers in the area do not link or help each other when dealing with an at risk child or their family. They stated that the staff of the service providers do not talk to one another and the case mentioned earlier of the mother organising for the speech therapist and remedial teacher to get together was a prime example of this lack of communication.

It was also stated that considering nobody knows what services are available or how to contact them, the service providers must not be proficient at public relations. It was suggested that the public profile of the service providers should be enhanced.

## Role of Parents

Overall, the parents believed that they were encouraged to get involved when their child had a problem at school. They believed that this was particularly so in primary school, where they are kept well informed by the teachers, and that they were much more involved than they used to be. However, the same view was not echoed in relation to the local post-primary schools. Parents also expressed concern about the transition from 6<sup>th</sup> class to first year and also Transition Year.

Some parents believed that meeting other parents was very important and that it was easier to talk to a peer group about children. This was one of the major problems with post-primary school, as there was very little, if any, contact between parents. They stated that the HSCL co-ordinator in the Sacred Heart Secondary School had organised for students' parents to meet on a class-by-class basis, which they thought was a very good idea. However there was some discussion as to whether parents with a number of children in a school would be willing to attend a number of class meetings.

The interviewees in Moyna NS stated that at the start of each year the Junior Infants class teacher meets with parents of pupils in her class, and explains to them what to expect and how they can support their child. They thought that this was very useful and should be extended to all grade levels. There was also some discussion as to how to get parents more involved in school events. However, while all thought that increased parental involvement was a good idea, most believed that few parents were willing to give any of their time to support school activities. They stated that it usually ended up with the same few parents turning up to meetings, and these tended to be

mothers who were housewives or self-employed. Another issue raised as a barrier to organising events in school was that the school building could not be used after 3pm each day for insurance reasons. They thought that the school should be available to the parents in the evening, and with this there would be an improved likelihood of the average working parent attending.

One parent believed that post-primary schools could be helpful if you approach them concerning one problem, but if one had a collection of problems the school often steered clear of them. All the parents believed that the primary schools were very good at keeping the parents informed of their child's progress, both behaviourally and academically.

## **Role of Teachers**

The parents interviewed in Moyna NS thought that the teachers were helping children who were at risk, but that more specialist help was needed. In particular, they suggested speech therapists and educational psychologists. One of the interviewees stated that she had two severely dyslexic children but that they had no access to adequate facilities in the local area.

The interviewees in Carraholly NS believed that teachers often only paid attention to bright children or to the troublemakers. However, those who were having difficulties often tended to stay quiet and could therefore be ignored by teachers. The parents thought that teachers should encourage all the children, not just those who were doing well. They also believed that there was a need to talk to the children, for example, if a child was mitching they could be asked why they were doing so. In a related vein, both believed that there should be counsellors serving the primary schools. They suggested that someone who is an early school leaver should talk to the children, as pupils were much more likely to accept their advice than being told that it was a bad idea by someone who went to college.

## **General Comments**

The main issue raised by parents was that of children working while still at school. They stated that even children in first year were working and that they come to school tired. The parents also stated that the work experience element of the Transition Year programme was often a time of temptation for students to neglect their studies and

work outside of school. The parents criticised local employers who put children and young people under pressure to work in the evenings and at the weekend. They pointed out that many local employees tell young people that they will only get a summer job if they work evenings and weekends during the school year. Because of labour shortages in Westport, employers often look favourably upon students and try to coax them to work more hours than they should. The employers realise that students are often the only people willing or available to fill these jobs and thus they may encourage the students to leave school, by enticing them with a real income. According to the parents, once the children start earning money they think they are independent and they do not realise that they were working in dead-end jobs. They suggested that young people should not be allowed work before age 16 and that it should be legally enforced. They also suggested that even when the children do start working it should be on a part-time basis.

Some parents also complained about the level of social welfare fraud occurring in the area. They pointed out that many early school leavers were getting a large cash income from working on farms or on a construction site and were also drawing the dole. Young people then do not see the point in going to school when they are earning so much money. They believe that they are getting paid more than those who are paying tax and working in 'better' jobs, where qualifications were required. The parents believed that social welfare officers were turning a blind eye to this seemingly well known fraud.

In addition, all parents interviewed in Moyna NS expressed concern about the drink culture among school going children. They believe that it was a very serious problem that required some form of action. Some parents complained that because the children were working they had ready cash available to spend on alcohol. They also criticised local publicans who do not check the age of some of their younger customers, with children as young as fifteen getting served. In addition, the parents stated that from first year on, most students seemed to have ready access to alcohol away from the public houses, referring to the mini black market mentioned earlier.

All of the parents agreed that there should be some form of re-entry system for education. Those who drop out of school often would like to return a few years later, after some time in a dead end job. However there is no return route for them or at least not any route known to the parents from the area. As stated earlier, many of the parents were unaware of the option of Youthreach and what it entailed. One parent

suggested bringing apprenticeships into the school system, in a similar way to Germany. This could allow children to stay in school to receive a basic education along with some practical experience, leading to a recognised trade qualification.

Both parents in Carraholly NS suggested that a school building should be made available that allows for a mixture of activities, and that the children would enjoy attending. This place could focus more on broader skills and sports, rather than just on academic issues. They referred to it as an "ideal school" for children, somewhere without all the structure and formality of regular school. These parents also criticised the fact that there was nothing available for children in the area after school. Everything was in town, i.e. Westport, according to the parents, and there were no evening activities available for children. They suggested having a venue for indoor basketball and other games, but stated that rural areas such as theirs were very unlikely to have a recognised community centre, due to its size and relatively close proximity to Westport town. In addition to this they also pointed out that there were no activities organised for children during the summer months. They believed that if something was organised it could be very beneficial to the children.

The parents interviewed in Moyna NS echoed the point that there was a need for more sporting and non-academic facilities in the area. They all agreed that there was a need for after-school hours activities or facilities for children. They stated that the Youth Club in Moyna had been beneficial in the past, but not much use is made of it now as a result of a lack of parental interest. The interviewees stated that despite the need for an individual or group to re-organise the youth club no one in the area was willing to volunteer their time. They all believed that more parents needed to be encouraged to get involved but were unable to suggest means by which this could occur. They also complained that if the children were not interested in playing Gaelic football then there were few other activities available to them.

One of the parents at Carraholly NS was a classroom assistant and believed that this was a very good way of understanding what happens in a classroom and it gave her insight into why and how children learn. She also thought that the position helped some of those children in need to keep up with the rest of the class. The parents in Moyna also suggested improving the psychological services accessible to the schools. Another parent asked that more facilities and services should be made available for children with special needs throughout the country, in particular dyslexic children.



## Recommendations for Service Provision in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser

In this chapter, current service provision for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser will be analysed, and recommendations made for improvement. As with all of the case studies, issues that relate to national rather than local policy or practice will be discussed only in the concluding chapter *Recommendations for Service Provision for at Risk Children*.

Before making specific suggestions, two related factors may be noted. First, a distinctive feature of service provision for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser is the scarcity of organizations providing for at risk children or families in the area. Second, the dispersed and rural nature of the area makes service provision and integration more difficult than in urban areas.

The area is typical of a rural West of Ireland district, with low population density, a large dependent population, low educational attainment, small farm holdings, and poor infrastructure. While the content of this chapter relates specifically to the area of Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser, many of the suggestions may be applicable to other parts of rural Ireland. The chapter will analyse service provision under the following headings:

- current provision
- degree of service integration
- allocation of funds
- the role of schools.

### Current Provision

The level of service provision for at risk children in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser is very poor. Services are based outside the area, and are inaccessible to young people and families who have no means of transportation. Many improvements are needed.

Current provision will be analysed by:

- gaps in provision
- decentralising of services
- involvement of local people
- overlap in provision.

### ***Gaps in Current Provision***

The gaps in service provision identified by interviewees will be outlined in this section.

#### **Activities for Young People**

All those interviewed believed that there was a lack of activities for young people in the area, who had nothing to do after school. There had been three youth clubs (run by Foróige) in the area a number of years ago, but these were no longer operating. It appeared to parents that Foróige had ceased working in rural areas, preferring to concentrate its activities on larger towns, such as Castlebar. Parents pointed out that Gaelic football was the only after-school option open to young people in the area, and for individuals not interested in this, there was nothing to do.

At present, one youth club (Fahy) operates within the case study area. However, it offers only a limited range of activities on an occasional basis, as it is hampered by lack of funding and of volunteer leaders. A small number of young people from the area attend The Riverside youth club in Newport (a few miles away). The club is unusual in that it is reasonably well funded and does not have to rely exclusively on volunteer work. It is run by the Community Garda, who received funding from SWMDCo.

It is apparent that there is little for young people to do in the area, and that what little there is depends on volunteer work. The re-establishment of youth clubs and the expansion and development of existing ones would help to address the gap in activities.

It would be beneficial if SWMDCo were to channel funds into activities for young people, particularly youth clubs. The difficulties in attracting volunteer youth leaders might also be eased if some basic funding was available. Foróige could expand its operations beyond large towns, and at a minimum, offer advice to those attempting to set up youth clubs in rural areas. Foróige should also consider training young adults as youth leaders, perhaps with the assistance of CE, or similar, schemes.

#### **Availability of Information**

One of the most noticeable gaps in service provision in the area was a lack of information about what was available. In particular, there was little or no awareness of possible progression routes for early school leavers. The nearest Youthreach centre is in Ballinrobe, some 15-20 miles away. Only one of the parents interviewed had heard

of the centre, and even she did not really understand what services it offered. Parents agreed that primary school staff were very approachable, but felt that teachers would not have much more knowledge than parents about services. They did not consider post-primary teachers as a possible source of information.

Parents complained that the only other source of advice available was the JLO or Community Garda, and pointed out that most parents would be reluctant to approach the Gardaí for advice about their children. Some suggested that an information officer could be appointed for the area, possibly attached to the Obair office in Westport. Correspondence with staff at that office indicated that the people of Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser rarely used their service, though this may be due to a lack of knowledge of the services offered.

Information on services needs to be more readily available. One way to achieve this might be through an expansion of services offered in the Obair offices. For example, as well as advice related to employment, information could be offered on other local services. However, the case study indicated that even local service providers frequently did not know what other services were available in the area. Therefore, as a first step, a comprehensive directory of local services for families and children needs to be prepared. SWMDCo should collate such a directory, in consultation with local service providers. Once compiled, it should be distributed among local schools and services.

### Early Intervention

Post-primary teachers were most vocal in calling for earlier intervention with at risk children. They believed that most of the problems that are manifested in first year in post-primary school could have been prevented by intervention in the early years of primary school. At the time of the case study, there were some initiatives in the area targeting primary school pupils. The three primary schools in the case study were included in the Breaking the Cycle scheme, two employed classroom assistants and one school had access to a Homework Project.

Parents and teachers praised the role of classroom assistant, believing it was a welcome support to teachers and prevented children in need falling behind with their schoolwork. One of the parents interviewed, who was employed as a classroom assistant, thought that the position offered her a better understanding of what happens in the classroom, and felt better able to assist her own child as a result. In general, the

employment of classroom assistants appears to have benefits. Therefore, Moyna NS, which does not currently employ a classroom assistant should consider doing so.

Most of the interviewees were impressed with the concept of the Homework Project in Westport. While the children of Carroholly NS had access to this project, those in Fahy and Moyna National Schools did not. Teachers and parents in these schools believed that a similar scheme could be of great benefit to children. Realistically, both schools have a population too small to merit a full-time project. However, a project could be run on a cluster basis, with one or two individuals serving five schools, thus allowing each primary school to have an after-school homework club one day a week. Meitheal Mhaigheo and FÁS, as sponsors of the Westport project, should examine the needs of smaller schools, and consider expanding the project, where warranted.

### Psychological Services

A major issue that was raised by all interviewees was the lack of adequate educational psychological services for the area. The perception among teachers was that the Department of Education and Science and the WHB were not fulfilling their duty to offer psychological services to the schoolchildren of County Mayo, in general, and Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser, in particular. Parents highlighted the lack of educational psychologists, while all of the teachers criticised aspects of the WHB psychological services, such as lack of feedback, long delays between referral and assessment, and the use of clinical psychologists when a situation required an educational psychologist.

Psychological services were so inadequate in the area that teachers and parents regularly used private consultants to deal with at risk children. Some of these referrals were to locations as far away as Galway and Sligo, and teachers complained that this was at much cost and inconvenience to families. On occasion, funds from the Breaking the Cycle scheme were used to finance private referrals. Although recent Department of Education and Science changes with regard to the National Educational Psychological Service should improve the situation somewhat, it was felt by those interviewed that current supply is inadequate to meet the demand for assessments.

Teachers also complained about lack of feedback; only one teacher reported receiving feedback from the WHB in relation to a child who had been assessed. Clearly, the level of feedback to schools needs to be improved, if maximum benefit is to be gained from assessments.

### ***Decentralising of Services***

The centralising of services in a one-stop-shop as reviewed by the OECD in *Under One Roof* (OECD, 1998) has many positive features, but it is an urban model and not suitable for a rural area with low population density. The majority of service providers for the area are located in Castlebar and are inaccessible to those without private transport. Partial decentralising of services to existing Health Centres would allow easier access to the services by the population of the case study area.

The WHB headquarters for County Mayo are in the County Clinic in Castlebar, where most services are based. Some services, such as the PHN and Community Welfare Officer, are offered on a weekly basis in Newport and Westport Health Centres. An expansion of services in these local centres (for example, offering occupational therapy, physiotherapy, a social work service and a family support service) would help to address the problem of inaccessibility. While services may continue to be based mainly in Castlebar, the facilities exist to deliver them in other locations on a weekly or monthly basis.

It is not only health services that need to examine their town-based location. Foróige should consider expanding its services beyond larger towns. Although it does not have the capacity to establish youth workers in multiple locations around Mayo, it could assist in redeveloping youth clubs in rural areas. This would not require a full-time youth worker for each area, but advice would be required by local people on how to set up and expand youth clubs.

### ***Involvement of Local People***

Unlike the other case study areas, much of the provision for young people in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser was dependent on voluntary work. However, all of those interviewed believed that far fewer people were willing to volunteer for activities than had been the case in the past. As a result, service provision had suffered. For example, whereas both areas had very active youth clubs and community centres in the past, this was no longer so. Parents felt that more people, particularly women, were now employed, and so had less time to give to the community. Despite the decrease in volunteers, a number of local parents, mainly those who were interviewed, did engage in voluntary activities.

It would be desirable if local involvement in service provision could be increased to former levels. However, if this is not possible using purely voluntary

contributions, the use of FÁS-sponsored schemes to encourage local participation should be explored.

### ***Overlap in Current Provision***

Given the shortage of services, there is very little overlap in provision. One area where overlap does exist is in duplication of treatment. For example, one parent pointed out that her severely dyslexic child was receiving help from multiple professionals, but that communication between them was limited to contact initiated by her.

Since communication between service providers in the area is limited, it is likely that some services will duplicate the work of other services when dealing with the same clients. There would seem to be a role here for SWMDCo to facilitate greater communication between providers, perhaps by creating a co-ordinating body for them. This will be discussed in more detail in the section *Lack of an Overall Strategy*.

### **Service Integration**

Service integration was little more than a concept in the case study area. None of the service providers or teachers believed that there was any form of integration, either horizontal or vertical, in the area. In this section, suggestions will be made for ways to develop a more integrated approach to provision.

### ***Developing Mutual Awareness Among Service Providers***

Parents reported that there seemed to be no network of service providers and that contact with one agency did not lead to contact with another. What was unusual about services in the area was the relatively limited knowledge each had of other service providers. Any attempt to implement a more integrated approach to provision for Kilmeena and Kilmacllasser must first address this problem.

At a minimum, SWMDCo or Meitheal Mhaigheo should set up an umbrella group for local service providers, as some other Partnership companies have done, and should oversee and encourage interaction and co-operation between the providers. Rather than an umbrella group for all of Mayo, the county should be divided into regions (such as those used by Meitheal Mhaigheo) and a group established for each area. Even if such groups were to meet only quarterly, it should significantly improve communication and awareness between services.

### ***Lack of an Overall Strategy***

Service provision for the area appears to lack an overall strategy. At the time of writing, County Development Boards (CDBs) were being put in place. One of the first tasks of the CDBs will be the development of a strategy for the economic, social and cultural development of an area. If Southwest Mayo is to contribute in a useful way to the CDBs, then local services will need to develop their own basic area plan. An umbrella group for service providers should provide a forum for developing such a plan.

### ***Western Health Board***

The WHB was criticised for a lack of communication with schools and between its own departments. Furthermore, while the range of available services was praised, the very slow response times to requests for psychological assessments and interventions by social workers were criticised. The social work department was reported to have a high turnover of staff, a heavy workload resulting from understaffing, and a backlog of referrals. The WHB was perceived to have too many administrative and not enough 'front-line' staff.

Staff shortages and rapid turnover make establishing links with schools and service providers more difficult. To improve links with other providers, the WHB will require adequate staffing levels, and staff should be retained in the same post for longer periods of time. If, as one service provider claimed, the WHB are having difficulty in getting social workers to work in the West of Ireland, then they must examine ways to make working conditions more attractive. Furthermore, where schools have referred children to the WHB, they should receive feedback, something that does not always happen at the moment.

### ***Department of Education and Science Schemes***

Interviewees had mixed feelings about the two main Department of Education and Science schemes to combat educational disadvantage (Breaking the Cycle and the HSCL scheme) in the area. While positive aspects of each scheme were recognised, it was felt that each could contribute more to developing integrated services. This would require both the Breaking the Cycle and HSCL co-ordinators having more interaction and communication with service providers. At the time of writing the case study

(May, 2000), it was expected that most HSCL co-ordinators would have established local committees of teachers, parents and service providers by September 2000. Such a committee should prove to be beneficial in Westport. However, concerted efforts should be made to involve parents from the rural hinterland and not just from the town itself.

#### Links between the Breaking the Cycle and HSCL co-ordinators

Two primary school teachers mentioned that Breaking the Cycle did not link with other schemes, such as the HSCL scheme. Post-primary teachers complained that the Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator did not provide them with information when pupils were transferring from primary to post-primary school. The HSCL co-ordinator indicated she had recently been in communication with the Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator, but contact appeared to be fairly minimal. It would be welcome if contact between the co-ordinators of the two schemes was established on a more formal footing.

### **Allocation of Funds**

Service providers believed that the allocation of funds to the area was very unsatisfactory. Furthermore, there was much uncertainty as to where funds were to be procured and how to apply for them. This section discusses both the adequacy and coherency of funding for the area.

#### ***Adequacy of Funds***

All of the service providers believed that they were poorly funded and that service provision would be greatly enhanced by extra funding. Some believed that extra funding should only be offered to existing service providers. It was suggested that more adequate funding would allow service providers to offer a more enhanced service, such as a more proactive service, more personnel to deal with at risk children and families, and more time to interact with other service providers.

The inadequacy of funding directly affects the staffing and service offered to the public. A number of interviewees believed that it resulted in an inadequate number of staff being employed by the WHB, especially social workers, and that this created a large workload and high job dissatisfaction. Other interviewees reported that

fundraising activities diverted time from core activities. Furthermore, services which relied on volunteer staff clearly had difficulties in attracting and maintaining staff, difficulties which might have been eased had they been on a more financially stable footing.

A factor that compounded the inadequacy of funding was the lack of knowledge among local service providers about how to access funds. SWMDCo is primarily responsible for the allocation of EU LEADER funding, one of the main sources of funds in the area. It would be beneficial if SWMDCo improved its dissemination of advice to small service providers on how to access funds, and how to develop grant applications. Such advice could apply to accessing funding from government as well as EU sources.

### ***Coherence of Funding***

Those interviewed thought that funds were allocated in a piecemeal and ad hoc fashion. Common complaints were that there was no local consultation on how best funds could be utilised and that insufficient consideration was given to supporting or expanding existing services.

Local knowledge, or, at a minimum an awareness of current provision, should form an element of funding allocation. However, it should be based on an analysis of the needs of the area as a whole. To date, such an analysis has not been carried out. As mentioned earlier, SWMDCo or the CDB should be involved in the analysis, as should representatives of local service providers. Statutory agencies at local level could also play a role in the allocation of funds.

## **The Role of Schools**

In this section, the relationship between primary and post-primary schools, between schools and service providers, and between schools and families will be examined

### ***Relationship Between Primary and Post-primary Schools***

The lack of structured links between primary and post-primary schools was identified as a major issue by some of those interviewed.

## Transfer Programmes

None of the primary schools in the case study operated a transfer programme with post-primary schools, leading to the suggestion that a formal programme between primary and post-primary schools in the area should be developed. In schools where Breaking the Cycle and the HSCL scheme are in place, the respective co-ordinators should play a central role in transfer programmes. In schools without co-ordinators, a teacher (such as a Year Head) could be designated responsibility for the programme. A transfer programme would help reduce the culture shock for children starting in a post-primary school, where a first year class might have the same number of students as the whole of a rural primary school.

## Sharing Pupil Information

There was little exchange of information on pupils between primary and post-primary schools. While such exchange is relatively common in urban areas, it is less so in rural schools (Eivers, Ryan and Brinkley, 2000). Primary schools will have amassed a considerable amount of information on individual pupils by the time they transfer to post-primary schools. Unfortunately, this information is not being passed on to post-primary schools in the case study area. A formal system should be created whereby post-primary schools are supplied with information on their first year enrolment from primary schools.

## ***Schools' Interaction With Other Service Providers***

Schools in the case study area lacked formal or informal links with local service providers. Teachers and parents believed that teachers needed more support and guidance from service providers when dealing with at risk children. Teachers also believed that a team approach should be adopted and that they should have more input to, and feedback from, case conferences.

The Partnership companies for the area, Meitheal Mhaigheo and the SWMDCo, have a vital role to play in improving links between schools and service providers. The setting up of an umbrella group for providers in the area would help develop these links, as long as schools also were involved in the group. For primary schools, the Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator would be the most suitable school representative for such a group, as he is in contact with six schools. Furthermore, SWMDCo should examine some of the work done by the Mol an Óige project in North

Tipperary, which developed a model for inter-agency training between services and schools that is suitable for rural areas.

Meitheal Mhaigheo was criticised for not focusing enough resources on educational issues. It is true that it has not supported any projects in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser, but it has helped set up a small number of educational support projects in other parts of the county, such as the Family Support Teaching in the East Mayo area. Nonetheless, Meitheal Mhaigheo, as the parent Partnership, and SWMDCo, as the Local District Partnership, could focus more investment and effort on educational supports, rather than maintaining their strong emphasis on enterprise creation and development.

### ***Schools' Interaction With Families***

There were clear differences in how parents viewed the approachability of primary and post-primary schools. In this section, the roles of primary and post-primary schools will be discussed separately.

#### **Primary School**

Parents perceived primary schools to be very approachable, and most believed that if they needed help the school would be the first port of call. However, these parents seem to be the exception, as teachers reported that there was a lack of parental interest and participation in their children's education in the area. This lack of interest was experienced at first hand when trying to arrange the parent interviews for the case study area. For example, one principal was unable to organise any interview because of a lack of interest, while in another school only three parents agreed to participate in an interview, of which only two turned up.

Teachers and parents praised the Breaking the Cycle scheme. Primary school teachers and principals approved the extra resources the scheme brought to the school, while parents believed that the schools had become much better places for the children since the introduction of the scheme. However, the scheme was also criticised. All of the parents interviewed were uncertain about the role of the Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator. They said that when the role was first introduced, home visits were talked of, but these never occurred. A key part of the role definition for Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators is to improve school-home links and to actively encourage parents to become involved in their children's education. However, this key aspect is lacking in

Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser and may be contributing to the continuing poor quality of home-school interaction.

In mitigation, the co-ordinator for the three primary schools in question is shared between six schools. This means that he cannot be in a given school on the same day every week, making it difficult for parents to know when to contact him. Furthermore, the interim evaluation report of *Breaking the Cycle* (Weir and Ryan, 2000) indicates that most co-ordinators reported spending less time on home-school links than they felt they should. Nonetheless, improving home-school links is intended to form a significant part of the *Breaking the Cycle* co-ordinator's job. This point should be impressed upon co-ordinators and principals of participating schools.

Primary schools could also encourage better parent-school interaction by employing parents as classroom assistants. Two of the local primary schools already employ a classroom assistant. The third school should also consider employing a parent in this role.

One Junior Infants teacher organised meetings with parents at the beginning of the school year to inform them of what to expect and how they could support their child educationally. Some parents were particularly in favour of such meetings and believed that they should be held for each grade level in primary school.

### Post-Primary School

Parents considered post-primary schools to be relatively unapproachable. They did not feel comfortable asking post-primary teachers for assistance, who they felt were more inclined to assign blame than to offer help. Parents also complained that problems often manifest themselves during a student's first year in a post-primary school. However, schools do little to inform parents of emerging problems and only tend to contact them when problems reach crisis point, for example when a student is suspended or expelled from school.

It is clear that post-primary schools need to improve the level of feedback they provide to parents. One way to achieve this would be to increase the number of opportunities for parents to meet teachers, preferably in a less formal setting than a parent-teacher meeting. School events (for example sports days, art displays and school concerts) could be used as a means to begin to encourage informal interaction between teachers and parents.

A few parents reported that the HSCL co-ordinator was an important role, because it meant that parents knew who to contact with queries. However, only one of

the three post-primary schools in Westport is included in the HSCL scheme. In schools without the services of a co-ordinator, a designated contact teacher could be appointed for each child's parents. This teacher could meet parents at the beginning of the school year and inform them that they can be contacted with any queries they may have about their children. Contact between parents and school could be directed through this teacher, allowing more personal relationships to be established. The most appropriate teacher for such a role may be a Year Head.

The relevance of the post-primary curriculum to rural pupils and students was raised. Parents and post-primary teachers praised the Leaving Certificate Applied and the Leaving Certificate Vocational programmes, stating that they offered more choice to students. However, while an overhaul of the curriculum was not proposed, it was suggested that the introduction of more topics related to rural life might serve to maintain students' interest in school.

An issue of major concern to parents is that of underage drinking. It was considered to be a particular problem in Westport, where it was alleged some licencees served older students who were minors. These in turn sold cans of alcohol at exorbitant prices to students in second and third year of post-primary school. Parents felt that the schools did nothing to stop this, even though they all knew it was occurring. An alcohol awareness programme in post-primary schools in Westport might help address the problem. Such a programme could be run in conjunction with the Community Garda and local licencees.

## **Summary of Main Recommendations**

### ***Current Provision***

1. Current provision for Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser is limited, with very few services located in the area. Provision needs to be improved in areas of activities for young people, psychological services, early intervention, and information on available services.
2. Meitheal Mhaigheo and FÁS should examine the needs of smaller rural schools, and consider expanding the Homework Project, where warranted.
3. A directory of services for the area is needed.

4. Greater use should be made of WHB Health Centres in Westport and Newport, and the Centres should offer a wider range of services, rather than having the bulk of provision in the County Clinic in Castlebar.
5. As one of the few organisations engaging in youth work in Mayo, Foróige should re-examine its town-based focus and consider the needs of rural young people.
6. The involvement of local people in service provision should be increased. If this is not possible to achieve through volunteer work, then the use of FÁS-sponsored schemes should be considered.
7. Communication between providers should be improved to reduce overlap in provision.

### ***Service Integration***

1. Mutual awareness among service providers operating in the area is limited. Meitheal Mhaigheo and SWMDCo should encourage communication and co-operation between services by setting up a co-ordinating body for local service providers.
2. There is no overall strategy for service provision in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser. Local services need to develop such a strategy, which could inform the work of the CDB.
3. The level of feedback from the WHB to schools needs to be improved.
4. The WHB would be in a position to offer a more effective service if allocated more social workers, who would be maintained in posts for sufficient time to establish good working relationships with schools and other service providers.
5. The setting up of local education committees by the HSCL co-ordinator should improve communication with service providers and parents. However, efforts should be made to ensure parents from rural areas are represented on such committees.
6. Formal links should be established between the HSCL and Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator.

### ***Allocation of Funds***

1. SWMDCo should develop a higher profile among service providers, especially in relation to advice on the availability of funding sources and how to develop grant applications.
2. A needs analysis of the area should be conducted, with involvement from SWMDCo, the CDB and representatives of local service providers. The results should inform future allocation of funding.

### ***The Role of Schools***

1. Formal links between primary and post-primary schools serving the area need to be established. In particular, a transfer programme needs to be put in place between primary and post-primary schools. Schools should also consider sharing of pupil information.
2. SWMDCo should help to develop links between schools and service providers. This could be facilitated by school participation in an umbrella group for service providers.
3. SWMDCo and Meitheal Mhaigheo need to direct more funding towards the provision of extra educational supports.
4. That home visits are an integral part of the job of Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators should be impressed upon co-ordinators and principals.
5. Primary class teachers should meet parents at the start of each academic year to discuss what will be expected of children in the upcoming year and to outline how they could support their children's education.
6. Post-primary schools should make use of more informal events, such as school concerts and sports days, to develop communication with parents.
7. In the two post-primary schools without the services of a HSCL co-ordinator, parents should be assigned designated contact teachers.
8. Post-primary schools were perceived to be ignoring a black market in alcohol among their students. Schools need to ensure that older students do not sell alcohol to younger students.
9. An alcohol awareness programme should be introduced to local schools, to which the Community Garda and local publicans could contribute.



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# Recommendations for Service Provision for At Risk Children

In this chapter, recommendations are made for changes to the provision of services to at risk children and their families. The recommendations will be grouped under the following headings:

- Legislative issues
- Suggested changes at school level
- Suggested changes within the Department of Education and Science
- Suggested changes to Health Boards
- Suggested changes in funding practices
- Structures and supports at national level.

However, before recommendations are made, current provision and level of integration will be discussed briefly, using findings from the four case study areas as indicators of how service provision functions nationally.

## Current Service Provision

There were distinct differences between the four case study areas, both in terms of the amount and type of provision, as well as in the degree of integration of services. It is likely that the varying quality of provision reflects national variation. It is clear that integration has not been achieved in any of the four areas, although there were differences in the extent to which basic structures had been instituted to facilitate it.

Despite differences, the same issues tended to crop up in each area. Planning at the level of the local area, typically supported by the local Partnership company or by a local co-ordinating body, appeared to have led to better communication between service providers. Health Boards were generally isolated from the network of local service provision. Schools varied considerably in their approach, with some very involved in local networks and some almost completely isolated.

Service providers were often housed in inappropriate facilities, with little or no advertising of their presence. Much of the provision for each area was financed by short-term funding, often on a pilot basis, making long-term planning for individual

organisations, and for the area, quite difficult. Government Departments and statutory bodies were often described as the biggest obstacles to developing an integrated service. Common gaps in provision included activities for young people, developmental youth work, early intervention programmes, and psychological services for schools. Finally, provision in the rural case study area was limited in the extreme.

### ***Area Planning***

Coherent area-based planning by local service providers was associated with a more integrated provision of service. Nonetheless, the case studies suggest that such planning is still at an embryonic stage in many parts of Ireland, and that even the best area plan will be inadequate if funding agencies do not take local needs into consideration. Many of the service providers interviewed felt that efforts made at local level were simply not being supported by government practice (as opposed to policy).

Some areas did have multiple partial area plans. For example, various local Partnership companies, local co-ordinating bodies of service providers, Drugs Task Forces, ISPs and other bodies have produced plans to deal with the needs of their area. This, however, created difficulties, in terms of stated priorities for the area and time demands on service providers who were involved with more than one planning group.

### ***Partnership Companies***

Area-based Partnerships have contributed to a more local focus. Although they vary in their activities, most share a number of features that have proven successful. They have assisted local groups in accessing funds, both by making them aware of funding sources and assisting with grant applications. They have also acted as a source of advice and provided support facilities for many smaller community organisations. When utilised fully, the community resource aspect of Partnerships has proven to be very fruitful. Most Partnerships have also financed or managed projects designed to redress educational disadvantage, typically homework clubs or additional remedial and psychological support.

However, there were considerable differences in how Partnerships were viewed in each of the four case study areas. This derived partly from the differences in the goals of Partnerships; for example, some were focussed on employment creation while others focussed on community development. Partnerships also differed in how their

consultation skills were viewed, and there was some criticism that a top-down approach had been adopted. In Jobstown, where Tallaght Partnership was perceived to have consulted widely with local agencies, support for and investment in Partnership activities was more pronounced than in other areas.

### ***Local Co-ordinating Bodies***

Local level structures designed to improve communication between service providers (such as JISP, Muirhevna Mór Community Council and Magnet) appear to have had some success. The rural area examined did not have a co-ordinating body of service providers (although it was under the auspices of SWMDCo), and the degree of communication between services was markedly poorer than in the other three areas. This may be partly due to geographical dispersion, and partly to a dearth of non-voluntary service provision, but it is also likely that the lack of a co-ordinating body of service providers contributed to the relative lack of communication.

Even in areas that have co-ordinating bodies, problems arise. Success has been hampered by factors such as time constraints and understaffing, turf wars, incoherent and inconsistent funding, lack of management commitment to integration, and a basic lack of clout by such local structures. Local community and voluntary organisations tended to have a greater investment than larger statutory bodies in local representative bodies of service providers. While the more local focus that this may bring can be beneficial, the relative exclusion of larger agencies is not.

### ***Health Boards***

Health Boards appear to be somewhat isolated from the wider service provider network. Although individuals within Health Boards have done much to foster integration, the general impression appeared to be that decision-makers in the four area Health Boards did not have any belief in, or commitment to, integration. Chronic understaffing and high turnover, particularly among social workers, exacerbated the isolation of Health Boards.

### ***Schools***

Schools were also perceived as somewhat removed from other agencies. Huge differences existed between them in the extent to which they were seen as part of a wider network of service provision. Even in the schools that had done most to foster integration, both teachers and service providers felt that integration could be improved. At the other extreme, some schools were seen as wanting to remain outside of any network, and as unwilling to relinquish any control, while others remained oblivious to the wider service provider network.

As a general trend, the smaller the school, the more likely it was to be isolated from networks. This might in part be attributable to factors such as principals having to teach full-time and lack of ancillary staff (such as a HSCL co-ordinator). However, it can also be related to a tendency for service providers to focus on larger schools, to the relative neglect of smaller ones.

### ***The Public Face of Services***

Despite what service providers might think, local individuals had limited awareness of the services operating in their area. Indeed, in cases where they recognised the name of a service provider, they frequently had only a vague idea of what the service actually did. It is clear that the public profile of many services needs to be raised. The fact that many services are not housed in purpose-built facilities means that their premises do not stand out. There was also a distinct lack of signposting of services (with the exception of The Glen, which probably not coincidentally is the area where parents had the most comprehensive knowledge of services).

### ***Short-term Projects***

Service provision in the case study areas was characterised by a number of short-term projects. Many were pilots, funded by EU or a combination of EU and Irish government money, and supplemented from other sources. Often, the future of individual services was insecure, making it difficult to engage in any meaningful long-term strategy.

### ***Co-ordination at Departmental Level***

Integrated service provision is currently a buzzword in government Departments and, to facilitate it at local level, attempts have been made to maximise co-ordination of policy at national level. For example, cabinet sub-committees (such as the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion) and inter-departmental committees (such as Inter-Departmental Group on the National Drugs Strategy, and the Interdepartmental Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems) have been specifically created to support co-ordination of policy.

However, the reality is that on-the-ground co-ordination between Departments seems lacking. The case study areas supplied plenty of examples of similar projects, in the same area, with the same target client group, funded by different Departments. Where co-operation existed between such projects, it was typically initiated and maintained at local level, with little input from above.

As much of this research project focussed on schools, schemes funded by the Department of Education and Science came in for particular attention. Where co-ordination across schemes existed, it was very much because of local initiative. Indeed, one principal commented that not alone did those involved in administering one scheme frequently not know that her school was also participating in another (Department of Education and Science-sponsored) scheme, sometimes they even appeared unaware of the existence of the other scheme.

### ***Common Gaps in Provision***

Across the four areas, similar gaps in provision were identified. Outside of the targeted programmes, there were few activities for young people. Consequently, many children and adolescents passed their time hanging around street corners, with some resorting to anti-social behaviour as an outlet for their energies. In particular, a lack of activities during summer holidays was apparent. Although youth workers offered valuable services to at risk young people, those who were not manifesting specific problems tended to be somewhat neglected.

Intervention programmes tended to be targeted at older children and adolescents, with less attention focussed on young children. In two of the four areas, childcare provision was lacking, while in all four areas, the psychological services offered to schools were regarded as totally inadequate to meet demand.

### ***Rural Service Provision***

The difference between the rural area and the other areas was startling. Whereas in the town and city areas the difficulty was in ensuring that all the various services were identified and described, in the rural area, the difficulty was in finding *any* services to describe. In terms of absolute numbers, there were more at risk young people in the three urban or provincial locations studied. Consequently, it is reasonable that more provision should be targeted at these areas. Nonetheless, there exists a rural underclass of young people who are being largely ignored by measures designed to reach those at risk.

### **Legislative Issues**

There are certain pieces of legislation that are particularly relevant to at risk young people. In this section, the relevant Acts, as they pertain to this study, will be discussed. While some, such as the Education (Welfare) Bill, have obvious implications for at risk young people, others, such as the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act, also affect service provision for this target group.

#### ***Proposed Education (Welfare) Bill***

At the time of writing (May, 2000), the Educational (Welfare) Bill had not been enacted. Therefore, this section discusses the Bill in its proposed form.

#### **Educational Welfare Officers**

At the time the case studies were carried out, the proposed National Educational Welfare Board had not been set up. Therefore, schools referred cases of truancy to either the School Attendance Officer (SAO) or the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO). It is to be hoped that the introduction of the National Educational Welfare Board, and the appointment of Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs), will significantly improve how absenteeism is dealt with. However, there are a number of problems associated with the current system of dealing with absenteeism, not all of which appear to be resolved by the proposed changes.

## **Staffing Levels**

At present, SAOs are extremely understaffed and can deal with only a small percentage of their potential target group. Inevitably, they deal with the most extreme cases – those whose attendance is sporadic from an early age, and who have already amassed a large number of absences. While it is undeniable that such children should be targeted, it would be preferable if the service had sufficient resources to deal with absenteeism in its early stages, when difficulties are less pronounced, and intervention more likely to be successful.

Anecdotal evidence would suggest that many principals (both primary and post-primary) frequently do not pass on names of persistent truants to the SAO, simply because they realise that the service is grossly understaffed. As a result, even though the workloads of SAOs are currently very heavy, they may represent only a fraction of their potential work. Therefore, it is recommended that the number of EWOs appointed should represent a major increase on current provision.

## **Cutoff Point for Referral to Educational Welfare Officers**

It is likely that provisions of the Educational (Welfare) Bill will require schools to give EWOs the names of all pupils who are absent for more than 11 days. Such a requirement will place considerable demand on EWOs.

For example, the School Attendance Department for the Dublin County Borough had a collective caseload of 754 pupils in 1998/99, out of a total of 68,409 pupils to whom the School Attendance Act applied (School Attendance Department, 1999). Thus, the caseload was equivalent to 1.1% of the total population. However, average daily attendance in the Borough for that year was 90%. Assuming a school year of 180 days, a 90% attendance rate translates into an average of 18 days absences. Thus, the *average* number of absences for the Dublin Borough was more than one and a half times higher than the proposed threshold for reporting cases to EWOs. Although average absences may be inflated by a small number of pupils with very high numbers of absences, it is quite possible that up to half the pupils in the Dublin Borough will exceed the proposed threshold of 11 days absence per year. This will clearly make a nonsense of the requirement to pass on names of those exceeding the threshold.

From these comments, it would appear that the proposed threshold of 11 days is too low, and should be raised significantly. Even with a raised threshold, the

number of pupils who will be referred to EWOs is likely to represent a major increase on current levels. Consequently, increasing staffing to a level adequate to deal with *current* demand is unlikely to be adequate to meet the demand when the Educational (Welfare) Bill is enacted.

### **Assignment of Educational Welfare Officers**

SAOs are assigned to areas, rather than to schools. At present, this results in a situation in which some schools can have part of their enrolment covered by the School Attendance Department, and another part that must be dealt with by the JLO, depending on the home address of the pupil. Clearly, this may lead to confusion on the part of teachers, as well as militating against a coherent school policy on absenteeism. The latter point is particularly important, given that EWOs will be expected to assist schools in formulating a school attendance strategy. The assignment of EWOs to schools, rather than to geographical areas, would seem more appropriate.

### **The Role of the Juvenile Liaison Officer**

Most of the schools selected in the case study areas were outside the areas covered by SAOs, and relied on the local Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) to enforce school attendance. While teachers praised individual JLOs, it was generally recognised that referring truants to the Gardaí was not the most effective way of dealing with persistent absenteeism.

It is true that those who drop out of school before the minimum age are breaking the law. Similarly parents are legally obliged to ensure that their children regularly attend school until they reach such an age. Nonetheless, most of those interviewed felt that criminalising truants or early school leavers was not the best way to deal with the problem. In particular, rural parents were unhappy that what they saw as their only real recourse in the face of truancy (contacting the JLO) meant that they had to criminalise their own children. They felt that it was too drastic a step for most parents to take.

As well as the suitability of using Gardaí to enforce school attendance, the degree of enforcement must also be questioned. Of the 17 rural early school leavers interviewed as part of the wider 8- to 15-Year Old Early School Leavers project, none reported ever being contacted by a JLO (Eivers, Ryan and Brinkley, 2000). During the same project, data were collected from primary and post-primary teachers on a total of 29 rural early school leavers, although data at both levels were not returned for all 29.

Teachers' reports indicated that only two early school leavers had ever been contacted by the JLO. Consequently, it would appear that, in rural areas at least, JLOs play a minimal role in enforcing school attendance.

It is recommended that EWOs should take over the work currently carried out by SAOs and JLOs.

### Minimum School-Leaving Age

The Educational (Welfare) Bill proposes a raising of the minimum legal school leaving age to 16 years, or to a minimum of three years of post-primary education, whichever is later. Unfortunately, this will create a situation in which a small number of students will have completed their Junior Certificate examination, yet will be legally obliged to attend school until they reach 16, despite having no desire to do so. It is unclear what, if any, benefits the proposed changes will bring to these young people. Indeed, forcing 15-year old students to complete the first term or two of Senior Cycle may have a disruptive effect on their classmates.

It would be preferable if the Bill allowed students who have completed their Junior Certificate examination to leave school, even if they have not yet reached their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. A more fruitful approach might be to make appropriate alternative training provision for such students.

### ***Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996***

The Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996 outlines the conditions under which young people may or may not be employed. In general, the Act prohibits the employment of young persons under 16, with certain exceptions. Children aged 14 are permitted to work up to 35 hours during school holidays, but prohibited from working during school term. Upon reaching 15, young people are permitted to work eight hours a week during school term, while those aged 16 and over are permitted to work up to 10 pm during school term. Employers must receive written permission from parents when employing a child under 16 years of age, and must supply young employees with a summary of the Act.

The Educational (Welfare) Bill will make two main modifications to the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act. Firstly, inspectors may enforce the prohibition of the employment of young people during the school day, something not

included in the 1996 Act. Secondly, it provides for a register of young persons, and prohibits the employment of any young person without a certificate of registration.

### Register of Young Persons

The Education (Welfare) Bill will amend the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996. It proposes a register of young persons (to include young persons aged 16 and 17, who are not registered at a recognised school or engaged in a prescribed course of study or training). Any young person registered will receive a certificate, and employers may not legally employ a young person without it. Further, employers must notify the Educational Welfare Board within one month if they employ a 16- or 17-year old. The Board will then liaise with the young person, his or her parents, the employer and any other relevant parties to develop a plan for assisting the young person to avail of educational and training opportunities. The Board shall also, where appropriate, offer assistance in carrying out such a plan.

The proposed changes outlined above represent a considerable alteration from current provision for young people who have left school. However, while it is very worthy to state that all young people should have access to training, it is of little use unless supported by adequate provision. Indeed, without adequate training provision, the proposed changes will do little more than make it difficult for an employer to legally employ a 17-year old. At the time of writing (May, 2000), the Education (Welfare) Bill had passed most stages in the Dáil. However, there was no indication of moves to increase training provision for young school leavers, as would obviously be required were the Bill to be implemented.

Indeed, the Annual Report for the School Attendance Committees County Borough of Dublin (1999) raised just this issue, highlighting the need for appropriate courses to be made available in sufficient numbers *before* legislation was enacted. The report also pointed out that for EWOs to be effective, they must offer young school leavers “real opportunities appropriate to their needs and holding out the hope of qualification for fulfilling work that offers the prospect of a meaningful career” (p.8). In other words, not only is it necessary to have training provision in place before the Act becomes law, real courses and opportunities should be available, not dead end courses with little point to them.

## Enforcing the Act

The issue of youth employment as a factor contributing to early school leaving was raised by a number of the parents interviewed. It is clear that many employers do not adhere to the guidelines in the 1996 Act. Many young people of school-going age are employed for longer hours than those specified by the Act and frequently much later than the official cutoff time of 10 pm. Parents also discussed how employers “blackmail” young people into working evenings and weekends, by saying that they would not be employed during the summer if they did not do so. While, in theory, the young person or their family can report such employers to the Employment Rights Section of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, in practice most people do not know that such an option exists.

Workplace inspections arising from such complaints only take place during office hours, whereas most young people tend to be employed in the evenings and at night. While it is vital that employers who employ young people during the school day should be identified, the majority of young employees do not work during regular office hours and will not therefore come into contact with inspectors.

In research related to the present study, Eivers, Ryan and Brinkley (2000) interviewed 40 senior cycle students from a mixture of 13 rural, urban and provincial post-primary schools. Just over half the students were employed at the time of interview, which, for the majority was in the term preceding their Leaving Certificate examinations. The average number of hours worked was 17.68 per week, with 26.3% working 20 hours or more. Similarly, Morgan (2000) found that 16.7% of students in a sample of Dublin students worked more than 20 hours a week during term time, while only 22.1% did not work at all during term.

It is difficult to believe that working such hours does not affect students’ school performance. Steinberg and Dornbusch (1991) in a study of US high school students found that working more than 20 hours per week was associated lower academic performance and lower investment in school. In a longitudinal study, Steinberg, Fegley and Dornbusch (1993) found that pre-existing differences between students who worked excessive hours (more than 20 hours per week) and those who did not were magnified by working long hours.

Currently, the Irish legislation is enforced by 11 inspectors, who are also responsible for enforcing other legislation. In the first 10 months of 1999, there were 667 inspections under the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act,

approximately half the number that were carried out in the previous year. Clearly, the number of inspections is inadequate, given the very large number of schoolchildren in employment. While the proposed amendments to the legislation are to be welcomed, they will be of little benefit unless supported by an increase in the number of inspections to ensure adherence to the Act. It is recommended not only that the number of inspectors to enforce the Act, and the number of inspection increase, but also that inspections be performed both during and outside of normal office hours.

### ***The Intoxicating Liquor Bill 2000***

The Intoxicating Liquor Bill 2000 makes a number of changes to the law relating to underage drinking. The “reasonable grounds” defence for licence holders had constituted a major obstacle to Gardaí in obtaining successful convictions against those who sold alcohol to minors. The new Bill makes it an offence of strict liability (no defence is acceptable) for those found selling to minors. Furthermore, when licence holders are convicted, the court may impose an order to close the premises for up to one week for the first offence, and up to one month for second and subsequent offences.

Any measures to curb the extent of underage drinking are welcome, as it is a major factor in the poor school performance of young people. The ASTI recently drew attention to the extent of the problem, and suggested that the new National Drugs Strategy should have efforts to curb underage drinking as one of its core objectives (press release, June 25, 2000). Eivers, Ryan and Brinkley (2000) found that 13% of their sample of early school leavers drank at least monthly while in primary school, while 37% did so in post-primary school (all left school before they reached 16). Similarly, Brinkley, Fitzgerald and Greene (1999) found that almost half of their sample of 14- and 15-year olds drank at least once a month.

At the time of writing, the Bill had not come into operation. Therefore, it is not possible to assess the effects, if any, that it will have on underage drinking. The previous law in relation to selling alcohol to minors was rarely enforced, and it remains to be seen what levels of enforcement will be applied to the new laws. However, it is to be hoped that the new provisions will not only be enforced, but be enforced for all licence holders. While many young people do obtain alcohol in pubs, younger adolescents in particular are more likely to obtain alcohol from off-licences, or from friends. For example, Brinkley, Fitzgerald and Greene (1999) found that only 12% of

their sample of Dublin underage drinkers drank in pubs. Targeting off-licences that sell to minors and adults who purchase alcohol for minors is essential if underage drinking is to be reduced.

Finally, schools also have a role to play in the enforcement of the law. The job of licencees is easier where young people have identity cards displaying their age. If all schools in an area have a policy of encouraging students to obtain such cards from the Gardaí, then alcohol can reasonably be refused to those who do not have such a card.

### ***Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts***

The Freedom of Information Act, 1997 created three new legal rights for members of the public: the right to obtain information held by government Departments and public bodies; the right to obtain reasons for decisions affecting oneself; and, the right to have official information relating to oneself amended where it is incorrect, incomplete or misleading.

The Data Protection Act, 1988 is in the process of being amended to reflect a more recent (1995) EU directive. Although the deadline for implementation of the updated legislation was October 1998, the amended Act is not expected to go before the Dáil before Autumn 2000. The primary obligation under the Act for data holders is that personal data should be fairly collected and processed so that individuals to whom the data relate are aware of the uses to which the data are put and the entities to which they are disclosed. The 1988 Act applies solely to the automated processing of personal data. Therefore, if personal data are not held on computer, the provisions of the 1988 Act do not apply.

However, the amended Act will apply to certain forms of manual records. The directive upon which the amendments will be based seeks to ensure that data subjects are granted a number of important rights including the right of access to the data, the right to know where the data originated (if such information is available), the right to have inaccurate data rectified, a right of recourse in the event of unlawful processing and the right to withhold permission to use their data in certain circumstances.

It may not be immediately obvious how such legislation affects service provision, but interviews with service providers have indicated that, for some at least, the Acts are an inhibiting factor in sharing client information with other agencies. Of course, it could be argued that this is certainly not the intent of either Act. Yet the fact

remains that an overly cautious approach to the storing and sharing of information by some service providers has emerged as a result. One interviewee commented that those worried about such legal issues were ignorant of the law, a comment that may well reflect the truth in the majority of cases. However, it is not always easy for service providers, especially smaller agencies, to access information on the legal niceties of both Acts. Furthermore, having acquired the relevant information, it is not always easy to interpret. This is particularly so in the case of the Data Protection Act, where the general thrust of the main changes have been known for the last five years, but little is known about how, or when<sup>1</sup>, these changes will be implemented.

It is recommended the proposed changes to the Data Protection Act be enacted and that greater efforts be made to disseminate information about both Acts to community and voluntary organisations. In particular, bodies such as area-based Partnership companies are ideally placed to hold seminars for smaller service providers, explaining what is involved in each Act and how it might affect their work practices.

### **Suggested Changes at School Level**

As a general rule, primary schools were perceived as more welcoming than post-primary schools of parents and more child-friendly. Post-primary schools were perceived to be stricter, and more problematic for at risk young people. However, there was also recognition by parents that both types of schools had improved in recent years, and become more open to involvement from parents.

As well as differences between primary and post-primary schools, there were also considerable differences between schools themselves. Some schools were quite involved in local networks of service providers, while others were somewhat isolated. In general, the degree to which a school strived for a more integrated service depended on the attitudes of the principal and of key staff members, such as the HSCL co-ordinator, where such a post existed.

In this section, improvements are suggested for primary and post-primary schools, and the relationship between the two types of school.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of those interviewed were under the impression that the amendments had already been enacted. Whether this was because the Act should have been enacted by October 1998, or due to a confusion between the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts is unclear.

### ***Use of School Facilities***

Schools frequently have the largest collection of facilities in disadvantaged areas. While many schools allow voluntary and community groups to use their facilities, others do not. Where possible, schools should be encouraged to allow community use of facilities after hours and during school holidays. Such an approach has two main benefits. Firstly, it represents a more economic use of resources, as local groups do not have to spend large sums of money duplicating facilities. Secondly, in the case of post-primary schools, primary school pupils who have availed of the facilities of a post-primary school are less likely to find it intimidating when they transfer to the school.

As the use of school facilities for non-school activities may have insurance implications, the Department of Education and Science should recompense schools for any extra cost incurred. Consideration might also be given to the allocation of a Special Duties post with responsibility for overseeing the use of facilities outside of school hours.

### ***Courses for Parents***

Parents interviewed spoke favourably about courses run in schools for parents. Teachers were not always so positive about courses, with some commenting that while many parents would express interest, attendance was usually low. They also felt that attendance for leisure courses was higher than for courses that teachers would like parents to attend (for example, parenting courses). Overall though, it would seem that courses for parents have quite often been a useful way to increase parental contact with the school, particularly in the case of primary schools.

Typically, courses were run by HSCL co-ordinators, but it is quite possible that schools without the services of a HSCL or Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator could also organise courses for parents. Ideally, courses that would help with parenting or academic skills should be provided, but if parental interest levels are not sufficient, then other types of courses should be considered. Schools considering courses could seek assistance from the local Health Board, Partnership, Inspectorate, Education Centre or Parents' Council. Although time and financial constraints exist, it is recommended that schools that do not currently offer courses to parents should consider doing so.

### ***HSCL Co-ordinator***

The HSCL scheme was widely praised by parents, particularly the primary level scheme. Parents reported that HSCL co-ordinators were a good source of information and advice. They found the school to be a less intimidating environment as a result, and felt that they could play a greater role in their child's education. Some also mentioned that through the work of the co-ordinator, they had established a mutual support system with other parents.

The courses run by HSCL co-ordinators were perceived by parents to be very useful and many had attended. Some HSCL co-ordinators expressed reservations about parental enthusiasm, pointing out that parental interest did not always translate into action, and that attendance for leisure-type courses generally outweighed attendance for parenting or shared reading courses. While the educational benefits to pupils of their parents attending "Colour Me Beautiful" courses may not be immediately apparent, it is clear that such courses have succeeded in tempting many parents into the school who would otherwise not venture near the facility. Once contact has been established in such a non-threatening manner, HSCL co-ordinators have found it easier to maintain links with such parents. Therefore, it is recommended that HSCL co-ordinators continue to base courses for parents on parental wishes, even if the benefits to pupils may not be immediately obvious.

Despite the best efforts of HSCL co-ordinators, a hard core of parents simply do not have any involvement with their child's school, a problem identified in the evaluation of the HSCL scheme (Ryan, 1999). It is difficult to know what could be done to increase participation from such parents. What is clear is that involving all parents is not something which can be achieved overnight. Relatively immediate changes in the attitudes and behaviour of a reasonable proportion of parents are a frequent result of home-school initiatives, but a significant proportion of parents remain unmoved by such initiatives. A successful strategy for targeting the latter group will have to be multi-faceted, and long-term in nature.

Offering a variety of courses for parents over a period of time, while at the same time realising that some parents simply will not attend is one option. While Parent Rooms appear to be successful in some of the schools (particularly primary) in which they have been introduced, co-ordinators must also be aware that those who avail of such facilities are a fairly self-selected sample. Thus, mainly targeting these parents may lead to an ignoring of those most in need of support. The need for home

visitation remains. Finally, it is vital that HSCL co-ordinators are involved in any network of local service providers.

### ***Primary Schools***

While some primary schools are models of engagement with parental and service providers, others are not. Most of the schools visited for the case studies had well-developed links with parents. In this section interaction with parents and service providers and models of best practice for primary schools will be examined.

#### **Parental Engagement**

Primary schools were clearly more successful than post-primary schools in engaging parents. However, this is not to say that the present situation could not be improved. Moreover, the schools visited were, for the most part, involved in Department of Education and Science targeted schemes to redress educational disadvantage (Early Start, Breaking the Cycle, the Scheme of Assistance to Schools in Designated Areas of Disadvantage, the 8- to 15-Year Old Early School Leavers Initiative and the HSCL scheme). Therefore, they may not be typical of Irish primary schools.

#### **Breaking the Cycle Co-ordinator**

The Breaking the Cycle scheme is a targeted programme to redress educational disadvantage that has a significant rural component. In the Breaking the Cycle schools visited, the scheme was regarded very positively by both teachers and parents. Parents commented how the schools had “blossomed” since the inception of the scheme, while teachers welcomed the additional support provided.

One of the main aims of the scheme is to encourage parental participation in children’s education. To achieve this, co-ordinators must establish and maintain contact with parents, preferably through activities such as courses for parents and home visits. However, the interim evaluation report of Breaking the Cycle indicates that while this may be one of the stated aims of the project, many co-ordinators feel that principals do not agree (Weir and Ryan, 2000). Indeed, 45% of co-ordinators reported that principals believed they spent too much time working with parents, while 50% thought that principals wanted them to function as either remedial or resource teachers. Co-ordinators reported spending significantly less time on home-school interaction than they believed they should (Weir and Ryan, 2000).

Clearly, there is a distinct difference between intent and practice in some schools, and at least some responsibility lies with principals. While it is understandable that principals who have little or no access to remedial teachers might wish to use the Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator in such a role, that is contrary to the spirit of the scheme. It is recommended that greater efforts be made to impress upon principals the importance of the home-school aspect of the co-ordinators' role.

Where the Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator's role has been carried out as intended, it has proved to be very successful in increasing parental participation. As the parent interviews conducted during the case studies indicated, achieving participation from rural parents can often be harder than from their urban counterparts. Despite this, rural Breaking the Cycle schools have shown dramatic increases in parental involvement over the first three years of the scheme. For example, while fewer than 10% of schools offered courses for parents prior to the introduction of the scheme, almost all did so by the third year. Parental involvement in school activities (assisting with sports, classroom activities, and so on) increased, as did the number of schools holding events (such as sports days or concerts) to which parents were invited (Weir and Ryan, 2000).

### Classroom Assistants

Some of the schools visited used parents as classroom assistants or as occasional participants in classes such as English reading, Art and Craft, and PE. Parents reported that such involvement not only gave them a sense of achievement, but also, a far greater understanding of the requirements of school. Some teachers also commented that it allowed for individual attention for pupils who were having difficulty. The manner in which parental assistance was organised varied, with some being employed on CE schemes, and some doing occasional voluntary work.

In general, the use of parents as classroom helpers has much to offer. Voluntary participation from a number of parents would seem preferable to appointing one or two parents on a scheme. However, many schools found it difficult to maintain parental involvement in this way. In such cases, schools might attempt to employ parents as part of a CE or similar scheme. The Department of Education and Science could play a role in this. Many schools are unaware of how such schemes are operated. The Department, or members of the Inspectorate, could disseminate information to schools and Boards of Management on how they might access the required resources.

## ***Post-primary Schools***

In this section, suggestions will be made as to how post-primary schools can increase parental involvement in children's education, as well as how they can combat the issue of early school leaving.

### **Parental Engagement**

As mentioned, the degree of parental engagement achieved by primary schools was noticeably higher than that achieved by post-primary schools. This is not to say that post-primary schools have not made efforts in recent years to encourage parental participation. Indeed, it was apparent from speaking to parents that post-primary schools were perceived to be more welcoming of parents than they had been in the past.

Part of the difficulty in involving parents may lie in the fact that many parents of disadvantaged young people have not themselves attended post-primary school. Consequently, they do not have a great understanding of the requirements of such an environment, and may feel a little out of their depth. Those that did attend post-primary school typically left without qualification, and may not have happy memories. Therefore, the work of post-primary schools in achieving parental involvement is somewhat more difficult than that of primary schools.

### **Designated Contact Teacher**

Many of the parents interviewed reported that they found it difficult to make the transition from a one-to-one relationship with a class teacher in primary school to dealing with multiple subject teachers in post-primary school. One way to minimise such parental difficulties would be to assign a designated contact teacher for each child's parents. Parents could be introduced to such a teacher at the start of the year, and told that they could contact him/her with any queries about their child. Contact from the school to parents could be channelled through the teacher concerned, thereby establishing a more personal relationship between the school and parents.

The most obvious candidates for such a role would be Year Heads. Some schools might feel that Year Heads already engage in similar work. However, this has frequently not been adequately communicated to parents. The incorporation of these duties into the role of Year Head should be accompanied by an appropriate reduction in timetabled teaching hours.

### **Class-based Parent-Teacher Meetings**

Parents referred to feeling overwhelmed and a little intimidated in situations where large numbers of parents are herded into rooms to meet an entire school staff. They reported feeling that they could not talk to teachers, as they could see that the teachers were under pressure, and also felt that they would be delaying other parents.

A better option would be if parent-teacher meetings were held on a class-by-class or year-by-year basis. This would not only allow parents greater interaction with teachers, but allow parents to meet each other. In primary schools, most parents know their child's classmates' parents, and those interviewed reported that they found such contacts helpful. In contrast, parents of post-primary students typically have much less contact with each other. An increase in the number of parent-teacher meetings would require more time and administrative effort from teachers, particularly Year Heads, who should have a central role in organising such meetings. If a shift to class-by-class or year-by-year meetings were to happen, this would need to be recognised in the teaching hours of Year Heads.

### **Opportunities for Positive Interaction**

It is reasonably common for parents of primary schoolchildren to meet teachers while dropping their children to, or picking them up from school. In schools that were praised by parents as being welcoming, teachers typically used these occasions to chat with parents and to keep them informally updated on their child's progress. As a result, parents did not feel, as they often did when describing post-primary schools, that the only time they were contacted by the school was when there was a problem. Chatting with parents at the school gate is less likely to be an effective option for post-primary teachers. Nonetheless, post-primary schools need to redress the perception that parents are contacted only when things go wrong.

One way in which this could be achieved would be by creating opportunities for positive interaction with parents. For example, schools could invite parents to events other than parent-teacher meetings. Events recognising non-academic achievement, such as a choral performance, an art display or a sports day were suggested by parents interviewed. However, post-primary schools must realise that entrenched attitudes are unlikely to be changed by one open day or a similar event. Promoting parental interest and involvement is a slow process, and initial disappointments (such as low parental turnout) are to be expected.

## Choosing Subjects

A small number of parents raised a problem in the context of children making post-primary school subject choices. They felt that children did not always understand what was involved and would benefit from more information prior to making their choices. They also believed that parents did not really understand the content of various subject areas, and were often of little use in helping their child to make a choice.

While most post-primary schools do indicate to parents and students what is involved in studying a subject, many only do so just before choices are to be made. Despite the good intentions of teachers, some parents simply do not understand their explanations. While it could no doubt be argued that any parent can ask a question if they do not understand, many would be afraid to ask a 'stupid' question in front of a large group.

It is recommended that prospective students and parents be provided with an overview of each subject area well in advance of having to select optional subjects. As primary to post-primary transfer programmes are now quite common, subject information could be provided during visits to primary schools, and on post-primary school open days. Whatever methods are used, parents should be able to discuss subject choices with their children, rather than making a quick decision on enrolment day.

## Difficulties with Specific Subject / Teacher

A number of students find that while they are generally happy in post-primary school, there is one class which is problematic. This may be because they cannot understand the subject, because they have a personality clash with the teacher, or any number of other reasons. Currently, the choice for students is to attend all classes or to attend none. As a result, while the majority continue to attend all classes, a small number begin to absent themselves from school to avoid one subject. Once they begin to miss days, they find that they start to have difficulties in subjects other than the one which was initially problematic.

An option suggested by parents was that students be allowed to drop one subject if a situation such as that described above arose. Students could be allowed to choose a supervised study period instead of attending the class. However, such a policy would involve considerable administrative effort on the part of schools, as well as a reduction in teaching hours to free teachers for supervision. Teachers might also

feel that, were such an option presented to students, large numbers would attempt to drop one class. While the proposal advanced by parents has positive aspects, it would prove difficult to implement.

Clearly, schools should improve procedures for dealing with cases where students are having difficulty with a particular class. For example, students should be able to consult with personnel such as the guidance counsellor or Year Head, without feeling that such consultation would create difficulty between them and the subject teacher. It should be possible to resolve most problems without recourse to dropping a subject.

## **Suggested Changes in the Department of Education and Science**

The previous section discussed some changes that individual schools could make to foster a more integrated service. However, much of what happens in schools is dictated by the Department of Education and Science. If it is Departmental policy that schools should promote integration, then policy and practice should support efforts by schools to promote integration.

### ***Centralised Nature of the Department of Education and Science***

Unlike many other Departments and statutory agencies, the Department of Education and Science is extremely centralised. While this no doubt has its advantages, it also creates difficulties for those attempting to develop a more integrated service at a local level. For example, the second ISP report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion stated "... for some Departments and Agencies, particularly the Department of Education and Science, implementing the ISP has caused particular difficulties given its highly centralised structures and the programme-based nature of its business." (2000, p.11). In particular, the ISP report indicated that the centralised nature of the Department had led to difficulties in establishing linkages with local service providers.

If government policy is moving towards greater co-operation between agencies at local level, then the structure of the Department of Education and Science would seem to pose some problems, and may need to be reviewed. At a minimum, the Inspectorate could play a greater role in the process of integration at local levels than it does at present.

### ***School's Interaction with Service Providers***

There were distinct differences between schools in the extent of their interaction with other service providers. Some of this can be attributed to factors such as the presence or absence of extra posts (HSCL co-ordinator, Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator), whether the principal was an administrative principal or not, the existence of a local network for service providers, or even the distance from the school to the premises of other service providers.

However, part of the differences between schools can be explained by attitudinal factors and a basic lack of understanding of how the teaching profession fits into the larger network of service provision, factors that can only be addressed by adequate training.

### **Teacher Training**

From interviews with service providers, it would appear that at least some schools are perceived to choose isolation from wider service provision. One service provider described schools as 'independent empires'. Others thought that teacher training practices had fostered the concept of the teacher and classroom as isolated from the outside world.

It is clear that while some schools have done much to promote more integrated provision, others have done little. Unfortunately, too much seems to depend on personalities, and not enough on Departmental policy. Given the way in which the role of teacher has been construed in the past, it is hardly surprising that many are nervous of adopting alternative approaches. Teachers used to working in isolation in a classroom, with no questioning of their judgement, might quite reasonably find a team approach to be a bit of a culture shock. With no real pressure on them to change their work practices, many do not.

While not every teacher in a school needs to have regular contact with external service providers, key personnel such as principals, HSCL co-ordinators, Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators, teacher counsellors, guidance and remedial teachers do. Current teacher training does not include modules on inter-agency co-operation, or on the working practices of other professionals (such as social workers or PHNs) with whom teachers might be expected to have contact. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that there are difficulties in achieving school participation in initiatives to promote

integration. Many teachers simply do not understand how other professionals work, and would have little work-related contact with other professions.

Mol an Óige, a Youthstart-funded project designed to redress the problem of early school leaving, recently developed a training course on inter-agency co-operation. Teachers who took part reported a much better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of other agencies, and increased contact (Mol an Óige, 1999). They felt more competent in engaging with other agencies, due to an increased understanding of how they operated, and what their requirements were.

Inservice training on inter-agency co-operation be offered, at a minimum, to all principals. It would be desirable that such inservice be organised on a local basis, ideally in conjunction with the local Health Board. The Education Centres and the Inspectorate may have roles to play in informing teachers of the benefits of a more integrated approach, and in facilitating efforts that schools may make.

### **Redefining the Role of Teacher**

Undoubtedly, the primary function of teachers is to teach. Yet there are many teachers who do not teach (administrative principals, HSCL co-ordinators), but who fill valuable roles in schools. One of the main problems identified by teachers was that while they were often 'expected' to do far more than teach, no time was allocated for these extra activities.

Within a new framework of more integrated service provision, liaising with service providers should not be seen as extra work for teachers, but as part of the core role definition for some. This is not to say that all teachers should spend their time attending case conferences, merely that some teachers need to have their role redefined to incorporate a broader range of tasks.

Certain key personnel need to have time freed from teaching activities to liaise with service providers, to meet with parents, and so on. In particular, teaching principals in primary schools would benefit from time away from classroom duties. How such free time is created can vary, and would depend on size and type of school.

### **HSCL Co-ordinator**

The Department of Education and Science's description of the role of HSCL co-ordinator makes reference to the wider community context, in response to which most co-ordinators in the four case study areas have established significant links with statutory and community agencies. These links were well regarded by other teachers

in the schools, many of whom commented that the HSCL co-ordinator was one of their main sources of information about local services and activities. Furthermore, the involvement of HSCL co-ordinators in local networks has, to some extent, helped to reduce the perception among service providers that schools are isolated from local service provision.

It is expected that by September 2000, all HSCL co-ordinators, with the exception of those in schools which only joined the scheme last year, will have established local committees of parents, service providers and teachers. These should no doubt prove to be beneficial. However, many areas already have formalised networks of service providers. Where a local umbrella body exists, the HSCL co-ordinator should play an active role in it.

While the HSCL co-ordinator is the main source of information about local service provision for many teachers, the case studies indicated that the extent to which co-ordinators keep teachers apprised of local service provision varies considerably. It is recommended that regular feedback to their teaching colleagues form part of the role of HSCL co-ordinator.

Perhaps the most significant part of the HSCL co-ordinator's job is to liaise with parents and to involve them in their children's education. However, the majority of parents are employed and cannot participate in courses for parents run during school hours, nor can they make themselves available for home visits during the day. Even the among the most marginalised of parents, many have found employment in the current economic boom. Therefore, large numbers of parents cannot meet HSCL co-ordinators during school hours.

This is not to say that these parents are not interested in their child's education, merely that a job specification that is predicated on the assumption of parents being available during working hours is outmoded. At present, some co-ordinators engage in evening activities with parents, but do so in their own time<sup>2</sup>. If HSCL co-ordinators are to achieve maximum effectiveness, then some flexibility in their working hours needs to be introduced.

Clearly, where possible, HSCL co-ordinators should match their hours to the school day. Only in cases where it is not possible to meet parents during the day, or where significant numbers who wish to attend a course cannot do so during the day,

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<sup>2</sup> Some evening activities are funded from other sources (such as the local Partnership), and in such cases the co-ordinator receives payment from the funding body for their involvement.

should evening work be considered. Further, working days would have to adhere to the school term. For example, flexibility should not extend to building up hours from evening courses to take a week off during term.

### **Breaking the Cycle Co-ordinator**

Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators are ideally placed to move forward the process of service integration in the rural schools within which they are located. Unfortunately, while liaising with external agencies is part of their role, it is an aspect that is not always recognised. Greater liaison with outside agencies might enhance the role. Given that the co-ordinator serves between four to six schools in a cluster, this would also simplify the work of other service providers, as they would have one contact person for a number of schools.

Perhaps the key aspect of the Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator's role is to facilitate parents' involvement in their children's education. However, problems have arisen with this aspect, as co-ordinators reported that some principals thought that too much time was being spent with parents. Furthermore, Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators have faced the same difficulties with time constraints as their HSCL counterparts. They are scheduled to work until 3 pm, whereas many parents are not available to meet until after that time. Weir and Ryan (2000) report that 88% of Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators agreed that lack of flexibility in working hours made it difficult for them to carry out their work in the most effective manner.

As with HSCL co-ordinators, some Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators have resorted to working in the evenings, in their own time, to meet parents. As recommended for HSCL co-ordinators, a limited amount of flexibility in working hours would help Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators to carry out this work more effectively.

### ***Relationship Between Primary and Post-Primary School***

There was almost universal agreement among those interviewed that the point at which many children begin to experience real difficulty is in making the transition from primary to post-primary school. Due to the manner in which the Irish education system is designed, the two school systems tend to operate relatively independently of each other. Consequently, while most, if not all, students are likely to find transferring to post-primary school a major culture shock, a small but significant number who

simply do not have the resources to deal with the change may gradually disengage from the schooling system, and eventually drop out.

### Sharing Pupil Information

There is no formal handover of information on pupils between primary and post-primary schools, although the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1993) recommended that schools share such information. In practice, many post-primary schools have at least some communication with their feeder primary schools about their incoming enrolment. For example, Eivers, Ryan and Brinkley (2000) found that primary schools passed on information to post-primary schools on just over 80% of their early school leaver sample. However, practice varied considerably by area, with information being passed on in only one third of cases in rural areas. Further, the quality and type of information varied considerably. As a result, although much information is available on a student by the time he or she enrolls in a post-primary school, many post-primary schools do not or cannot avail of these valuable data.

The Department of Education and Science could have greater input in this area. At a minimum, it should issue schools with guidelines about the type of information that should be handed over, and provide samples of what is needed. Ideally, such information handover should be a requirement for any pupil transferring to a post-primary, or indeed to another primary school.

### Transfer Programmes

Many primary and post-primary schools already engage in a considerable number of activities to ensure that transition between the schools is as painless as possible. For example, a transfer programme involving local primary and post-primary schools is relatively common. However, these are typically organised at a local level rather than at a system-wide level. While many are well run, schools could also benefit from greater input from the Department of Education and Science. The Department should play a greater role in defining models of best practice for transfer programmes, and disseminate information about such models to schools.

Although transfer programmes vary considerably, there are certain core elements of an effective programme. Visits to primary schools by post-primary teachers should form an essential component of any transfer programme, as should open days in post-primary schools, on which prospective pupils could visit the school with their parents, view the facilities and meet some of the teachers. An induction day

for first years at the start of the post-primary school year is another core element. A student mentor system, adopted effectively by some post-primary schools, could also form part of the transfer programme.

For schools in a more rural environment, it is essential that small rural feeder primary schools are included in transfer programmes, as in many ways, the culture shock of post-primary school is far greater for a pupil whose entire primary school might have the same numbers as one first year class.

### ***Tracking Pupils***

The maintenance of pupil data by schools needs to be radically overhauled. At present, there are no computerised records of primary school pupils while pupil records maintained by post-primary schools are infrequently updated and consequently, often inaccurate. Suggestions for both primary and post-primary schools are made below.

#### **Primary School**

The Department of Education and Science does not have computerised records containing details of individual pupils in primary schools. Schools send the Department data on how many pupils are enrolled in the school and at given grade levels, but do not identify individuals. The only records of individual pupils are maintained in school roll books, which are retained in the school itself. As a result, it is impossible to track the movement of pupils through the primary system, or indeed, in the transfer from primary to post-primary.

The Department of Education and Science is currently developing a primary pupil database, similar to that used for post-primary pupils. When complete, it should be possible to track a pupil from the primary to the post-primary database. More importantly, using the two systems, it should be possible to identify individual pupils who have not transferred from primary to post-primary school. The database should be centrally updated at least twice yearly, to facilitate prompt identification of pupils who 'disappear' from the system.

#### **Post-primary School**

Post-primary schools supply the Department of Education and Science with information on individual pupils for its Post-Primary Pupil Database. However, the data are based on the September enrolment and are updated only once a year. As a

result, identification at a national level of those who have dropped out generally happens much later than when the actual dropout occurs. For example, a student may attend until November, then drop out. However, the student will appear in the school's enrolment for that year and will not be removed until the next academic year.

Updating the database on an annual basis provides a distorted picture of the post-primary school population, as many who drop out are included as attending school. It is recommended that the database be updated twice yearly – once in September and once in January. In this way, a more realistic picture of school enrolments could be obtained, with earlier identification of dropouts.

### ***Staffing Levels and Special Posts***

The case studies indicated that the HSCL scheme was very successful, and very well thought of by parents. Indeed, distinct differences were noticeable between schools with and without the services of a HSCL co-ordinator. Consideration should be given to the needs of schools which do not have a co-ordinator, and provision made when warranted.

Provision of remedial teaching for rural primary school pupils was criticised. Teachers were critical of the fact that where remedial teachers are shared between schools, little account seems to be taken of the amount of travel time involved. In assigning caseloads to remedial teachers greater consideration should be given to the travel requirements of remedial teachers shared between schools.

Many parents complained that young people who dropped out of school before the Junior Certificate had never received any career guidance. Parents believed that had young people a better idea of their employment opportunities without qualifications, or if they had some idea of what opportunities were available to them with a Junior Certificate, they might have been persuaded to stay in school. Realistically, many young people would probably not stay in school because of career guidance, but it is possible that a minority might. Certainly, those who did drop out would have a better understanding of the routes open to them after leaving school. If this is so, then a case can be made for greater attention to educational and career guidance during Junior cycle.

Principals in some of the case study primary schools were engaged in full-time teaching duties, although the school was designated as disadvantaged. Principals in such schools would benefit from greater administrative support.

## **Suggested Changes to Health Boards**

Although the four case study areas were under the aegis of four different Health Boards, there was remarkable similarity in the views expressed about the Boards by those interviewed. In this section recommendations are made for all Health Boards, although some reference is also made to individual Boards. Although Health Boards offer a broad range of services, social workers and public health nurses (PHNs) were the two roles considered most salient by those interviewed.

### ***Social Workers***

It is apparent from the case studies that there is an acute shortage of Health Board-employed social workers. It is also apparent that the manner in which social workers are assigned to cases could be improved.

### **Staffing Levels**

Current staffing levels among social workers are clearly inadequate to meet demand. An almost universal refrain from teachers interviewed was that they experienced considerable delay when referring a child to the local Health Board. The trade union IMPACT recently (May, 2000) carried out a survey of unallocated cases of reported child abuse and neglect and vacant social worker posts in the ERHA. The survey found over 1,150 unallocated cases and 38 vacant posts (out of a total of 270 posts). Indeed, in Community Care Area 4 (Southwest Dublin) alone, where Jobstown is located, there were 280 unallocated cases of reported child abuse and neglect, and eight vacancies for social workers.

Clearly, such a situation not only results in an inadequate level of service, but also places heavy demands on those social workers who are employed in under-resourced areas. It is not unreasonable to suggest a link between poor staffing levels and the fact that there appears to be a high turnover of social workers working in these areas. There is little point in raising public awareness of child abuse, and advising professionals of their responsibility to report suspected cases, if the necessary supports to act upon such information are not in place.

The Department of Health and Children and the various Health Boards need to examine the staffing levels of social workers working in Community Services. If, as they appear to be, Health Boards are having difficulties in filling vacancies, they must look at the factors precipitating such a situation. Such an analysis should incorporate

some of the issues raised in a submission by social workers to the Expert Group on Various Health Professions. For example, the submission raised the point that Child Protection Services had shown a dramatic increase in resources required in recent years, which had not been matched by resources allocated. It was argued that, as a result, work had become more focussed on crisis intervention, to the detriment of preventative work. Also, many social workers were perceived to have unrealistic caseloads.

The Report of the Expert Group (2000) recommended that employers should ensure that adequate support facilities are provided for social work services (including clerical support, investment in information technology and proper communication systems). The Report also recommended a role for the National Social Work Qualification Board (NSWQB) in the provision of adequate training for both newly appointed and experienced social workers.

### Case Assignment

At present social workers within many areas are not assigned cases in a particular geographical subdivision of the area; rather, assignments are made on a caseload basis. This method of case allocation was criticised by some of those interviewed. Caseload allocation makes it difficult for school personnel and other service providers to establish good working relationships with social workers, and also makes it more difficult to know who to contact for information. As a prerequisite for service integration is knowing about other service providers, it could be argued that caseload allocation is a major obstacle to providing a more integrated service.

A geographically-based allocation of cases would not only allow social workers to build better relationships with service providers in an area, but would also allow them to develop a more comprehensive knowledge of available voluntary and community services. This, in turn, would enable them to offer a more effective service to their clients, and indeed, to build a better picture of individual clients and their needs.

Given the shortage of social workers, it is understandable that management should attempt to allocate cases in as equitable a manner as possible. From this perspective, allocation on a numbers basis seems fair. However, it is a short-term perspective, and serves to perpetuate the (apparently common) perception of social workers as dealing with specific issues only, and rarely looking at the client as a

whole. The same client is frequently dealt with by a number of social workers over a period of time, thereby reducing the possibility of a coherent approach.

It is recommended that social workers be assigned to small local areas, rather than assigned a set number of cases. Area-based assignments should not be based solely on population size, but should also take account of population characteristics, such as level of demand. Each school should be assigned a designated contact social worker, through whom all issues concerning the school's pupils would be channelled, and who would ideally deal with all of the school's enrolment.

### ***Public Health Nurses***

Public Health Nurses (PHNs) engage in a variety of tasks, as was summarised by the Review Committee on Public Health Nursing (1997). For example, their main client groups include ante-natal and post-natal mothers, infants, children, those with physical, sensory or learning disabilities, the elderly, and those who are chronically or acutely ill. In the context of dealing with at risk children, PHNs deliver ante-natal, post-natal and parent-craft classes, a home visiting service and developmental screening until the age of three years (or six years, where the need is indicated), child development clinics, and a school health service. Home visits to pre-school children comprise approximately 15% of the overall workload of a PHN.

There is little doubt that the PHN plays a central role in the delivery of services to young children. In particular, the home visiting service and post-natal care are vital means of establishing the health of both mother and child. However, there are a number of modifications to the role that could be made to improve the level of service provided. Suggestions made in this section are based on the case study findings but are also informed by the Report of The Commission on Nursing (1998).

### **Expanded Provision for Pre-school Children**

PHNs have a vital role to play in the care of pre-school children. Many of the teachers interviewed commented that by the time some children reached school, they were already at a significant disadvantage. The PHN service is sometimes the only agency that assesses the developmental health of a child from a disadvantaged background prior to enrolling in school. As such, they can offer invaluable help to parents, and identify and address developmental lags. Moreover, the home visiting service provides an opportunity to see the child and family in their natural environment, and

provides a better picture than could be obtained from, for example, a visit to a Health Centre or GP surgery.

It is recommended that the frequency with which PHNs meet pre-school children and their families be increased. Although more time-consuming than a clinic-based visit, home visits should form a significant proportion of all visits. Current practice tends to focus on visits during the first year (in particular, during the first few months of a child's life), with a lesser number of visits up to three years of age. While visits during the first few months are clearly important, regular contact should ideally be maintained until the child enrolls in school.

### More Flexibility in Working Hours

As noted by the Review Committee on Public Health Nursing, client needs have changed considerably in recent years. Many parents are employed, and are unable to meet PHNs during the day. A pilot scheme in operation in an EHB care area found that the introduction of flexitime for PHNs halved the number of "no access" visits (cited in "Public Health Nursing: A Review" 1997). Consequently, as recommended by the Committee, PHNs should have greater flexibility in their hours of work, to allow them to meet the needs of their clients more effectively.

It is also important to provide sufficient flexibility in the organisation of clinics in Health Centres to allow parents to initiate contact with the PHN service. Most clinics in the case study areas were open only in the morning for a brief period. As a result, any parent employed even on a part-time basis would find it difficult to attend if they worked mornings. At a minimum, some clinics in a given area should be held in the afternoon, thereby allowing access to those who work mornings.

### Staff Allocation

It was apparent from the case studies that many perceived the PHN service to be understaffed. Indeed, the Report of The Commission on Nursing (1998) indicated that a number of vacancies existed for PHNs, suggesting that basic staffing levels are not being maintained. If the Commission's recommendation that registration as a midwife no longer be a requirement for PHNs is accepted, this may go some way to easing the shortage of PHNs. However, simply filling current staff allocations may not be sufficient.

Staffing levels should also be adjusted to take demographic characteristics into account. Currently, PHNs are allocated to areas based on population size, with no

account taken of factors such as socioeconomic conditions or even of the amount of travel required. Factors that influence level of demand for service, as well as factors that influence service delivery, should be taken into consideration when allocating staffing levels.

### Public Perception of Role

While most people have heard of the PHN, not all are sure what the role entails. A Department of Health (1995) survey of public perceptions of PHNs found that while the service was well regarded, there was a lack of knowledge about what it entailed. With regard to home visits, many parents viewed them as a test that they have to pass rather than an opportunity to ask questions and get advice.

As well as providing for an increase in the number of home visits, the public perception of such visits needs to be changed. All expectant mothers should have easy access to information about the PHN service. Literature should emphasise the positive aspects of the role, making it clear to prospective parents that PHNs are primarily a source of advice and assistance, rather than an aloof figure who observes them to pass judgment on their fitness for parenthood.

### ***Health Boards and the Reporting of Child Abuse***

An issue arose in one case study area regarding maintaining the reporter's confidentiality in suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Staff at the SHB were criticised for revealing the names of reporting teachers, when teachers felt that they had supplied information in confidence. Across the four areas, there seemed to be distinct differences between the Health Boards (NEHB, SHB, WHB and the then-EHB) in how such cases were dealt with. Further investigation suggested that much is at the discretion of the local Health Board, and that there is an absence of a clear national policy on protecting the identity of reporters of potential child abuse.

The Freedom of Information Act established a legal right for people to access information held about them by public bodies. However, this right has to be balanced by the rights of the reporter and the question of whether the child will be negatively affected by the release of the reporter's name. Indeed, the Department of Health and Children (1999) pamphlet *Child Abuse! What can I do?* clearly states that "While the health boards cannot guarantee confidentiality, they will not normally reveal the names of members of the public who report suspected child abuse unless they have

permission to do so” (p.3). While such a policy does not guarantee confidentiality for reporters, it is implicit that efforts will be made to maintain it.

It would appear that the SHB does not make as strenuous an effort as do other Health Boards to maintain confidentiality of reporters. Unfortunately, given such a situation, it is likely that teachers may be less willing to refer cases to the SHB. At the very least, the SHB needs to have greater consultation with schools about the issue of confidentiality and the rights of reporters. However, the Department of Health and Children should also have a more clearly defined national policy, rather than leaving much to the interpretation of local Health Boards.

### ***Health Boards and Service Integration***

It is a fact that local Health Boards are the largest service providers dealing with at risk young people and their families. As such, they should have a central role to play in the integration of services to these clients. Unfortunately, this does not appear to happen in practice. A number of those interviewed believed that at management level, Health Boards simply did not view service integration as a priority.

While many individuals employed by Health Boards were praised, there was a perception that senior management saw integration as a side issue, and that liaising with other service providers was diverting time from core activities. Indeed, one interviewee believed that Health Board employees who tried to adopt a more holistic and co-ordinated approach were seen as less hard-working than their colleagues.

Rather than simply stating that Health Boards should integrate more into the network of service providers, it is necessary to first discover the reasons for their relative isolation. As mentioned earlier, understaffing is an important factor. It is difficult to find time to meet with other agencies when one is overwhelmed with the volume of work. However, the manner in which roles are defined within Health Boards may also be a problem. It would appear that integration is not seen as part of the job, but as an extra piece of work that may yield little outcome. Changes need to be made at the level of role definition before significant changes in practice will come about.

## **Suggested Changes in Funding Practices**

Funding has an enormous effect on service provision. At the most basic level, if funding is not available, services cannot operate, while inadequate funding means that only a limited service will be available. However, the manner in which funding is allocated also shapes provision. In this section, both amount and allocation of funding are discussed.

### ***Amount of Funding***

While a small number of organisations were relatively cash rich, most operated on very small budgets. Supplementing of core funding by seeking extra grants or engaging in fundraising activities was widespread. Many service providers reported that they spent a considerable amount of their time trying to access extra funds for their organisation, thereby diverting time from core activities. Some also complained that although funding bodies paid for staff, they did not consider administrative or support costs. For example, although funding might be supplied to employ a youth worker, no money would be allocated for a phone or a desk for the new employee.

It is understandable that funding bodies want to get value for money, and will try to ensure that services produce maximum value for minimum cost. However, if staff are spending a considerable percentage of their time trying to source extra funds to allow a service to function properly, than funders are engaging in false economy.

### ***Pilot Projects***

During the course of the case studies, it became apparent that a large number of projects in the various areas were short-term in nature, with funding allocated for between one and three years. Many were funded partially or wholly by the EU, and were specifically designed to develop innovative responses to issues such as early school leaving, which could then be mainstreamed by the Irish government.

Unfortunately, while there is no doubt that many good ideas and models for best practice have been developed, many of those interviewed felt that the government was unlikely to ever mainstream the majority of projects. Indeed, some complained that, even with its own pilot projects, the government preferred to replace them with further pilots. As a result, some of those interviewed felt slightly disheartened.

There is nothing inherently wrong with pilot projects. However, it can be problematic when they form the bulk of provision for an area. As a general

recommendation, short-term pilots should not be used as a replacement for a more coherent long-term strategy to address problems. Where projects have been found to be successful, they should be considered for mainstreaming.

### ***Short-term Funding***

Apart from pilot projects, short-term funding hampered many other service providers. Indeed, even some of those that would locally have been considered to be well-established were funded on a year-to-year basis, with no assurance of long-term status. The short-term nature of funding affected both the work of individual service providers and service provision in the area as a whole.

Individual service providers were unable to engage in strategic planning for their organisation, as they sometimes did not even know if they would exist in a few years. Some also found that it led to dissatisfaction among staff, as they were employed on a contract basis, with no real job security.

Planning at the level of the local area was also hampered by the short-term nature of funding. For example, the fact that the Partnerships were facing an uncertain future at the time of the case studies rather made a mockery of their role in area-based planning. Quite simply, it is very difficult to plan for an area if there is uncertainty about the future of key service providers.

### ***Type of Projects Funded***

There is a perception among some service providers that certain types of projects are more likely to be funded than others. For example, short-term projects dealing with a specific issue, with clearly defined aims are more likely to be funded than a project which has a broad focus, or could be described as bringing benefits to an area as a whole. For example, a homework club for 10 at risk children is more likely to find favour with funders than is a drop-in centre for all young people in an area.

Clearly, targeted measures can be very effective, particularly in areas where only a small percentage of the population could be defined as at risk. If funds are limited, it is logical that they should be directed at those whose need is greatest. Nonetheless, there are areas where a considerable proportion of the young population could be classified as at risk. Further, general area or context factors also play a role in disadvantage and need to be addressed. Thus, directing funds towards measures which

can improve quality of life in an area as a whole can be an effective use of funds. In severely disadvantaged areas, broad-based interventions as well as targeted interventions should be considered.

### ***Coherency of Funding***

Many teachers and service providers criticised the coherency of funding to an area. A prevalent perception was that various government Departments and EU funding sources allocated money to an area without any regard for existing services or the actual needs of an area. Funding was seen to be driven by political factors (described as “flavour of the month funding”) rather than by the actual needs of areas.

It would be preferable if the reality of an area, rather than just grantsmanship, influenced funding allocation. Local knowledge has a role to play in deciding how money should be best spent, and should be utilised. The recently formed County and City Development Boards (CDBs) could have a role to play at this level. As one of the main functions of the CDBs is the development of a strategy for the economic, social and cultural development of an area, it seems reasonable that an input into the allocation of funds to an area form part of its remit.

## **Structures and Supports at National Level**

This section analyses current structures and supports, and suggests improvements and modifications, where necessary.

### ***Local Level Co-ordination***

It is apparent that not only is greater co-ordination needed at national level, but also at local level. As the report of the Interdepartmental Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems commented “Whatever about the problems of policy co-ordination at the national level, the delivery of services and the shaping of objectives at ground level is where the absence of co-ordination is most felt. In Ireland these problems are probably more acutely felt than in other jurisdictions, due to the relatively narrow range of functions entrusted to the local government system.” (1999, p.32)

At present, there are many bodies involved in co-ordination of some sort at local level. For example, Partnership companies and LEADER II groups, local

authorities, Údarás na Gaeltachta, ISPs, Local Drugs Task Forces and local umbrella groups of service providers are all involved. All have proven effective in their own way. Unfortunately, their success has been somewhat limited by their slightly different targets and geographical areas, and the fact that they have not adequately consulted with each other about what they want and how it is that they intend to achieve their aims. What is lacking is a holistic picture of the needs and plans for the same area.

It is to be hoped that the recently formed City and County Development Boards (CDBs) will go some way to overcoming these problems. However, it is likely that they will face considerable difficulty, given the plethora of existing groups, many of which will no doubt feel that their toes are being stepped on. There is also a real fear that CDBs will duplicate much of the work already done by other agencies. While no one agency may have produced the perfect plan for an area, they may have developed, for example, a highly effective anti-drugs strategy. It is clear that CDBs should use the results of existing consultative processes, rather than replicate the processes.

The CDBs are designed to be as inclusive as possible, with representation from the social partners, community and voluntary groups, local development agencies and State agencies operating at local level. Unfortunately, this glosses over the fact that some State agencies do not have a significant local presence. In the context of this report, the absence of any Department of Education and Science presence at local level is particularly problematic. While the CDBs may have participation from VECs, this is not an adequate substitute for Department of Education and Science representation. It is recommended that the Department examine ways in which it might become a more active participant in CDBs, as they are likely to have a noticeable impact on the network of service provision within which schools are located.

### ***Co-ordination at Departmental Level***

As outlined in the section *Current Service Provision*, despite the many inter-Departmental initiatives to promote integration, the perception of those working on the ground is that integration is even less of a reality at a high level than it is at local level. It may be that it is too early to expect results from some of the inter-departmental committees. Nonetheless, the perception is that turf wars appear to exist at Departmental level as well as at ground level. This is not a problem peculiar to Ireland. The OECD (1996) commented that “It is perhaps in relation to

communication amongst ministries or departments that the reports indicated the greatest need for improvement in the development of efficient, open, reliable, frequently and regularly used channels” (p.65).

The lack of any one government Department with overall responsibility for young people was mentioned by a number of service providers as being partly responsible for the incoherence in policy. Also mentioned was the lack of an ‘official’ national youth body, with representation from voluntary and statutory agencies, and with sufficient influence to affect policy. While the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the co-ordinating body for voluntary youth organisations, some of those interviewed saw Foróige (the National Youth Development Organisation) or the National Youth Federation as having greater influence.

Perhaps the new CDBs can play a role in promoting a more coherent response by Departments. At a minimum, they can provide Departments with information on current provision in an area. This will go some way to reducing the amount of replication in provision found in some areas.

### ***Decentralisation of Some Services***

A common theme in the literature on service integration is the advantage of promoting a centralised location for services – the ‘Under One Roof’ concept promoted by the OECD, among others. Certainly, being able to access information and assistance on a variety of issues in the one location has advantages. However, at a higher level, overly centralised services can be problematic. Indeed, the framework document for the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (Ireland, 1997) identifies access to public services as “a vital issue for rural communities” (p.19).

It was particularly evident in the rural case study that many services were not available to local people, particularly health-related services. Not only did rural schools seem to be extremely poorly served by remedial teachers and school-based supports, they also appeared to have particular difficulty in accessing specialist help (such as psychological assessments, speech and language therapy, or advice on dyslexic pupils).

Centralisation of services is also a problem at a local level. For example, the Jobstown case study indicated that, for many services, Jobstown has tended to be treated as part of the wider Tallaght area. However, Jobstown undoubtedly has an adequate client base to justify more localised service provision. In the rural case study,

most services were centralised in Castlebar, the administrative centre of County Mayo. However, many could have been located in other areas around the county, at least on an occasional basis. There is much to recommend the centralisation of services within one facility. However, this should not mean that whole communities should be neglected simply because they do not live in the vicinity of such facilities.

### ***Location of Services in a Shared Facility***

Bearing in mind the caveats of the previous section, centralisation of services for an area in a shared facility has many advantages. The case studies indicated quite clearly that many service users were unaware of services available to them. Purpose-built facilities, shared by a number of service providers would not only heighten public awareness of services, but, from an end-user's point of view, would make it much clearer to know where to go for help. However, for shared facilities to be maximally effective, certain conditions would need to exist.

#### **Multiple Tenants**

Shared facilities should include participation from as wide a range of services as possible. Tenants should not be limited to larger agencies such as the local Health Board and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. Some facilities could be made available on an occasional basis to outside groups.

#### **Sharing of Information**

Sharing premises can, though does not always, lead to a more co-ordinated approach between service providers. Any service providers sharing premises would have to agree, as part of their terms of residence, to engage in information sharing and co-ordination with other occupiers. As a general rule, premises which create opportunities for casual interaction between service providers (such as shared kitchen and administration facilities) tend to lead to greater co-operation than one in which the various tenants are segregated from each other.

#### **Public Profile**

For providers to reach their target clients, people need to know they exist. It was apparent that the general level of advertising by service providers was poor. Many locals did not know they existed, let alone what they did. At a very basic level, any centralised facility should be well signposted, with a full list of all services clearly

posted outside. Services should also be advertised in multiple other ways, such as in local or parish newsletters, on local radio, in schools and shops. Apart from raising the profile of services, such advertising also makes them less intimidating to users.

### Resource Centre

Not only do service users need assistance, so do smaller service providers. Groups operating on tight (or sometimes non-existent) budgets generally have inadequate office and administrative facilities. Where possible, some office facilities in shared premises should be made available, for a small fee, to such groups. In particular, the occasional use of facilities such as a photocopier, meeting space or a training room can be invaluable to smaller agencies.

### School-based Centralised Provision

While bodies such as the OECD have favoured a school-based cluster of services, the case studies indicate that this may not be the best approach to take. Firstly, many parents simply do not want to approach schools. While it is quite right that steps should be taken to change this, it does not make sense to locate most services in a place where a sizeable minority will not feel comfortable accessing them. Secondly, even those who are comfortable in a school environment pointed out that they would often prefer if their children did not see them accessing services.

Thirdly, some parents thought that while school-based services might work for primary schools, older children would not like to see their parents in and out of the school. Fourthly, at least some service providers in all case studies expressed a fear that schools wanted to take control of provision. Locating services within the school would certainly not do much to assuage that fear. Finally, as the Muirhevna Mór case study highlighted, locating services around one school can mean that other schools are relatively neglected. Thus, while centralised service provision is a good idea, services should not be based in schools.

## Summary of Recommendations

This section provides a summary of the main recommendations that have already been described in more detail earlier in the chapter.

### ***Legislative Issues***

1. Staffing levels for the proposed EWOs should represent a significant increase on current provision (of SAOs).
2. The proposed threshold (of 11 days) for referral to an EWO is too low and should be raised.
3. EWOs should be assigned to schools, rather than to areas.
4. The JLO is not the most appropriate individual to enforce attendance, and his/her role in this should be taken over by EWOs.
5. Students who have completed their Junior Certificate examination should be allowed to leave school, even if they have not reached 16 years of age.
6. If the proposed Register of Young Persons in the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act is to be effective, training provision will need to be increased prior to enactment.
7. The prohibitions on the employment of young people under the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act should be enforced, and inspections should be carried out outside office hours.
8. Both the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts are inhibiting sharing of client information by service providers. Partnership companies or similar bodies should hold seminars explaining to service providers how the Acts impact upon their work practices.
9. The measures on underage drinking in the Intoxicating Liquor Bill 2000 should be enforced, with particular attention paid to off-licences and adults who purchase alcohol for minors.

### ***Suggested Changes at School Level***

1. Schools should make their facilities available for use by the wider community.
2. Schools that do not currently offer courses to parents should do so.

3. HSCL co-ordinators should continue to engage in a variety of strategies to increase parental involvement, particularly home visits, and should have extensive involvement in networks of local service providers.
4. Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators should not be used as remedial teachers.
5. More primary schools should employ classroom assistants, or use parents to assist in the classroom in a voluntary capacity.
6. Post-primary schools should assign designated contact teachers to parents.
7. Post-primary schools should at least occasionally have class-based parent-teacher meetings.
8. Schools, particularly post-primary schools, should create more opportunities for positive interaction with parents.
9. Students enrolling in post-primary school should be given more information about subject choices.

### ***Suggested Changes in the Department of Education and Science***

1. Inservice training on inter-agency co-operation should be offered to teachers.
2. The non-teaching aspect of the role of some teachers needs to be given due consideration in terms of freeing time for such activities.
3. Liaising with service providers needs to be recognised as one of the core functions of the role of Breaking the Cycle co-ordinators, as do home-school activities. Co-ordinators should be allowed a limited amount of flexibility in their working day.
4. Liaising with other service providers should be recognised as one of the main functions of the role of HSCL co-ordinator, as should providing regular feedback to their colleagues. Co-ordinators should be given a limited amount of flexibility in their working day.
5. The Department of Education and Science should issue schools with guidelines about the type of pupil information that should be passed from primary to post-primary schools.
6. The Department of Education and Science should define models of best practice for primary to post-primary transfer programmes, and disseminate this information to schools. Smaller rural schools should be fully included in any such programmes.

7. Pupil tracking systems should be in place in both primary and post-primary schools. The systems should be updated twice yearly.
8. In assigning caseloads to remedial teachers, greater consideration should be given to the travel requirements of remedial teachers shared between schools.
9. Consideration should be given to the needs of teaching principals in schools designated as disadvantaged, and to those in small rural schools.

### ***Suggested Changes to Health Boards***

1. Staffing levels for social workers should be increased, and efforts made to fill current post allocations. Cases should be assigned on an area-basis, and every school should have a designated contact social worker.
2. PHNs should increase the number of their visits to pre-school children, have greater flexibility in their working hours, and more positive publicity about their role.
3. Health Boards and the Department of Health and Children need a more clearly defined national policy on the reporting of child abuse, and on the protection of confidentiality of reporters of such abuse.
4. Management within the various Health Boards needs to prioritise service integration and to include it as part of the core role definition for key employees.

### ***Suggested Changes to Funding***

1. Pilot projects, although useful, should not replace long-term provision. Where a pilot has been found to be successful, it should be considered for mainstreaming.
2. Funding bodies should clarify future funding prospects for service providers as far in advance as is practicable. Current short-term budgets negatively affect long-term planning capacity.
3. In severely disadvantaged areas, broad-based interventions as well as targeted interventions should be considered.
4. Local knowledge should be used in the allocation of funds. The CDBs could play a role in this.

### ***Structures and Supports at National Level***

1. The CDBs should use existing results from consultative processes where possible, and avoid the duplication of the processes.
2. The Department of Education and Science should examine ways in which it could participate in CDBs.
3. Rural areas are inadequately served, particularly by health-related services. Consideration should be given to the development of models of provision more suited to the needs of rural populations.
4. In urban areas, locating service providers within the one purpose-built premises is something which should be aimed for. Such premises should accommodate a variety of service providers, have a high public profile, and should not be based in or around schools.

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