

# National anti-poverty

FROM NATIONAL TO LOCAL

NAPS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

 **Combat Poverty**  
*working for the prevention  
and elimination of poverty* **Agency**

## What is the National Anti-Poverty Strategy? (NAPS)

In 1997 the Irish Government published a ten-year plan to reduce poverty. This plan – the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) - was the first national strategic approach to reducing poverty. It acknowledged that the elimination of poverty would be a difficult task, one that would require an in-depth analysis of the problems and an integrated targeted approach to solving them. Five specific areas were identified requiring specific attention: unemployment, income adequacy, educational disadvantage, and disadvantaged rural and urban areas. Targets were set for these.

During 2001, a review of the NAPS was undertaken, in consultation with the social partners. This process looked at existing targets and set new ones. It led to the launch of the revised NAPS: *Building an Inclusive Society*, in February, 2002.

The earlier five themes were retained, but new themes were adopted in the areas of health and housing/accommodation, both closely associated with poverty.

Since older people, children, women and people with disabilities often experience particular forms of poverty and social exclusion, special attention was paid to them across all thematic areas. The Strategy also recognised new and emerging groups experiencing poverty e.g. migrants and ethnic minorities.

At European level, poverty and social exclusion were recognised as being detrimental to the growth of the EU and future social cohesion. Member states agreed to develop National Action Plans on Social Inclusion (NAPs/incl), which agreed common objectives on combating poverty and social exclusion.

National Action Plans on Social Inclusion (NAPs/incl) and NAPS dovetail and complement each other. They both aim to help the most vulnerable by facilitating participation in employment and encouraging equality of access to services and resources.

Local authorities are named specifically as one of the key players in reaching those objectives since it is recognised that they have particular responsibilities and expertise in delivering national strategies on the ground.

### Key Facts

- **In 2000, 22% of the population lived on incomes below the 60% relative income poverty line. For a single person the 60% line was about €147 per week.**
- **6% of the population (just over 200,000 people) were living in consistent poverty in 2000 (the most recent data available)**
- **Child poverty is still a serious problem in Ireland, although measures recently taken have seen a considerable reduction in child poverty from 25% in 1987 to 8% in 2000.**

## The Relevance of NAPS for Local Authorities

The role of the local authorities was outlined in *Building an Inclusive Society 2002* as follows: *The setting of key strategic development objectives will take account of the principles, targets and objectives set out in the NAPS and, over time, local authorities will develop appropriate social inclusion strategies at local level, which will underpin and strengthen the national actions being taken.* Increasingly, local authorities partner other agencies and organisations to deliver targets on health, education and unemployment.

In areas such as housing and accommodation the NAPS defines a lead role for local authorities in delivering 'an appropriate mix' of social and affordable housing targets and providing emergency accommodation for homeless. One target, for example, is that by the end of 2004 *sufficient and appropriate emergency accommodation will be available to rough sleepers, in conjunction with appropriate outreach services to enable them to access it.*

Rural local authorities are involved in addressing rural disadvantage by organising rural transport and outreach services to isolated rural communities. Ethnic minorities and migrants, recognised within the NAPS as vulnerable to poverty are increasingly using local authority services.

Many clients of the local authorities leave school early, making them more vulnerable to long term unemployment or low income. Many cannot access the Library service due to poor literacy skills. Many live shorter lives because of poor health and many are caught in an intergenerational cycle of low-income, poverty and disadvantage.

## Delivering NAPS in Local Authorities

Local authorities are identified as key to the delivery of NAPS, which is being rolled out through the County/City Development Boards.

NAPS is a cross-cutting strategy which takes account of the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion and requires action across a range of functions and policy areas. For it to be effective, therefore, targets and actions must be explicitly built into corporate, service and operational plans.

Elected representatives, in partnership with sectoral interests and supported by local authority officials, have been given an opportunity to create new policy and practice that is informed by local knowledge and expertise. This is happening at present through Strategic Policy Committees, Community Fora/Platforms and County/City Development Boards etc.

Anti-poverty work also requires elected members, senior management, technical staff, planners, housing officers, arts officers, librarians and front-line staff to develop an awareness of how their work can impact more positively on the lives of those experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

## Who is responsible for NAPS and the NAP/incl?

Overall responsibility for NAPS and NAP/incl rests with the Office for Social Inclusion, located within the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The institutional structures underpinning the NAPS are:

- › **A Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion, chaired by An Taoiseach**
- › **A Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion, drawn from all key Ministries and chaired by An Taoiseach's Department**
- › **The Office for Social Inclusion**
- › **Social Inclusion Units in key ministries**
- › **A Social Inclusion Consultative Group and Forum**
- › **The Combat Poverty Agency**
- › **The National Economic and Social Forum**

The Office for Social Inclusion will monitor the overall implementation of NAPS. In addition to the Office for Social Inclusion, both the National Economic and Social Forum and the Combat Poverty Agency will play a role in the evaluation and monitoring of NAPS. The Social Partners (i.e. Trade Unions, Employers, Farmers and the Community Pillar) also have an important role to play.

## Defining Poverty

**The definition of poverty underpinning the NAPS is:**

*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.*

## Poverty-Proofing

Poverty-proofing looks at how policy or work practices impact on the lives of those who are poor. For example, the absence of a waiver system on waste disposal could place additional financial strain on families who are already living on low income. It could also lead to increased illegal dumping. The absence of public transport in rural areas can have a disproportionate economic and social effect on older women, people with a disability, young adults and the unemployed.

### Further Information

Department of Environment and Local Government, Local Government Policy Unit, Custom House, Dublin 1  
Tel: 01 8882000 Website [www.envron.irlgov.ie](http://www.envron.irlgov.ie)

Office for Social Inclusion, First Floor, Department of Social and Family Affairs, Áras Mhic Dhiarmada, Store St, Dublin 1 Tel: 01 7043851/7043530 Fax: 01 7043032 E-mail [osi@welfare.ie](mailto:osi@welfare.ie) Website [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)

Combat Poverty Agency, Bridgewater Centre, Conyngham Road, Islandbridge, Dublin 8  
Tel: 01 6706746 Fax: 01 6706760 Website [www.combatpoverty.ie](http://www.combatpoverty.ie)

Community Worker's Co-operative, Unit 4, Tuam Road Centre, Tuam Road, Galway.  
Tel: 091 779030 Website [www.cwc.ie](http://www.cwc.ie)

Institute of Public Administration, Lansdowne Road, Dublin 4 Tel: 01 6689135 Website: [www.ipa.ie](http://www.ipa.ie).

## Useful References

*Sharing in Progress; The National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, Government of Ireland, The Stationery Office, 1997

*Building an Inclusive Society, Review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, The Stationery Office, 2002

*Involving People Experiencing Poverty, A Checklist for Local Authorities*, Combat Poverty Agency 2002

*Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network, Information leaflet*, Combat Poverty Agency 2002

*Strengthening Our Voice, A Guide for Community Sector Participation in Local Decision Making*, Community Workers Co-operative, 2001

Craig, Sarah, *Involving Communities in Local Government, A Guide to Participation*, Combat Poverty Agency, 2000

*NESF Opinion Number 8, The National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, August 2000

*The Role of Community Development in Tackling Poverty*, Combat Poverty Agency, 2000

## Abbreviations

CPA	Combat Poverty Agency
DSFA	Department of Social and Family Affairs
NAPS	National Anti-Poverty Strategy
RAPID	Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development
OSI	Office for Social Inclusion
NAPs/Incl	National Action Plans on Social Inclusion

## Further information on Local Government Programme

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