

**INTEGRATED RESPONSES TO LABOUR MARKET
DISADVANTAGE IN FINGLAS AND CABRA**

REPORT PREPARED FOR FINGLAS/CABRA PARTNERSHIP

by

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PREFACE

Impact, flexibility, commitment and collaboration – these are key factors in effective active labour market interventions at the local level in Dublin. It is recognised widely that what is required to maximise the impact of the Local Employment Services Network (LESN) is a coherent national policy framework and support structure married to flexible implementation shaped and directed by local conditions. However, it is important to identify more clearly the elements of public policy and local responses essential to achieving the most effective mix.

The Dublin Employment Pact has tracked innovative good practice in local labour market interventions and disseminated the resultant policy lessons learned. This led to the publication in 2000 of the baseline analysis, *Solving long-term unemployment in Dublin – The lessons from policy innovation*¹. One of the many lessons to emerge was the need to examine in depth the elements essential to enhancing the qualitative impact of local employment services, i.e. in the delivery of these services to the people for whom they are intended. Two core issues emerged rapidly: firstly that there was a widespread *ad hoc* but ultimately unsatisfactory level of inter-agency collaboration locally and secondly that the issue of co-operative local data collection and client-centred information sharing needed considerable development and a model of how best to implement it.

Arising from this learning process, in 2001 the Pact issued a call for tenders for pilot projects which would elucidate and define these elements. Two research projects were selected and then implemented in Ballymun and Finglas Cabra. The first, carried out through the Ballymun Jobs Centre by Mick Creedon of BJC and Tom Ronayne of WRC Consultants, focussed on the elements essential to achieving effective inter-agency collaboration at the local level. The second project, carried out through Finglas Cabra Partnership LESN by Eoin Collins of NEXUS Consultants, developed a model for client centred data collection and sharing between service providers. During the course of the research, an Advisory Group of managers of relevant agencies (Local Employment Services Networks (LESN), FAS, CDVEC, Department of Social Community and Family Welfare and Health Boards) reviewed the progress of the initiatives.

The two reports which resulted from this process –Tom Ronayne and Mick Creedon *Developing Process not Structure: The Challenge to Inter-Organisational Action* and Eoin Collins *Integrated Responses to Labour Market Disadvantage in Finglas and Cabra* – are in-depth studies which add greatly to knowledge in this area. In addition, they each contain a set of clear and precise recommendations for action going forward. These set out very clearly practical solutions to the issues identified originally, and their implementation will be pursued vigorously by the Dublin Employment Pact. We commend these excellent studies to all agencies and organisations concerned with the development of a qualitatively effective local employment service and look forward to a positive response from policy makers to the recommendations they advance.

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Dublin Employment Pact

¹ E. Fitzgerald, B. Ingoldsby, F. Daly (Dept. Social Policy, UCD), *Solving Long-term Unemployment in Dublin – The Lessons from Policy Innovation* (DEP Policy Paper No. 2) (2000).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

This report documents the results of a research process commissioned by the Finglas/Cabra Partnership to inform future integrated service provision for people most excluded from the labour market in the Finglas and Cabra area. In doing this, the research set out to answer the following questions:

- What is currently known about the needs and circumstances of those most distant from the labour market within the two communities?
- To what extent have services been able to respond to those needs in an integrated way – bearing in mind different constraints and barriers?
- Are there any lessons from existing practice, or past experience, that might inform integrated service provision in the future – within the local context and beyond?

2. METHODS

The findings of this report are based on work undertaken in 2001. This involved:

- A review of literature - including relevant documents at local and national policy levels;
- Review of the client data base of the Local Employment Centres and interviews with staff. This was undertaken with full regard for client confidentiality;
- Workshops involving front office staff from a range of agencies including the then Department of Social, Community Family Affairs (DSCFA) and City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee;
- Individual interviews with local agency personnel.

3. FINDINGS

Circumstances of People Excluded from Labour Market Opportunities

In line with national trends, Finglas and Cabra have seen significant drops in the numbers on the live register over the past few years. Those who continue to be excluded from labour market opportunities can face a range of barriers, and often individuals can face multiple barriers where each is significant. These can relate to a number of factors including literacy problems, early school leaving, disability, mental health issues, addiction and problems arising from being an ex-offender. Labour market participation rates continue to be low among the Traveller community and barriers to entering employment have also been noted in relation to refugees and asylum seekers.

Integrated Approaches to date

A good deal of progress has been made in the Finglas and Cabra areas in terms of extending and deepening both processes and structures toward more integrated service provision to those excluded from labour market opportunities. These include:

- Formal partnership approaches to strategic planning and service delivery, such as the Finglas Cabra Partnership;

- Formal inter-agency co-ordination agreements which have been established at local level, such as the referral process between FAS and the DSCFA;
- Formal networking arrangements, such as the Local Employment Service Network which provides an important framework within which the mediation services provided by the Local Employment Centres can operate;
- Specific programmes developed jointly by different agencies and targeted at those most excluded from opportunities in the labour market. These include the Education and Skills for Industry Programme, the Finglas Gateway Initiative and the 'Departures' project.
- Ongoing informal contact between agency personnel around the placement of individual clients.

Summary of Lessons

There have been positive outcomes from these integrated approaches to date. These include:

- More information-sharing and improved effectiveness of referral.
- The establishment of new services which better reflect local needs;
- Opportunities for community sector involvement around articulating the needs of those most excluded;
- Critically, an increased recognition of the importance of inter-agency co-operation and the need for integrated responses to multiple needs.

While recognising the progress made, many challenges lie ahead in framing responses that can match the diverse needs of the most marginalised. Much can be learned from the experience to date on how to enhance integration in a way that more effectively meets the needs of those most excluded. These lessons can be summarised as follows:

- Identifying needs and appropriate services as well as evaluating the effectiveness of such services requires systematic and ongoing collection of information by all relevant agencies. It will not be sufficient, in the context of changing individual circumstances, to map out a long-term 'progression path' and then occasionally review progress along this path. This can lead to the development of services that are dated and no longer relevant to current needs. The challenge, rather, is to build the capacity between agencies to monitor, understand and interpret changing individual circumstances on an on-going basis.
- Given what is known about the barriers faced by the unemployed, it is clear that a broad set of agencies/services will need to be involved in the integrated process. Services identified in this respect include mainstream health services, drug rehabilitation services, housing providers and mental health services
- Integration does not require rigid structures but rather a process through which, as stated above, individual client needs can be monitored and interpreted on an on-going basis and, from this, services established or adapted accordingly. The precise structures or processes for establishing particular services or ensuring linkages can then be agreed on the basis of what has been found to be most effective for the task at hand.
- Integration needs to be co-ordinated – especially where rigid structures are not being proposed or implemented. Co-ordination in this respect requires designated personnel to support the process, freeing personnel from the participating services to implement, plan and review.
- It should also be stated that the most successful processes would seem to be those that are based on an open and transparent understanding of the goals and objectives of the participating agencies and a recognition of the operational

constraints they face. An understanding of what can be done at local level, and what may require action at national or policy level, is an important element in establishing feasible integrated initiatives rather than what have been described as well meaning 'wish lists'.

It is also important that provision for greater co-ordination and integration is made in the policy and practices of all those organisations and agencies relevant to the needs of people who are long-term unemployed. Important supports identified in this respect are:

- There is a need to provide the necessary resources for staff to engage with other agencies, both at an informal level and in more formalised local development structures. Supports identified include a recognition of the importance of engaging with other organisations in relevant job specifications and the inclusion of 'networking' and other inter-agency co-ordination skills in staff training.
- It is important that the lessons emerging from local co-ordination are taken aboard in policy and practice. Especially important in this respect, it has been suggested, is the development of mechanisms within key organisations which serve to link local experience to policy making structures at regional and national level.
- The integrated collection of information on the extent and nature of labour market exclusion, which has been identified as a key element in planning and evaluating the effectiveness of services, requires a resource commitment by all relevant agencies. Resources can relate to the development of agreed protocols and procedures for recording information (which can raise questions around confidentiality, for example in relation to identifying ethnic background, health status etc.) and staff and system costs for putting the agreed information systems into place.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with these findings, the main recommendation of this report is that the Finglas Cabra Partnership should be designated to build on the co-ordination work already conducted to date. Key elements of this work should include the following:

1. The first task should be around the co-ordination of more systematised collection of information on the needs of unemployed people in the area and on their progression through services.

The challenges involved in doing this are considerable and have implications beyond Finglas and Cabra. It is recommended therefore that a process for developing an integrated information system for Finglas/Cabra should be funded by the Dublin Employment Pact as part of a pilot project which can then draw out the resource and other implications for local, regional and national policy and practice in this area.²

2. Up to date and comprehensive information on the needs of unemployed people would in turn inform another key function of the Finglas Cabra Partnership; the facilitation of a periodic review process through which gaps in service provision could be identified and addressed by the relevant participating agencies. Such a

² A pilot study has begun (August 2002) in the Finglas/Cabra area, involving a range of agencies, which will collect this data on an ongoing basis for a two-month trial. The aim of the pilot is to assess the actual usefulness of such information and to gain an understanding of issues relating to its collection.

review process could comprise six-monthly meetings, which would be facilitated by the preparation of a report drawn from innovative data sources outlining the extent of *current* labour market disadvantage, the nature of such disadvantage and information on the progression of particular target groups of clients where relevant.

1. CONTEXT AND APPROACH TO THE STUDY

1.1 Context

A number of developments in national policy and practice are critically relevant in informing any approach to understanding integrated service responses at local level. These have significant implications for public service design and delivery in general, as well as for the design and delivery of specific interventions to address labour market disadvantage. Developments in this respect can be grouped under two key headings:

- An increasing awareness of the value of 'client' or 'customer'-centred approaches to service provision;
- Related to this, the acknowledged need for greater consultation, co-ordination and co-operation between and within government departments, statutory agencies and community/voluntary organisations.

A 'CLIENT-CENTRED' APPROACH TO SERVICE PROVISION

At the macro level, much of more recent orientation towards a 'customer' focus has been driven by the Strategic Management Initiative³ (SMI), designed to improve the effectiveness of public services. Guidelines issued to Government Departments as part of the Initiative were designed to increase capacity to identify and respond to the diverse needs of particular client groupings. The Guidelines, in this respect, state that:

"An essential first step is for each Government Department/Office to identify its own customers and clients and, where necessary, to segment customers in accordance with the types of services provided for them. Segmentation of customers is necessary in order to focus on the different customer groups and their particular requirements"

This more general trend has influenced the specific ways in which challenges associated with labour market disadvantage are interpreted and taken up. The development of the Local Employment Service (LES) is itself an example of the application of broader customer-centred policies to the challenges involved. In recommending a locally based response to long-term unemployment, the Task Force on Long-term Unemployment⁴ proposed that:

"Mainstream training provision should be flexible and adaptable to respond to local needs and to cater for the considerable differences that exist among the long-term unemployed, in terms of their future employment aspirations and needs."

While this comment focuses on training provision, a similar rationale is applied to the other progression services the LES is seeking to facilitate and influence. Indeed, it underpins the establishment and subsequent development of the Service itself.

Subsequent developments, furthermore, have reinforced the necessity of concentrated efforts toward deepening the understanding of the nature and complexity of client needs in relation to long-term unemployment. As total numbers

3 Government of Ireland, 1996

4 1995

decline, it has become more apparent – through intensifying efforts to address the needs of those still distanced from the labour market – that barriers to accessing opportunities are both varied and complex. Understanding the range and complexity of needs – with the individual client or customer at the centre of this process – has been increasingly acknowledged as the key to delivering more effective responses (NESF, 2000:45).

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SERVICE DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Movement towards the design and delivery of effective responses to client or customer needs in an *integrated* way is evident in a broad range of policy areas – most notably through the Strategic Management Initiative itself. However, it becomes especially relevant within policy and interventions in the field of social inclusion.

Influenced significantly by EU social and regional policy, the concept of ‘multidimensionality’ was at the centre of a new conceptual framework affecting the way poverty came to be understood and addressed. This was based on the premise that the causes and effects of poverty are ‘multi-faceted’ and are evident in a whole range of socio-economic circumstances. Key examples of how this principle has underpinned both policy and practice include:

- The establishment of the County/City Development Boards following a recommendation from the Government *Task Force on Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems*. At the time of writing, the Boards were in the process of developing strategies designed to promote and encourage co-operation and co-ordination among key local actors (including statutory, social partners and community interests) around local development, with an emphasis on tackling social exclusion.
- The Integrated Services Process (ISP)⁵. The process seeks to ‘improve customer service, maximise the use of resources and *enhance the integration of services* [our italics]’. The emphasis on movement towards ‘a single local contact point for customers... which would be the gateway to the full range of social services’⁶ is especially relevant in this respect. The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* committed the government to learning from the experience of the Integrated Services Process, stating that this ;

“...will be taken on board in policy development and will be used to inform the delivery of public services to communities in disadvantaged areas”⁷.

The RAPID Programme has continued on from this Process. Eight areas of Dublin have been included in this Programme, including Finglas (West and South) and Ballymun.

- The experiences of *Area-Based Partnership Programmes* also demonstrate the contribution of co-ordinated and integrated approaches to addressing more complex issues pertaining to social and economic disadvantage. The local community-based approach to tackling social exclusion and disadvantage has informed a range of interventions across a broad spectrum of services and development programmes. This has resulted in what could be termed a new

5 Following Government approval for an Integrated Social Services System in 1993, and of an inter-departmental committee report in 1996.

6 *Integrated Social Services System: Building Links* Interdepartmental Report, Government Publications, Dublin 1996.

7 *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness; Framework III for Social Inclusion and Equality*, p83.

cross-sectoral infrastructure which has become the context for planning and implementing more effective local responses.

- The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) is itself established upon an acknowledgement at policy level of the inter-relationship of the various factors contributing to poverty and disadvantage. Setting out a number of goals to be achieved over a ten-year period under the themes of unemployment, educational disadvantage, urban disadvantage and rural poverty, the NAPS provides a framework within which a more comprehensive, inclusive and effective approach to service delivery can be designed.
- Movement towards integrated service delivery has not been confined to the statutory sector. The *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector*, published in September 2000, outlines a number of new mechanisms for more extensive and effective co-operation between the statutory and the community/ voluntary sectors, as well as measures to build the capacity of the latter

These and other similar initiatives are based upon the recognition that, just as the causes of exclusion are complex and multi-faceted the response must also implicate a range of different institutional stakeholders if it is to be effective. Stakeholders, as the previous Section indicates, clearly includes those who are currently excluded from a range of social and economic activities.

If the development of integrated responses represents a feature of social inclusion policy and practice generally, then it is arguably even more critical in developing effective responses to long-term unemployment. The increased emphasis on 'active' labour market measures has, for instance, led to greater co-operation between FAS and the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs. Such co-operation was formalised with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 1998 which commits both organisations to a joint programme covering a range of areas designed to promote access to employment. The most integrated element of this co-operation has, to date, been the implementation of Guidelines 1 and 2 of the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP), which involves the systematic referral by the DSCFA of various categories of the unemployed to FAS Employment Services. Both organisations have also been key statutory players in the Local Area Partnership Companies and in the Local Employment Service.

Integration has, in fact, been the corner stone upon which the Local Employment Service delivery mechanisms were built. This is most notably reflected in the involvement of different stakeholders around the pursuit of particular service objectives. Namely;

- Social Partner representative (especially employers) input in relation to matching training and other services to actual labour market requirements and opportunities.
- Community and Voluntary sector representatives articulating the needs and circumstances of target groups – including the barriers faced in accessing employment support and other relevant services.
- Key statutory agencies ensuring that services provided match both the stage and complexity of client needs – in very targeted and practical ways.

Successful delivery of Local Employment Services also, of course, implies the need for integration between these functions and not just within each.

1.2 Approach to this Study

This study represents an attempt to explore how both dimensions outlined above (client-centredness and integration) interact and interface in one particular geographical area. That is, the integration of services as a way of addressing the needs of those most excluded from labour market opportunities in Finglas and Cabra.

KEY QUESTIONS

This research has consequently set out to establish;

- What is currently known about the needs and circumstances of those most distant from the labour market within the two communities?
- To what extent have services been able to respond to these needs in an integrated way – bearing in mind different constraints and barriers?
- Are there any lessons from existing practice or past experience that might inform integrated service provision in the future – within the local context and beyond?

A related piece of work is currently being undertaken by the WRC for the Ballymun Partnership. This will complement the work of this study, given that it will provide a more macro-oriented 'mapping' of how a number of relevant and key agencies currently co-operate and interact. Reference is made to study where appropriate.

TASKS

Findings presented here are based upon:

- A Review of relevant literature in the area including research currently being carried out for the Finglas/Cabra Partnership (FCP) to inform its future outreach strategy;
- Review of LEC client database (with due consideration of client confidentiality);
- Interviews with LEC staff, including Mediators, the Jobs Club Facilitator and Employment Liaison Officer;
- A workshop involving front office staff from a number of agencies including the CDVEC, DSCFA and the FCP;
- Individual consultations have been held with the Manager of the ICTU Centre for the Unemployed, the Manager of FAS Employment Services in Finglas, the Manager of FAS Community Services, the DSCFA Job Facilitator for Cabra, a Community Welfare Officer operating in the Cabra area and the volunteer worker with the Cabra Aftercare Project for Young Offenders.

2. CURRENT PROFILE AND NEEDS OF LONG-TERM OF UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

2.1 Profile of the Long-Term Unemployed: National Context

Labour market conditions in Ireland have been radically transformed over the past decade. Unemployment has fallen from a rate of 15.1% in 1992 to 3.7% in the first quarter of 2001. The fall in long-term unemployment has been even more significant: falling from a rate of 8.5% in 1992 to 1.5% in 2001 (CSO, 2001).

Despite these extremely positive developments, it is clear that some people have not been able to take advantage of the labour market opportunities arising. The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), in its Review of the Local Employment Service (2000), found that clients now presenting to the LES and FAS and to the Employment Support Services of the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs (DSCFA) have greater needs and are harder to place than earlier clients (2000:46).

In examining barriers to employment take-up, LES clients interviewed by the NESF Review team noted that the skills or qualification requirements for many of the jobs arising were too high or else the pay was too low for the jobs to be attractive. Hourly rates of £2.00 to £2.50 per hour were quoted. Another point which emerged from their consultations was the particular disadvantage faced by men in their forties and fifties with low skills and few qualifications who felt that there was no way back to the workforce for them and that employers would not hire them (2000:46).

Similar issues were identified in a recent study by the Economic and Social Research Institute entitled "*Employability and its Relevance for the Management of the Live Register*" (Barrett et al, 2001). Using Labour Force Survey Data, the authors show that age, duration of unemployment, low educational attainment, childcare responsibilities and ill-health were all associated with reduced 'employability' (2001:25).

Analysing returns from the referral process under the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP), the ESRI study also identifies the continuance of extreme labour market disadvantage. This especially relates to those people referred by the DSCFA to FAS and deemed 'not progression ready'. Comprising up to 10% of all those referred under the NEAP, the 'not progression ready' are assessed by FAS as having such severe difficulties that it is not possible to put them forward for work or training programmes. Among the reasons cited for putting people into this category are drug abuse, serious illness and personal problems (20001: 44).

The report cautions against assuming that disadvantage is limited to those deemed 'not progression ready'. The authors state that some people with employability difficulties, such as poor literacy, are not included in this group so a focus on the 'not progression ready' may lead to an understatement of the problem (2001:2).

In the conclusion to their report, the ESRI authors recommend the introduction of profiling as a method for identifying individuals for participation in programmes. The process they propose is to develop a model that would, through sample analysis, allow for the identification of the significance of various factors in reducing employability. Officers in DSCFA local offices could then use the model to estimate the likelihood of an unemployed person becoming long-term unemployed. It is

recommended that such profiling be started on a pilot basis and extended thereafter (2001:70).⁸

2.2 Profile of the Long-Term Unemployed: Finglas/Cabra

In the absence of up to date census figures, it is not possible to establish current rates of unemployment and long-term unemployment in the Finglas and Cabra areas with any degree of accuracy. There have, however, been quite marked reductions in the numbers on the Live Register for the DSCFA Finglas office and the Navan Road office, which covers people from Cabra in addition to people from Dublin 15 (which includes Blanchardstown).

The significance of these reductions is apparent from Table 1, showing a 72% reduction in the numbers on the Live Register in Finglas between 1996 and 2001. This is higher than the 65% drop in numbers for Dublin as a whole between the same dates. The drop in numbers is lower for those signing on at the Navan Road office, although it is difficult to establish precisely how this relates to Cabra in the absence of specific postal district figures.

Table 1: Numbers on the Live Register in Selected DSCFA Offices (1996 and 2001)

Local Office	April 1996	April 2001	% change
Finglas (D.11)	4,856	1,344	(-72%)
Navan Road (D.7 and D.15)	10,157	4,528	(-55%)
Dublin	90,030	31,590	(-65%)

It should be noted that the Live Register figures only give a partial account of unemployment as they do not include persons seeking work who are not entitled to an unemployment related welfare payment or credit. Nevertheless, the figures would suggest that there have been substantial reductions in unemployment in both areas over the past five years in line with experience more generally.

Also in line with experience from elsewhere has been the fact that while people who were relatively easy to place have found work, many of those now presenting to local employment and welfare support agencies face multiple disadvantages in accessing employment. DSCFA staff from both the Navan Road and Finglas local offices discussed this trend at the research workshop. Aspects of disadvantage identified included addiction, literacy and numeracy difficulties and the particular problems faced by ex-offenders. Family breakdown was also identified as an important issue, which had a particular impact on young people. In some cases, young people presenting for social welfare payments had left home due to various family problems and were either homeless or temporarily living with friends.

The Finglas/Cabra Local Employment Service Network (LESN) Local Employment Centres (LEC's) have identified similar issues with respect to their client base and the target groups they have sought to engage with through the service. Issues in this respect include the following:

⁸ The ESR study provides a comprehensive analysis of the merits and shortcomings of different methods for obtaining more accurate information on the circumstances of the unemployed and the risk factors associated with long-term unemployment. In addition to profiling, other methods looked at were characteristic screening and interview based identification.

1. *Literacy/numeracy.* More than 50% of those clients who registered since January of 2001 (276 people in all) had some literacy or numeracy difficulties.
2. *Lone parenting.* Sixteen per cent of clients registered in 2001 were in receipt of the One Parent Family Payment. Lack of Childcare has been identified as a key barrier to take-up by lone parents of various training and employment options. Also significant has been the 'benefits trap' whereby take-up of employment and training can lead to the loss of benefits such as rent allowance. It is perhaps not surprising that lone parents tend to be somewhat over-represented on Community Employment schemes as they do not lose these benefits by participating, and the hours are flexible enough to fit in with childcare needs.
3. *Disability.* Twenty three per cent of new clients in the LEC's were in receipt of a disability payment. Disability in this respect covered a range of impairments, some physical and some relating to mental health such as depression. Barriers to progression identified included accessibility (covering transport, building access etc.), prejudice and negative perceptions of a person's actual ability. Isolation and low self-esteem were also identified as particularly acute problems for some people presenting.
4. *Addiction.* Three percent of new clients were identified as having an addiction problem, principally drug related although alcohol dependency also featured as an issue for some. The capacity of some drug users, particularly those not undergoing treatment, to access employment or training can be severely restricted. Drug use is such a barrier, in fact, that some people interviewed in the course of the research suggested that it might be more appropriate if some drug users received a disability payment rather than unemployment assistance which assumes that the person is available for - or capable of - work. Given these circumstances, the need for labour market progression services that are linked to ongoing health care and rehabilitation have been identified as critically important.
5. *Early school leaving.* Nine percent of new clients in 2001 were young early school leavers below the age of 18 years. Particular concern was expressed about the needs of such young people, given the very clear correlation between low educational attainment and risk of future low paid work or unemployment. As noted in the LESN Plan 2001-2003, a survey of schools in the Finglas and Cabra areas found that 10% of pupils could be considered 'at risk' in this respect. Criteria for measuring 'at risk' included as poor attendance, lack of punctuality, low level of personal well-being, low reading age, poor numeracy skills, siblings who left school early, behaviour difficulties, aggressive behaviour and family difficulties (2000:22).
6. *Issues relating to Travellers.* The problems faced by Travellers are well documented in the LESN Plan, which identifies a range of issues or problems faced. These include low levels of formal educational attainment, literacy difficulties and, for young Travellers, very high rates of early school leaving. For cultural reason many Travellers do not have an interest in accessing mainstream employment and it is interesting in this respect that while many Travellers live in the Finglas/Cabra area, only 1% of new LEC clients came from this community. The LESN Plan has noted these problems and, in particular, the need for tailored responses, including measures to support traditional Traveller economic activities through, for example, new social economy initiatives.
7. *Issues relating to Ex-offenders.* Two per cent of new LEC clients were ex-offenders. Perhaps the most significant difficulty such clients faced in accessing employment was that employers were in many cases reluctant to take them on as a result of their having a criminal record. However, as noted in the LESN Plan, many ex-offenders can also face a range of other difficulties, including literacy

problems and low levels of educational attainment. The Plan also notes that many ex-offenders can be reluctant to engage with local services (2000:18).

8. *Ethnic minorities.* Three per cent of new LEC clients in 2001 were identified as either refugees or asylum seekers. Needs identified for these people include language training, specific skills training, supported integration (for example around housing, social networks and so on) and counselling interventions for those who may have experienced/witnessed traumatic events in their countries of origin.

These points give some insight into the various and multiple problems faced by those who are most distant from emerging labour market opportunities in Finglas and Cabra. However, it does not necessarily provide a precise indication of the extent of such problems or the exact numbers comprising the various target groups most likely to experience such problems⁹. The most comprehensive information available in this respect is from the 1996 Census, which, as stated above, does not capture the rapid changes that have taken place in labour market conditions.

Nevertheless, census data does show that Finglas and Cabra are characterised by aspects of disadvantage that will not necessarily have changed with falling unemployment. For example, Finglas North and South and Cabra West were identified as some of the most deprived areas in the State, taking factors such as educational attainment, occupational profiles and housing/environmental conditions into account (LESN Plan). Such levels of general disadvantage would indicate the various barriers of employment take-up identified are still likely to apply to a significant number of people in both areas.

9 Lack of comprehensive and up to date local data has been identified as a particular problem for Partnership Companies in relation to planning, monitoring and evaluating interventions to reduce unemployment and stimulate employment at local level. A recent project undertaken for the Ballymun Partnership by Tom Ronayne of the Work Research Centre (Ballymun Employment Report 2K) was designed to address these difficulties. The project involved a large scale survey of people in Ballymun designed to capture data comparable to labour measures used in the Census of Population (of which only figures for 1996 are available) and the Quarterly National Household Survey, which does not allow for analysis at local level.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO DATE

The OECD defines service integration as a 'process aimed at developing an integrated framework within which ongoing programmes can be rationalised and enriched to do a better job of making services available within existing commitments and resources' (OECD, 1996:22). At one end of the spectrum, processes for inter-agency co-ordination or integration can be extremely limited and at best simply involve informal exchanges of information between individual personnel in different agencies around common clients and issues, with no formal protocols or resources set aside to support such contacts.¹⁰ At the other end of the spectrum, fully integrated services can emerge where traditional service boundaries are removed and new organisational structures and working practice are put in place (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2001:65).

A good deal of progress has been made in the Finglas and Cabra areas in terms of extending and deepening processes for integration of services for the long-term unemployed along the spectrum just outlined. While this development has been clearly influenced by national policy and funding provision, it has also been a bottom-up process as individual personnel in various local agencies have sought to engage with other organisations relevant to their own client needs. The role of the community sector has also been important in this respect, not just in articulating the multiple needs of the disadvantaged, but also in seeking to ensure that services are provided in ways that are relevant to these needs and accessible to those who need them.

In this context various processes for more effective integration and co-ordination with regard to the long-term unemployed can be observed in both areas. These include the following:

3.1 Formal Partnership Approaches to the Strategic Planning and Service Delivery

The most significant example of this form of integration process is the Finglas/Cabra Partnership (FCP), which has a Board comprising social partner and community sector interests at local level. The Partnership Board also includes political representatives – two T.D.s and a local Councillor. In addition to the main Board, the Partnership also has six committees and a range of Fora for different target groups.

Co-ordination and integration of services to meet the needs of groups identified as being particularly disadvantaged (especially the long-term unemployed) are key objectives of the FCP, as set out in its Area Action Plan (2000-2006). In line with this objective, the cross sectoral composition of the FCP Board and sub-committees of the Board is intended to provide the basis for the design of innovative programmes and the co-ordination of services more generally (which includes taking on board the lessons learned from innovative and experimental provision).

¹⁰ The more limited areas of co-ordination and integration within the LES was noted in Review undertaken by the National and Economic Social Forum (2000:91). In some cases, the review team noted, different agencies barely spoke to one another and in others any contact or co-ordination that did happen tended to rely on local personalities rather than more formal organisational protocols.

3.2 Formal Networking Arrangements for Strategic Planning and Service Delivery

The FCP established a Local Employment Service Network Working Group in 1995 to prepare a plan for a Local Employment Service in the area. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment accepted the plan and a contract for its implementation was given to the FCP. The service has a number of key objectives, notably;

- To provide one-to-one mediation and assistance to the long-term unemployed, and from this referral to appropriate services and employers. Two local Employment Centres (LECs) - the operational name for this service is 'Options' - were established to undertake these functions; one in Cabra and one in Finglas.
- To help co-ordinate local services to ensure that the necessary provision is in place to progress people towards employment. The framework for doing this is the Local Employment Services Network (LESN). Members of the LESN now include the two LECs, FAS, the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee, IBEC, Youth Services, the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs, the local ICTU Centre for the Unemployed and the Community Welfare section of the North Regional Health Authority.

The FCP has overall responsibility for the LESN. Specific lines of responsibility however, are as follows:

- The Services to the Unemployed Committee of the FCP. This comprises personnel from member agencies of the Network and has responsibility for determining strategic direction and any policy issues arising¹¹;
- The Finance and Administration Committee of the FCP has responsibility for staffing issues in the LEC's.
- The LESN Co-ordinator has day to day responsibility for management of the LEC's and for any more general co-ordination necessary to implement the LESN Plan.

The LESN is now in its second planning period (2001-2003) which was agreed by constituent members following a local consultation process undertaken in 2000. As in the first planning period, co-ordination of those services necessary to support the long-term unemployed is a key objective of the plan. The plan has also expanded the range of target groups to reflect both the changes in the local operational environment and to address gaps in provision identified in the earlier planning period. Additional groups identified in this respect include ex-offenders, ethnic minorities, substance abusers, Travellers and people with disabilities.

In addition to formal management structures, an LESN Staff Network Group was established in 1996, which involved staff from constituent LEC's who worked face-to-face with unemployed people. At the time of writing, the Group had not met for some time. However, a Focus Group representing frontline workers in the Cabra area has continued to meet. This development, it has been suggested, reflects the more limited structures or networking arrangements in Cabra than in Finglas and hence the necessity of keeping this form of networking arrangement in existence.

11 It should be noted that the LESN committee and the Partnership's Services to the Unemployed committee are one and the same group. According to Partnership personnel, this has reduced duplication and increased effectiveness in the work.

The Cabra Focus Group is facilitated by a staff member from the LEC. The Group provides an opportunity for staff in the different agencies to share information and to raise issues of concern. Training sessions have also been organised by the facilitator on emerging issues including the needs of asylum seekers and refugees and people with disabilities.

3.3 Formal Inter-Agency Service Co-ordination Agreements

NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT ACTION PLAN

As noted in the introduction, the Memorandum of Understanding signed by FAS and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (DSCFA), commits both organisations to certain areas of joint work. The most significant in this respect has been the implementation of Guidelines 1 and 2 of the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP), which involves the systematic referral by the DSCFA of various categories of the unemployed to FAS Employment Services.

The implementation of the NEAP has involved close inter-action between both organisations at national, regional and local level (including in Finglas and Cabra). It has involved the designation of specific staff to support the referral and placement process. The development of an NEAP Tracking System at national level has also been important. This sits on top of the existing information systems of the DSCFA and FAS. Designated staff at local level in both organisations have access to this tracking system in order to monitor the progress of clients.

FAS AND THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

The LECs work closely with FAS locally (including FAS Community Services, Employment Services and the FAS Training Centre) in the placement and referral of unemployed people. As in other LES areas, mediators in the LEC's in Finglas and Cabra also have access to the FAS Central Data Base (CDB) which provides a range of information including information on job vacancies.

Linkages between the LECs and FAS have become more formalised since the establishment of the National Employment Service, which incorporates FAS and the LES. A National Operational Agreement was put in place which sets out the parameters and guidelines for Area Based Partnerships and FAS in relation to the LES. Issues covered in the agreement include a specification of the categories of unemployed to be targeted by the LES and FAS respectively and procedures for referral and information sharing between both organisations. With regard to the latter, specific guidelines are also outlined for referral of clients to the LES under Guidelines 1 and 2 of the National Employment Action Plan.

The various procedures and guidelines have been put in place in Finglas/Cabra through local agreement between FAS and the LECs.

3.4 Specific Programme Development and Implementation

The partnership and other networking arrangements presented above have provided a very important basis for different agencies and sectoral interests to come together to develop and implement specific programmes and interventions around the needs of the long-term unemployed. The structures or processes developed for the design and implementation of these measures have in turn allowed for more structured integration and co-ordination between various local agencies around the needs of particular target groups. Example here include;

- The Education and Skills for Industry Programme (ESI). The ESI Programme is aimed at unemployed people in the Finglas and Cabra areas with few or obsolete skills or training. Operational management is provided by a group made up of local service providers including the FCP, CDVEC, FAS, and the DSCFA.
- The Finglas Gateway Initiative was developed “to provide identified early school leavers in the Finglas area with a series of flexible tailor-made interventions that will assist them in making informed decisions regarding their progression options in a youth-friendly atmosphere”. The Initiative is managed by a Steering Committee that includes representatives from FAS Community Services, Community Training Workshops (Finglas West and Tolka Valley), Fingal ICTU Centre for the Unemployed, Finglas Youth Development Project, Gardai, Finglas Youth Services, Probation and Welfare Services, Finglas/Cabra Drugs Task Force, St. Paul’s School, Finglas Cabra Partnership, Department of Social, community and Family Affairs and the Village Project.

Other examples of joint programmes include Departures (also aimed at young early school leavers) and the position of Literacy Development Outreach Worker (who works from the LECs) and is supported by a network of local agencies including the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee.

Local networking has also allowed for the adaptation of national programmes to meet specific local needs. For example, the Job Initiative in the Finglas/Cabra area (part of the national Job Initiative programme) has been targeted at people over 40 years old. The initiative at local level, in which the LEC’s and FAS have been central players, has also had a strong emphasis on developing a ‘client-centred’ approach, by building the jobs around the needs of clients themselves in terms of the work they wish to pursue.

3.5 On-going Informal Contacts

Informal contact between personnel from different agencies in the area continues to be an important means of co-ordinating services on a day-to-day basis. As noted, the more formal arrangements for networking and service development have been greatly facilitated by informal contacts and good working relationships developed between personnel from different agencies at local level. New structures and programmes have also increased the level of daily contact between agencies around the placement of clients. LEC staff, for example, noted very frequent and positive contacts with FAS and the DSCFA arising under programmes such as the National Employment Action Plan and within the context of the agreed Operational Framework for the Employment Service.

4. LESSONS EMERGING: FACILITATING FACTORS AND CONSTRAINTS

An important starting point in the discussion on integration is to acknowledge what has been achieved through the level of interaction between different agencies and sectoral interests described in the previous section. Positive outcomes in this respect include:

Information Sharing

Agency personnel consulted noted a considerable improvement in the information available on the types of services in place locally to meet the diverse needs of unemployed people. This has encouraged much greater linkages between the relevant services. For example, DSCFA staff in both the Finglas and Navan Road offices were able to access lists of services relevant to the needs of many of the clients presenting, and in some cases had well established procedures for referral. This, it was noted, was a considerable advance from what was in place some years ago.

Various networking opportunities were considered to have played an extremely important part in this development, and the opportunities for meeting personnel from other agencies allowed for ongoing updates on services being developed and for the establishment of better referral mechanisms. Participants in the Cabra Focus Group for example, noted the value of having guest speakers from the National Disability Authority and SPIRASI, an agency dealing with the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

New Service Development

An equally important outcome of inter-agency co-operation has been the development of new services or programmes relevant to the needs of those more distant from the labour market. Mediation provided by the LECs was considered to be an important new service for long-term unemployed people who needed more intensive and individual assistance, and the support of the member agencies of the Local Employment Services Network provided an important means of linking mediation to necessary services. Also mentioned was greater provision around literacy, and the development of more targeted and locally relevant programmes such as the Gateway Project and the Job Initiative as developed at local level.

Involving the Community

More targeted and accessible services, it has been suggested, have been facilitated by increased opportunities for interaction between various agencies and community sector groups. On the one hand, such interaction has allowed for the different needs and barriers faced by unemployed people to be articulated in the local planning process. On the other, such interaction also allowed for greater awareness on the part of community interests of the constraints faced by different agency personnel operating at local level.

Recognising the Importance of Integration

An important general outcome, with particular significance for the future, has been the recognition among various personnel of the importance of integration. As

one person put it, “there is much greater recognition that no one agency has all the solutions, and integration increases the effectiveness of all our work”.

A very significant factor in achieving these positive outcomes, would appear to be the good personal working relationships that have existed between personnel from the key local agencies in Finglas and Cabra – which has not always been the case in all LESN areas, according to the NESF Review of the Local Employment Service (NESF, 2000:91). Good working relationships have both facilitated and been further enhanced by the various structures and processes established to meet the needs of unemployed people over the past few years. Positive personal relationships have also facilitated a key aspect of service co-ordination; informal contact on a day-to-day basis which has allowed for flexibility and responsiveness around the needs of individual clients.

The challenge ahead, it has been suggested, is to move provision for integration to a new level where it is firmly built into the formal working practices of all organisations relevant to meeting the needs of the long-term unemployed. Much can be learned from the experience to date in seeking to move to this next level – these issues are explored in more detail below.

4.1 Information on Needs

As noted in section 2, there are considerable limitations in the information available on the circumstances, needs and progression through services of the long-term unemployed in Finglas and Cabra. This does present a significant barrier to more effective integrated provision. In particular:

The Potential for Unrealistic Expectations

It has been suggested that a lack of information on (or indeed a shared understanding of) problems faced by unemployed people has led to undue expectations as to what can be achieved for particularly excluded groups. Substance abusers for example and in particular those not receiving any form of treatment, may not be currently capable of working or accessing training. Without an ‘holistic’ understanding among all involved agencies of the diversity of such needs, including accurate assessments of what drug users might be expected to achieve when in the process of medical rehabilitation, training or employment service interventions may be inappropriate and ineffective.

Lack of on-going Knowledge of Needs and Progression

It has also been suggested that the most accurate assessment of need is one that has the capacity to measure and understand the complexity of factors blocking progress for a range of different target groups at any given time. This is clearly important as needs and circumstances can change very quickly, and a particular intervention may not be appropriate if it is based on dated assessments. In other words, it will not be sufficient in the context of changing individual circumstances to map out a longer-term ‘progression path’ and review progress along this. The challenge is rather to build the capacity between agencies to monitor, understand and interpret changing individual circumstances on an on-going basis.

Involving Other Stakeholders

Given what is known about the characteristics of those now unemployed, it is clearly difficult to tackle labour market exclusion without combating the broader set of social and economic factors that contribute to it. This suggests that the integrated process for the long-term unemployed will need to encompass a broader set of institutional

actors than may have been the case before (indeed considerable progress has been made in this respect). However, convincing a wider set of organisations, who may have had no previous links with labour market interventions, to get involved in the integrated process does often require a concrete demonstration of need or indeed, benefit to that organisation and the services it provides. For example, the case for drawing in mental health services to the integrated process around tackling long-term unemployment is likely to be strengthened if information is available on the numbers of unemployed who have such a barrier to employment. Information on the role that employment or training might play or have played in assisting them to cope with their condition is also useful in this respect.

Difficulty when Evaluating

Lack of ongoing information on needs and circumstances also presents a significant barrier to evaluating the effectiveness of interventions. It is clearly difficult, for example, to establish the effectiveness of training or other forms of employment support targeted at people with disabilities if there is no information on their precise numbers in the area, the types of services they are accessing and the outcomes for them of accessing such services. It is thus difficult to assess whether the intervention (or the integrated intervention) is reaching those who need it or to identify gaps in provision or highlight those interventions that are most effective.

Information as a Resource

While the points above have been raised as barriers to integration, lack of information can also be considered as an effect of the limitations of inter-agency co-ordination. In particular:

- The ongoing collection of information on client progression can be considered as a key resource commitment by agencies participating in the integrated process. This has, for example, been recognised in the implementation of the National Employment Action Plan where considerable resources have been put in place to establish a 'Tracking System' to monitor client progress. FAS has also provided support for the LEC's in terms of monitoring progress through the various services accessed following mediation. The LEC's have also more recently been collecting information that would allow for an identification of key 'target group' categories of the long-term unemployed accessing their service. These, as noted in section 2, include people with disabilities, early school leavers, Travellers and so on.

With the exception of the LEC data base however, there is no systematic collection of information on target group categories accessing local services. Live Register figures for example tell us nothing about the numbers of Travellers, which make it difficult to accurately assess unemployment levels or progress to employment among that community.

- Without the involvement of a wider set of stakeholders in the integrated process (for example, mainstream health services etc.) it is also difficult to establish indicators of progression which could then be collected in a systematic way. For example, it has been mentioned that training interventions for drug users (such as the Millennium Project) have helped in the 'stabilisation' process. It is not possible to establish this effect in any concrete way however, without some assessment of how to measure such stabilisation and relate it to the intervention in question (for example, by asking drug users what might have helped them).

4.2 Structures and Process¹²

A clear point of general agreement among most of those consulted is that integration does not require more structures to make it happen. In fact, many people expressed some concern about the number of committees and management groups on which they were required to participate. This can put them under considerable pressure when trying at the same time to engage in their core work.

It was suggested instead that much could be done to enhance existing structures and processes by learning from experiences to date. The issues emerging include the following;

Building Trust

People can be reluctant to engage in local structures or processes for co-ordination if they feel they are going to be criticised or gaps in their service held up in a very personalised way. An important part of any inclusive process therefore, is building up trust and confidence. Building up this trust can take time and was seen to be most effective when participants in the process were open about their own organisations objectives and the organisational constraints they operated under.

The challenges to building up such trust should not be underestimated. Processes for inter-agency co-ordination at local level can often present participants with a conflict of loyalties, particularly if it is apparent that a particular policy of their own organisation is causing a problem at local level. Do they defend such a policy or can they support the local process or structure in seeking to have such a policy changed?

Getting the Business Done

The form of structures or more informal process that is established and the number of people involved should be measured against what is feasible or necessary to get the business done. For example, a large attendance at the Cabra Focus Group was considered effective when the business at hand was simply the exchange of information on services available or what has been described as 'putting the names on faces'. On the other hand very specific tasks were often more successfully done through small working groups comprising those participants most relevant to the particular programme being developed.

Involving the Community

The involvement of community groups, particularly those closest to the long-term unemployed, has been important in framing integrated solutions that actually meet the needs of the most excluded. Such involvement, it has been suggested, needs resources, including training for those who will not have the same day-to-day familiarity with operational issues as might be the case for statutory representatives.

Demonstrating Effectiveness

An overriding factor in terms of success of any process is that it is seen to 'bear fruit'. In other words, agency personnel are most likely to engage in a process when it is seen to actually address issues that arise in their work. On the other hand,

12. By structure we mean a framework within which actions take place, while process can be defined as the way such actions are carried out. For example, a board of management might be the structure for the development and implementation of a project while the process is how the board actually works in practice.

structures or processes for integration can be devalued if they are perceived to be unfocused or mere 'talking shops'.

Balancing Formal and Informal Contact

A final challenge relates to the capacity to build on the very good informal personal relationships established between personnel from different local agencies. The aim here should be to maximise the benefits of informal contacts between agencies on a day-to-day level in terms of responsiveness and flexibility around the needs of individual unemployed people. The dangers to be avoided however, were considered twofold;

- On the one hand there should not be an over-reliance on personal as opposed to organisational contacts. If good informal contacts are simply based on a particular individual then the benefits can be diminished when that individual leaves.
- On the other, there is a need to ensure that contacts do not become so formalised that the benefits associated with informality are lost.

4.3 What can be done at local level

Adapting services to meet local needs can be constrained by the operational context of various agencies operating at local level. The DSCFA or FAS, for example, operate within a national organisational framework and aspects of service delivery such as qualification requirements for social welfare schemes or entry and payment criteria for certain training programmes are set at national level. As a result, certain anomalies that might arise in relation to such schemes cannot be immediately altered at local level. An example identified was the barrier to progression presented by the more favourable benefits structures in place for lone parents to participate in Community Employment schemes rather than in other training programmes which might have a much stronger labour market focus.

Within this operational context, it is probably not surprising that:

- Some of the most successful examples of integration referred to by those interviewed have been around what Ronayne (2001) has described as "service delivery type issues". In other words, it has been easier to increase linkages between existing services - for example through exchanges of information on services and the development of referral mechanisms - where progress is immediately possible and impact discernible.
- On the other hand, it has been much more difficult to design new integrated services, many of which are not within the power of local agency personnel to deliver (or not in the short-term). As such, the most significant progress in terms of service design in this respect has been in the joint development and delivery of specific non-mainstream programmes such as those outlined in the previous section.

These points raise important questions about how far integration can be taken at local level without some mechanism for linking local experience to policy-making structures at national and regional level. Of particular concern in this instance is that while local development structures have led to the design and implementation of innovative programmes, these can remain fragmented and the lessons not translated into mainstream service provision.

4.4 Organisational Support

A key point emerging from the research is that co-ordinating or integrating services needs to be resourced if it is to be effective. Issues identified in this regard are as follows;

Resourcing Participation

Participation in local co-ordination structures can take up a great deal of time and for most people this must be done side-by-side with other organisational duties. Without sufficient support, either the person is put under significant strain or the co-ordination process itself is negatively affected.

Another issue identified is that engaging with other organisations requires personal capacity and specific skills. As noted already, a significant factor in the success of inter-agency co-operation in Finglas and Cabra to date has been the personal orientation and capacity of individuals to engage with personnel from other agencies in a very productive way. Such skills and capacities, it has been suggested, will need to be acknowledged and built into the job specifications of agency personnel in order to enhance the capacity of their organisations to support more integrated service provision. The required skills should correspond to a broader organisational plan around co-ordination and co-operation and provide for the necessary skills and capacities to engage in informal ongoing contact as well as engaging in more formal and specialised inter-agency programmes and service provision.

Resourcing the Process

The actual process of co-ordination doesn't just happen, but requires resources and direction if it is to continue. This is clear from Finglas and Cabra where the first co-ordination efforts began on an informal basis as different agency personnel came together to discuss issues of mutual concern. Deepening this process, however, has been facilitated by the resources available to the FCP to support such co-ordination. The Cabra Focus Group for example, has been facilitated and supported by one of the mediators in the Cabra LEC. This includes the provision of secretarial support to the group and follow-up support in acting on agreed joint work.

Translating Results of Inter-Agency Contact into Organisational Practice

At a broader level however, the value of participating in local co-ordination processes will be lost if it is not translated into the practices of the participating organisations. For example:

- With regard to co-ordinating existing services, once the connections have been made through local networking processes, information and referral mechanisms will need to be put in place and updated on an on-going basis. When this is not done, when an individual leaves an organisation or moves to a different area of work within it the knowledge built up (i.e. knowledge of services available, who to contact and so on) often leaves with them.

As already noted, it has been suggested that the skills and capacities necessary to engage with other agencies should also be built into personnel policy and practice if the capacity of an organisation to engage in joint work is to be maximised and sustained. This has implications not just for job specifications but also associated staff support, including staff training.

- Similar issues apply to service design, where an organisation has been involved in the design and delivery of an integrated project at local level. Without some mechanism to translate the lessons learned into broader service practice, then the value of the project will be lost. The issues identified as to what can be changed locally and what will need to be challenged at a higher policy level in the organisation is of obvious importance. In this respect, it has been suggested that internal vertical lines of communication and integration within key organisations will ultimately be critical in order to support effective 'horizontal' integration at local level.

An example of the value of such a vertical line of communication has been the development of a training course on the needs of asylum seekers by the DSCFA for Job Facilitators at national level. This arose following positive feedback from the Cabra Job Facilitator to the Department at national level on the value of the training session on this issue, which had been organised by the Cabra focus Group and delivered by SPIRASI.

A final point in relation to resources concerns planning and evaluation. As noted above, without the on-going collection of information that can identify the progress made by those most in need, it will not be possible to accurately identify gaps in provision and shape the form and structure of service delivery accordingly.

The collection of such information on an integrated basis requires a resource commitment by all relevant agencies. Resources can relate to the development of agreed protocols and procedures for recording information. The development of such protocols can raise a number of issues that may need some degree of consideration before they can be resolved. Issues identified include appropriate procedures for ensuring that issues such as mental health, literacy problems or drug use can be assessed while at the same time preserving client confidentiality.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

There have been substantial reductions in the level of unemployment in Finglas and Cabra over the past five years. However, in line with experience in other areas, there continues to be significant numbers of people who have not been able to avail of the labour market opportunities arising. The barriers to accessing employment can be linked to a complex and multiple set of needs. Issues identified in this respect include mental health, drug use, early school leaving, family status, literacy difficulties and issues pertaining to particular groups such as the Traveller community.

In this context, it has become increasingly apparent that tackling labour market exclusion needs to be part of an overall strategy to tackle the broader social and economic factors that give rise to it. The need for greater co-ordination and integration of labour market services and more general social services has been recognised to be a key part of any successful strategy in this respect.

While considerable progress has been made in Finglas and Cabra in creating the conditions for more effective inter-agency co-ordination, many challenges lie ahead. Much can be learned from the experience to date on how to improve integration in a way that more effectively meet the needs of those most excluded. These lessons can be summarised as follows:

- Identifying needs and appropriate services as well as evaluating the effectiveness of such services requires systematic and ongoing collection of information by all relevant agencies. It will not be sufficient in the context of changing individual circumstances to map out a longer-term 'progression path' and occasionally review progress along it. This can lead to the development of services that are dated and no longer relevant to current needs. The challenge is rather to build the capacity between agencies to monitor, understand and interpret changing individual circumstances on an on-going basis.
- Given what is known about the barriers faced by the unemployed, it is clear that a broad set of agencies/services will need to be involved in the integrated process. Services identified in this respect include mainstream health services, drug rehabilitation services, housing providers and mental health services
- Integration does not require rigid structures but rather a process through which, as stated above, individual client needs can be monitored and interpreted on an on-going basis, and from this services established or adapted accordingly. The precise structures or processes for establishing particular services or ensuring linkages can then be agreed on the basis of what has been found to be most effective for the task at hand.
- Integration needs to be co-ordinated – especially important in the case where rigid structures are not being proposed. Co-ordination in this respect requires designated personnel to support the process, freeing personnel from those services participating to actually implement, plan and review.
- It should also be stated that the most successful processes would seem to be those that are based on an open and transparent understanding of the goals and objectives of the participating agencies and the operational constraints each faces. An understanding of what can be done at local level and what may require

action at national level is an important element in establishing feasible integrated initiatives rather than what have been described as well meaning 'wish lists'.

It is also important that provision for greater co-ordination and integration is embedded in the policy and practices of all organisations and agencies relevant to the needs of people who are long-term unemployed. Important supports identified are as follows;

- There is a need to provide the necessary resources for staff to engage with other agencies, both at an informal level and within more formalised local development structures. Supports identified include a recognition of the importance of engaging with other organisations in drawing up the relevant job specifications, and the inclusion of 'networking' and other inter-agency co-ordination skills in staff training.
- It is important that the lessons emerging from local co-ordination are taken aboard both in policy and practice. Especially important in this respect is the development of mechanisms within key organisations in order to link local experience to policymaking structures at regional and national level.
- The integrated collection of information on the extent and nature of labour market exclusion, which has been identified as a key element in planning and evaluating the effectiveness of services, requires a resource commitment by all relevant agencies. Resources can relate to the development of agreed protocols and procedures for recording information (which can raise questions around confidentiality, for example in relation to identifying ethnic background, health status etc.) and staff and system costs for putting the agreed information systems into place.

5.2 Recommendations

In line with these findings, the main recommendation of this report is that the Finglas Cabra Partnership should be designated to build on the co-ordination work already engaged in. Key elements of this work should include the following:

1. The first task should be around the co-ordination of more systematised collection of information on the needs of unemployed people in the area and on their progression through services.

The challenges involved in doing this are considerable and have implications beyond Finglas and Cabra. It is recommended therefore that a process for developing an integrated information system for Finglas/Cabra should be funded by the Dublin Employment Pact as part of a pilot project which can draw out the resource and other implications for local, regional and national policy and practice in this area.¹³

2. Up to date and comprehensive information on the needs of unemployed people would in turn inform another key function of the Finglas Cabra Partnership; the facilitation of a periodic review process through which gaps in service provision could be identified and addressed by the relevant participating agencies. Such a review process could comprise six-monthly meetings, which would be facilitated by the preparation of a report drawn from innovative data sources outlining the extent of *current* labour market disadvantage, the nature of such disadvantage

13 A pilot study has begun (August 2002) in the Finglas/Cabra area, involving a range of agencies, which will collect this data on an ongoing basis for a two-month trial. The aim of the pilot is to assess the actual usefulness of such information and to gain an understanding of issues relating to its collection.

and information on the progression of particular target groups of clients where relevant.

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