



An Fóram Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Sóisialta  
National Economic & Social Forum



An Rannán um Chuimsiú Sóisialta  
Social Inclusion Division

# Social Inclusion Forum

Wednesday  
4<sup>th</sup> November 2009

# Theme

Child Poverty: Children and their  
Families

## ***Irish Government Definition of 'poverty and social exclusion' 1997***

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

## CPA on Consistent Poverty

- having an income below 60% of the median and also experiencing *enforced deprivation*. This means being on a low income and not being able to afford basic necessities such as new clothes, not having the money to buy food such as meat or fish, not being able to heat your home, or having to go into debt to pay ordinary household bills.

# More.....

- **CPA on Relative Deprivation**
- This takes account of access to resources other than income.
- *The deprivation index* includes items and activities that are generally taken to be the norm in a particular society
- People who are denied, through lack of income, items or activities on this list are regarded as experiencing relative deprivation.

# CPA Deprivation index

- In Ireland, 11 basic items are used to construct the deprivation index:
  - Without heating at some stage in the last year
  - Unable to afford a morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight
  - Unable to afford two pairs of strong shoes
  - Unable to afford a roast once a week
  - Unable to afford a meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day
  - Unable to afford new (not second-hand) clothes
  - Unable to afford a warm waterproof coat
  - Unable to afford to keep the home adequately warm
  - Unable to afford to replace any worn out furniture
  - Unable to afford to have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month
  - Unable to afford to buy presents for family or friends at least once a year

# Poverty and Educational Disadvantage

- Strong link between poverty and educational disadvantage (OSI;CPA; ERC etc)
- Poverty alone is not a good indicator of Educational Disadvantage.
- Need to broaden the concept of poverty
- What are the characteristics of poverty which contribute to educational disadvantage?

# What should we look at?

- Is there a positive and supportive atmosphere around the child's life including accommodation, health, emotional and educational needs at home
- Is there a positive and supportive community response
- Is there a positive and supportive school response

# Disadvantaged children are more likely to be affected by .....

- Impact of drugs, alcohol, crime, violence, (absence of) discipline, sexual and physical abuse,
- Lower levels of self esteem, poorer hygiene, physical health, exercise, diet, mental health, less supportive relationships with friends, family, mentors.
- Security, accommodation, heating and lighting, personal space, suitable sleeping space
- lack of access to sport, literature (reading material), art, music, mental stimulus (including spiritual guidance)

# DES Support structures

- **DEIS**, the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion
- Family learning including literacy programmes, parenting programmes, childcare programmes
- NEWB – over 700 field staff
- Home school community links at primary, post primary and access levels.
- Visiting Teachers
- School completion programme

# School supports (DEIS Schools)

- Reduced PTR (for the most disadvantaged schools)
- Administrative Principals
- Extra capitation
- Literacy and numeracy supports (RR, MR,)
- Curricular choice (JCSP, LCA)
- Guidance support
- General learning support

# More....

- Planning supports
- Leadership development supports
- Teacher Training supports
- School meals
- School Books
- Psychological supports

# National targets

- Education Goals set in the Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 to 2011
- Goal 1 - Ensure that targeted pre-school education is provided to children from urban primary school communities covered by DEIS

# Education Targets (contd)

- **Goal 2:** Reduce the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties in primary schools serving disadvantaged communities. The target is to halve the proportion from the current 27%-30% to less than 15% by 2016;
- **Goal 3:** Work to ensure that the proportion of the population aged 20-24 completing upper second-level education or equivalent will exceed 90% by 2013;

# Why target DEIS schools

Education Act 1998:

- educational disadvantage means the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevents students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools

# ESRI/Bernardo's Report

## Investing in Education: Combating Educational Disadvantage

- Targeting resources on disadvantaged schools is not enough to counter educational inequality. Around half of disadvantaged young people attend non-DEIS (designated disadvantaged) schools; their needs must be a focus for policy.

# Targeting resources

- ESRI report P27 - The broader issue of allocating resources on a targeted basis provoked considerable response, both in favour of and against this mechanism.
- Those who argued for the need to target those with greatest levels of disadvantage ..... ***felt that schools with low levels of disadvantage have the capacity, within universal supports, to address the needs of disadvantaged students:***
- ***... it is only where the examples of disadvantage are highly concentrated that there is a need for supplementing what is mainstream.***

# Alternatively...

- Others felt that..... targeting on its own was a flawed mechanism for addressing the needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. One stakeholder quoted an OECD finding which indicated that “...targeted interventions are not doing anything for literacy across the system because they are too targeted”.
- Others were more vociferous in their views, stating: *The approach of targeting is insufficient politically ... it lets the State get off to a certain extent. If we are to deal with educational disadvantage, it has to be more than just the targeting of what we would see as severe concentrations of disadvantage ... There are students who have extremely poor standards of literacy and numeracy, and they are in every school in the country. And we are extremely concerned that the policy to deal with educational disadvantage does not take that into account.* (Stakeholder)

# Role of Schools

- It is recognised that the majority of schools include among their pupils, children with disadvantaged backgrounds. In general most schools address the individual needs of these children without recourse to additional targeted resources.
- Evidence has shown that disadvantage associated with poverty and social exclusion assumes a multiplier effect where the levels are highly concentrated in schools

# Multiplier effect

- *Part of the rationale for programmes targeted at schools derives from a belief that the disadvantage associated with poverty is aggravated when large proportions of pupils in a school are from poor backgrounds (the “social context” effect). (Educational Disadvantage Committee, 2003)*

## Half of all of disadvantaged children attend non DEIS schools

- DEIS accounts for 876 of 4035 schools in the state (22%)
- 50% of 'disadvantaged' children attend 22% of schools
- 50% of 'disadvantaged' children attend 78% of schools

# How did DES select DEIS schools

- Primary – unemployment; local authority accommodation; lone parents; Travellers; large families; free books
- Post primary - Medical card; Junior and Leaving Certificate retention; Junior Certificate exam results and Free Books

# Disadvantage in schools

- Where the variables were common among the children the schools were selected for DEIS.
- However, there is no evidence to support the view that a child with one or more of the characteristics is 'disadvantaged' *per se*....
- Rural poverty/disadvantage does not have the same impact as urban poverty/disadvantage
- There is also evidence of gender differences

# DES learning Supports under GAM

- Finally, it is important to say that there are a large number of children attending school who need additional support because they experience learning difficulties not necessarily associated with disadvantage.
- To meet their needs the Department provides general learning support to all State funded schools, whether or not they are in DEIS.
- Under the GAM additional teaching resources are provided to make schools inclusive and meet needs of pupils with high incidence learning difficulties without recourse to individual assessment
- including pupils with mild speech and language difficulties, pupils with mild social or emotional difficulties and pupils with mild co-ordination or attention control difficulties associated with identified conditions such as dyspraxia, ADD, ADHD

*EVD*