

chapter 11



Social Inclusion Priority

Social Inclusion Priority

Investment of some €49.6 billion, all funded by the Exchequer, will be made under the Social Inclusion Priority. The priority will consist of the following Programmes:

Social Inclusion Priority

Programme	All figures in € million current prices					
	Exchequer	PPP	Local Auth.	State Bodies	Other	Total
Children Programme	12,290	0	0	0	0	12,290
Working Age — Education	4,201	0	0	0	0	4,201
Working Age — Social & Econ. Particip.	1,160	0	0	0	0	1,160
Working age — Justice	300	0	0	0	0	300
Older People	9,725	0	0	0	0	9,725
People with Disabilities	19,250	0	0	0	0	19,250
Local & Community Dev.	1,862	0	0	0	0	1,862
Horizontal Prog.	848	0	0	0	0	848
Social Inclusion Total	49,636	0	0	0	0	49,636

High Level Goals for Social Inclusion

The Government is committed to a coherent strategy for social inclusion based on the life cycle approach set out in *Towards 2016*, with implementation supported by the NDP and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. While both Plans identify a wide range of targets and interventions, the Government has also identified a number of high level social inclusion goals to achieve the overall objective of reducing consistent poverty. Based on the lifecycle approach, these goals aim to:—

Children

- Ensure that targeted pre-school education is provided to children from urban primary school communities covered by the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan.
- 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.
- Work to ensure that the proportion of the population aged 20-24 completing upper second level education or equivalent will exceed 90% by 2013.

People of Working Age

- Introduce an active case management approach that will support those on long term social welfare into education, training and employment. The target is to support 50,000 such people, including lone parents and the long term unemployed, with an overall aim of reducing by 20% the number of

those whose total income is derived from long term social welfare payments by 2016. This target will be reviewed in the light of experience.

Older People

- Continue to increase investment in community care services for older people, including home care packages and enhanced day care services to support them to live independently in the community for as long as possible.

People with Disabilities

- Increase the employment of people with disabilities who do not have a difficulty in retaining a job. The immediate objective is to have an additional 7,000 of that cohort in employment by 2010. The longer term target is to raise the employment rate of people with disabilities from 37% to 45% by 2016 as measured by the Quarterly National Household Survey. The overall participation rate in education, training and employment will be increased to 50% by 2016. These targets will be reviewed in the light of experience and the availability of better data.

Communities

Housing

- Deliver high quality housing for those who cannot afford to meet their own housing needs and to underpin the building of sustainable communities. An important element will be the enhanced housing output reflected in *Towards 2016*, which will result in the accommodation needs of some 60,000 new households being addressed over the period 2007 to 2009. This will embrace meeting special housing needs (the homeless, Travellers, older people and people with disabilities).

Health

- Develop 500 primary care teams by 2011 which will improve access to services in the community with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of holders of medical cards.

Integration of Migrants

- Develop a strategy aimed at achieving the integration of newcomers in our society. As an initial action, resources for the provision of 550 teachers for language supports in the education sector will be provided by 2009 and access to other public services through translation of information and supports will be improved.

Objectives of Social Inclusion Priority

Building on and complementing these high level goals, the major objectives of the Social Inclusion Priority will be to:

- Address the shortages in supply of childcare places by the creation of an additional 50,000 places by 2010 with subsequent targets to be set after the 2010 Mid-Term Review of the Plan;
- Provide for the protection and care of children at risk;
- Provide support for recreational facilities for children;
- Help children with special needs in the education system to reach their full potential;
- Provide those from disadvantaged backgrounds with the education, skills and training necessary for employment and active participation in society;
- Assist people of working age to access further education and third level education as well as supporting those returning to work and education;
- Promote equity of access to Higher Education;

- Support the reintegration and rehabilitation of prisoners and offenders;
- Assist older persons to live independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible and to support the provision of quality residential care for older persons who are no longer able to live at home;
- Provide quality services and opportunities for people with disabilities;
- Assist communities, particularly disadvantaged communities, to identify and address challenges and problems in their area; and
- Develop a more inclusive, intercultural society in Ireland based on a commitment to inclusion.

The Challenge of Social Exclusion

The central theme of this Priority is combating poverty and social exclusion. Poverty and social exclusion are defined as:

“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”.

The strong performance of the Irish economy over the last decade has been an important factor in combating poverty and social exclusion. Firstly, the enormous growth in employment has made a very significant reduction in unemployment, facilitated increased participation of women in the labour force, reversed the previous phenomenon of involuntary emigration and produced a real increase in standards of living. Accessing and retaining employment has proved to be one of the most important routes out of poverty. Success in this area has been complemented by the introduction of the minimum wage, the reform of the tax system and the greater flexibility of the social welfare system aimed at supporting people into employment.

Secondly, the success of the economy has produced the resources to significantly augment public investment in tackling social inclusion. This has been manifested not only in the large increases in income of those dependent on social welfare payments but in the public investment made under the previous NDP in housing, health services, childcare, education inclusion, training, community development and social inclusion generally.

The Government, in 2002, set a target to reduce the numbers of those who are consistently poor to 2% and, if possible, to eliminate consistent poverty as then defined. A major discontinuity between the Living in Ireland Survey 2001, previously used for monitoring progress, and the introduction of the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC) in 2003 means that it is not possible to compare trends in consistent poverty in that period. However, the low levels of unemployment and the substantial resources devoted to Social Welfare and other social services strongly support the view that the downward trend continued since 1997. Since 2003, the new EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions is being used as the basis to monitor trends for the future. This indicates that the consistent poverty rate has reduced from 8.8% in 2003 to 7% in 2005. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion will contain the Governments revised targets for addressing poverty and social exclusion.

However, despite unprecedented economic performance over the last decade and an overall increase in living standards for everyone, some groups and communities continue to experience poverty and social exclusion. These include: households headed by a person working in the home, particularly lone parents; retired persons; people with disabilities; and those who are unemployed, although the number in this latter

group has declined significantly. Certain minority groups, such as Travellers, face particular problems, while newcomers in Irish society present new challenges to achieving social cohesion.

Despite the fact that all groups in society have benefited from economic growth, the evidence shows that those in employment, particularly those in two-income households, have achieved most while households headed by a person outside the labour force have not gained to the same degree. These groups require particularly focussed efforts if they are to be removed from this situation. The problems faced by some persons in these groups are multi-dimensional in nature and require integrated multi-policy responses across a range of policy areas. The adoption of the lifecycle approach in this Plan will assist the development of such policies.

The Strategic Framework for Tackling Social Exclusion

Ireland first adopted a strategic approach to combating poverty with the publication of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) in 1997. This process was further developed in 2001 when Ireland produced its first National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion as part of an EU-wide effort. These processes recognise the multi-faceted nature of poverty and the need for a coordinated multi-policy response. The Government emphasised this strategic approach to combating poverty when it made social inclusion a key horizontal element of the NDP 2000-2006. That Plan provided for substantial investment in social infrastructure (such as housing and childcare), capacity building in relation to employment and training, educational inclusion and community development.

The strategic framework for social inclusion will now be significantly enhanced. For the first time, the numerous processes, that have heretofore made up the overall strategy for promoting social inclusion, will be brought together in an integrated framework that will ensure that economic and social development go hand in hand. This will be achieved through streamlining the goals and implementation of several key processes:

- the new partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*;
- the recent National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NSSPI), submitted to the EU in September 2006;
- the new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) which will be published shortly; and
- this Social Inclusion Priority chapter and other important elements of the NDP (2007-2013).

This strategic framework will help to create more coherent and integrated structures and facilitate reporting and monitoring across the wide spectrum of government activity in the area of social inclusion.

The framework for tackling the challenges outlined above has largely been agreed in the context of *Towards 2016*. This agreement, negotiated and ratified by all social partners, sets out a shared overall goal to realise a new vision for Irish society of which the following elements are of particular relevance to social inclusion by:

- Nurturing the complementary relationship between social policy and economic prosperity;
- Re-inventing and repositioning Ireland's social policies; and
- Deepening capabilities, achieving higher social and economic participation rates and more successfully handling diversity including immigration.

From a social policy perspective, the most significant feature of the new agreement is the development of the lifecycle approach, which offers a comprehensive framework for driving forward a streamlined, cross-cutting and visible approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion, and improving health outcomes throughout the lifecycle. The key lifecycle stages are identified as: *Children; People of Working Age; Older*

People and People with Disabilities. The agreed 10 year strategic vision and key long-term goals for each stage of the lifecycle, together with agreed priority actions for the initial phase of the agreement, form the basis for the measures outlined below.

Delivery within the Framework for Tackling Social Exclusion

The strategic framework referred to above will help to create more coherent and integrated structures and facilitate reporting and monitoring across the wide spectrum of government activity in the area of social inclusion. Delivery of the priority goals for social inclusion will be achieved by strengthening administration through greater coordination and integration of procedures across Government at national and local levels, as well as between these levels. It will include regular monitoring and evaluation of progress, and consultation with stakeholders on performance. It will require service delivery that is accessible, flexible and focused on the needs of the individual.

This focus on delivery requires an openness to change, including closing or adapting programmes when they are not delivering results, requiring Departments and organisations to work together effectively and overcome traditional barriers to co-operation; service delivery must be more accessible, flexible and focused on the needs of the individual. Given the critical importance to society of promoting social inclusion, it is important from the viewpoint of the target audience that the measures in place are working. This is obviously also important from a Value for Money standpoint. An important element of this will be the development of outcome indicators for the wide range of programmes set out in this Priority. Particular care will also be exercised to avoid duplication of effort and to keep administrative costs to the minimum so that resources can be maximised directly to the assistance of the socially excluded.

The Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) has been given responsibility for co-ordinating a single annual social inclusion report. This report, which aims to streamline existing reporting processes, will review progress at each stage of the lifecycle, following the framework of *Towards 2016*. It will encompass the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, Ireland's social inclusion input to the NSSPI 2006-2008 and the social inclusion aspects of this NDP. In the case of the latter it will feed into the overall NDP reporting and monitoring arrangements.

Implementing social inclusion measures requires actions to be taken at local level. The RAPID (Revitalisation of Areas by Planning Investment and Development) programme provides a mechanism by which Exchequer funding programmes can prioritise investment in 46 of the most disadvantaged urban and provincial areas. Social inclusion issues are also incorporated in the work of local authorities through their Corporate Plans and through their various programme groups, including planning, housing and infrastructural provision. *Towards 2016* also contains a commitment to the establishment of social inclusion units in half of all county/city local authorities by the end of 2008.

The involvement of local interests, particularly local authorities and County/City Development Boards, will be key elements in ensuring the delivery of social inclusion across all sectors of society. Local authorities are expanding their role in the promotion of social capital, active citizenship and community development in line with the general competence of local government to promote the interests of the community. This will be done in partnership with sectoral, community and other relevant interests utilising the County/City Development Boards (CDBs) and Strategic Policy Committees as newer participative democratic structures, which complement the traditional representative role of local government.

Specific actions on achieving greater co-ordination and strengthened delivery will include:

- The Office for the Minister for Children will provide a leadership role in improving outcomes for children. Drawing on the experience of the Childhood Development Initiatives, the Children Services Committees and the County Children's Committees, integration of services will be improved around the needs of individual children and families through new and enhanced local structures;

- To ensure a better integration of activation, income and other supports to assist people into employment, a new high-level group will be established. This will be composed of the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Social and Family Affairs, FÁS and other relevant agencies as required. This group will report to the relevant Cabinet Committee regarding progress in delivering the targets set out in this Plan and other related issues;
- The Local Government Social Inclusion Group (LGSISG) will be developed further to support the linkages between the national and local level and, in this context, the Group will report to the Cabinet Committee as appropriate;
- The County/City Development Board structure as the key coordinating mechanism for public service delivery (including social inclusion activities) at local level and the means of ensuring more joined-up delivery of social inclusion programmes on the ground, will be developed and strengthened to support its role in coordinating public service delivery at local level. In this context, the extension of Social Inclusion Units to half of the city and county councils by end 2008 will support this approach;
- A continuing focus at national and local level on co-ordinated delivery of services and supports to improve outcomes for the Traveller Community;
- The delivery of the RAPID programme, which aims to direct State assistance towards improving quality of life and access to opportunities for communities in the most disadvantaged urban areas throughout the State, will be strengthened and enhanced; and
- The development of new mechanisms, at national and local level, to improve coordination and delivery of housing, and care services for older people and people with disabilities.

The NDP and Tackling Social Exclusion

Human Capital Priority

Given the recognised importance of employment as the key factor in people exiting poverty, the measures outlined in the Human Capital Priority (Chapter 5) will have a fundamental impact on the lives and opportunities of those who are in low skilled jobs and those who are furthest from the labour market. These measures, together with the programmes outlined in this chapter, can make a real and decisive impact on families and their children who are living in poverty.

Social Infrastructure Priority

The Social Infrastructure Priority (Chapter 6) will also play a key role in promoting social inclusion and improving the quality of life of people who are disadvantaged economically or socially. In particular, the provision of local authority and voluntary housing, an integrated response to homelessness, the provision and improvement of Traveller accommodation, improvements to the existing local authority rented stock, improvements in the housing conditions of the most vulnerable (including older people, people with a disability and others) and the provision of affordable housing form a comprehensive range of targeted anti-poverty policies and programmes.

This Priority also includes details of investment in health infrastructure. Good health is a prerequisite for participation in the social and economic life of society and the Government has recognised access to health services as an important aspect of social inclusion. There is a well observed relationship in Ireland and internationally between health status and income levels, especially for the most disadvantaged groups in society. Additionally, there are a range of vulnerable groups for whom the health and personal social services are an essential ingredient to improve their quality of life and prevent deterioration in their circumstances. These groups include children in need of care and protection; persons with disabilities, including those with mental illness; people, including young people, who are homeless; drug users; and older people. The potential improvement in health status arising from the NDP investment can contribute to greater participation by disadvantaged groups in education and in the labour force thus helping to break the cycle of disadvantage and poor health over the longer term.

Access to other services, including play and recreation facilities, sports, heritage and community infrastructure programmes are all important measures that will contribute to the general well being of communities.

Transfer Payments

Social welfare payments are clearly central to the promotion of social inclusion. Funding for these payments is not included in the NDP as it is provided annually as part of the Estimates and Budget process. In 2007, it is estimated that some €15.3 billion will be expended on these payments.

The Social Inclusion Priority: Incorporating the Lifecycle Approach

The lifecycle approach agreed under *Towards 2016* provides a framework within which the key social inclusion challenges can be addressed. It adopts the perspective of the individual as the centrepiece of social development and requires the development of policy in an integrated manner. Achieving such an approach is ambitious and poses major challenges in terms of resources, infrastructure and inter-agency delivery at both national and local level. The social partners have acknowledged that flexibility and learning will inform the overall effort. The social partners are also committed to striking the appropriate balance between prioritising specific vulnerable groups and delivering desirable social outcomes for all groups of the lifecycle.

Key programmes under the Social Inclusion Priority across the four key stages of the lifecycle are outlined in this chapter. Also detailed are a number of programmes and initiatives which will impact broadly across the lifecycle stages. These include supports for health, community development, gender equality and specific groups like immigrants and Travellers.

Children Programme

Some €12.3 billion will be invested under the Children Programme over the period of the Plan. The Programme will comprise the following Sub-Programmes:

- National Childcare Investment Sub-Programme — €1,336 million;
- National Children's Strategy Sub-Programme — €60 million;
- Child Welfare and Protection Sub-Programme — €3,444 million;
- DEIS and Early Education Sub-Programme — €361 million;
- Special Needs Sub-Programme — €5,356 million;
- Traveller Education Sub-Programme — €511 million;
- Youthreach Sub-Programme — €574 million;
- Youth Justice Sub-Programme — €224 million; and
- Youth Sector Sub-Programme — €424 million.

Strategic Context

The vision for children as outlined in *Towards 2016* encompasses: respect for young citizens; cherishing and supporting children by family and society at large; assisting children to enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential.

The importance of children in the context of public policy was recognised by the establishment of the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) in 2005. This initiative brought together a range of policy matters related to children under a single umbrella. The focus of the OMC will be on harmonising policy issues and

maximising the use of resources allocated in areas such as early childhood care and education, youth justice, child welfare and protection, participation, research and cross-cutting initiatives.

Any investment framework with children as its centre and social inclusion as its overall objective must include education. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion identifies education as central to addressing poverty. Equipping people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with skills and training will help them access employment and thereby participate actively in the economy and society.

The DEIS and Early Education, Special Needs, Traveller Education, Youthreach and Language Support Sub-Programmes will encompass the endeavours of the educational sector to promote social inclusion, employing a variety of interventions to tackle diverse sectors of social disadvantage. The Sub-Programmes will focus on the needs of children from disadvantaged communities and provide support for schools operating in disadvantaged areas. They will embrace the concept of lifelong education and help those with educational deficits and needs to access the education and training they need. They will continue the investment of recent years in assisting children with special needs in schools and will support students with the costs of study in the higher education system on a means tested basis as heretofore. There will be a particular focus on the educational needs of the Traveller Community.

The Youthreach Sub-Programme will involve training, education, further education/early adult education for those who are alienated from the formal system, i.e. economically disadvantaged, socially vulnerable and frequently challenging youth. The Youth Sector Sub-Programme will continue to complement the formal education and training processes and systems. Finally, the Sub-Programme will also make provision for language support teachers to assist children from a non-English speaking background (mainly the children of immigrants from EU countries and the children of refugees from outside the EU).

National Childcare Investment Sub-Programme

Some €1.3 billion will be invested under the National Childcare Investment Sub-Programme over the period of the Plan. Childcare has become a central pillar in a diverse range of Government strategies aimed at tackling social and economic issues, including unemployment, gender equality, family support, educational disadvantage and social inclusion. The demand for childcare has increased strongly over recent years. Although there has been a very substantial increase in the number of places provided, childcare is still characterised by significant supply shortages in some areas. The investment made under the Plan will seek to address these deficits.

Future development of childcare supports will be informed by the following factors:

- *Child-Centred Approach*: In 2000, the National Children's Strategy set out, for the first time, a vision for children living in Ireland which recognises the valuable contribution they can make to their own communities and wider society.
- *Access to Services*: Childcare patterns in Ireland are both complex and diverse. It will be critical to address any gaps in services for children in the 3 to 4 years age group and children of school going age.
- *Affordability*: The development of childcare capacity through grant support for both private and community facilities will provide a wider range of options for parents and create a more competitive market environment by supporting an increase in the number of places.
- *Quality Childcare Services*: Quality Services are considered to be essential to the development of effective early childhood care and education in Ireland.

The National Childcare Investment Sub-Programme, which will run initially until 2010, aims to provide quality childcare supports and services grounded in an understanding of local needs. The Sub-Programme will

also be an important element in the overall social inclusion effort to remove barriers to employment, education or training and to tackle educational disadvantage. The Sub-Programme will involve:

- The creation of an additional 50,000 new childcare places by 2010, of which approximately 22,000 will be in the private sector and 28,000 in the community and voluntary sector;
- Projects funded under the Sub-Programme will significantly address gaps in service provision for two key groups:
 - Approximately 20% of these new places will be for the 3 to 4 years age group and will provide an early childhood care and education focus; and
 - An additional 10% of places will be for children of school going age outside of usual school times.
- Where appropriate, childcare services supported by the National Childcare Investment Sub-Programme will be co-ordinated with and support early learning services for pre-school children introduced under DEIS.
- Projects will focus primarily on the needs and development of the child. In this regard the staff training and qualifications, the adult to child ratios and the physical environment and programmes will all be important.
- In general projects will be expected to demonstrate that they will be sustainable over the medium to long term. Projects eligible for a current subvention will be required to adopt measures to achieve sustainability.
- Projects will be expected to be integrated or linked with complementary services or programmes in the locality and closely aligned with important Government policies and initiatives in the sphere of childcare.
- The Sub-Programme is also expected to contribute to the creation of up to 8,000 jobs for people working directly with children and a further 1,200 for people employed in ancillary roles.

Prior to the conclusion of the National Childcare Investment Sub-Programme at the end of 2010, progress in addressing childcare needs will be reviewed to ensure that measures are appropriate to emerging needs. This process will take place in tandem with the Mid-Term Review of the NDP and will inform any subsequent policy response. This direct investment in Childcare will be complemented by the Early Childcare Supplement introduced in Budget 2006 as part of a range of measures to support parents of children aged 6 years and under.

National Children's Strategy Sub-Programme

The National Children's Strategy Sub-Programme will invest some €60 million over the next seven years in advancing the goals of the Government's National Children's Strategy. Launched in 2000, the Strategy identified three key goals in advancing the interests and well-being of children: (i) participation; (ii) research; and (iii) improved services and supports (play and recreation).

Participation

The development and improvement of structures to enable participation in decision-making by children and young people will continue. Support will be available for Dáil na nÓg, the 34 Comhairle na nÓg at county level and the Children/Young People's Forum, to allow children the opportunity and the right to make known their views and so contribute towards policies and actions that affect them. Funding will also be available to support the Dáil na nÓg Facilities Website.

Research

The development of policies with regard to children needs to be evidence-based and take account of the most up-to-date information about children's requirements. Funding will, therefore, be available under this Sub-Programme for research activities. The biggest project will be the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland, which will be concluded over the period of the Plan. This Study is now underway and the first data sweep for nine year old children will take place in early 2007. A number of other studies have been commissioned to date under the Children's Research Programme through to 2008. Children's research will also benefit from a research scholarship scheme and a research placement scheme operated through the Office of the Minister for Children.

Improved Service and Supports — Play and Recreation

Recreation, sport and physical activity are recognised as important for the balanced and healthy development of children. *“Ready, Steady, Play: A National Play Policy”*, which was published in 2004, and the National Recreation Policy provide a framework for the development of public play and recreation facilities in Ireland, with the overall aim of ensuring that children have access to a range of quality play and recreation opportunities to enrich their childhood. Funding will be directed towards the development of play and recreation infrastructure to include:

- New and redeveloped local authority play and recreation facilities (including playgrounds and multi-use games areas);
- Sports and arts programmes targeting children and young people; and
- Improved opportunities for play, recreation and sports facilities within schools.

Child Welfare and Protection Sub-Programme

The Office of the Minister for Children is currently in the process of developing a national policy for children's services. The purpose of such a policy is to set out a long term vision for services for children provided through the Office of the Minister for Children and the Department of Health and Children by the Health Service Executive (HSE). This national policy will have at its core the principles of family support while at the same time be based on existing policies and data. It is anticipated that this policy will be published during the second quarter of 2007.

The Child Welfare and Protection Sub-Programme will be a key element of this overall policy and will invest some €3.4 billion in the protection and care of children who are at risk. Child welfare and protection policy, which is delivered through the HSE, has refocused from providing general and specialist residential care for children, who have been separated from their parents, to providing localised family support to maintain the child in the family home and to remove the risk of abuse or neglect in that setting through appropriate and timely interventions and service delivery. These kinds of services will work most effectively if they can be integrated with the work of a range of statutory providers delivering services locally under a range of other Government programmes and initiatives. *Towards 2016* sets out the new structures to deliver on commitments for children referred to above. These structures and associated processes will be the key delivery engine for a range of outcomes for children across a range of services.

There is a need for a continued focus on specific areas of child protection: children in care, special care and high support; specific categories of youth homelessness; and unaccompanied minors.

Following the HSE establishment of a national managerial structure for High Support Units and Special Care Units, the HSE will examine residential facilities with a view to better aligning their function to a nationally operated system, thereby serving changing policy objectives following on from the establishment of the Office of the Minister for Children.

Over the period of the Plan, the following will take place under this Sub-Programme:

- The health sector, in partnership with the new Irish Youth Justice Service, will support the accelerated implementation of the Children Act 2001;
- The development and delivery of Family Support Initiatives and services on the basis of evidence-based needs assessment, including the expansion of programmes such as the Teen Parent Support Programme;
- The child protection service will be enhanced in line with policy and legislative requirements; these include the further implementation of the Children Act, 2001, and the implementation and development by the HSE of national policies on assessment and early intervention;
- The HSE will establish a group to examine the area of special foster care and develop pilot special foster care projects; standards relating to special foster care are set out in the National Standards for Foster Care; the provision of foster care would enable children, who due to their challenging behaviour would otherwise be placed in high support residential care, to be placed in a family setting;
- The Social Services Inspectorate will be established on a statutory basis with an expanded role;
- The extent of the implementation of the Youth Homelessness Strategy is to be established in consultation with the key stakeholders and a programme of action for the future development of youth homelessness services to be determined in this context;
- Revised Pre-School Services Regulations will be introduced; the increase in pre-school places provided by the Equal Opportunities Child Care Programme and the enhanced regulations will require the recruitment of significantly increased numbers of inspectors and the provision of support facilities for them;
- The Pre-School Services Inspectorate will give effect to the revised regulations taking account of the expansion of pre-school services;
- HSE Pre-School administrative systems and training of Pre-School Inspectors will be improved and the inspection system standardised;
- Standardised Pre-School Inspection Reports will be made publicly available;
- Services for unaccompanied minors will continue to be enhanced to meet the required standards; and
- The HSE will develop a programme of refurbishment and possible redesignation of existing facilities for child residential care with a view to realising maximum efficiencies and effectiveness in facilities which are in need of refurbishment. One important element of this will be the development of the Clonmel facility recently transferred from the Department of Education and Science.

DEIS and Early Education Sub-Programme

Some €361 million will be available under the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools) and Early Education Sub-Programme to combat disadvantage in primary and secondary schools serving communities with concentrated levels of disadvantage. This DEIS provision is in addition to existing annual educational disadvantage funding for primary and post primary of some €140 million. It is also additional to some €40 million per annum included for primary and post primary education for Travellers which is provided for in the separate Traveller Education Sub-Programme. The DEIS action plan for educational inclusion will address the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school to completion of upper second level education (3 to 18 years). The DEIS Plan is motivated by a desire to ensure that no-one is left behind, that every child gets the supports that he or she needs to reach his or her full potential and that a culture of high expectations is at the centre of our actions locally and

nationally. The main objective of DEIS will be to build on the success of existing measures while tackling the identified weaknesses that have served to reduce their overall effectiveness by:

- Putting in place a standardised system for identifying, and regularly reviewing levels of disadvantage in schools;
- Establishing a single integrated programme of supports (School Support Programme (SSP)) which will bring together, and build upon, a number of pre-existing interventions for schools and school clusters/communities with concentrated levels of disadvantage; and
- Providing extra targeted support for those in schools serving the most disadvantaged communities.

The overall objective of the Sub-Programme will be achieved by the following measures:—

- Targeted class size reductions to 20:1 in junior classes and 24:1 in senior classes in urban primary schools serving communities with the highest concentrations of disadvantage;
- Targeted pre-school provision in urban primary school communities;
- Additional financial supports for all schools in the programme;
- Increased investment in measures aimed at enhancing literacy and numeracy attainment levels for schools in the programme, including a family literacy initiative, with a key focus on early intervention;
- Additional supports for the professional development of principals and school staff;
- Extension of Home/School/Community Liaison and School Completion Programme services to all urban primary and second-level schools in the School Support Programme;
- Improved arrangements for measuring progress and outcomes at both national and local level; and
- Extension of the Schools Meals Programme to any of the schools included in the School Support Programme that do not already avail of it.

The Sub-Programme will also support on an ongoing basis the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) in its mission to develop and coordinate early childhood education and to advise the Department on policy issues in this area. The objectives of the Centre over the period of the Plan will aim:

- To develop a quality framework for early childhood education including a quality in education (QE) mark for providers in the sector; and
- To develop targeted interventions on a pilot basis for children who are educationally disadvantaged and children with special needs.

Special Needs Sub-Programme

This Sub-Programme will amount to almost €5.4 billion over the period of the Plan.

The establishment of the National Council for Special Education with some 80 Special Educational Needs Organisers to co-ordinate the provision of service and allocation of resources to schools provides the capacity for enhanced delivery of service to pupils with special needs, their parents and schools. This Sub-Programme will operate in the context of the implementation of the Education for persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and the Disability Act 2005.

The objective of the Sub-Programme is to ensure that all young people can access the educational system and receive adequate education and related qualifications to support their full participation in the economy, in employment and in society. The high level target is to create an environment where every child with special needs has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Enormous progress has been made over the past number of years in relation to increasing the numbers of teachers in our schools who are specifically dedicated to providing education for children with special educational needs. The numbers of teachers working directly with children with special needs has increased from under 1,500 in 1998 to 5,566 at present at primary level. The number of Special Needs Assistants has increased from 300 in 1998 to 6,930 whole time equivalents at present at primary level. At post primary level, the number of teachers in place to support pupils with special educational needs in the current school year is 1,854 compared to a figure of 200 in 1998. In addition, there are 534 learning support teachers and approximately 1,365 Special Needs Assistants in second level schools in 2006/07.

The precise model of provision being made available will continue to depend on the assessed needs of the students involved. Some students are capable of attending ordinary classes on a fully integrated basis with additional teacher and/or special needs assistant support. In other cases, placement in a special class in the school may be the more appropriate response. Such special classes operate at significantly reduced pupil/teacher ratios. Students in these special classes may be facilitated in attending ordinary classes on an integrated basis wherever possible.

Traveller Education Sub-Programme

€511 million is available under this Sub-Programme over the period of the Plan. In May 2006 the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science published a report “Survey of Traveller Education Provision”. This report highlights the significant progress in Travellers’ access to and participation in primary and post-primary education over the last number of years. The report does, however, reveal serious levels of low achievement and problems with absenteeism among many Traveller pupils.

In November 2006, the Minister for Education and Science launched the “Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy”. This report, prepared by the Advisory Committee on Traveller Education with representation from the Education Disadvantage Committee, covers aspects of Traveller education from pre-school right through to further and higher education within a lifelong learning context. The report sets out current provision noting that Travellers enrolled in both primary and post-primary are entitled to the same education, learning support and resource support in response to identified educational need as all pupils. Over €55 million was spent on Traveller specific initiatives in education in 2004/05 which is over and above expenditure on mainstream education.

The Minister for Education and Science having considered the two reports has established a Co-ordinating Committee to implement most of the recommendations in the November report, mindful of the findings of the May report.

A three-phased approach will be taken to address the recommendations in the November report. This three phased approach will:

- Prioritise and address a number of recommendations, at an early date;
- Aim to implement most of the recommendations within a three to five year period; and
- Review some of the recommendations to determine how best the Department can implement them.

Thus, most of the funding for Traveller education under this Sub-Programme will be available in the short to medium-term to cater for the educational needs of Traveller pupils. During the lifespan of the Plan it is intended to phase out, in a sensitive way, current segregated provision at primary and post-primary and have all Travellers integrated into mainstream primary and post-primary schools. It is also proposed that pre-schools for Travellers over a longer period be integrated with current and new pre-schools so that young Travellers may experience an inclusive integrated education from the start of their education.

Youthreach Sub-Programme

Some €574 million will be available over the period of the Plan for the Youthreach Sub-Programme. The Youthreach Sub-Programme will involve, as in previous NDPs, training, education, further education/early adult education for those who are alienated from the formal system, i.e. economically disadvantaged, socially vulnerable and frequently challenging youth. Its overarching objective will be to help participants to achieve independence, sustainability and employability, to build self-esteem and communications skills and to become active citizens and lifelong learners. Particular attention will be given to addressing the special needs of the young people participating in the Sub-Programme. Future developments in Youthreach programmes will be informed by the evaluation being carried out by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science and also by the findings of the expenditure review of Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres.

Youth Justice Sub-Programme

Some €224 million will be available under the Youth Justice Sub-Programme to strengthen the youth justice system. Policy will be informed by the Children Act 2001 which established a modern youth justice system. The policy objective of the Act is the rehabilitation of child offenders coupled with diversion away from crime. This is to be achieved by spreading responsibility and supports across the child, the parent or guardian, the criminal justice agencies and the health services. Accordingly, the Youth Justice Sub-Programme will support two principal endeavours: (i) the implementation of community sanctions; and (ii) Garda Youth Diversion Projects.

Implementation of Community Sanctions

The objective will be to reduce the number of children sentenced to detention by the courts and reduce re-offending rates and substance abuse. The Children Act 2001 provides for a series of community sanctions as alternatives to detention. It will be a priority for the Youth Justice Service to ensure that the services needed to facilitate commencement of all of the community sanctions — which will largely be delivered through the Probation Service — are provided as soon as possible during the Plan.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects

There are currently 74 Garda Youth Diversion Projects which are administered by Garda Community Relations Section of An Garda Síochána. Further Youth Diversion projects will be established which will bring the total in the region of 130 nationwide during the Plan period. A comprehensive evaluation of the existing scheme will be conducted to inform the evolution of the projects during the period of the Plan.

Youth Sector Sub-Programme

Some €424 million will be available under the Youth Sector Sub-Programme to support the development of the youth sector, i.e. the non-formal education sector which aims to advance the social and personal development of young persons.

The first National Youth Work Development Plan (NYWDP) set out a strategy for the development of youth work in Ireland 2003-2007. The NYWDP provides broad goals as well as measures to counter social exclusion and disadvantage that fit within the framework of the NDP 2007-2013. These are as follows:

Supporting the Youth Work Sector

The objective of this measure will be to develop and resource the sector, both voluntary and statutory, for the continued rollout of the provisions of the Youth Work Act, 2001 and of the various elements of the NYWDP. It will also support the work of volunteers and youth work practitioners.

National Youth Work Development Unit and Assessor of Youth Work Initiatives

The objectives under this measure include the undertaking of a number of key research and development initiatives, in line with relevant policy objectives. The National Youth Work Development Unit will facilitate, over time, the rollout of certain key initiatives envisaged under the Youth Work Act, 2001 and the NYWDP including initiatives such as the Youth Work Development Project Fund, and the National Award Scheme for Volunteers. The Assessor of Youth Work will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating youth work projects and programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science and assisting in the development of definitive criteria for the evaluation of youth work. The Assessor of Youth Work will also confirm, through evaluation, that public funds are being used efficiently and effectively.

Developing the Existing Physical and Human Infrastructure

The aim of this measure will be to develop and improve the current schemes administered by the Youth Affairs Section of the Department of Education and Science drawing upon the resources and expertise of the National Youth Work Development Unit and the Assessor of Youth Work. These schemes include the Youth Service Grant Scheme, Special Projects for Youth Scheme, Local Youth Club Grant Scheme and the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund. The area of Youth Information Centres will be addressed with a view to maximising their usage in a cost-effective, targeted and innovative manner.

Equality, Cultural, Social, Multi-ethnic and Citizenship Youth Initiatives

This measure will include new and existing initiatives which will have a broad positive impact on young people, including those who are socially excluded or disadvantaged. These initiatives will be developed on a partnership basis between the appropriate agencies. An equality initiative will be undertaken with pilot projects and training programmes aimed at promoting best practice on equality issues in youth organisations. A programme will be devised aimed at enhancing the contribution of youth work in a multi-cultural society to be supported and resourced by the relevant statutory bodies.

Working Age — Education Programme

Some €4.2 billion will be invested under the Working Age Education Programme.

The Working Age Education Programme will comprise the following Sub-Programmes:

- Further Education Sub-Programme — €2.2 billion; and
- Student Support and Third Level Access Sub-Programme — €2.0 billion.

Strategic Context

People of working age who are outside the labour market are particularly vulnerable to poverty or social exclusion. In developing an all-embracing system for Second Chance and Further Education in Ireland, top priorities will be to address the low literacy levels of the Irish adult population and the large numbers of Irish adults who have not completed upper second-level education.

Further education includes education which occurs after second level but which is not part of the third level system. The programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science aim to:

- Meet the needs of early school leavers;
- Provide an alternative route to employment or higher education for school leavers on completion of senior cycle;
- Provide second chance education for adults in various settings and contexts, both formal and informal; and

- Provide vocational preparation and training for adult labour market entrants and re-entrants.

Considerations in looking at existing further education provision for the target groups include:

- The provision of a flexible suite of learner centred programmes, both part time and full time, that will address the needs of the different target groups;
- Provision of part-time modular programmes to allow learners at work to balance their work and learning lives;
- Engaging with hard to reach groups such as long term unemployed, adults with negative initial school experience, the homeless and older unemployed and early school leavers through the provision of non-formal and informal learning opportunities. Community education has a particular role to play in this context as has the provision of appropriate information through guidance and counselling; and
- recognition of the contribution to date and the further potential for second chance and further education.

The overall considerations in shaping a programme for the development of the Working Age — Education Programme will be:

- An expansion of provision in line with learners' needs, increased emphasis on successfully reaching those most in need and availability of information, advice and guidance;
- Greater synergy between the different elements of programme provision; and
- Flexibility and adaptation to ensure that programmes offer a wider range of choices which are appropriate to the learning, domestic and employment needs of learners.

Bearing in mind the different priority groups, current provision and overall budgetary considerations, the Government has decided to renew the focus of development of Second Chance and Further Education on a National Adult Literacy Programme as the top priority. The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) provides for a further expansion of part-time options with a particular emphasis on promoting a return to learning for those in the population with less than upper secondary education, early school leavers and support for childcare. Another objective in the NDP 2007-2013 will be the provision of a system of guidance and counselling to meet adult needs in the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), literacy, community education programmes and BTEI.

Equity of access must be an integral feature of the Working Age — Education Programme if our higher education system is to deliver for individuals, society and the economy. As a modern democracy, Ireland aspires to having an equitable education system that provides opportunities to learners throughout their lives to reach their full potential as individuals and as members of society and successfully participate in higher education, regardless of social, economic or cultural background.

Further Education Sub-Programme

Some €2.2 billion will be available under the Further Education Sub-Programme to facilitate access to educational opportunities outside the mainstream educational system. Assistance under this Sub-Programme will complement many of the education and training measures set out in the Human Capital Priority chapter. The following measures aimed at persons of working age will receive support.

Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) — Part time options

The BTEI will provide support on a part-time basis for adults who did not complete upper second-level schooling. 8,000 places are currently provided. Support will be available for 2,000 additional places over

the period of the Plan in line with commitments under *Towards 2016*. The overall aim of the BTEI will be to increase the participation of young people and adults with less than upper second level education in a range of flexible learning opportunities. The priority will be to target people who experience particular and acute barriers to participation. In particular, the objectives are:

- To address low literacy levels;
- To provide more flexible learning opportunities;
- To address difficulties in combining family, personal and work responsibilities with education; and
- To engage with hard-to-reach groups.

Key target groups will include people with disabilities, lone parents, early school leavers, unemployed people, Travellers, ex-offenders, homeless people, older people and persons from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)

The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) is a second-chance education and training programme which provides courses of up to two years duration for unemployed people. The Scheme is funded by the Department of Education and Science and delivered locally by the Vocational Educational Committees (VECs). There are 99 centres nationwide catering for some 5,000 participants, 68% female and 32% male. Courses are held in VEC premises, adult education centres and rented premises. Courses are provided free of charge, and meal and travel allowances may be provided. Childcare and guidance supports are available.

Courses are full-time and can last for up to two years, with 30 hours attendance per week. Trainees on VTOS can pursue subjects in the Junior or Leaving Certificate programmes or modules or awards certified by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) at various levels. Currently 1,500 of the 5,000 students are presenting at FETAC levels 5 and 6. The remainder are presenting at FETAC levels 3 and 4 or equivalent.

People aged 21 or over, and in receipt of Jobseekers Benefit or Assistance (previously known as Unemployment Benefit/Assistance), One-Parent Family Payment, Disability Allowance, Disability Benefit or Invalidity Pension for at least six months are eligible for VTOS. People signing for credits who satisfy these conditions and dependant spouses of eligible persons may avail of the programme and receive a payment from the VEC in lieu of their welfare payment, equivalent to the maximum rate of unemployment benefit. In the remaining cases, persons attending full-time retain their welfare payment. In order to attract longer-term unemployed people, a bonus of €31.80 per week is payable to participants who have been in receipt of an eligible social welfare payment for at least 1 year directly prior to starting VTOS.

Post-Leaving Certificate Sector (PLC)

Investment in this area will have two objectives: firstly to provide participants with specific vocational skills to enhance their prospects of securing lasting, full-time employment; and, secondly, to support progression to other studies. Two categories of students will receive support — those who enter the PLC sector directly from post-primary schools and those adults who are returning to education. The objective will enable such students to receive additional accreditation and gain employment or progress on to further training/education. Prioritised proposals in relation to PLC provision (focused, in particular, on the larger PLC providers) are being prepared to enhance the programmes and services provided over the period of the Plan.

Adult Literacy

Adult literacy is the Government's top priority in adult education. Literacy is fundamental to empowerment and personal development. It is an attempt to give a second chance to people for whom the mainstream

system did not properly cater when they were younger. Funding will be available to provide access to literacy, numeracy and basic education to those adults whose skills are deficient in these areas. Adult literacy courses are delivered through the VECs and the service is free of charge to students. The VECs currently deliver adult literacy courses to approximately 35,000 participants annually. In line with the commitment under *Towards 2016* there will be an increase of 7,000 places over the period of the NDP.

Childcare in Further Education

Funding will continue to be available to the VECs to contribute to the childcare expenses of participants on the VTOS, Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training programmes and BETI. This measure will facilitate the attendance on these programmes of people who may otherwise be constrained from participating in them because of childcare responsibilities.

Further Education Management Information System (FEMIS)

Funding will be available for the development of a Management Information System for programmes in the further education sector that are not covered by the post-primary pupil database. Participant information by reference to gender, age, economic status, levels of certification, prior education attainment etc. will be made available by the project. This system will provide for improved further education service to targeted groups and facilitate the tracking of further education students.

Adult Guidance

The Adult Education Guidance Initiative offers information, advice and guidance on an individual and group basis to assist people to make the best choices for learning. The service will cover a spectrum of needs ranging from initial outreach, particularly in the field of literacy and basic education, to vocational information, guidance and orientation.

Education Equality Initiative

The Education Equality Initiative is one of a range of initiatives which seek to address educational disadvantage through promoting equality of access and equality of treatment. This is achieved through the provision of short-term (2 or 3 years) grants to organisations for specific purposes.

Student Support/Third Level Access Sub-Programme

Some €2.0 billion will be provided under this Sub-Programme to support greater equity of access to Higher Education. The high level objective is that, by 2013, students with a disability, mature students and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, including members of the Travelling Community and refugees, should have adequate opportunities to progress to higher education. Higher education institutions will pro-actively welcome and cater for a fully diverse student population.

Student grants are a major factor in encouraging the current record levels of participation in higher education. The key priorities in the area of student grants over the Plan are to continue to give priority to addressing inequities in participation of students from the lower socio-economic groups, including those with family responsibilities and to ensure that a quality user-friendly application and payment service is provided to students. In this regard, financial support will continue to be provided on a means-tested basis for participation by students in Third Level and Further Education. At present there are three student maintenance grant schemes for students attending higher education. These are administered variously by the local authorities and the VECs. In June, 2006 the goal of consolidating the administration of student grants within the VEC sector was announced. The intention is to introduce a unified scheme which will replace the three existing higher education grant schemes and to place them on a statutory footing. The legislation would also put the existing maintenance grants scheme for students attending post leaving certificate courses on a statutory footing. The changes are part of an overall plan to introduce service

improvements in the administration of the student support schemes. This Sub-Programme will also provide support for the special rate of maintenance ('Top Up Grant'). The grant will assist applicants from households who are in receipt of certain long-term social welfare payments.

Third Level Access Fund

In addition to the means tested maintenance grants schemes, this Sub-Programme will also make provision for a Third Level Access Fund aimed at tackling under representation by the following three target groups:

- Students with disabilities;
- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds; and
- Mature students.

Under the Ten Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement — *Towards 2016*, provision is made in the area of third level access as follows:

- (a) Under the priority actions for people of working age is the provision of additional supports for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities and mature students to enhance access to further and higher education.
- (b) Under workplace initiatives is the provision of a targeted fund to alleviate the fees in public institutions for part-time courses at third level by those at work who have not previously pursued a third level qualification.

The fund creates a real opportunity to put in place new initiatives to address up-skilling within the work force. Skills forecasts show that the economy will increasingly need higher education skills to maintain competitiveness into the future. At an individual level this means that individual workers, particularly those without third level experience, need an opportunity to continuously engage in training and education.

- (c) Under the section on young adults the parties agree to work together to address the particular education, training and employment needs of young adults by investing in further and higher education to enhance participation by those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular socio-economically disadvantaged school leavers, members of the Traveller community and minorities, mature students, lone parents and students with a disability. These measures will include needs assessment, technology support, community based strategies, childcare supports and access routes.

The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education was established in 2003 to promote equity of access and it works with all publicly-funded Higher education Institutions. The National Office, which has been implementing a three-year national strategy since January 2005, also manages the Fund for Students with a Disability, the Student Assistance Fund, the Millennium Partnership Fund and monitors expenditure on access in higher education institutions. It is intended to build further on these latter priority actions for people of working age with the additional funding provided over the period of the Plan.

The Student Assistance Fund will be an integral part of third level access funding. The objective of the Fund will be to assist students in a sensitive and compassionate manner who might otherwise, because of financial reasons, suffer severe hardship or be unable to continue their third-level studies. The Fund will be an important source of support for students who experience circumstances of hardship while in college. A priority is to link the funding to identified target groups, in particular those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and arrangements are in train to facilitate this better targeting.

The Fund for Students with a Disability will be encompassed by the Programme for People with Disabilities.

The Millennium Partnership Fund, introduced in 2000, will continue to provide community-based funding to support retention and participation among under-represented groups of students in further or higher education. It will be available to students in area partnerships and community groups.

Available data shows that particular regions and communities in Dublin and around the country continue to have low levels of participation in higher education. A whole-community approach to equity of access in higher education is currently being developed through two pilot projects, one in a rural area and one in an urban area. These projects supplement resources provided through the Millennium Partnership Fund. The two pilot projects will finish in February 2009, at which time it is intended that community-based interventions will be extended more widely.

Information and guidance on available financial support is essential for potential and current students and their families. This information will be provided through a comprehensive website and other accessible formats. The information strategy will draw on good practice from other countries.

Supports and services, including assistive technology supports and services, will also be developed for people with a disability in further and higher education. As well as general assistive technology supports, there is a need for particular national initiatives — for example, making print texts available in audio/large screen.

Routes of access and progression from further to higher education also require development, particularly for young people who have completed the Leaving Certificate Applied and who cannot enter higher education directly. Work is underway on developing new routes and it is intended that these will have expanded significantly by 2013.

Institutional Funding

The new Higher Education Authority (HEA) funding model for higher education institutions will include core funding to achieve equity of access and builds on monies available through HEA targeted/strategic initiatives from 1996-2005. In the new model, an additional 33% of funding is allocated for each student from an under-represented group.

In addition to the education measures outlined above, the Human Capital Priority Chapter details measures under the training and skills development programme aimed at improving workforce adaptability, participation and activation measures, with a particular focus on vulnerable persons such as the unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents, Travellers, women and prisoners. Improving access to the labour market and the services and training available to groups outside the labour market is critical for the promotion of social inclusion.

Working Age — Social and Economic Participation Programme

Some €1.2 billion will be invested under the Working Age — Social and Economic Participation Programme in the following Sub-Programmes:

- Activation Sub-Programme — €50 million;
- Back to Work Sub-Programme — €591 million; and
- Back to Education Sub-Programme — €519 million.

Strategic Context

Employment has proven to be a major factor for people exiting out of poverty and also influences quality of life and social well-being. Therefore, while social welfare income support remains crucial and must be

adequate to meet needs, passive income support alone is not sufficient if poverty and social exclusion are to be comprehensively addressed and people are to have financial independence and reach their potential. This programme, agreed as one of the major initiatives in *Towards 2016*, provides supports aimed at increasing social and economic participation. In some cases, the outcome will be full-time employment without any further social welfare support. In other cases, where people are quite distant from the labour market, the programme will support people on social welfare payments taking up other progression options, such as training and education, to enhance employability.

Activation Sub-Programme

The objective of the Sub-Programme, which will be implemented by the Department of Social and Family Affairs (D/SFA), is to promote participation and social inclusion through activation measures aimed at all people of working age. This approach involves engaging with all people of working age in a similar way, whether they are unemployed, lone parents, people with a disability or in some other category. The aim is to facilitate progression regardless of the circumstances that led the person to require income maintenance. This will be a new service, building on the D/SFA's existing experience and income maintenance relationship with the people concerned, in co-operation with other relevant service providers such as FÁS, VECs, HSE and other local agencies. The vision is of a single transparent system with a primary focus on the customer and a route map starting at the first point of engagement with the Department. The programme will complement existing services, such as the Department's own Back-to-Work and Back-to-Education Sub-Programmes, as well as services offered by other agencies in agreed circumstances, where necessary.

The particular added value that will be provided by D/SFA is an active outcome-focused individual case management of all social welfare customers of working age who are not progressing into employment or accessing training or education opportunities. Activation measures will be provided at the primary point of access, which is at the initial claim stage, delivering more intensive engagement with individuals of working age than is possible in the current structure. This will establish a rights with responsibilities concept in welfare supports by moving from a passive approach to active case management on an individual basis. It is intended to invest €50 million under this Sub-Programme over the lifetime of the NDP, subject to a mid-term review of the efficacy and outcome of this Sub-Programme. In the first three years, €13 million will be invested, following which the Sub-Programme will be reviewed and a decision made on the extent and content of the sub-programme over the following four years.

Investment under the Human Capital Priority by the Sub-Programme for Activation and Participation of Groups outside the Workforce will make a significant contribution to the goals of this Sub-Programme.

Back-to-Work Sub-Programme

Some €591 million will be available over the period of the Plan for this Sub-Programme to support people returning to work. The Back-to-Work Sub-Programme is delivered mainly through the Department's Social and Family Support Service. It provides weekly payments and other supports to long-term social welfare recipients to promote economic participation and other progression. The largest single element is the Back-to-Work Allowance Scheme (BTWA) and the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA). The purpose of the BTWA is to encourage the long term unemployed to take up employment opportunities by allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their social welfare payment plus secondary benefits over three years. The allowance is paid on a reducing scale over the three year period, i.e. 75% of a person's social welfare payment in year one, 50% in year two and 25% in year three. The BTWEA has a similar function in relation to people on long-term social welfare payments taking up self-employment opportunities. BTWEA is paid on a reducing scale over a four year period, i.e. 100% of a person's social welfare payment in year one, 75% in year two, 50% in year three and 25% in year four.

The rest of the Sub-Programme will comprise a number of small schemes that together have a total budget of less than €10 million. per annum. Among the activities supported are:

- Technical assistance, training and loan guarantees for BTWEA recipients in the initial stages of their businesses;
- Projects run by third parties to assist welfare recipients, as well as members of their families, improve their employability through education, training and personal development; and
- Training and development programmes for very young lone mothers, other parents rearing children without the support of a partner, dependent spouses on Social Welfare payments in households with children and Carers.

Back-to-Education Sub-Programme

Some €519 million will be available for the Back-to-Education Allowance (BTEA) Scheme which is designed to help people in receipt of social welfare to improve their employability and job-readiness by giving them another chance to improve their qualifications and education. There are two strands to the BTEA scheme, the Second Level Option and the Third Level Option. The Second Level Option allows participants to attend a full-time second level course of study at any community, comprehensive, secondary, or vocational school. The Third Level Option allows participants to attend a full-time, approved third level course of study at any recognised university or third level institution.

Working Age — Justice Programme

Some €300 million will be invested under the Working Age — Justice Programme.

Strategic Context

While prison will remain the primary deterrent against crime, custodial sentences will be accompanied by measures aimed at promoting prisoner rehabilitation and resettlement as law abiding citizens in society. This Programme will aim at the rehabilitation of offender through integrated sentence management while in custody and services to facilitate the reintegration of offenders on their release. It will consist of two integrated areas of endeavour; integrated sentence management and reintegration of offenders.

Integrated Sentence Management

Plan funding will support the development of structures and the provision of prison programmes that are aimed at increasing employability, promoting pro-social attitudes and addressing offending behaviour. This sub-programme aims to provide a mechanism for effective integration and co-ordination of all services and programmes designed to meet the complex risks and needs presented by offenders.

There will be a particular focus on the following:

- provide integrated, cross disciplinary, sentence management that is focused on the prisoner's resettlement from the moment of committal to release;
- develop formal, structured information systems to improve the flow of information between prisons and community-based agencies;
- adopt a prisoner-centred approach, taking the individual risks of re-offending and personal circumstances into account, with the active involvement of the prisoner, and support key sentence management decisions in regard to the prisoner;
- use structured risk and needs assessment procedures to measure the prisoner's progress; and

- develop an integrated system approach with other criminal justice agencies to support seamless through-care and incorporate in-reach service arrangements with community based agencies.

In addition, support will be available for:

- the design of a detailed business process, which will involve the development of manuals, forms, guidelines and other supporting documentation;
- introduction of a structured risk and needs assessment tool;
- training for all staff involved in the process;
- the development of an IT system to support the process; and
- putting in place new monitoring and evaluation systems.

Re-integration of Offenders

Support will be available for the re-integration of offenders into society on release.

The Probation Service will concentrate on and develop its core areas of expertise centring on community based supervision of offenders. It will continue to advance initiatives designed to address patterns of criminal behaviour associated with social exclusion, with particular emphasis on restorative justice initiatives.

In particular, there will be support to:

- Expand and improve programmes, both in prisons and within the community, specifically sex offender programmes;
- Extend the Linkage Programme to increase the number of offenders successfully placed in employment, education or Community Employment schemes;
- Develop and expand programmes to meet the needs of juvenile offenders, including parenting programmes, intensive supervision, mentoring, training and activities etc. to ensure that, as far as possible, young persons acquire a balanced lifestyle away from crime;
- Assist offenders leaving custody, who may be in need of assistance in acquiring accommodation, employment, training, and further education; and
- Develop multi-agency initiatives/programmes to teach skills to selected trainees, who in turn can use the skill acquired to obtain employment.

Prisoners are also a target group under the Sub-Programme for Activation and Participation of Groups outside the Labour Force in the Human Capital Priority Chapter.

Older People Programme

Some €9.7 billion will be invested under the Older People Programme.

The Older People Programme will comprise the following Sub-Programmes:

- Living at Home Sub-Programme — €4.7 billion; and
- Residential Care Sub-Programme — €5.0 billion.

Strategic Context

Older people are recognised as one of the main groups who may be at risk of social exclusion. The Partnership Agreement, *Towards 2016* sets out a vision of how older people can maintain their health and well-being, as well as live active and full lives, in an independent way in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

The support for this vision will not be restricted to measures contained in this Programme. The Plan has a range of programmes and measures across a number of Priorities that will support the vision for older people. These include social housing, essential house repairs and improvements in primary health care facilities which are detailed under the Social Infrastructure Chapter. Other measures include the Rural Transport Initiative, education and training, support through community organisations to improve the security of its older members and activation and participation measures as outlined under the Human Capital Chapter. Measures under the Local and Community Development Programme under this Priority also complement the older persons programme.

Living at Home Sub-Programme

The Living at Home Sub-Programme will provide some €4.7 billion over the period of the Plan for a range of measures that will help older people to live independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. The use of community and home-based care will be maximised and will complement the role of informal, including family, care.

Home Care Packages

Home care packages will deliver a wide range of services throughout the country. They may include the services of nurses, home care attendants, home helps and the various therapists, including physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

The packages are aimed at older people living in the community or who are in-patients in an acute hospital and who are at risk of admission to long term care. The home care packages are also available to those older people who have been admitted to long term care and who now wish to return to the community. In addition, the packages are available to people who are already using existing core services, such as home helps, but need more assistance to continue to live in their community.

The packages will be delivered directly by the HSE, voluntary groups and the private sector.

Home Help Service

The Home Help service is an essential part of community provision. Home Helps will support older people at home and thereby delay or prevent admission to long stay residential care. They can also assist in reducing the necessity for admission to acute hospitals or in facilitating early discharge.

Meals-on-Wheels

The Meals-on-Wheels service provides regular meals and essential social contact for many older people. In this way, the service will contribute to older people remaining at home and in better health.

Community Intervention Teams

Community Intervention Teams (CIT) will assist in preventing avoidable hospital admission and the facilitation of early discharge from hospitals. CITs will operate in addition to existing mainstream community services and will address issues such as:

- Capacity to provide fast-tracked non-medical care or supports for an interim period while mainstream services are being arranged for the patient, where such are not immediately available, on a 7 day per week basis. This is achieved through dedicated services to provide an immediate response for patients who are identified by a GP as requiring new or enhanced home supports; and
- The link between community services and patients being discharged from Accident and Emergency Departments who require community supports.

Respite/Day Care Services

Day care and respite care will be an integral part of delivering a comprehensive community service for older people and will also give a much needed break to carers in the home. Older people offered the service may, depending on the circumstances, receive:

- Physiotherapy, occupational therapy, chiropody and assistance with personal services such as laundry;
- Social contact amongst older people;
- Respite for family members and/or carers; and
- Social stimulation in a safe environment for older people with mild forms of dementia.

Day care services will continue to be expanded to provide services in the evenings and at weekends.

Residential Care Sub-Programme

The Residential Care Sub-Programme will invest some €5.0 billion over the period of the Plan. When it is no longer possible for an older person to remain in their own home in dignity and independence, they may need to be cared for in a long-stay residential setting. *Towards 2016* outlined the principles which inform policy development in this area.

The growth in the older population will bring with it an increased requirement for residential care which will be met by public or private providers.

Community Units offer a range of services; convalescent care, respite care, and long-term care. These Units offer their services to clients within a specific area, and therefore keep people in the area in which they are familiar. It is proposed to develop units (each with a capacity of some 50 beds) at a number of locations in Dublin, Cork and a number of other sites across the country.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) completed a Residential Care Needs Assessment in 2006 which took into account current developments such as home care packages, the growth in private sector capacity and the geographic spread of need and supply. The Department of Health and Children will work closely with the HSE to develop additional bed capacity, replace existing bed stock and to carry out necessary refurbishment and upgrading.

Apart from immediate improvements to the Nursing Home Subvention Scheme for 2007, plans have been announced for a significant change in how nursing home care is provided and paid for. From 1 January, 2008, the current subvention and public nursing home schemes will be replaced by a new Nursing Home Care Support Scheme, which is designed to ensure that everyone who enters a nursing home, public or private, pays a fair portion of their income as a contribution towards the cost of their care.

People with Disabilities Programme

Some €19.2 billion will be invested under the People with Disabilities Programme.

The People with Disabilities Programme will comprise the following Sub-Programmes:

- Health Services Disabilities Sub-Programme — €18.8 billion;
- Education Disabilities Support Sub-Programme — €260 million; and
- Disability Friendly Environment Sub-Programme — €164 million.

Strategic Context

The NDP will support the continuing rollout of the National Disability Strategy. The Strategy was launched in September 2004 and contains five elements:

- The Disability Act, 2005;
- The Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act 2004;
- The Citizens Information Bill 2006;
- Sectoral Plans prepared by 6 Government Departments; and
- A multi-annual Investment Programme for high priority disability support services.

This Strategy represents a commitment by Government to drive forward a significant evolution in policy and provision for people with disabilities. Allied to this legislative framework is the deepening and widening of the Government's commitment to the policy of mainstreaming as provided for under the Disability Act, 2005. During the course of the Plan, the relevant Government Departments will, under their Sectoral Plans, specifically target their services towards the needs of people with disabilities. These Departments are Health and Children; Social and Family Affairs; Transport; Communications, Marine and Natural Resources; Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Enterprise, Trade and Employment. During the term of this Plan, it is expected to build upon the legislative commitments in the areas of employment equality and equal status. This legislation is supported by infrastructure which has already had a positive influence on equality, service development and delivery, comprising the Equality Authority, the Equality Tribunal, the National Disability Authority and Comhairle. The investment under the Human Capital Priority for Activation of People with Disabilities will also make a major contribution to the goals of this Programme.

Health Services Disabilities Sub-Programme

The overall objective of this Sub-Programme is to put in place the most effective combination of legislation, policies, institutional arrangements and services to support and reinforce participation by people with disabilities in society. €18.8 billion will be used to provide the infrastructure required to expand health funded support services for people with disabilities, including mental illness. This investment is in line with Government commitments in the Multi-Annual Investment Programme 2006-2009 to progressively build additional capacity in the health services. This will enable the Health Service Executive to meet its statutory obligations under the Disability Act 2005, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and the Mental Health Act 2001. The Department of Health and Children's Sectoral Plan, together with the report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy, outline in detail the measures which will be taken in relation to the implementation of this legislation by the health services.

Sectoral Plan of the Department of Health and Children

The Department of Health and Children's Sectoral Plan sets out the key initiatives to be taken by the Department, the Health Service Executive and 27 statutory bodies in the field of disability. Part 2 of the

Disability Act provides for the assessments of need and service statements for people with disabilities and will commence for children aged under 5 years from June 2007. The Act will be phased in for children aged 5-18 years in tandem with the implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act (EPSEN), 2004 and will be phased in for all others by 2011. Services for adults and children will continue to be enhanced progressively over the next number of years. The practice of assessment of individual needs and the provision of service statements for all service users will be promoted by the HSE as capacity permits.

The Health Services Disabilities Sub-Programme funding over the Plan period incorporates the major multi-annual investment in services for persons with disabilities announced in Budget 2005. The funding will be used to address the priority needs of people with disabilities including the provision of:

- Community based residential and respite services for those who have been assessed as requiring them;
- Provision of more appropriate residential accommodation for those currently in inappropriate settings such as psychiatric hospitals, nursing homes and older campus style accommodation;
- Day centres and resource facilities;
- Aids and appliances, including assistive technology;
- Specialist facilities for those with intellectual disability who, because of behavioural problems, medical conditions or old age require a more intensive level of care;
- Enhanced child and adolescent psychiatric services and acute, specialist and community based adult mental health services; and
- Ongoing maintenance of existing and expanded infrastructure.

The provision of locally based services, which can be easily accessed by people with disabilities, their families and carers, is a vital element in enabling people with disabilities to remain part of and to contribute to their local communities.

Education Disabilities Support Sub-Programme

Some €260 million will be available under the Education Disabilities Support Sub-Programme. Of this some €59 million will be available for students with a disability, from the Third Level Access Fund, which aims to tackle under representation by specific target groups. It will provide grants towards the provision of services and the purchase of equipment for students with disabilities attending courses in Third Level Institutions or Post Leaving Certificate courses. The scheme will apply to students who have serious sensory, physical and/or communicative disabilities, including dyslexia. Grants will provide for the purchase of special equipment, special materials, technological aids, targeted transport services, sign language assistance/interpreters and personal assistants.

Some €201 million will also be available over the period of the NDP to enhance the provision of education services for adults with disabilities, to expand the role of the National Council for Special Education, to increase the level of pre-school provision and to introduce new appeals processes as envisaged in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004.

Disability Friendly Environment Sub-Programme

This Sub-Programme will invest some €164 million in developing and adapting local authority facilities, government offices, courthouses and civil legal aid centres for use by disabled people.

The Disability Friendly Environment Sub-Programme is to support the delivery of the National Disability Strategy. Local authorities have an important role in implementing the requirements of the National Disability Strategy. In 2005 a multi-annual programme of initiatives to implement the National Disability Strategy, including both capital and current funding, was commenced. Funds will be allocated, on an annual basis, to the individual local authorities and other public bodies under its aegis on the basis of priority areas identified in submissions made. Capital expenditure addresses the priority needs of people with disabilities, effectively and efficiently, by providing and improving accessibility to public buildings, roads and pavements, parks, amenities, heritage sites and other public areas.

Each local authority will be required, following completion of access audits for its public facilities, to draw up an implementation plan setting out a programme of actions and detailed costings of the various actions to give effect to the commitments and objectives contained in the Disability Act and in the sectoral plan. Priority will be given in the implementation plans to local authority buildings and other facilities to which access is most frequently required, including an accessible external environment of public footpaths, streets and crossings and the physical interface with public transport facilities.

Funding will be available for a programme of support projects in the Justice area focusing on improved accessibility to services, including technology development, and supporting existing legal provisions in relation to the position of people with disabilities.

Local and Community Development Programme

Some €1.9 billion will be invested under the Local and Community Development Programme.

The Local and Community Development Programme will comprise the following Sub-Programmes:

- Community Development and Services Sub-Programme — €861 million;
- RAPID Sub-Programme — €67 million;
- Local Development Social Inclusion Sub-Programme — €417 million;
- Volunteers and Volunteering Supports Sub-Programme — €197 million; and
- National Drugs Strategy Sub-Programme — €319 million.

Strategic Context

The Local & Community Development Programme will address the ongoing challenge of change in the demographic, ethnic and economic profiles of the communities of Ireland. The objective of the Programme will be to put in place measures to support increasingly diverse communities, particularly those that are subject to disadvantage. The strategic goal is to enable communities themselves to identify and address issues and challenges in their own areas. The Government recognises the valuable role of the Community and Voluntary Sector and remains committed to the principles underpinning the relationship between the State and this sector as set out in the White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity.

Local partnership structures have demonstrated an ability to harness local skills and resources and have enabled the building of effective working solutions that have empowered individuals and groups to participate in finding solutions to deal with issues facing their communities. Interventions under this Programme will be focused on communities who make full use of local and community structures and provide for the comprehensive engagement with the community and voluntary sector. Of key importance will be the need to promote linkages, cohesion and sharing of resources between local and community development agencies. In this context, Departments/public bodies will continue to look to existing local structures and local authorities for delivery of new local or community development initiatives. It will be

important to ensure that any new measures in this area affirm the role of the County/City Development Boards as re-emphasised in *Towards 2016*.

Community Development and Services Sub-Programme

Some €861 million will be provided under this Sub-Programme over the period of the Plan to support communities in ways that involve local people in improving their own communities.

Funding will be provided under the following headings:

- Local Resource Centres/Community Development Projects;
- Family and Community Services Resource Centres;
- Supporting Local and Voluntary Groups;
- Providing essential Community Services; and
- Community Policing.

The aim is to promote social inclusion by core funding community based projects in disadvantaged areas, which have persons experiencing poverty and disadvantage represented within the management structures. This ensures that the needs identified by the projects relate to the target groups and that any responses emerging meet the needs of the disadvantaged within the community.

Projects funded will support a wide range of self-help activities designed to improve quality of life for individuals and groups in disadvantaged communities. Projects that act as catalysts for development in disadvantaged communities will also be supported.

Local Resource Centres/Community Development Projects

The broad objectives of the 2007-13 programme are to:

- Resource disadvantaged communities to have their voice heard in relation to the issues that affect them and to influence local actions to tackle disadvantage;
- Support a wide range of self-help activities designed to provide a first step for individuals to escape from poverty and disadvantage; and
- Improve family life in disadvantaged communities, by funding of resource projects that act as catalysts for further personal and community development.

Funding will also be available to invest in the staffing and equipping of local resource centres that provide a focal point for community development activities and for other specialised community development projects and initiatives having a strategic importance. These centres will allow for the delivery of statutory and other services on an outreach basis and local and accessible points at which services can be delivered. Projects will be supported in those communities experiencing cumulative levels of disadvantage and social exclusion. Projects will continue to be supported to encourage the active participation and development of community leadership in the targeted areas.

The central focus of the funding for 2007-13 will be the mobilisation of the capacity of communities to participate in mainstream local development, tackle disadvantage by locally tailored solutions and the provision of training and education as well as supporting people to engage in enterprise and employment opportunities. Projects will be supported to deliver smaller scale self-help work in specific target groups that experience disadvantage. The programme will specifically target actions at people suffering multiple and inter-generational disadvantage and help communities to articulate their point of view and participate in a process of personal and community development. The emphasis will be to support actions to build

community competence with particular support aimed at people with disabilities, lone parent families, young people, the elderly, Travellers and other disadvantaged groups.

Family and Community Services Resource Centres

The aim of the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme, which is administered by the Family Support Agency, is essentially to help combat disadvantage by improving the function of the family unit. Family Resource Centres empower disadvantaged people by involving them in decisions which affect them and in using and developing their own skills, knowledge and experience. The Centres focus on developing the skill levels and capacities of their local communities, including training for voluntary management committees, to encourage communities to become self reliant and self directed. Priority in funding will be given to Centres which serve those areas where communities are contending with multiple disadvantages and where families are facing significant challenges in trying to rear their children and securing positive futures for them. The Family Support Agency will work with County/City Development Boards to ensure a more cohesive approach to the delivery of family focused social inclusion services provided through Family Resource Centres.

Supporting Local and Voluntary Groups

Funding under this heading will finance two schemes of once-off grants to local voluntary and community groups:

- (1) Equipment and Refurbishment Grants will provide essential physical supports for the local community and voluntary groups and make funds available for the purchase of equipment such as office furniture and for small-scale refurbishment of premises; and
- (2) Education, Training and Research Grants are aimed at enhancing the capacity of local communities and grants of up to €10,000 are available for relevant proposals.

Providing essential Community Services

The decision by Government to transfer the Social Economy Programme from FÁS to the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs with effect from 1st January 2006 reflects its desire to see a shift in emphasis within the scheme from labour market training to providing essential community services. Reflecting this change in emphasis, the name was changed to the Community Services Programme (CSP).

The CSP currently funds over 400 projects and will continue to be funded under the Plan. The objective is to support local community activity to address disadvantage, while providing employment opportunities for people from the following priority target groups:

- People with Disabilities;
- The Long-Term Unemployed;
- Travellers; and
- Lone Parents.

The activities of the projects will be varied and include community childcare services, services for the elderly or people with disabilities, rural transport projects, projects to operate community halls and facilities or community radio.

Community Policing

Community Policing will facilitate and support interaction between the Garda Síochána and local authorities and local communities to address local policing issues.

The establishment of Joint Policing Committees and Local Policing Fora, under the provisions of the Garda Síochána Act, 2005, and the further establishment, as envisaged under the Government's National Drugs Strategy, of Community Policing Fora in Local Drug Task Force areas will enhance the State's promotion of social inclusion over the lifetime of the Plan. These fora will facilitate An Garda Síochána, locally and nationally elected representatives, officials from local authorities and representatives from local communities working together in partnership to address local policing and related issues. These measures will not only assist in the State's development of its overall crime prevention response but will also act as a practical means of supporting the capacity of local communities to meaningfully participate in crime prevention, which is a key feature of the Government's strategy for social policy development.

RAPID Sub-Programme

Some €67 million will be available under the RAPID (Revitalisation of Areas by Planning Investment and Development) Sub-Programme to address in a focused way the spatial concentration of poverty and social exclusion within the most disadvantaged urban areas and provincial towns in the country.

The priority for the RAPID Sub-Programme will be to ensure that RAPID designated areas have first call on State interventions and that such interventions are tailored in a manner to ensure the root causes of disadvantage and exclusion are tackled. The Sub-Programme will also facilitate Government Departments and State agencies in prioritising investment in these defined areas and to bring about better co-ordination and closer integration in the delivery of services with the specific aid of tackling exclusion.

The leverage impact of the scheme will help improve the quality of life and community safety for residents in the designated areas by supporting small-scale projects with immediate impacts on the quality of the environment by improved security or access to services and leisure facilities.

Local Development and Social Inclusion Sub-Programme (LDSIP)

Some €417 million will be provided, over the period of the Plan under the Local Development Social Inclusion Sub-Programme, to support locally-based social inclusion measures. The Sub-Programme will have a particular focus on supporting people and communities suffering disadvantage and exclusion through a wide spectrum of locally promoted actions. The alignment of local, community and rural development organisations leading to unified overarching county structures with full county/city coverage will enable the provision of the services to all persons, irrespective of their place of residence, with equal access to the services available including employment, education and training opportunities.

Similar to the LDSIP 2000-2006, the Sub-Programme under this Plan will aim to promote social inclusion and will contribute to achieving objectives under the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. It will involve the provision of funds and support to unified partnership companies to promote social inclusion at local level. The programme will have national coverage and will continue to target the most disadvantaged areas, groups and individuals, particularly those experiencing cumulative disadvantage. Local actions delivered by the partnership companies will complement and add value to other services for disadvantaged communities and people.

The promotion of social inclusion by these partnership structures will include both economic dimensions (e.g. employment and self-employment; education and training) and social dimensions (e.g. community and social networks; integration and equality; health and well-being). The objectives of the new Sub-Programme will be to fully involve socially excluded groups and individuals in the development and implementation of policies and programmes that affect their lives. Actions will include support for:

- Progression towards and within the labour market for people who experience social exclusion, whether seeking to return to the labour market, unemployed, under-employed, or at risk of unemployment;

- Breaking the inter-generational cycle of social exclusion through education and training supports at different stages of the life-cycle in families;
- Adding value to the effectiveness of social inclusion programmes and interventions delivered by statutory and non-statutory agencies through partnership, collaboration and coordination; and
- Innovation and learning and the development of practice and policies that meet the needs of individuals and groups experiencing social exclusion.

A key aim of the 2007-13 Sub-Programme will be to strengthen the integrated, multi-sectoral approach which will concentrate on supporting the broad actions for the programme set out above.

Volunteers and Volunteering Supports Sub-Programme

Some €197 million will be invested in supporting volunteering activity under this Sub-Programme over the period of the Plan. As stressed in *Towards 2016*, the Government will continue to develop policies on volunteers and volunteering arising from the package of measures announced in February 2005. Central to this approach is the constructive role of voluntary activity in improving the quality of life in local communities. Policies and schemes in this area will be further informed by the findings of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship.

Under this Sub-Programme the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will take the lead role in progressing the principles underpinning the White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity. Schemes will be designed to support, resource and recognise volunteers and volunteering both in terms of funding and capacity. The broad objective is to enable the improvement of the provision of services at the coal face.

National Drugs Strategy Sub-Programme

Some €319 million will be available over the period of the Plan under the National Drugs Strategy Sub-Programme to continue the fight against the causes and consequences of the abuse of illegal drugs.

As in many countries throughout the world, drug abuse in Ireland continues to present major challenges. Opiate use remains a problem in Dublin and has spread to other areas (recent estimates indicate that there are approximately 14,500 opiate users in Ireland of which about 12,000 are in Dublin). Cocaine and polydrug abuse have also emerged as serious problems, while cannabis remains the most commonly used illegal drug in Ireland. Such problems require both a reorientation and expansion of treatment services.

Ireland's National Drugs Strategy, launched in 2001, will continue to deliver through four inter-connected pillars dealing with supply reduction; prevention; treatment; and research, as well as the fifth pillar of rehabilitation that was added following a mid-term review of the strategy in 2005. While the overall framework for drugs policy in Ireland will be reviewed in 2008 (the current Strategy expires at the end of that year), the focus of drugs policy in the coming years will continue to be on illegal drugs that do the most harm and on the most vulnerable drug misusers, their families and communities. A key feature of the Strategy will continue to be the bringing together of the key players (both statutory and community/voluntary) working in partnership to develop a range of responses to tackle drug misuse, building on evidenced-based approaches.

Within the Plan the emphasis will be on:

- **Supply Reduction** — focus will continue on the refinement of the legislative framework, the strengthening of enforcement practice, the further development of community policing and the operation of the criminal justice system to impact on the supply of illegal drugs.

- **Range & availability of treatment options** — given the increased prevalence of cocaine and poly-drug abuse, the availability and range of treatment options will continue to be tailored and increased to meet the needs of an evolving situation.
- **Rehabilitation** — with the addition of rehabilitation as a fifth pillar of the National Drugs Strategy to reflect the importance of rehabilitation for drug misusers in terms of “moving on” and, ultimately, re-integrating them into society, an integrated rehabilitation framework is being developed and will soon be in place. The implementation of this framework will be a priority in the coming years.
- **Prevention** — The use of education and awareness programmes and the development of sport and recreational alternatives will aim to divert people (particularly young people) away from the dangers of drug misuse; and
- **Research** — the overall objective is to have valid, timely and comparable data on the extent of drug misuse in Ireland and to gain greater understanding of the factors which contribute to Irish people, particularly young people, misusing drugs.

The Local and Regional Drugs Task Forces and the Young People Facilities and Services Fund will be centrally involved in delivering elements of the National Drug Strategy

Local Drugs and Regional Drugs Task Forces

The range of projects being undertaken through the Local Drugs and Regional Drugs Task Forces will be developed and strengthened over the coming years. Strategic plans, developed by the Drugs Task Forces and based on the identified needs of the areas involved, will continue to be central to the effort to counteract the problems of drug misuse

Young People’s Facilities and Services Fund (YPF SF)

The YPF SF will continue to assist in the development of youth facilities (including sport and recreational facilities) and services in disadvantaged areas where a significant drug problem exists or has the potential to develop. The geographic coverage of the Fund may be expanded to other disadvantaged urban areas. The YPF SF will continue to target 10 to 21 year olds who are “at risk” due to factors including family circumstances, educational disadvantage or involvement in crime or substance misuse. The Fund will continue to build on and complement youth measures under the Children’s Programme in the areas where it is operational.

Horizontal Social Inclusion Programme

Some €848 million will be invested under the Horizontal Social Inclusion Programme.

The Horizontal Programme will comprise the following Sub-Programmes:

- Immigrants Integration Sub-Programme — €36 million;
- Language Support Sub-Programme — €637 million;
- National Action Plan against Racism and the Programme for Social and Economic Advancement of Members of the Traveller Community — €27 million; and
- Equality Sub-Programme — €148 million.

Strategic Context

Integration is one of the most important challenges being faced by Irish society during the period of the Plan. It is critical that integration services be mainstreamed into both targeted social inclusion services and into the generality of service being provided for a new multicultural Irish society. The special funding being

provided here will help to accelerate and precipitate progress in this critical area. The overall aim of the National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR) is to provide strategic direction to combat racism and to develop a more inclusive, intercultural society in Ireland based on a commitment to inclusion by design, not as an add-on or afterthought, and based on policies that promote interaction, equality of opportunity, understanding and respect.

Measures to support Traveller participation will focus on coherent inter-agency cooperation with the participation of social partners and including Travellers and their representatives.

While the European Union has been instrumental in the incorporation of a strong body of legislation aimed at achieving equality and overcoming discrimination into Irish law over the past thirty years, there is still evidence that, in tandem with all other EU countries, there are still issues of inequality to be addressed in Irish society.

Further positive action will be taken to support women wishing to participate fully and advance their roles within the labour market and in the broader economy. Engagement in the labour market is seen as a key contributor to the efforts to address social exclusion and it is frequently women who are at the greater risk of experiencing poverty.

In its effort to maximise European competitiveness and productivity, the European Union has recently promoted a new road map to achieve true gender equality among Member States. The statistics show that there is still scope for improvement under a number of measurements of gender equality in Ireland. Gender equality requires a comprehensive, whole of Government approach and the Irish Government has recognised this in commissioning the preparation of a new National Women's Strategy which will underpin developmental actions to support the contribution of women to our economy and our society over the next ten years.

Immigrants Integration Sub-Programme

This Sub-Programme will involve funding of some €36 million to promote the integration of immigrants into Ireland.

In 2002 approximately 7% of Ireland's population of just under 4 million were immigrants. CSO Population and Migration Estimates (April 2006) put the total immigration flow into Ireland in the twelve months to April 2006 at 86,900 — the highest figure on record. The estimated number of emigrants in the same period was 17,000 resulting in a net migration figure of 69,900, compared with 53,400 and 31,600 in the previous two years. We are thus rapidly moving towards a situation where almost one in ten of our population will be non-Irish nationals — a phenomenal demographic change which will shape a very different society by 2013.

Social inclusion policy and measures must therefore address, not only whatever inequalities and divisions exist within our native Irish population, but also those contained in an Irish society which will be fundamentally and irrevocably multicultural by nature. A new dimension in our planning which focuses on integrating our immigrant population is required. A national integration policy will be developed, based on equality principles and taking a revised and broader view of social inclusion which builds on the experience of other countries. The current positive impact of immigrants on a growing Irish economy is acknowledged. There is an ongoing commitment to serving the continuing social, cultural and economic aspirations of our immigrant population.

Integration policy will be underpinned by appropriate investment in the human capital represented by those immigrants who are committed to helping Ireland to continue to develop its strong economy. While core funding for integration will be provided through the various mainstream service delivery programmes set out in this Plan, it is proposed to establish specially-targeted initiatives which include a specific focus on promoting mainstream competency, a central tenet of overall integration policy. This special Sub-Programme will seek to facilitate and energise initiatives which promote the integration of all legally resident immigrants. Research exercises under the Sub-Programme will also contribute to identifying appropriate and effective interventions.

Language Support Sub-Programme

Some €637 million will be available under this Sub-Programme for language support teachers to assist children from a non-English speaking background (mainly the children of immigrants from EU countries and the children of refugees from outside of the EU). The objective of the Sub-Programme will be to enable these children to acquire a sufficient knowledge of the English language to enable them to benefit from the Irish education system at the same level as their Irish peers.

Provision for the appointment of an extra 550 language support teachers by 2009 is included as one of the priority actions in the Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015 *Towards 2016*.

Assessment kits are being developed for distribution to primary and post primary schools. The kit will enable schools to provide an accurate representation of newcomer pupils' English language proficiency using objective criteria.

National Action Plan against Racism and Programme for Social and Economic Advancement of Members of the Traveller Community Sub-Programme

This Sub-Programme will spend some €27 million over the next seven years and have two elements:

1. National Action Plan against Racism (NPAR); and
2. Programme for Social and Economic Advancement of Members of the Traveller Community.

National Action Plan against Racism

The National Action Plan against Racism is being implemented over the 4 year period 2005-2008. The emphasis is on "a whole of system approach" which seeks to mainstream intercultural issues into the formulation of public policy. The overall aim of the Plan is to encourage the emergence of a more inclusive, intercultural society in Ireland based on a commitment to inclusion by design, which promotes interaction, equality of opportunity, mutual understanding and respect. The NPAR structures also underpin the objectives of integration and will support initiatives that work towards realisation of that policy. The current Action Plan will run until 2008 at which time an opportunity will arise to review and to consider new strategies in the design and implementation of diversity policy.

Programme for Social and Economic Advancement of Members of the Traveller Community

The High Level Group on Traveller Issues which reported to Government in March 2006 identified three priorities for the effective implementation of policy to support the fullest possible participation of Travellers in Irish society, i.e. coherent inter-agency cooperation, meaningful consultation with Travellers and their representatives and the incorporation of law enforcement measures into the interagency approach. *Towards 2016* commits all social partners to "give concentrated attention to achieving progress", including measures to promote positive communication between Travellers and the wider community. Expenditure under this Programme will support enhanced Traveller related measures under broader mainstream programmes.

The Social Inclusion Priority also contains a Traveller Education Sub-Programme under which some €511 million will be expended over the Plan period.

Equality Sub-Programme

Various components of the NDP contain measures designed to promote the principle of equality. In relation to the social inclusion priority, there are two specific interventions which will be implemented under the Equality Sub-Programme, which has a total allocation of €148 million:

- National Women's Strategy; and
- Promoting Equality for Women.

Gender Equality as a Horizontal Principle

The National Development Plan 2000-2006 included a number of measures which specifically addressed the issue of gender inequality in Ireland. While a strong body of legislation outlaws inequality and discrimination on a number of grounds including gender, reality shows that women still earn less than men and are less likely to advance to the most senior decision making roles either in enterprise or in wider civil society.

The achievement of the twin aims of growth and competitiveness require sustained growth in the size of the Irish labour market. Over the life of NDP 2000-2006, the numbers of women in the Irish labour market increased by 26% (to 855,000 women in employment) compared with an increase of 17% for men. This reflects the untapped pool of women who were of working age but were not previously employed outside the home.

The European Union continues to focus on the participation of women in the labour market as a central driver for growth across the Union. The maximisation of benefits to economic growth from the high academic achievements of women and their continuing engagement in the labour market, particularly from the older age groups who had withdrawn from the labour market, together with their increased role in decision making at all levels, are key aims contained in the European Union's Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men published early in 2006 and the Gender Pact agreed by the Spring 2006 European Council of Prime Ministers.

As indicated in Chapter 1, the mainstreaming of gender equality continues as a priority of the Government and, accordingly, the National Development Plan 2007-2013 will continue to focus on gender equality as a horizontal issue. The Plan also includes a range of positive actions which invest in the development of women in preparation for and as participants in the labour market and in all levels of decision making in order to achieve true gender equality in Ireland.

National Women's Strategy

Funding will be provided to support initiatives under the National Women's Strategy, which is currently being developed by a Working Group under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Strategy is expected to be published in early 2007.

Promoting Equality between Women and Men

This intervention will have two central elements. Firstly, it will support positive actions to promote gender equality. These positive actions will be informed by the National Women's Strategy due to be published later this year. This cross-departmental strategy will aim to equalise the socio-economic status of women, ensure their well-being and engage them in decision making and in civil society.

Secondly, it will provide funding for tackling the problem of domestic violence, including awareness raising campaigns aimed at encouraging victims to seek assistance and to alert and alter public attitudes to the crime. Funding will also be available for programmes which work with the perpetrators to recognise and change their violent behaviour.

Equality Proofing

The equality proofing process seeks to identify any unintended negative impacts of policy on any category of persons protected by equality legislation. It is a process for ensuring that policy is more efficient, effective and economic, i.e. for ensuring value for money, as well as maximising the equality impact of policy. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, through the Working Group on Equality Proofing and in collaboration with the Equality Authority, is now in a position to provide technical assistance to other Departments in proofing their policies to avoid unanticipated negative impact on any of the groups protected under the equality legislation. In addition, the Equality Authority, in collaboration with the Department, will develop a measure to support an equality mainstreaming approach across all labour market programme providers that ensures that labour market programme design and delivery accommodates diversity and enhances access, participation and outcomes for groups experiencing labour market inequality across the nine grounds covered by equality legislation.

