Report of the Working Group on the Review of the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) Scheme

July 2005

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Department of Social and Family Affairs
An Roinn Gnóthaí Sóisialacha agus Teaghlaigh
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REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE REVIEW OF THE BACK TO EDUCATION ALLOWANCE (BTEA) SCHEME

SEPTEMBER 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This first chapter outlines the background to programme expenditure reviews arising as they do from the provisions of Delivering Better Government under the Strategic Management Initiative.

The twin aims of programme reviews, as approved by Government, are stated to be:

A systematic analysis of what is actually being achieved by expenditure in each spending programme

and

A basis on which more informed decisions can be made on priorities within and between expenditure programmes

The composition of the Working Group for the Back To Education Allowance (BTEA) Expenditure review is listed in Section 1.3. It comprises mainly of personnel from the Department of Social and Family Affairs but also has representation from the Departments of Finance, Education and Science, Enterprise Trade and Employment and FÁS.

The terms of reference for the review, which are set out in 1.5, require the Working Group to, interalia, determine if the original objectives of the scheme are being achieved, to ascertain whether these objectives are still valid and to determine what the future objectives of the scheme should be, to evaluate the interactions between the various strands of the scheme and their overall impact on employment and educational policies and programmes across all Government Departments.

The Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) is an educational opportunities scheme for unemployed people, lone parents and people with disabilities in receipt of particular payments from the DSFA. The objective of the scheme is to enhance the employability skills of vulnerable groups who are distant from the labour market.

The chapter provides an outline of the Integrated Proofing Pilot exercise which was tested on the BTEA review and which is based on three separate proofing strands: gender, poverty and equality.

Participation in educational opportunities programmes has grown significantly, with less than 100 people participating in 1990/1991, when the original scheme commenced, to 7,648 by 2003/2004. Over the fifteen years it has helped over 10,000 people attain qualifications in a range of skills thereby enhancing their employment prospects.

CHAPTER 2: POLICY CONTEXT

This chapter considers the social and broad policy environment within which the scheme operates and sets the context in which the future of the Back to Education Allowance Scheme must be considered.

The future occupational trends in the Irish labour market strongly indicate that there will continue to be significant growth for most occupations in all regions of the country. In particular, managers, professional and service type occupations and those in the Financial Services and Insurance Sectors which would require higher levels of education and training in the future.

There will be a net additional employment requirement of some 190,000 for those with third level qualifications in the period 2001-2010 notwithstanding the replacement demanded for those currently employed who will need to be replaced due to retirement, illness, death and other reasons. The indication is that there will be a real labour force inflow requirement of just over 300,000 individuals with third level qualifications.

There are issues around how socially inclusive the Irish labour market is, given the number of people who remain unemployed and the number of jobless households as well as the significant number of early school leavers. Research, examining the effectiveness of a range of active labour market programmes (ALMPs), found that, among other issues, those with low levels of educational attainment and poor previous labour market experience tended not to benefit significantly from current labour market interventions.

There will be a need for individuals to acquire a qualification relevant to the needs of the labour market and for policy to be directed towards increasing the numbers proceeding to Leaving Certificate and to further and higher education and training to equip them to participate in the knowledge economy (FÁS 2004).

Ireland is transforming itself into a knowledge-based, high skills economy, where it must continue to develop its capability to acquire and develop knowledge for competitive advantage.

The knowledge economy applies to a vast range of economic activities and should not be viewed solely as the domain of high tech industries.

The Enterprise Strategy Group established by the Tánaiste in July 2003 recommended that the numbers entering higher education should be maximised and recommended the introduction of a more formal approach to lifelong learning, The report noted that, as a particular priority, policy interventions will be required to ensure the low-skilled are not left behind in the move towards a knowledge economy.

The current National Programme, 'Sustaining Progress', agreed by Government and the social partners, provides the overall strategy for managing the interrelated elements of economic and social policies for the period to 2005. The stated shared overall goal is to continue progress towards the realisation of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) vision for Ireland expressed in terms of:

- Economic inclusion based on full employment
- Consistent economic development that is socially and environmentally sustainable
- Social inclusion and a commitment to social justice and continuing adaptation to change (2003).

NEAP (The *National Employment Action Plan 2003-2005*) sets out the policies and strategies by which there will be continued focus on job creation and in particular higher-skilled jobs, the elimination of long-term unemployment, and the securing of a balance in the regions in terms of jobs and skills. The Plan represents the Irish response to the European Employment Strategy 2003-2005, which has three overarching objectives in terms of strategy with regard to employment policy; Full Employment, Quality and Productivity of Work, Social Cohesion and Inclusion. Full employment is to be achieved by implementing a comprehensive policy approach aimed at raising employment rates towards targets set at the Lisbon Summit of 2000 (70% for overall working age population (15-64); 60% for female working age population; 50% for age group 55-64), with these targets due to be fulfilled by 2010. The Stockholm Summit of 2001 set interim targets for 2007 of a 67% overall participation rate, with a female participation rate of 57%.

Since the aim of the BTEA Scheme is to provide vulnerable groups and those who are distant from the labour market with a second chance educational opportunity to improve their employment prospects and halt the flow into long-term welfare dependency, it can be considered an active labour market programme (ALMP) that is relevant and timely.

The extent to which it achieves this outcome is examined in the course of the review.

CHAPTER 3: HISTORY DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE BTEA SCHEME

This chapter provides the background to the establishment of the BTEA scheme, its progression to-date and its current organisational and administrative arrangements. The following is dealt with in detail:

- History and development of the scheme
- Objectives of the scheme
- Study options available
- Administration
- Eligibility
- Payment Arrangements
- Profile of participants
- Scheme expenditure, staffing levels, and administration costs

Studies have shown that there is a strong link between unemployment and educational attainment. As far back as 1986 the Department of Social and Family Affairs made provisions for unemployed persons to avail of second chance education through the introduction of the Educational Opportunities Scheme (section 3.2). Following on from this, the Third Level Allowance Scheme was established in 1990, and in January 1998 both the Second and Third Level Allowance were merged into one unified Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) Scheme.

Since its inception, the objective of the Department's second chance education initiatives, including the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) Scheme, have primarily remained unaltered i.e. to equip people in receipt of certain Social Welfare payments with the skills and qualifications that will enable them to obtain employment.

The Back to Education Allowance Scheme, which consists of two strands i.e. second and third level is currently administered at both central and local level. For persons in receipt of an unemployment payment the third level strand of the scheme is administered centrally by the Department's Employment Support Services and the second level strand is administered in the Department's Social Welfare Local Offices. Over the years, as the scheme developed and was extended to other Social Welfare payments such as Lone Parents (1993) and Disability Allowance (1998) etc., the particular scheme owner assumed responsibility for administration for both strands.

Subject to satisfying certain eligibility criteria (section 3.6) successful applicants are paid a weekly allowance that is equivalent to the maximum standard rate of the Social Welfare payment that qualified them for participation in the scheme. Payment of the allowance is made through two computer systems (ISTS and Penlive), the system used is determined by the qualifying payment (e.g. Penlive in the case of participants who accessed BTEA from One Parent Family Payment). Participants on the scheme continue to receive Secondary Benefits and are also paid an annual allowance towards the cost of studies. The number of participants in the scheme has continued to grow from 67, in it's inaugural year, to 7,648 in the 2003/2004 academic year.

CHAPTER 4: EFFICENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

This chapter examines the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme. Efficiency is about delivering service at optimum cost. Effectiveness is concerned with the extent to which the objectives of the scheme have been achieved. In examining this, the Group arrived at a number of conclusions, which are further addressed in chapter 5.

Applications for BTEA are dealt with by Employment Support Services (50%) and in the primary payment area (50%). The administration costs for 2003 were €372,000 with programme costs amounting to €38.3 million in 2003. However a significant element of the programme costs would have occurred from the claimants entitlement to their primary social welfare payment. Where claims are refused the claimant has a right of appeal -over 60% of such appeals were successful in 2003/2004. The Group recommends that BTEA be processed by the primary payment area which would be the point of contact for enquiries and that additional non-payment information needs to be captured for performance measurement of the scheme.

BTEA is one of a number of initiatives to improve the skills and educational qualification levels of persons on social welfare payments to enable them to access the labour market. It accounts for about 8% of participation across the range of Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs). A survey of participants in the BTEA scheme showed that there was a high take up of the Third level option from the top socio-economic groups (AB) while there was a higher take up of Leaving Certificate courses from the lower socio-economic groups (DE). The scheme is accessed principally by persons in receipt of unemployment assistance (75%) who are under 35 years and on the social welfare payment for less than 12 months (63%).

In relation to employment status following completion of the BTEA the survey showed that 63% were in full-time or part-time employment while a further 9% were pursuing further education. Factors determining employment were age and socio-economic group. The survey findings for employment were supported by a separate analysis done by the Department. The survey found that persons who failed to gain employment were long term welfare recipients and in the lower socio-economic groups.

The BTEA scheme is self-selecting in nature. The potential pool of BTEA clients could range from 320,000 to 412,000 depending on duration on the qualifying payment. The group considered that a more pro-active approach to selecting persons for participation in the scheme should be explored further. The Group also considered extending eligibility for the scheme to all social welfare customers of working age, and in that context, that Pre-retirement allowance (PRETA), and Sick No Benefits (SNB) payable as well as payments to homeless persons under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme, should be eligible payments for access to the scheme. The Group also considered that periods spent in receipt of Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) by Asylum Seekers while pending Refugee status (once status was granted) should count towards the qualifying period for the scheme once the qualifying conditions were complied with.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter provides the recommendations of the Working Group for the future access to second chance education. It begins by outlining the current policy setting referring as it does to programme for Government and EU employment strategy. The development of a high skills and knowledge economy applies to all people of working age whether in employment or unemployed.

Lifelong learning is the key to the development of knowledge, skills and competencies, which are essential for survival in the modern labour market. On a National level the Green and White papers on Adult Education have raised awareness of the Lifelong learning agenda.

The BTEA scheme is designed to facilitate people who are welfare dependent to obtain qualifications, upskill, or re-train in order to compete in this high skills, high knowledge economy.

The Group's view is that public monies should continue to be spent on the provision of educational and income supports for those who are welfare dependent and most distant from the labour market. It also recognises the need for such a system of support to address any gaps in existing service provision, e.g. eligibility for the scheme should be extended to Pre-retirement allowance and Sick No Benefits (SNB) and homeless cases (where SWA is in payment). It also recommends that periods spent in receipt of Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) by Asylum Seekers (once Refugee status has been granted) should count towards the qualifying period for the scheme.

There is also a need to track participation levels based on the diversity of people within the scheme's target groups.

The Group agreed that, against a backdrop of a changing labour market and the need to promote and facilitate access to second chance education in order to address, unemployment, disadvantage and social exclusion, the original objective of the BTEA scheme should be revised.

The Group recommends that the objective of the scheme be revised as: 'To facilitate participation in education by social welfare customers of working age who are most distant from the labour market in order to enhance their employability and assist them in accessing sustainable employment'.

Three Government Departments, the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA), the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), share the responsibility for meeting the needs of the same target group. DSFA for income support, DES for education provision and DETE for employment and training.

The National Employment Action Plan (NEAP), as one Active Labour Market Programme (ALMP) in a range of supports, provides a framework in which a joined up approach for the delivery of educational supports to the target group can be provided. Its targets interact with some of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) targets.

In arriving at its final recommendations for the future of the scheme the Group considered a number of options:

Option 1: This explored the feasibility of retaining the scheme in its current format with some key refinements, the main ones being, extending the eligibility for the scheme to schemes not currently eligible, localising the administration of the scheme, paying BTEA at the existing rate of the qualifying payment, all policy formulation and reviews to be dealt with exclusively by ESS HQ.

This option was not recommended by the Group for a number of reasons, mainly, because an inequity with regard to payments (to those in receipt of SLO and those in receipt of VTOS training allowance) would still prevail, there would remain a lack of clarity around service provision and there would still be a duplication of effort on the part of DSFA and DES. However, some of the key refinements to the scheme were agreed in the context of option 4 below.

Option 2: This examined the feasibility of transferring the second level option (SLO) of the scheme, i.e. both the income support and Cost of Education Allowance to DES. This would eliminate the current anomalies which exist between SLO and VTOS in relation to income and educational supports as both would be provided by one agency.

This option was not recommended mainly because income support is not the core business of DES and there would be high administrative and other costs associated with it.

Option 3: Both SLO and TLO (income support and Cost of Education Allowance) are transferred to DES.

This option was considered by the Group not to be viable on the grounds that it would be diverting the current DES brief from education provision to providing income support which is not their core business.

Option 4: This option is based on making the fundamental distinction between the DSFA brief, of providing income support, and the DES brief, of providing educational supports and to clearly separate out those two functions. In this scenario DSFA will continue to pay income support to those availing of second chance education while DES will continue to provide educational supports to the mutual target group. This will involve the transfer of the Cost of Education Allowance from DSFA to DES and the establishment of an overarching BTEA/second chance education scheme.

This option was agreed to be the way forward for the BTEA scheme encompassing as it does the NEAP as a method of targeting and channelling the target group into the appropriate education options. It also integrates service provision in a 'joined-up' approach between three key players, DSFA, DES and DETE through FÁS. It was agreed that the introduction of the overarching system should take place on a phased basis following on from some of the key refinements to the BTEA scheme as outlined in option 1 which are listed as:

- Extend eligibility for the scheme to other welfare schemes: PRETA, Sick No Benefits (SNB), homeless (SWA) cases.
- Periods spent on SWA for those customers pending refugee status (once refugee status is granted) should count towards the qualifying period for BTEA
- The BTEA rate of payment should be equivalent to the rate of the Social Welfare qualifying payment
- Reviews on all applications to be carried out centrally in ESS Section
- All policy for the scheme to be formulated centrally in ESS Section.

The group considered that this approach might be delivered in two phases; phase one would focus on streamlining the supports available at second level while phase two would complete the transition for the future delivery of service by streamlining the supports for those of working age and in receipt of a social welfare payment at third level.

The chapter concludes with performance indicators based on efficiency and effectiveness and a framework for the future delivery of the service.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Expenditure Review Programme

In 1996, the Coordinating Group of Secretaries, established under the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI), identified in Delivering Better Government a *'need for a systematic analysis of what is actually being achieved by the €15.24 billion in Government resources spent annually' and recommended that 'agreements between the Department of Finance and individual Departments on delegated authority for programme expenditures (should) provide a schedule of reviews of expenditure to be carried out during the currency of the agreements, with the aim of ensuring that each programme of expenditure is subject to a thorough review at least once every three years'*.

The Government accepted this recommendation and approved a programme of reviews with the twin aims of providing:

- a systematic analysis of what is actually being achieved by expenditure in each spending programme and
- a basis on which more informed decisions can be made on priorities within and between expenditure programmes.

1.2 Structure of the Review Programme

In the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA), reviews are undertaken by Working Groups which are chaired at Principal level and are comprised of officials from the relevant policy and executive sections, the Department of Finance and other relevant Departments and agencies.

The Working Groups report to a joint Department of Finance – DSFA Steering Group that oversees the programme of reviews. The Steering Group is chaired by the Secretary-General of this Department and is composed of appropriate officers at Assistant Secretary, Principal and Assistant Principal level from both this Department and the Department of Finance.

At the central level, a Steering Committee has been established to coordinate these activities and oversee the wide ranging programme of reviews undertaken within the civil service.

1.3 Working Group

The Working Group (WG) to review the expenditure under the Back to Education Allowance Scheme was established in June 2003. The first meeting of the group was in September 2003. Twenty meetings were held before the group reported in March 2005.

The members of the WG were:

Leonard Burke (Chair)	Employment Support Services, DSFA
Tom King (Secretary)	Employment Support Services, DSFA
Clodagh McDonnell	Employment Support Services, DSFA
Ita Reid	Employment Support Services, DSFA
Michael Daly	Regional Directors Office, DSFA
Pat Ryan	Dublin West Region, DSFA
Finbarr Hickey	Programme Evaluation Unit, DSFA
Sean Gillard	IS Division, DSFA
Siobhán Lawlor	Planning Unit, DSFA
Daire Fogarty	Planning Unit, DSFA
Benny Swinburne	Pension Services Office, DSFA
Martin Perrill	Social Welfare Services Office Longford, DSFA
Michael Kearney*	Social Welfare Services Office Longford, DSFA
John Naughton	Department of Finance
John Fitzpatrick	Department of Finance
Rory McCloskey	Dept. of Enterprise, Trade & Employment
Pauline Gildea	Department Education & Science
Connie Larkin	Department Education & Science
Bryan Fields	FÁS
Ciaran Conlon**	FÁS

** joined the Group recently to replace Martin Perrill (DSFA) ** to replace Bryan Fields (FÁS).*

1.4 Background of this Review

The Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) is an educational opportunities scheme for unemployed people, lone parents and people with disabilities in receipt of particular payments from the DSFA. The objective of the scheme is to enhance the employability skills of vulnerable groups who are distant from the labour market.

The number of participants availing of the Back to Education Allowance has grown since the scheme was first introduced in September 1990, from 67 to 7,648 in the 2003/2004 academic year. Over the fifteen years since the scheme was established, over 10,000 people have been helped to attain qualifications in a range of skills thereby enhancing their employment prospects.

The educational programmes were introduced in a period of high unemployment and emigration. Since then, the employment and economic situation in Ireland has gone through a period of fundamental change with an improved economic environment and immigration more the norm than emigration. In this light, a review of the Back to Education programme is considered prudent, to ensure the scheme of support is still relevant and appropriate to modern labour market and current economic conditions.

1.5 Terms of Reference

The focus of the Back to Education review is to

- Determine if the original objectives of the scheme are being achieved
- Determine whether these objectives are still valid
- Ascertain what the future objectives of the scheme should be

To achieve these objectives, the terms of reference for the Working Group were to

a) assess the compatibility of the scheme's objectives with the mission and current strategy of the Department
b) evaluate the interaction between the various strands of the scheme and their overall impact on employment and educational policies and programmes across all Government Departments
c) assess the operation of the qualifying criteria in the context of the needs of the relevant target group(s)
d) analyse the education/employment experience of participants
e) evaluate the degree to which the objectives of the scheme warrant the allocation of current levels of resources and examining the scope for alternative policy/organisational/financing arrangements
f) specify appropriate performance indicators for use in evaluating the scheme in the future

1.6 Methodology

To achieve these objectives and fulfil the stipulated requirements, a range of approaches were employed

- An historical analysis of the scheme based on Department's files, Dáil debates and Parliamentary Questions was undertaken. These sources describe the initial objectives of the scheme and their development over time. The major changes in the scheme were charted and the original objectives were examined.
- Submissions were invited and received from relevant parties representing the education sector, those working in the voluntary and community sector and other agencies who work with the target group(s). The views expressed by these groups are set out in Appendix A.
- A survey of scheme participants was undertaken with a view to establishing the education and employment experiences of participants. The findings of this survey are set out in Appendix B.
- Statistical sources were used to add a quantitative element to the review and to highlight changes over time i.e.
    - Department of Social & Family Affairs (Statistical Information on BTEA Trends).
    - Department of Education and Science (Statistical Data on VTOS).
- A review of relevant literature was undertaken. Key findings in relation to specific issues such as income, employment, education and poverty were considered.

1.7 Integrated Proofing Exercise

During the course of this review the Equality Authority contacted the Chair of the Working Group and sought to have a newly designed integrated proofing pilot exercise tested on the BTEA Review. The Authority subsequently attended a meeting of the Working Group where it provided an overview of the integrated proofing process and the WG agreed to participate in the exercise.

The process is based on the three separate proofing strands;

- Gender Proofing in the context of the Structural Funds and the National Development Plan 2000-2006
- Poverty Proofing in the context of the National Anti Poverty Strategy; and
- Equality proofing initiatives across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation developed by the Equality Authority.

A draft proofing template was developed and a meeting of representative organisations (equality and poverty) was organised in order to seek and explore their views on a draft summary of the Review document and on the proofing process itself.

This pilot process was the result of the combined effort of the Equality Authority, the Office for Social Inclusion, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Combat Poverty Agency with an objective to jointly develop an integrated approach to poverty and equality proofing.

It did not seek to negotiate issues or reach agreement or consensus but instead generate ideas and perspectives that could be documented and made available for consideration by the Working Group.

The focus of the exercise was on whether the Review has sufficiently recognized the diversity within the BTEA target groups and on how such groups are named and catered for by the existing BTEA scheme and through the future development of the scheme arising from the recommendations of the Review. The Proofing template used for the exercise lists diversity in terms of: gender, marital status, family status, age, religion, race, sexual orientation, disability, membership of the Traveller community and it also includes people experiencing rural or urban exclusion and people living in poverty.

Many of the points raised both at the meeting of representative groups and through the template document are reflected in the Review report in chapters 4 and 5.

1.8 Overview of Content

This report reviews the range of educational and training opportunities available to those dependent on a welfare payment. It then examines the supports provided through the Back to Education Allowance Scheme, outlining its history and administration. The issues of how efficiently the scheme is managed and how effectively it meets its objectives are then considered. This leads to a range of conclusions and recommendations with a view to strategically shaping the future developments relating to the scheme.

The following chapter, chapter 2 outlines the broad policy context in which the Back to Education Allowance Scheme is set.

CHAPTER 2:
POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

The Irish economy is currently undergoing a fundamental change where Ireland is no longer being viewed as a low cost location for investment and where the importance of skills and human resources have become a central policy instrument to sustain our competitiveness. The adoption of human capital policies that enable those who wish to find a job and develop their skills level to realise their full potential and to adapt to the pressures of globalisation and economic competitiveness is a primary objective at both national and European level.

Overall national education and training priorities are intended to contribute to the range of policies developed by the Government to address issues of national strategic importance. These policies are set out in the National Development Plan 2000-2006, *Sustaining Progress* (the current national economic and social agreement between the Government and the social partners); the National Anti-Poverty Strategy; the National Children's Strategy; the National Health Strategy; the Information Society Strategy and the National Spatial Strategy. A further policy context is provided by the EU Lisbon Agreement and the Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems. An important part of the objectives process is the definition of indicators and benchmarks by which to measure the progress of each country and of Europe as a whole towards the education and training objectives set for 2010.

National education and training priorities include

- Recognising that future prosperity is dependent on Ireland becoming a learning society, putting the necessary life-long learning systems in place to ensure that all its citizens have access to the learning opportunities they need at whatever stage and in whatever circumstances are appropriate to them;
- Ensuring equality of access and provision at all levels for all learners, with special supports for individuals experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, disability, and ethnic marginalisation;
- In order to maintain and enhance Ireland's international competitiveness, ensuring that the education and training systems promote the development of human capital, especially through the identification of future key skills needs and the putting in place of appropriate related learning opportunities;

This chapter considers the social and broad policy environment within which the scheme operates and sets the context in which the future of the Back to Education Allowance Scheme must be considered.

2.2 Social Environment

The primary objective of the Back to Education Allowance Scheme is to enhance the employability of unemployed people and other categories of social welfare customers by facilitating them to obtain the qualifications necessary to participate in the modern labour market.

The scheme was introduced in 1989/90 at a time of high unemployment and poor performance in the Irish economy. The subsequent period 1993 to 2000 was one of strong economic growth, with a notable feature of the economic boom being the extent of employment expansion. Unemployment decreased from 15.9% (222,500) in 1993 to 4.3% (74,900) in 2000. A striking feature of Irish unemployment has been the large number of long-term unemployed (i.e. out of work for a year or more). In 1993, the number of long-term unemployed was 125,400 or 8.9% of the labour force. By 2000, this number had fallen to 27,400 or 1.6% of the labour force. While the period 2000-2002 brought a slowdown in economic growth and a reduced growth in employment, there are now significantly lower levels of unemployment than at the commencement of the scheme.

During the 1990's, Ireland continued to become a more diverse society with regard to family formation and structure, along with a greater cultural diversity due to increased immigration. As a proportion of all families with children under 15 years, families headed by a lone parent made up 13.8% of households in 1996 as compared to 7.2% in 1986. This has resulted from increased levels of marriage breakdown and an increase in numbers of unmarried single parents. With regard to immigration, Ireland has experienced net inward migration since 1996, which has contributed to the growth of the labour force. While returning Irish nationals were the largest immigrant group in the period 1995-2000, over the latter part of the 1990's, the proportion of Irish and UK immigrants has decreased, while the percentage of immigrants from the rest of the EU and the rest of the world increased.

While the unemployment rate has decreased over the past ten years the proportion of people of working age in receipt of a welfare payment has remained stable (OECD, 2003:174). This is indicative of a change in the composition of the working age population who receive a social welfare payment. While the numbers in receipt of an unemployment payment have decreased, the numbers in receipt of other welfare type payments, particularly One Parent Family Payments and Disability Allowance, have increased.

	1980	1990	1999
Unemployment rate	7.4%	13.4%	5.6%
Proportion of working age in receipt of a welfare payment.	12.4%	18.9%	19.3%

The economic boom had a dramatic effect in accelerating the rise in female participation in the workforce. In the seven years from 1986-1993 the female participation rate rose from 33.8% to 38%, while in the six year period 1994-2000 it rose further to 48% (NESC, 2003). This increased participation was largely made up of women who had completed secondary school education at least. The increased rate of employment for women with lower skill levels, from 24.6% in 1994 to 35.7% in 1998, resulted mainly from women who had been classified as being 'outside the labour force' or 'in full-time caring or home duties', into employment (NESC, 2003: 398). Research highlights the fact that contact with the social welfare system is beneficial in prompting women 'in home duties' to seek employment and in facilitating them to access education, training or an employment scheme (Russell et al. 2002).

Questions remain about how socially inclusive the Irish labour market is, given the number of people in jobless households and the significant proportion of early school leavers (McCormick 2003). Conniffe and O'Connell (2001) examined the effectiveness of a range of active labour market programmes (ALMPs) and found among other issues, that those with low levels of educational attainment and poor previous labour market experience tended not to benefit significantly from current labour market interventions. Despite the low level of unemployment in Ireland, there are still significant numbers of persons of working age on social welfare benefits, many of whom have the potential to participate in the active labour market. These groups include persons on unemployment benefit/assistance, one parent family payment and disability allowances and other welfare payments to people who are of working age. In total, these groups amount to about 497,000 people. FÁS and the Department of Social and Family Affairs in particular have a shared concern in identifying and overcoming barriers to help make employment a real option for persons in these groups who wish to make the transition to work, education or training.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs customers include large numbers of people of working age. The numbers on each of the main schemes is set out in the table below

Table 2.1 Breakdown of Social Welfare Scheme Numbers & Expenditure

Social Welfare Payment	Number of recipients at 31 December 2004	Expenditure (2004) €'000
Unemployment Benefit (UB)/ Unemployment Assistance (UA) and Pre-Retirement Allowance (PRETA).	142,767	€1,164,087
Employment supports	40,216	€238,111
One-parent Family Payment (OPFP) and similar payments	92,330	€795,565
Maternity and related	10,382	€122,181
Disability Benefit (DB)/Invalidity Pension (IP)	114,590	€966,372
Disability Allowance (DA)	72,976	€544,489
Carers Allowance/carers benefit	23,709	€217,975

OECD data show that despite the fall in unemployment in the 1990s, the percentage of the population of working age dependent on social welfare payments has hardly changed. There has, however, been a shift in the overall composition of this group; the number of unemployed people has fallen, while the numbers receiving payments related to lone parenthood and illness/disability are increasing.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs is committed to delivering income support schemes to all customers who qualify in an efficient and customer-friendly way. In its previous strategy statement, attention was drawn to the importance, in addition to income support, of helping welfare customers to

get back into employment, education or training where this is appropriate. Indeed, for many years the Department has seen this as part of its role. Programmes such as Family Income Supplement (FIS), the Back to Work Allowance (BTWA) and the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) are examples of specific supports to people to access or remain in work. Following review, these schemes have been revised to make them more focused on those most in need of supports.

To date, most of the emphasis with regard to activation in this area has been with customers on the Live Register. As is clear from the table above, however, there are large numbers of customers of working age who are in receipt of other income-maintenance payments; many of these may benefit from suitable supports. The Department's activation measures, therefore, need to cover other categories such as lone parents and people with disabilities. In this regard, the Department is conscious of the different needs of the different categories of customers.

People with illnesses or disabilities constitute a diverse group, ranging from those who are temporarily ill (who will return to work within a short time without any active intervention) to those for whom full-time or any work may not be an immediate option. For people with disabilities, interventions are required which respect the needs of different categories, which are integrated across agencies and which serve to reduce the likelihood of lifelong welfare dependency. Any interventions must be sensitive to the circumstances of each customer. The Department of Social and Family Affairs commits to work with other agencies where appropriate to help these customers achieve their potential and the Department will deliver income supports to these groups in a manner that facilitates their participation in the labour market and in wider society.

People with caring responsibilities may require supports to facilitate their re-entry to the workplace when the caring period has finished. In the case of people getting One Parent Family Payment (OPFP), not all may be in a position to take up employment. It is clear, however, that many would wish to work and need to be afforded the opportunity and appropriate incentives to do so. There can be a complex set of factors involved, including age of the child(ren), availability of childcare, and the person's level of education and training. At different stages, different interventions may be appropriate. The programme for the localisation of the OPFP, under which claims for these payments will in future be dealt with in the local offices rather than in one central location, will enable more direct contact and interaction with lone parents and a better focus on their needs and the possibilities locally of addressing them. Interventions and supports are also provided to assist people whose caring role has ceased, to enable them access the labour market.

The Department's role in relation to the broad groups encompassed here is fourfold:

- to continue to develop income and related supports to an increasing number of customers;
- To review and update scheme rules and conditions, having regard in particular to the need to remove barriers to return to work;
- To deliver as much direct support as possible in helping people access employment, training etc. and work with other appropriate agencies in this regard;
- To support people in delivering on their caring responsibilities.

2.3 Trends in the Labour Market

The future occupational trends in the Irish labour market strongly indicate that there will continue to be significant growth for most occupations in all regions of the country but they will not be comparable with the very large increases that occurred in the 1990's. Broadly speaking, managers, professional and

service type occupations are forecast to increase significantly with little or no increase in either skilled or unskilled occupations, while little or no employment increase in manufacturing or building is anticipated up to 2010 (Sexton, Hughes, Casey, Finn and Morgenroth 2004). Nevertheless at a broad sectoral level many companies particularly those in the Financial Services and Insurance Sectors indicated that they would require *higher levels of education and training* in the future (Forfas 2003a). See Appendix C.

There will be a net additional employment requirement of some 190,000 for those with third level qualifications in the period 2001-2010 notwithstanding the replacement demanded for those currently employed who will need to be replaced due to retirement, illness, death and other reasons. The indication is that there will be a real labour force inflow requirement of just over 300,000 individuals with third level qualifications. Given that there will be a substantial decline in numbers entering and exiting third level institutions in the period 2001-2011[1] there is more than likely to be a shortfall in the forecasted supply for occupations requiring third level qualifications (Sexton, Hughes, Casey, Finn and Morgenroth 2004).

It is anticipated that skilled, semi-skilled and service occupations will still account for over half of all the available jobs in the economy up to 2010 (FÁS/ESRI Manpower Forecasting Studies Report No. 11 Jan 2004, p44). The skills and qualifications of the people doing these jobs will also be an essential element in delivering on the country's competitiveness.

Moreover the underlying demographics together with the current relatively low levels of unemployment will require a significant further contribution from rising labour force participation. It will be important therefore that individuals acquire a qualification relevant to the needs of the labour market and that policy is directed towards increasing the numbers proceeding to Leaving Certificate and to further and higher education and training to equip them to participate in the knowledge economy (FÁS 2004). In the medium term to 2016, the working age population is projected to grow from 2,590,000 in 2001 by between 489,000 and 587,000. This represents an increase of between 1.1% and 1.4% per annum compared to an annual increase of 1.7% in the ten years to 2001.

In the same period, the Labour force is projected to grow from 1.92 million in 2004 to between 2.27 and 2.37 million by 2016. It is anticipated that over the period of this strategy, the current buoyancy in the labour market will maintain the unemployment rate close to its current level and will also provide a positive response to the Department's proactive labour market programme.

Population growth will continue, mainly through continued immigration. The Central Statistics Office in its projections, conclude that the recent growth in fertility, which followed a significant decline, is unlikely to be maintained and that the long-term decline can be expected to resume but at a more moderate rate. This raises long term concerns in relation to population ageing and population decline.

Net immigration in recent years reached a high of 41,000 in 2002 but has fallen back somewhat to about 32,000 in 2004. This trend is projected to continue at levels close to 30,000 per annum over the period of this strategy and to decline in the medium term. This trend in immigration of non-nationals, particularly non-EEA nationals, will change the profile of customers of some schemes. This poses the challenge of taking into account cultural and religious differences, both in dealing with customers and in the structure of schemes

1 The population aged 15-24 years is set to fall by 15% in the period under review.

There is likely to be more 'churning' in the labour market, with a higher level of short-term unemployment than in the past. Strategies may be required to prevent people drifting into long-term unemployment.

The growth in 'non-standard' employment, e.g. part-time work, fixed term contracts, etc. will continue. Over the period 1994 to 2001 part-time employment grew by an annual average rate of close to 11 per cent compared to a growth rate of just over 4 per cent for fulltime employment. This poses challenges for social welfare systems based on the norm of full-time employment.

Higher employment rates in recent times have contributed to a rapid growth in the insured population. While this will slow down in the short term, the insured population is likely to continue at a high level. A consequence of this is increased potential claimant levels for various social welfare schemes.

In addition, the following are at risk of poverty due to their vulnerability in the labour market:

- Early school leavers: 18% of young people are not completing secondary school and in some areas 60% of males are not taking the leaving certificate examination.
- Older workers with low skills in industries which are vulnerable to economic restructuring ; these workers will require access to services which will ensure they can retain ongoing employability.

As the skill levels of the workforce develops, the skills gap between those in employment and those in long term unemployment could continue to widen making it more difficult to achieve future involvement in the labour market.

2.4 Knowledge Economy

Ireland is transforming itself into a knowledge-based economy, where it must continue to develop its capability to acquire and exploit knowledge for competitive advantage. This will require that the workforce is not only highly skilled but effectively deployed into the occupations that will underpin the knowledge intensive industries which will deliver and sustain the success and expectations of Irish society. The knowledge economy applies to a vast range of economic activities and should not be viewed as the exclusive domain of high tech industries.

The Enterprise Strategy Group established by the Tánaiste in July 2003 was directed to take Ireland into the next phase of economic development and promote the emergence of an innovation and knowledge driven economy. The Group's report, launched on 7 July, 2004 outlines the challenges and opportunities facing the enterprise sector in Ireland over the coming decade and the measures Government and industry must take in order to meet the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities. In addressing the issue of skills, education and training, the report identified three aspects of education and skills development as critical to the future of the enterprise sector:

- An adaptive and responsive higher education sector
- Upskilling of the existing workforce and raising education levels and
- Expanding the workforce to meet growth forecasts and an appropriate skills-based immigration strategy.

The report recommended that the numbers entering higher education should be maximised and recommended the introduction of formalised approaches to lifelong learning, the report noted that, as a particular priority, policy interventions will be required to ensure the low-skilled are not left behind in the move towards a knowledge economy.

2.5 National Programme/Social Partnership Agreement 2003-2005

The current National Programme, 'Sustaining Progress', agreed by Government and the social partners, provides the overall strategy for managing the interrelated elements of economic and social policies for the period to 2005. The stated shared overall goal is to continue progress towards the realisation of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) vision for Ireland expressed in terms of:

- Economic inclusion based on full employment
- Consistent economic development that is socially and environmentally sustainable
- Social inclusion and a commitment to social justice and continuing adaptation to change (2003).

The broad policy framework for achieving the aims of Sustaining Progress is -

Macroeconomic Policy
Consolidate the progress of recent years and achieve a medium term growth capable of sustaining high levels of employment and facilitating the evolution of a more equal society

Building, Maintaining and Sharing Economic Development & Prosperity
Ensure Ireland's economic structures are capable of consolidating and sharing economic development and prosperity

Delivering a Fair and Inclusive Society
Build a fair and inclusive society and ensure that people have the resources and opportunities to live life with dignity and have access to quality public services that underpin life's chances and opportunities.

2.6 Employment Policy

Responsibility for employment policy rests primarily with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Their Mission Statement is: *'to work for Government and the people to equitably grow Ireland's competitiveness and quality employment'*.

Among the five pillars by which they aim to achieve this strategy are Enterprise, Innovation, Growth and Quality Work and Learning. Within the Quality Work and Learning area, the aim is to: *'ensure that labour market policy responds to changing skills needs and to prioritise investment that delivers better jobs, lifelong learning for all and enhanced social inclusion'*.

The *National Employment Action Plan 2003-2005* sets out the policies and strategies by which there will be continued focus on job creation, particularly higher-skilled jobs, the elimination of long-term unemployment, and the securing of balanced jobs and skills throughout the regions. The Plan represents the Irish response to the European Employment Strategy 2003-2005, which has three overarching objectives in terms of strategy with regard to employment policy; Full Employment, Quality and Productivity of Work, Social Cohesion and Inclusion. Full employment is to be achieved by implementing a comprehensive policy approach aimed at raising employment rates towards targets set at the Lisbon Summit of 2000 (70% for overall working age population (15-64); 60% for female working age population; 50% for age group 55-64), with these targets due to be fulfilled by 2010. The Stockholm Summit of 2001 set interim targets for 2007 of a 67% overall participation rate, with a female participation rate of 57%.

With regard to Social Cohesion and Inclusion, the Plan notes that the following key employment/unemployment targets have been set in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS):

- The elimination of long-term unemployment as soon as circumstances permit but in any event not later than 2007
- A reduction in the level of unemployment experienced by vulnerable groups towards the national average by 2007
- The achievement of targets/objectives set in the National Employment Action Plan.

The Action Plan addresses ten specific Guidelines involved in implementing the European Employment Guidelines. Two of the Guidelines relevant in the context of this review are Prevention and Activation and Human Capital and Lifelong-Learning.

With regard to Prevention and Activation, despite the significant reduction in the numbers of long-term unemployed, Ireland is committed to further increasing labour market participation levels and job progression rates, particularly among marginalised and excluded groups. In this regard, Ireland retains a large range of Active Labour Market programmes (ALMP's) aimed at facilitating access by unemployed persons to the labour market.

FÁS, an agency of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, was established in 1988 under the Labour Services Act 1987 to provide a wide range of services to the labour market in Ireland. Its mission, as defined in its Strategy Statement, 2002 – 2005 is 'to increase the employability, skills and mobility of job-seekers and employers to meet labour market needs, thereby promoting competitiveness and social inclusion'. In relation to *Employment and People in Employment*, FÁS aims 'to promote investment in training by employers and to accelerate the development and delivery of a comprehensive range of programmes and services for employers and those in employment, based on identified labour market needs'.

With regard to the second relevant Guideline, Human Capital and Lifelong-Learning, the Action Plan reiterates the fact that high levels of participation in continued education and training are key factors in increasing economic productivity and competitiveness, creating an environment for innovation, minimising unemployment and fostering social inclusion. It further states that Lifelong Learning is about creating more and better employment opportunities accessible to all citizens.

2.7 Social Policy

At Government Department level, social policy in the context of employment, unemployment and family rests with the Department of Social and Family Affairs. In its Statement of Strategy 2005-2007, 'Security with Opportunity', its mission is: *'...to promote a caring society through ensuring access to income support and related services, enabling active participation, promoting social inclusion and supporting families'*.

The most significant challenges identified by the Department of Social and Family Affairs in its Strategy Statement , Security with Opportunity (05-07) revolve around the

- Continued enhancement to and development of policies which will tackle the issues of poverty and social exclusion.
- Development of responses that will ensure that all those capable of engaging with the labour market receive the supports needed to secure that engagement.

Among its six high level goals, two are particularly relevant in the context of this review:

People of Working Age
To provide income supports and access to relevant services to people of working age who cannot secure an income (or an adequate income) from employment and facilitate them in taking up relevant employment, training, education or development opportunities as appropriate.

Poverty, Social Inclusion and Families
To support and promote families and to attain better outcomes in tackling poverty and achieving a more inclusive society through co-ordinating, developing and implementing national anti-poverty strategies, and through the provision of income and other support services for people in debt or at risk of experiencing hardship.

In reference to Support to Work, the Strategy Statement refers to the Departments role in activation, as discussed already in relation to Employment Policy, along with the other responsible organisations. It further refers to the objectives of the National Employment Action Plan and states that: *'Under the Employment Action Plan (EAP) the Department provides referrals of unemployed customers on the Live Register (LR) to FÁS; in addition, the Department interacts with FÁS through the High Supports Process (HSP) in relation to customers categorised as "non progression ready" through the EAP process. These programmes are aimed at assisting people to access work or, where necessary, training or education to improve their employment prospects'.*

'In the previous strategy statement, attention was drawn to the importance, in addition to income support, of helping welfare customers to get back into employment, education or training where this is appropriate. Indeed, for many years the Department has seen this as part of its role. Programmes such as Family Income Supplement (FIS), the Back to Work Allowance (BTWA) and the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) are examples of specific supports to people to access or remain in work. Following review, these schemes have been revised to make them more focused on those most in need of supports'.

'The Department also has a network of facilitators throughout the country, whose role is to inform and encourage unemployed people and lone parents to avail of the wide range of incentives and options available from the Department and otherwise. While the scale and level of support which the Department can give directly in this regard is limited, significant results have been achieved in co-operation, where appropriate, with other agencies e.g. FÁS , and this co-operation will be further developed in the future'.

The Department also aims to*: ' take specific steps to encourage those who have been out of the labour market to avail of appropriate pre-employment training and development and education opportunities*'.

One of the ways in which it will do this is to work with other agencies in implementing the recommendations of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning.

In relation to Poverty and Social Exclusion, the Department has a lead role in advancing the social inclusion agenda, principally by driving forward the implementation of the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy in co-operation with other involved agencies and organisations. The specific strategies in the area of Poverty and Exclusion will be expanded on in chapter 5.

2.8 Education and Training

The Minister for Education and Science is responsible for provision for both academic and vocational education (mainly initial, but also continuing) in schools and colleges at first, second, further and higher levels.

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment has primary responsibility for training, and through FÁS, supports training in three broad categories, employment training schemes (e.g. apprenticeship), social inclusion measures (e.g. community employment) and training for unemployed people. In 2002 FÁS training of persons from the Live Register accounted for 17% of Active Labour Market Programmes (Information on the range of FÁS programmes for unemployed people is at Appendix D).

Other Ministers have responsibility for some aspects of sectoral training, such as agriculture, fisheries and tourism.

For the purposes of this review of the Back to Education Allowance Scheme, the policies of the Department of Education and Science are particularly relevant as it is programmes in the education sector that are approved for access by BTEA participants.

2.9 Education Policy

The mission of the Department of Education and Science is 'to provide for high-quality education', which will:

- Enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society and
- Contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development.

The following high-level goals of the Department of Education and Science are relevant to the policy context within which the Back to Education Allowance Scheme operates:

- To support, through education, a socially inclusive society with equal opportunities for all
- To contribute to Ireland's economic prosperity, development and international competitiveness.

Aspects of education and training policies to support employment, competitiveness and social inclusion include:

- A firm foundation of high quality initial education with a view to ensuring optimum retention rates so that at least 90% of pupils remain in school to complete upper secondary education
- Broader curriculum choice in second level schools, provision for a range of options to meet different abilities, interest and needs and strengthened vocational and technical dimensions of curricula
- Priority investment towards tackling educational disadvantage with particular attention to literacy and numeracy, preventing and addressing early school leaving and providing second chance education and training for those with low skills
- Ensuring a supply of high quality manpower to address skill needs and widening access to lifelong learning in the context of an integrated approach to education and training
- Addressing access barriers through a strengthening of financial supports, guidance and counselling, and increased flexibility of provision
- Enhancing quality through staff development, research and evaluation

- Embedding education and training provision within a national framework of qualifications, providing for quality standards, streamlined progression pathways, mechanisms for credit accumulation and accreditation of prior and work based learning, and embracing learning in formal, non-formal and informal learning.

2.10 Lifelong Learning

In the context of this review, the relevant aspects of education policy relate to adult learners and the learning opportunities available to them. The publication of The White Paper on Adult Education – Learning for Life in 2000 marked the adoption of Lifelong Learning as the governing principle of educational policy in Ireland. The policies outlined in the White Paper were complemented by the report of the **Task Force on Lifelong Learning** in 2002 which focused on labour market needs.

The White Paper defined adult education as *'systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education and training'*. In this context, adult education includes aspects of further and higher education, continuing education and training, community-based education and other systematic deliberate learning by adults, formal, non-formal and informal.

The focus of the Report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning was on the labour market aspects of lifelong learning and concentrated on the key themes of

- developing and implementing a National Framework of Qualifications
- ensuring Basic Skills for All
- providing Comprehensive Guidance, Counselling and Information
- addressing delivery, access and funding measures
- providing better opportunities for workplace learning, and learning for workers.

The need to continuously upgrade knowledge, skills and competencies across all occupations and workplaces is now generally accepted and this lifelong learning agenda is also regarded as key to delivering on employability and social inclusion by enabling individuals to access more and higher quality jobs (Govt. 2002). In addition Forfas (2003) recommends that if Ireland is to attract and sustain a knowledge intensive industrial sector then formal education must be underpinned and enhanced by a commitment to lifelong learning which is complemented by a formal framework that encourages both a return to education and the constant up-skilling of the workforce.

2.11 Education Providers

The principal statutory providers of further education, adult education and vocational education and training within the education sector are the Vocational Education Committees, the Institutes of Technology and Universities.

2.12 Further Education

In the light of the priorities identified in the White Paper on Adult Education, the objectives of the measures and programmes operated by the Vocational Education Committees are:

- to meet the needs of young early school leavers
- to provide second chance education for adults

- to provide vocational education and training opportunities for labour market entrants and re-entrants
- to provide alternative pathways to higher education.

These objectives are pursued through the following targeted programmes:

- Youthreach for early school leavers in the 15-20 year age group
- Traveller Training provided in Senior Traveller Training Centres for persons aged 15 years and upwards
- the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for unemployed adults wishing to return to learning with a view to enhancing employability
- Post-Leaving Certificate Courses for school leavers wishing to enter the labour market and adults returning to learning who have completed senior cycle education or equivalent and who need further education and training to enhance their chances of gaining employment
- The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) providing flexible part-time learning opportunities for those in employment and people who are unemployed or not in the labour market.

A brief description of these programmes is at Appendix E

The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme has particular relevance to this review of the Back to Education Allowance. The stated aim of VTOS is to give unemployed people education and training opportunities. The programme also aims to prepare people to go to paid employment, or to further opportunities leading to paid employment. As an Active Labour Market Programme, the specific objective of the VTOS is to enable long-term unemployed people to make the transition to stable employment or to further education and training. What differentiates the VTOS from other measures to combat long-term unemployment is its emphasis on increasing both the general educational levels and specific vocational skills of participants.

2.13 Higher Education

The recent OECD (16 February, 2004) Review of the Higher Education Sector highlighted the key role of the sector for future social and economic development. This echoes the report of the Government Enterprise Strategy Group, which states that Ireland's economic development, and the social dividends that flow from that will depend to a large degree on knowledge and innovation.

The ability of higher education to produce skilled graduates in sufficient numbers is critical to the development of the human capital on which Ireland's research effort and ability to attract high value inward investment depends. There has been a massive expansion of higher education over the past two decades in terms of numbers and investment. Where there were approximately 40,000 people in higher education in the early 1980s that now stands at over 130,000.

That growth is reflected in strong performance by Ireland among OECD countries in terms of higher education participation rates for the school leaver age cohort. The latest data available indicates that this stood at 55% in 2003, as compared with 44% in 1998, 36% in 1992 and 20% in 1980. It remains the case however that there are disparities in terms of access to higher education on the basis of socio-economic background.

The National Development Plan provided for a third level access fund totalling €121m over the period 2000–2006, aimed at tackling under-representation among three target groups:

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

The National Development Plan also provided for the establishment of the Action Group on Access to Third Level Education.

2.14 National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education

This Office was established in the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in the latter half of 2003. The establishment of this office was a key recommendation of the Action Group on Access to Third Level Education (McNamara report). The Office will facilitate the aim of increasing higher education participation among the three target groups.
Its key functions are:

- facilitate access to third level
- advise on policy development
- liaise closely with the Department and associated bodies, e.g. NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) and the Educational Disadvantage Committee, to ensure coordination and continuity between initiatives at various levels of education
- allocate funds under a number of programmes including the Special Fund for Students with Disabilities, the Millennium Partnership Fund and the targeted initiatives currently operated by the HEA. The Office would also be responsible for financial and other reporting requirements
- oversee centralised data collection
- develop annual targets and to monitor and evaluate progress towards these targets in the various initiatives
- establish links with institutions, to promote links between those institutions and schools/local groups and to consult with stakeholders and interest groups
- commission and promote research on access issues.

The National Office published an Action Plan for Equity and Access in Higher Education in November, 2004. The action plan was drawn up by the National Office with the assistance of an advisory group and with the help of a range of education and social partners. The plan sets out the rationale behind equity of access and the practical steps that are required to create this opportunity for groups who have, to date been under-represented in higher education. These include learners with a disability, mature students, disadvantaged school leavers and members of the travelling community and ethnic minorities.

2.15 Conclusion

A particular feature of all high skills economies is the persistent problem of limited penetration of knowledge based jobs, i.e. the presence of significant levels of social exclusion from the knowledge economy in the following categories, early school leavers, the unemployed, part-time employees (women mainly), temporary workers, older workers and individuals in the informal sector and those working in traditional organisations (Ashton 2002)[2] . Employment rates are significantly lower for less

2 Ashton, D. (2002) Challenges to the High Skill Economy FÁS labour Market Conference November 2002 Dublin.

educated than for their more educated counterparts with persons not having finished upper secondary schooling accounting for nearly half of all those unemployed where the limited labour market opportunities for the poorly qualified have a significant discouraging effect on participation (OECD 2003). Consequently policies that foster rather than discourage participation in the labour market are to be welcomed (OECD 2003).

- Furthermore, the first comprehensive analytical study of the relationship of human capital to economic returns that included all EU states[3] concluded that higher levels of education and training are accompanied by higher productivity, higher wages, lower unemployment probabilities and higher labour force participation rates (Bradley 2004)[4]. – The aim of the BTEA scheme is to provide vulnerable and marginalised groups with a second chance of educational opportunity to improve their employment prospects and halt the flow into welfare dependency in the longer term. The extent to which it does this is considered in this review as is its relevance as an active labour market programme in particular in terms of actual outcomes for participants

The following chapter, chapter 3, provides the History, Development and administration of the BTEA scheme.

3 Human Capital in a Global and Knowledge Based Economy, study commissioned by DG Employment and Social Affairs and authored by Angel de la Fuente University of Barcelona, May 2002.

4 Human Capital and Economic Growth: A National Perspective on the Returns to Investment, presentation by Professor John Bradley, The Economic and Social Research Institute, at EU Presidency Conference on Investment in Human Resources, Dublin Castle, June 24th 2004

CHAPTER 3: HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF BTEA SCHEME

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the reasons behind the establishment of the Back to Education scheme and how it has evolved to date, giving information on its current organisational arrangements and level of participation, structured around the following themes:

- History and development of the scheme
- Objectives of the scheme
- Study options available
- Administration
- Eligibility
- Payment Arrangements
- Profile of participants
- Scheme expenditure, staffing levels, and administration costs.

3.2 History and Development of the Scheme

The link between unemployment and poverty and the correlation between poor education attainment and long term unemployment were among the forces which first prompted the then Department of Social Welfare to offer people in receipt of certain social welfare payments an opportunity to avail of education programmes as a stepping stone to employment.

The Educational Opportunities Scheme (EOS) was set up in 1986 to allow long-term unemployed persons over 25 years of age to attend a leaving certificate type course in two pilot locations, Tallaght VEC, Co. Dublin and Limerick VEC catchment areas. While attending the courses participants received an allowance in lieu of their unemployment payment.

Further, to facilitate those wishing to pursue a Second Level course of study, the Social Welfare (Availability for Employment) Regulations 1989, came into operation on 11 December 1989. Statutory Instrument 328 of 1989 prescribed that long term Unemployment Assistance claimants, aged over 21 years, could be deemed to be available for employment provided that the second level course being pursued was approved by the Minister and would lead to a certificate recognised by the Department of Education.

Speaking in a Dáil Debate at the time[5] the Minister for Social Welfare said:

"I am very conscious that education and training play a vital role in helping unemployed persons to improve their prospects, particularly in the case of those who left the school system early, I am anxious to ensure there is the greatest flexibility within the current legislation to allow persons who are unemployed to attend education courses while still retaining entitlement to unemployment payments".

Following on from this initiative the Third Level Allowance Scheme was introduced on a pilot basis in July 1990. The objective of the scheme was the removal of the barrier to participation in third level education faced by people in receipt of unemployment payments. Persons, aged 23 years and over, who were registered as unemployed for at least 15 months qualified under the scheme. At that time the Minister stated:[6]

"This new scheme facilitates those who can get a place at third level and complements the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme and the Second Level initiatives for pursuing full-time and part-time education which I introduced over the past few years. Together these initiatives make the pursuance of educational courses a real option for those unemployed who want to improve their educational qualifications".

There were a number of measures introduced over the following years, which extended opportunities to a broader base of Social Welfare recipients wishing to pursue Second Level or Third Level courses (See Appendix F). The Third Level Allowance was established as a separate stand-alone scheme with effect from September 1996. The Second Level Allowance Scheme (which heretofore had no specific title other than a Second Level initiative) was established on a similar basis in April 1997. In January 1998 they were merged into a unified Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) Scheme (See Appendix G).

3.3 Objectives of BTEA scheme

The objective in setting up the scheme was to help unemployed social welfare recipients, by way of education and training, to improve their prospects of acquiring sustainable employment. This still remains the primary objective, having broadened over the years to facilitate other social welfare categories in obtaining qualifications necessary to participate in the modern labour market.

This objective is in line with government policy stated in Sustaining Progress, the Social Partnership Agreement 2003-2005. One of ten Special Initiatives identified in that agreement relates to support for the Long Term Unemployed, the objectives are to

'equip people with the skills to give them access to good quality and secure employment over their lifetime and to continue the re-integration of the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups into the open labour market, with a focus on progression opportunities'.

As set out in chapter 2 one of the policy goals contained in the Department's own Statement of Strategy 2003-2005 is in relation to Support to Work. In relation to this goal, and in order to actively support customers in their efforts to access the labour market, the Department commits to taking specific steps to encourage those who have been out of the labour market to avail of appropriate

5 Reply to Brendan Howlin T.D., Dáil Debate of 12 December 1989
6 Press release of 27 July 1990

pre-employment training and development and education opportunities. That objective is also compatible with the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) which has among its specific targets to:

- *eliminate long term unemployment as soon as circumstances permit but in any event not later than 2007 and*
- *reduce the level of unemployment experienced by vulnerable groups towards the national average by 2007.*

The objective of the scheme is also appropriate in the context of the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (October 2002), which states that:

'the population of unemployed people continues to be dominated by people with low levels of formal educational attainment.'

3.4 Study Options available under the BTEA scheme

There are two education options available under the BTEA scheme; A Second Level Option (SLO) and a Third Level Option (TLO).

3.4.1 Second Level Option (SLO)

Under this option, persons approved for Back To Education Allowance may participate in courses run by Community, Comprehensive, Secondary, and Vocational Schools and must be full-time day courses leading to a certificate which is recognised by the Department of Education and Science, or, approved by the Further Education Training and Awards Council (FETAC). The range includes Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate, and Post-Leaving Certificate, and certain City and Guilds Certificates. Courses in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland leading to a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), and some Northern Ireland Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) courses are also recognised. Foundation/Access courses at Universities or Institutes of Technology are also covered.

3.4.2 Third Level Option (TLO)

Approved full-time day courses can be availed of through any university or third level college or Institution. The course must be recognised by:

- Department of Education and Science for Higher Education Grant Scheme
- Vocational Education Committee's Scholarship Scheme
- Third Level Maintenance Grants Scheme for Trainees

or have

- Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) recognition.

Full-time day undergraduate courses in the United Kingdom and other European Union countries which are recognised for Higher Education Grant purposes are also recognised for TLO.

Other approved TLO courses include:

- Full time day courses provided by TEAGASC. The course must be validated by the Higher Education Training and Awards Council (HETAC)

- Full time day courses provided by Fáilte Ireland. The course must be validated by the Higher Education Training and Awards Council (HETAC)
- Certain Business & Technology Education Council (BTEC), i.e. Higher National Diploma (HND).

There has been a significant increase in the take up of SLO in recent years, but TLO is the option most availed of by Social Welfare recipients.

3.5 Administration

3.5.1 Procedures

At present four areas within the Department administer the scheme:

1) Employment Support Services (ESS)
The Employment Support Services, provides a central support for the administration of the scheme. This includes formulating policy, disseminating information, providing guidelines, customers support, reviewing applications and co-ordinating the administration of the scheme. In addition, the Back to Education unit within ESS decides all applications from SWLOs for TLO and is responsible for the decision and maintenance of application for both TLO and SLO from applicants whose qualifying payment is Disability Benefit.[7]

2) Social Welfare Local Offices (SWLOs)
SLO applications in respect of people in receipt of Unemployment Assistance/Benefit or Farm Assist are dealt with in the Department's Social Welfare Local Offices. Prior to the introduction of the BTEA scheme Local Offices dealt with the VTOS scheme. Arising from this and the Local Offices involvement with this customer base it is probable that the Local Offices were viewed as an appropriate area to process VTOS and SLO claims

3) Pensions Service Office (PSO) Sligo
The PSO in Sligo deals with all its customers (One Parent Family Payment, Deserted Wife's Benefit/Allowance, Widow's/Widower's Contributory/Non Contributory Pensions and Prisoners Wife's Allowance) TLO and SLO applications.

4) Social Welfare Service Office Longford
The SWSO in Longford similarly deals with all customers applications for TLO and SLO (Disability Allowance, Invalidity Pension, Unemployability Supplement, and Carers' Allowance).

Table 3.1 shows the caseload spread through the areas. In developing the scheme over the years all SLO applications were dealt with by the scheme owner of the qualifying payment. This is also the case for TLO applications from all qualifying payments with the exception of Unemployment and SLO/TLO Disability Benefit cases, which are dealt with centrally in ESS.

In essence, the area dealing with the BTEA participant also deals with any consequential enquiries such as Representations on behalf of the customer by T.D.'s, Parliamentary Questions, Office of the Ombudsman etc., Freedom of Information requests and Reviews.* ESS also deals with Policy related matters.

7 ESS also provides central support to The Back to Work Allowance (BTWA) and Employers PRSI exemption Schemes. ESS maintains approximately 3,000 Back to Work Allowance claims.

** Customers who are dissatisfied with a decision given by a Deciding Officer in relation to the Department's statutory schemes are entitled to appeal to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office. Such a service does not exist in respect of non-statutory schemes such at BTEA. Instead, a person who is dissatisfied with a ruling made on a BTEA application may request that the ruling be examined by an officer of a higher grade to the officer who made the initial ruling. These examinations are known as reviews. APPENDIX H sets out the progression of a BTEA claim.*

Table 3.1: Summary of Claimload 2003/04

Location	ESS (TLO)	SWLO (SLO)	PSO Sligo (SLO/TLO)	SWSO Longford (SLO/TLO)	Total All locations
Claims in Payment					
• New Claim approved	1543	Not	Not	480	Not
• Resumptions	2168	available	available	104	available
• Successful Reviews	130			-	
Total approved	**3841**	**1941**	**1282**	**584**	**7648**
	50%	**25%**	**17%**	**8%**	**100%**
Applications Not approved	718	Not available	384	5	Not available
Decisions Reviewed					
• Successful	130	Not	Not	Not	Not
• Not Successful	82	available	available	available	available
Total reviewed decisions	212	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

3.6 Eligibility

The qualifying criteria for participation on the Scheme can be broken down into four categories:

- Aged 21 years or over (or 24 years or over for an approved postgraduate qualification), and in receipt of one of a number of specified social welfare payments[8] for at least 6 months (156 days) for SLO or 15 months (390 days) for TLO[9]
- Aged 18-20 years, out of formal education for 2 years, and in receipt of Unemployment Assistance/Benefit or One Parent Family Payment for at least 6 months (156 days) for SLO and 15 months (390 days) for TLO.
- Aged 18 years or over and in receipt of Blind Pension, Disability Allowance, Invalidity Pension or Unemployability Supplement for 6 months (156 days) for SLO and 15 months (390 days) for TLO
- In receipt of Disability Benefit for 3 years or more.

Note: From September 2005 the 15 month (390 days) qualifying period for TLO will be reduced to 12 months (312 days).

8 Unemployment Assistance/Benefit, Farm Assist, One Parent Family Payment, Deserted Wife's Benefit/Allowance, Widows/Widowers Non Contributory/Contributory Pension or Prisoners Wife's Allowance or Carer's Allowance (having ceased caring responsibilities).

9 From September 2004 the qualifying period was increased from 6 months (156 days) to 15 months (390 days) for TLO applicants. SLO applicants were not affected by this change.

Periods spent on VTOS, FÁS Training Courses, Youthreach, Community Employment Schemes, Back to Work Allowance, FÁS Job Initiative, and Revenue Job Assist can count towards the qualifying period.

Persons included as Qualified Adults on a social welfare payment can access the BTEA in their own right. In such cases the rate of payment on BTEA is equivalent to the maximum standard personal rate of the Social Welfare payment that their partner/spouse receives. Persons who are signing for unemployment credited contributions (6 months for SLO and 12 months for TLO) may also participate in the scheme, but will not receive a payment.

3.7 Payment Arrangements

3.7.1 Payment Rates and Duration

Back to Education Allowance is paid at the standard personal rate of the participant's qualifying payment. Persons on a reduced rate of a Social Welfare payment (due to a means assessment or only having an entitlement to a reduced rate of benefit) are entitled to the maximum personal rate of payment while participating in the scheme. The allowance also includes increases for a qualified adult or children, where applicable.

An annual allowance of €254[10] is payable at the start of the academic year towards the cost of studies. There is no payment or annual allowance payable to applicants previously in receipt of unemployment credits only. Payment to Qualified Adults awarded the BTEA is made by opening a BTEA claim in the Qualified Adults own right, payable at full personal rate of qualifying payment and half rate payment for children where applicable.

Customers on the scheme continue to receive Secondary Benefits. Rent or Mortgage Interest Supplement may be affected if there is an increase in the household income as with other social welfare schemes.

Payment of the BTEA continues for the period of the course, provided the underlying entitlement to the primary qualifying payment is maintained except in the case of those who qualified on the basis of an unemployment payment. In these cases payment is discontinued during the summer holiday period. Appendix I outlines the BTEA scheme under several headings including payment rate, duration and other benefits. It also covers Educational, Training and Development Courses, and Part Time Education Courses covered in the Back to Education Programme. Furthermore it outlines VTOS and FÁS Training under the same headings.

3.7.2 Payment and Recording Systems

Payment of BTEA is made through the computer system on which the BTEA qualifying payment was maintained, namely **ISTS** for SWLOs, and **Penlive** for PSO Sligo and SWSO Longford. These systems hold only sufficient customer information to support the maintenance and payment of the relevant claims.

To support the administration of the Back to Education Scheme the **TLA Recording System** (See Appendix J) was developed to register applications for BTEA and to record details of decisions made on such applications. This system is utilized solely in ESS. As it was never extended to the three other areas of administration, the details on the system refer only to TLO applications from persons previously on

10 €400 from September 2005

an unemployment payment (50% of the total BTEA claim-load). In addition to basic customer information such as PPS No., name, address, date of birth and claim status, the system also records:

- Type of qualification pursued
- Title of course
- College name
- General remarks.

These additional details are maintained for statistical purposes and to assist in answering Parliamentary Questions, letters from customers and public representatives, Freedom of Information requests and to inform decision making for annual Budget.

In addition, the system generates the following outputs:

- Notifications to local offices of the result of the applications for Third Level Option
- Letters to successful Third Level Option applicants (disallowance notices are issued manually)
- Address labels for issuing resumption forms annually.

Access to the application is currently being considered for SWLOs.

A more detailed description of the above Payment and Recording Systems are contained in Appendix J.

3.7.3 Control

The principal control checks in relation to BTEA are:

- A statement from College confirming fulltime attendance and registration. Participants **other than those previously in receipt of an unemployment payment** may continue to receive their primary payment and failure to provide statement results in non payment of the cost of education allowance. However, for former unemployment payment participants, failure to provide statement results in cessation of primary payment as full time students are disqualified from receiving an unemployment payment. All SWLOs are given a common stop date in October to cease BTEA for all persons failing to provide evidence of attendance/registration.

- In March /April each year ESS HQ issue Resumption Notices to current TLO participants formerly on an unemployment payment (50% of BTEA claimload), requesting details of cessation date for current academic year and also date of commencement of next academic year if applicable. Failure to return form results in immediate cessation of the BTEA. In SWLOs Resumption Notices are issued from April to September for SLO participants (25% of BTEA caseload). Failure to return notice results in cessation of payment. In PSO Sligo and SWSO Longford Resumption Notices issue from May to September.

- There are also random checks carried out in SWLOs, PSO Sligo and SWSO Longford. Failure to respond results in cessation of payment or in the case of PSO Sligo and SWSO Longford, investigation by a Social Welfare Inspector.

- In addition, ESS HQ carries out a manual crosscheck between participants on the TLA Recording System and those in payment on ISTS. This check indicates a 6% to 7% drop out rate each year.

3.8 Participation Profile

Each year detailed statistics are compiled on participation in the scheme. The main purpose of the exercise is to give a realistic figure of participants in the scheme who are likely to complete the academic year. This examination of data provides the most accurate information on participation rate each year.

Statistics are compiled centrally in ESS HQ. The collation of data involves the two payment systems Penlive and ISTS as outlined earlier. ESS HQ obtains information from ISTS for unemployment payments. PSO Sligo and SWSO Longford supply statistics for their area. All annual participation rates reflect information supplied at the time of compilation.

3.8.1 Participation Levels

Table 3.2 below maps the rate of participation on BTEA over the last 6 years, with a breakdown of each strand. BTEA participation has increased steadily in recent years, with the exception of 2001/02 where there was a decrease of 471 participants compared to 2000/01 year. SLO participation has virtually quadrupled over a 6 year period, while TLO has increased by over 20% during the same period. Overall uptake of the BTEA scheme has increased by 50% in the period shown.

Table3.2 Participation rate, SLO and TLO, 1998 – 2004

Academic year	SLO	TLO	Total
1998/99	531 (10.55%)	4,503 (89.45%)	5,034 (100%)
1999/00	623 (11.56%)	4,765 (88.44%)	5,388 (100%)
2000/01	762 (13.60%)	4,843 (86.40%)	5,605 (100%)
2001/02	883 (16.62%)	4,431 (83.38%)	5,314 (100%)
2002/03	1,505 (23.25%)	4,968 (76.75%)	6,473 (100%)
2003/04	2,190 (28.63%)	5,458 (71.37%)	7,648 (100%)
2004/05	3,028 (41.44%)	4,280 (58.56%)	7,308 (100%)

3.8.2 Participation by type scheme

Those participating in the scheme come predominantly from the unemployment schemes and choose to follow third level courses. Overall participation levels are rising. While the numbers of unemployed on TLO remained stable there is a marked increase in the numbers on SLO. The numbers of those from OPFP has more than doubled over the 3 years. The numbers of those on disability type payments is small in comparison to the overall population in receipt of these types of payments.

Table 3.3 No of Participants by Qualifying payment

	2001/02		2002/03		2003/04	
	SLO	TLO	SLO	TLO	SLO	TLO
Unemployment						
Assistance/Benefit	787	3,460	1,389	3,711	1,941	3,791
OPFP	66	560	68	732	159	1,123
Disability Allowance*	337		433		460	
Invalidity Pension	23	59	23	60	46	48
Unemployability						
Supplement	2	5	3	5	3	4
Blind Pension	-	2	1	4	-	-
Carers Allowance	5	8	8	16	11	12
Disability Benefit	-	-	13	7	30	20
Total	883	4,431	1,505	4,968	2,190	5,458
Grand total	5,314		6,473		7,648	

Breakdown of SLO/TLO for Disability Allowance cases not available[11]. As a result they are all classed as TLO cases for statistical purposes

3.8.3 Gender Analysis

Female participation (58%) in BTEA is greater than male participation (42%) at present. In recent years female participation has continued to rise.

Table 3.4 Gender of participants

Year	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Female	**2,884** (54.27%)	**3,536** (54.63%)	**4,435** (57.99%)
Male	**2,430** (45.73%)	**2,937** (45.37%)	**3,213** (42.01%)
Total	**5,314** (100%)	**6,473** (100%)	**7,648** (100%)

3.8.4 Age Profile

Table 3.5 below sets out the age profile of participants. Only former recipients of an unemployment payment or OPFP aged 18-20 years are required to be out of formal education for 2 years, in order to access the scheme. Included in the table below, they numbered 60 in 2001/02, 111 in 2002/03, and 69 in 2003/04.

The age profile of participants indicates that those most likely to participate in the scheme are aged between 26-30 years. As can be seen from the profile of participants over 50% are under 30 years while those over 50 years are less than 7%. No reason is available for this but one might conclude that older persons find it more difficult to return to education.

11 D.A. section to record breakdown for future statistics

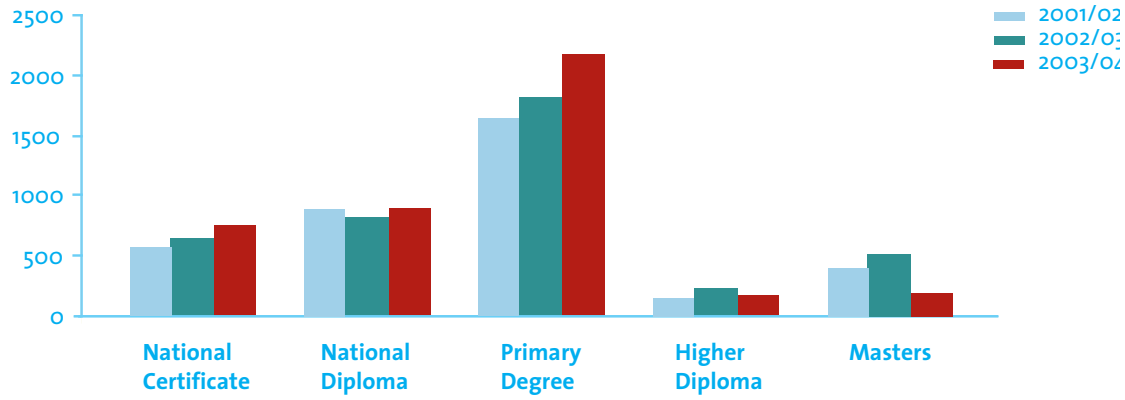
Table 3.5 Age profile of participants

Year	2001/02		2002/03		2003/04	
18-20	140	(2.64%)	179	(2.76%)	202	(2.64%)
21-25	999	(18.76%)	1385	(21.40%)	1722	(22.51%)
26-30	1650	(31.06%)	1912	(29.54%)	2,055	(26.87%)
31-35	880	(16.57%)	1034	(15.97%)	1,181	(15.44%)
36-40	605	(11.39%)	711	(10.98%)	844	(11.04%)
41-45	435	(8.19%)	480	(7.42%)	616	(8.05%)
46-50	305	(5.74%)	381	(5.89%)	497	(6.50%)
51-55	179	(3.37%)	211	(3.26%)	294	(3.84%)
>55	121	(2.28%)	180	(2.78%)	238	(3.11%)
Total	5314	(100.00%)	6470	(100.00%)	7,648	(100.00%)

3.8.5 Qualifications Pursued

The following Figure 3.6, presents the qualifications pursued by TLO participants formerly on an unemployment payment. The data is drawn from three quarters of all those opting for TLO. While recognizing that the data is incomplete, and includes none of those pursuing the second level option, it would appear that, of these, the most popular choices in courses followed, are at primary degree level. The least popular is at Higher Diploma level.

Figure 3.6 Qualifications pursued T.L.O.



3.9 Scheme Expenditure, Staffing Levels and Administration Costs

3.9.1 Scheme Expenditure

Expenditure on the scheme is calculated by calendar year although the scheme runs in tandem with the academic year. The figures contained in the following tables, include the annual Cost of Education Payment. The table shows how investment in the scheme has more than doubled in the last 7 years.

Table 3.7 Scheme Expenditure 1998-2004

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
TLO	€19.56m	€22.92m	€25.98m	€26.53m	€29.18m	€29.4m	€32.7m
SLO	€1.18m	€2.33m	€3.10m	€4.02m	€6.21m	€8.9m	€11.5m
Total	€20.74m	€25.25m	€29.08m	€30.55m	€35.39m	€38.3m	€44.2m

Table 3.8 gives a separate breakdown of the Cost of Education payment. In the 1998/99 academic year this payment amounted to €190 per participant. From 1999/ 00 onwards the amount was increased to €254.

Table 3.8 Cost of Education Expenditure (included in programme costs)

Year	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Amount	€ 0.959m	€1.389m	€ 1.424m	€1.350m	€1.644m	€1.942m

3.9.2 Staffing Levels

ESS HQ is the only area dedicated exclusively to the scheme. In the other three areas, staff work on the scheme at either peak times or the work is integrated with the areas' primary payments.

3.9.3 Administration Costs

A primary payment qualifies a customer for BTEA. In this respect the BTEA claim incurs additional administrative costs which are estimated at €0.372m based on data supplied by the primary scheme area for 2003/2004

The following chapter, chapter 4 outlines the current efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme and provides the conclusions of the Working Group.

CHAPTER 4: EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme. Efficiency is about delivering service at optimum cost. It can be defined as the relationship between input and output of an activity and the extent to which it is possible to maximize output from the input available or to minimize the levels of input for the given level of output. Effectiveness is concerned with the extent to which the objectives of the scheme have been achieved. In examining these aspects of the scheme the Group will draw conclusions, which will be further addressed in chapter 5.

The programme costs of the scheme were €38.3 million in 2003. When considering the programme costs, one needs to be mindful of the fact that a significant proportion of the programme costs would have been incurred, in any event, for as long as the primary qualifying payment remained in place.

4.2 Efficiency

In considering the efficiency of the scheme, the Working Group considered the following:

- Scheme Administration
- Service Delivery
- Control
- Review/Appeal
- Information Requirements
- Administration Costs
- Accounting Procedures

4.2.1 Scheme Administration

An outline of the administration of the BTEA scheme is given in the previous chapter and it shows that some elements of the scheme are localised and others are centralised. 50% of applications have all aspects of their application dealt with locally. The remaining 50% are decided centrally and are maintained and paid locally. The justification for the present administrative arrangements is centered around the requirement to collect course participant information to monitor the scheme.
This requirement for non payment data still exists and is addressed below under information requirement 4.2.5.

In the context of the primary qualifying payment the BTEA workload ranges from 0.07% of the workload in the Disability Allowance area to 2.1% in the One Parent Family section and to an average of 2.6% in SWLOs.

The referral of applications to the central ESS section is inefficient as it delays the processing time and creates additional work including follow-up correspondence and queries. Furthermore it is difficult to justify having a process in place where claim taking and maintenance occurs at local level but the decision process is centralised.

While there may have been justification for the way in which the administration of the scheme has evolved it is the opinion of the Group that the scheme should be aligned with the primary payment and structures put in place to ensure that the current benefits of centralised monitoring are protected.

4.2.2 Service Delivery

The Department's commitment to Service Delivery is outlined in its Customer Action Plan 2004 – 2007. The Action Plan highlights the benefits of the localisation programme. It states that:

'The localisation programme will enable quicker decisions, access to a service delivered locally and access to information on the range of services available through the local office network'

There are a number of aspects of the current structure of the BTEA scheme, which militate against the achievement of these benefits;

- Multiple points of contact can lead to confusion for the customer in relation to the application and decision making process. Workarounds have been established over time to cope with these weaknesses
- The centralised nature of the decision making process for the majority of third level applications increases the processing time for those applications
- In relation to schemes administered in PSO Sligo and Longford HQ customers who are already on the maximum rate may experience delays in the award of the Cost of Education Allowance as these cases are dealt with as resources allow.

The Group recommends that there be a single point of contact where all aspects of the claim are processed and all queries dealt with

The Cost of Education Allowance should be paid in all cases at the award stage.

4.2.3 Control

One of the Department's strategic high-level goals is to have an effective control programme in place, which co-exists with and complements fully the provision of a good quality service to our customers. The Department's objective in this regard is to:

'Implement controls on a cost-effective basis to ensure that error, fraud and abuse are prevented, detected and deterred and any monies incorrectly paid are recovered' [12]

The control measures in place for BTEA are outlined in chapter 3, section 3.7.3.

12 DSFA Statement of Strategy 2003-2005

In the context of the BTEA scheme, control measures focus on establishing entitlement to participate in the scheme and ensuring that the allowance is paid at the correct rate.

While the four administration areas carry out a range of control measures, the same procedures are not carried out in all areas.

4.2.4 Reviews/Appeals

As stated in chapter 3, section 3.5.1, there is no right of appeal to the Independent Social Welfare Appeals Office. Instead customers who are dissatisfied with a decision may request that the ruling be examined by a higher officer than the officer who made the initial ruling. These examinations are known as Reviews.

In the 2003/04 academic year, there were 500 requests for reviews. Over 60% of these were successful compared to a success rate of 44% under the Social Welfare Appeals process.[13]

The main reasons for original disallowances were:

a) The applicant was not applying for the first year of the particular course.
b) An equivalent qualification was already held.
c) The applicant was not 156 days in receipt of a qualifying payment.
d) Postgraduate courses not covered under the scheme.
e) Incomplete information provided at claim stage.

Requests for a review were allowed, following a re-examination of each case and submission made, on the basis, for example, that:

a) A number of applicants were exempt from the first year of the course.
b) The equivalent qualification was attained between 5 and 17 years ago.
c) The entitlement to unemployment assistance/benefit was on appeal and the appeal was successful.
d) Applicants had not been informed of the 2003 change with regard to the postgraduate option.
e) Applicants subsequently provided additional information.

A number of cases were also allowed on review due to exceptional circumstances, this was based on an individual's particular case as presented, through a submission.

While the non-statutory nature of the scheme allows for more discretion in the decision making process, nonetheless, the high number of revised decisions following review suggests a need for more uniformity and clarity in the criteria used by Deciding Officers when making the initial decision.

4.2.5 Information Requirements

Broadly there are two categories of information required to maintain and evaluate the scheme i.e. payment related information (personal details, rate of payment etc.) and non-payment related information (qualification pursued, title of course, college etc)

13 Appeals Office Annual Report 2003

The payment related information is captured by the two computer applications used to support the scheme. These applications are not compatible and this gives rise to difficulties in generating overall scheme information.

Non-payment related information is used for monitoring the effectiveness of the scheme and to inform the policy making process. This level of information is not captured on the two main computer applications. The TLA system goes some way in meeting this need but this system is available in the central ESS section only and as a result does not capture non-payment data for all applicants. Details of the TLA are outlined at 3.7.2

Non-payment information should be captured from all applicants and the level of non-payment information needs to be enhanced to support the measurement of the performance indicators set out in chapter 5.

4.2.6 Administration Costs

A claim for BTEA can be viewed as an event in the life of the primary qualifying payment. In that context, while the customer is already in receipt of a payment additional costs arise in processing and deciding the BTEA application and making the necessary adjustments to the primary payment (e.g. uprating where appropriate and paying the Cost of Education Allowance). These additional administration costs were estimated at €372,000 for 2003/04 academic year and represents approximately 1% of the programme costs.

4.2.7 Accounting Procedures

The Group identified two areas where accountability needs to be considered. One relates to accounting for expenditure and the other relates to the Live Register returns.

The BTEA is funded from a separate expenditure subhead to that of the primary payment. Where there is a failure or a delay in updating the claim for the primary payment as 'BTEA' this gives rise to inaccuracies in accounting for expenditure.

UA/UB customers who are in receipt of a BTEA payment are not counted on the Live Register. A weekly statistical return of the Live Register is made to the Central Statistics Office and it is imperative that all awards of BTEA which impact the Live Register are recorded in time.

The elimination of delays inherent in the current administrative arrangements as outlined in 4.2.1 above should help address these issues.

4.3 Effectiveness of BTEA scheme

Effectiveness is concerned with the outcomes of the scheme and the relationship between those outcomes and the objectives of the scheme. In assessing the effectiveness of the scheme, the Working Group considered the following:

- Take-up
- Impact of the scheme in getting people back to work
- Eligibility criteria

- BTEA payment
- Scheme awareness

4.3.1 Take-Up

Customer Base

The eligibility criteria allows access to the scheme from a broad base of social welfare customers and includes the unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents, carers and other groups in receipt of social welfare payments. The eligibility criteria are set out in Chapter 3 above. Table 4.1a and 4.1b below shows the potential size of the customer base by qualifying payment and by duration on the qualifying payment. The customer base can range from 336,519 to 424,561 depending on the duration required to satisfy the eligibility criteria.

Table 4.1a Potential BTEA Clients aged over 21 years (March 2005)

Category	Length of time on qualifying scheme		
	6 months	15 months	24 Months
Widows	119,854	114,312	109,008
Deserted	12,240	12,166	12,067
Lone Parents	71,232	65,291	58,336
Carers	21,112	18,465	16,152
Unemployed	75,569	44,446	33,850
Total	300,007	254,680	229,413

Table 4.1b Potential BTEA Clients aged over 18 years

Category	Length of time on qualifying scheme		
	6 months	15 months	24 Months
Illness/Disability	124,554	116,015	107,106

A considerable number of those eligible would not be in a position to avail of the scheme at any given time for various reasons (e.g. lone parents and widows who are in employment or on training programmes, people with severe disability, carers with full-time caring commitments etc).

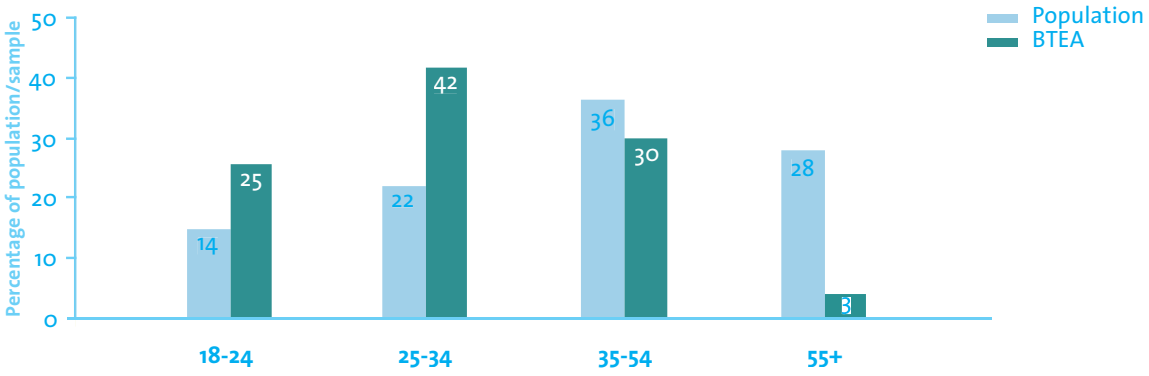
There were 7,648 customers in receipt of the allowance in the 2003/2004 academic year, 75% of these were in receipt of an unemployment payment prior to participating in the scheme and the remaining 25% were in receipt of other welfare payments. The proportion of those availing of SLO has increased from 16.62% in 2001/2002 to 28.63% in 2003/2004. It is likely that the cap on the number of VTOS places in recent years has contributed to this increase in the take up of SLO.

It should also be borne in mind that customers who are eligible for the BTEA also have a range of other Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) available to them. These include FÁS and VEC programmes. In 2003 the BTEA scheme accounted for 8% of the participation across all ALMPs.

Profile by Age and Gender

The age profile of current participants in the BTEA scheme is shown in Figure 4.2 along with an age profile of the full population. It is clear that in terms of the overall population the scheme is being accessed by a high proportion of people under 35, while the numbers over the age of 55 who access the scheme is low. The gender breakdown of current participants in the scheme is 58% women and 42% men.

Figure 4.2 Profile of Population and BTEA participants by Age for academic year 2003/2004 .



Profile by Socio-economic Group

Lansdowne Market Research was commissioned to carry out a survey of people who had participated in the scheme. The survey was carried out in November/December 2003 and included over 500 people who had participated in the scheme between 1998 and 2003. Supplementary interviews with lone parents were conducted in March 2004. The full survey findings are attached in Appendix B.

A socio-economic profile of customers surveyed is outlined in Figure 4.3. It compares the socio-economic groupings of the sample with that of the general population This comparison indicates an imbalance in the representation across the socio-economic groups with the lower socio economic groups showing a lower level of participation in the scheme.

Figure 4.3 Profile of Population & Sample by socio economic group.

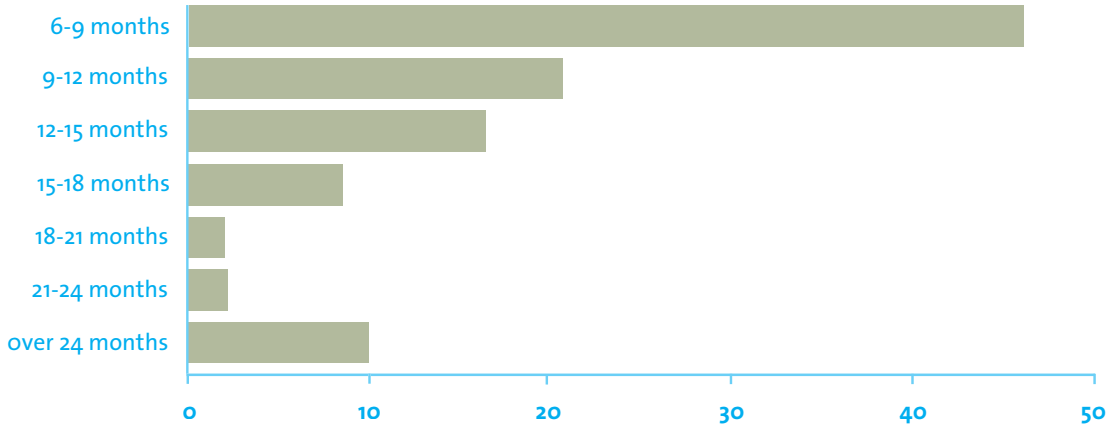
A socio-economic profile of the target group was not available but it would be expected that in comparison with the general population there would be a higher percentage of the target group in the lower socio-economic groups. This would suggest that the imbalance shown in Fig 4.3 above may be understated.

The survey results also show that there is a high take up of the Third Level Options from the top socio-economic groups (AB) while there was a higher take up of Leaving Certificate courses from the lower socio-economic groups (DE). Details of socio economic groups are in Appendix K.

- **It should also be noted that the 'Report on New Entrants to Higher Education in 2003**[14] **found that:** *'The analysis of long-term trends in college entry shows that in a context of progressively increasing estimated participation rates over the past two decades or so, all socio-economic groups increased their estimated participation rates in higher education between 1980 and 2003. However, consideration of equality of access in terms of relative odds of entry suggest a more complex pattern in which some of the more glaring inequalities have been mitigated, but in which certain groups, farmers and higher professional in particular, have maintained their relative advantages'* It is difficult however to draw any more definitive comparisons between its findings and that of the LMR survey due to the different methodologies employed in conducting the research.

Profile by Duration on Qualifying Payment
An analysis of new applicants (Figure 4.4) for the Third Level Option in the 2003/04 academic year who were previously on unemployment payments (75% of the total) shows that 44% were less than 9 months, 63% were less than 12 months and 90% were less than 2 years on an unemployment payment prior to commencement on the scheme.

Figure 4.4 Length of time in receipt of a Social Welfare Payment prior to BTEA



The take up is driven essentially by the self-selection nature of the scheme. The numbers engaging with the scheme are low in terms of the potentially eligible population and are more likely to be young, female, on the primary qualifying payment for less than 12 months and from the higher socio-economic group.

The Working Group considered that a more strategic approach to targeting, through, for example, a case management type intervention, is needed to attract higher numbers of the more marginalised groups to the scheme

4.3.2 Impact of the scheme in getting people back to work

The objective of the scheme as stated at 2.1 above is 'to enhance the employability of unemployed people and other groups by facilitating them to obtain qualifications to compete in the labour market'.

14 A Review of Higher Education Participation in 2003, Fitzpatrick Associates and Philip J.O'Connell, ESRI.

The Working Group considered the impact of the scheme from the point of the numbers engaging with the scheme, the qualifications obtained and the subsequent employment status of the participants. The Group drew on the results of the LMR survey, an internal analysis of scheme data and analysis carried out by the Department of Education and Science and by AONTAS.

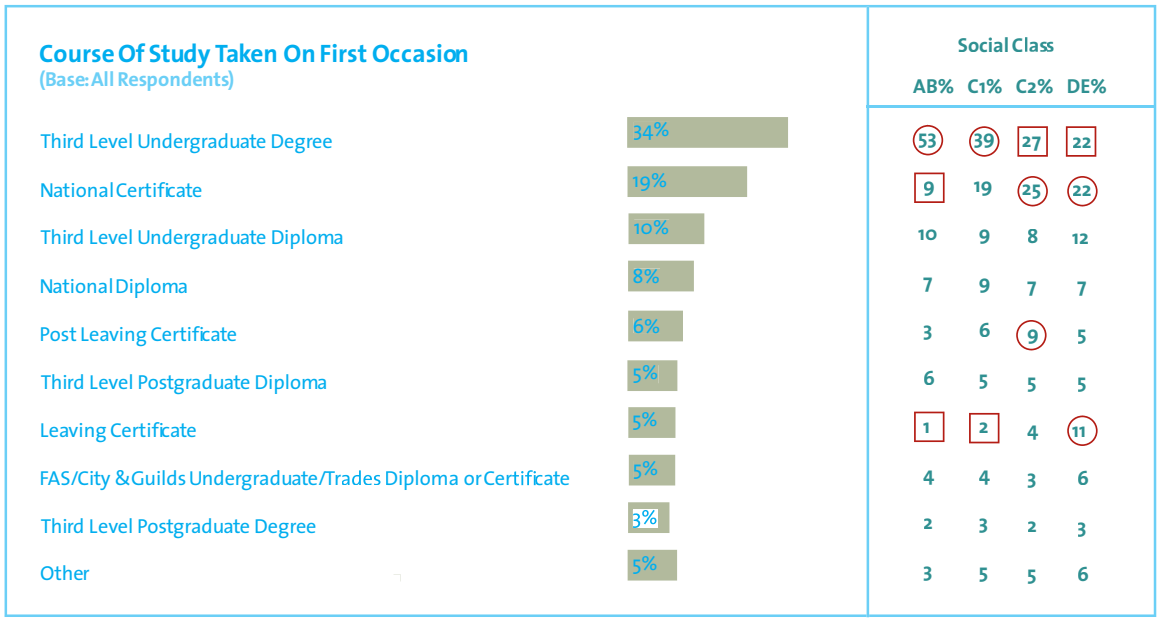
Participation and Qualification Obtained

10,000 customers have attained qualifications with the assistance of the scheme since its launch as the Third Level Allowance in 1990. In the current academic year (2004/2005) 4,280 are engaged in the Third Level Option and 3,028 have taken up the Second Level Option.

Figure 4.5 below from the LMR survey shows that there is a high take up of the Third Level Options from the top two socio-economic groups while there is a high take up of National Certificate courses from the next two socio-economic groups. All other courses are evenly distributed across socio groups except Leaving Certificate courses where there is a higher take up from the DE group.

Figure 4.5 Course of study taken on first occasion

Source: Lansdowne Market Research



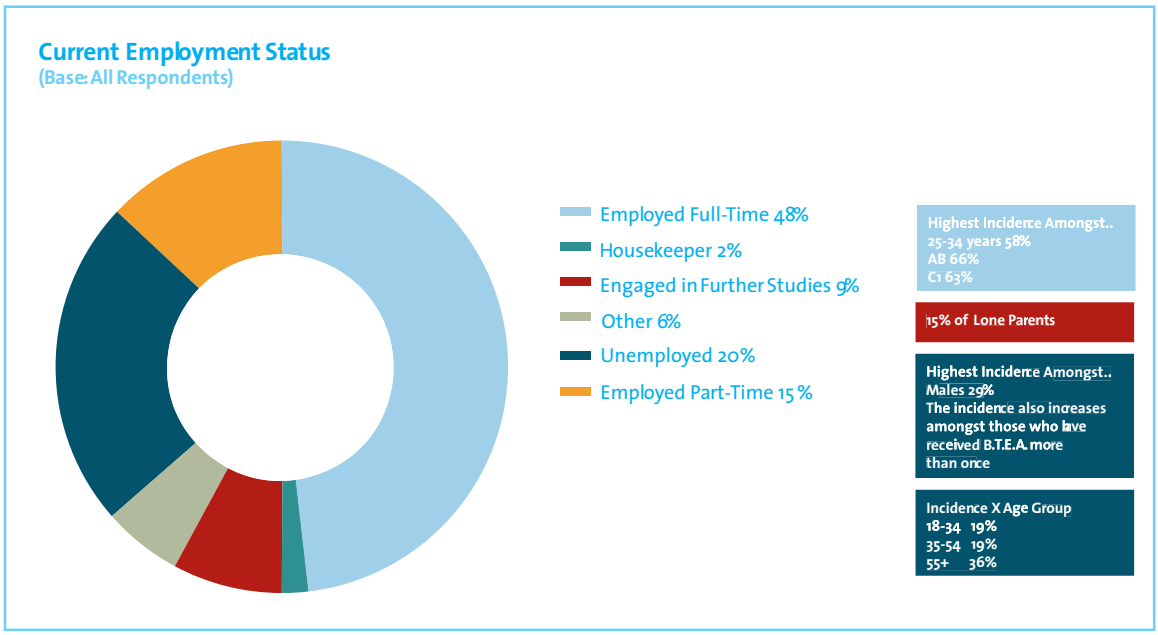
The self-selecting nature of the scheme is not supported by any mechanism to ensure that the education courses pursued at third level will best serve the future needs of the labour market. In relation to the further education sector, it is recognized that completion of upper secondary education or equivalent is an essential requirement for progression to a Post-leaving Certificate Course (PLC), which has a specific objective of providing relevant skills for entrants and re-entrants to the labour market.

Employment Status

The LMR survey also considered the current employment status and the results are summarised in Figure 4.6 below. 63% were found to be in full-time or part-time employment while at the time of the survey 9% were pursuing further education.

Figure 4.6 Current Employment Status

Source: Lansdowne Market Research



The survey results (Figure 4.7) also provided a breakdown of current employment status by gender, age and social class. The main points arising from this breakdown were:

- There is an even breakdown between male and female among those currently employed. However, there is a higher proportion of men currently unemployed
- A higher proportion of younger people are in full-time employment while there is a higher proportion of older people in part-time employment
- A significantly higher proportion of the top two socio-economic groups are in full-time employment while a significantly higher number of the lower socio-economic group were unemployed at the time of the survey.

Figure 4.7 Employment Status by Gender, Age and Social Class

Source: Lansdowne Market Research

Current Employment Status
(Base: All Respondents)

		SEX		AGE			Social Class			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	AB	C1	C2	DE
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Employed full-time	48%	49	47	58	40	16	66	63	48	19
Employed part-time	15%	12	17	10	22	19	14	13	20	13
Unemployed	20%	29	15	19	19	35	11	6	16	47
Housekeeper	2%	0	4	2	3	3	2	2	3	3
Engaged in further studies	9%	8	11	7	12	16	4	13	8	10
Other	6%	2	7	4	5	8	3	4	4	8

Deadweight
This is the extent to which people would have moved into employment or training and education without access to the scheme.

69% of those surveyed said that they would not have returned to education without the help of the scheme. 29% of those surveyed however indicated they would have done so in any event which suggest that almost 1 in every 3 availing of the scheme would have returned to education in the absence of the scheme. However, it should be noted that 50% of those making this claim are lone parents who are entitled to study while being in receipt of OPFP and for whom the only financial incentive from BTEA, in most cases, is the Cost of Education Allowance.

In this context it is also important to note the comments of one Mature Students Officer (see Appendix A) who states that the growth in the number of mature students in degree programmes has been aided 'in no insignificant way' by initiatives such as the BTEA and other supports and concern is expressed that there will be a 'dramatic drop in the number of mature applicants who will accept places in university' if the supports are curtailed or removed.

Analysis of DSFA Data
In addition to the LMR survey, the Department carried out an analysis using its own administrative data to compare a sample of those who participated in the BTEA scheme with a sample of customers who did not participate in the BTEA scheme. Both samples were taken from those who were eligible for the BTEA scheme in 1999. The analysis compared the samples selected from the 1999 data with those in receipt of a welfare payment in December 2003. The results of the analysis showed that the same percentage 64% of both samples, were not in receipt of a welfare payment in December 2004.

On the face of it this would appear to call into question the impact of the BTEA scheme but it must be borne in mind that the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) was introduced in September 1998. The NEAP is a joint initiative between the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and FÁS and it marked a significant development in the level of engagement with the unemployed. It provided for the first time a systematic referral of customers over 6 months on the live register to FÁS for assessment and referral to appropriate employment and training options, education options, including the BTEA scheme. This engagement with the same target group as that of BTEA has had a significant impact on reducing the numbers on the live register. 23,100 people were referred to FÁS under the NEAP in 1999 and by 2003 this figure had increased to 44,400 and to some 50,623 by 2004. BTEA participants are exempt from engagement with the NEAP process.

A review of the Third Level Allowance carried out in 1997, by the National Association of Adult Education (AONTAS), at the request of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, found that 67% of participants interviewed had either gone into employment (43%) following graduation or were engaged in further study (24%).

Analysis by Department of Education and AONTAS
Further research carried out in this area included studies by the Department of Education and AONTAS. A PLC review carried out in 2003 by the Department of Education and Science reported that two thirds of graduates enter employment on graduation with a significant number going onto further study.

Never got work
Both the LMR and DSFA showed similar results in relation to the numbers who failed to gain any employment since their participation in the scheme. 11% of those who participated in the LMR survey failed to gain employment, the corresponding result from the DSFA analysis was 12%. The LMR results

would also suggest that those who failed to gain employment were long-term welfare recipients, i.e. on social welfare for 1 year or more, and in the lower socio economic groups, are more likely to be unemployed.

Participants View
It is important that any assessment of the scheme's effectiveness also takes into account the opinions of the participants themselves. In this regard, the LMR survey results show that the vast majority of those surveyed felt that the scheme helped them to gain employment and nearly three quarters believe that they would have been unlikely to return to education if this scheme had not been available. 75% of those who were unemployed when surveyed also positively rated the scheme.
The evidence from the various surveys and analysis outlined above indicate that two thirds of participants progressed to employment or further education. In addition the majority of those who participated in the scheme who obtained a third level qualification are engaging with the labour market. However, it was the view of the group that the following should be considered in the development of educational support:

- **Proactive engagement with those most distant from the labour market**
- **Arising from a more proactive approach there will be a need to consider a system of assessing educational needs of the participants to ensure the course pursued meets the needs of both the participants and the labour market**
- **This should be further supported by a mechanism for tracking progression and**
- **providing additional support and guidance as required (e.g. High Supports Process).**

Participants Experience at College
The LMR survey did not seek to establish what the participants experience (e.g. financial, social, academic) of school or college was as mature students and this was not the purpose of the survey. However, the interviewees had completed their course and expressed an overall high satisfaction level with the BTEA scheme which is positive.

Research carried out for a publication called College Knowledge 'power, policy and the mature student experience at university' found that from a financial point of view those students who were in receipt of BTEA and who were single and had no dependents had a much more positive experience of college than lone parents who experienced both financial hardship and stress. A number of married students interviewed for the research experienced marital difficulties while they were at college and about 50% spoke of the impact their studies had on their relationship with their partner.

4.3.3 Eligibility Criteria

The main components of the eligibility criteria are the qualifying payments, the length of time a customer must be in receipt of a qualifying payment and the age of the customer.

Age
The scheme caters for all who are eligible between the ages of 18 and 65 years with the exception of:

- those pursuing an approved postgraduate qualification where the minimum age limit of 24 applied and
- those who are **not** early school leaver and are in receipt of an unemployment or lone parent payment. In these cases the minimum age limit is 21.

The minimum age limit for entry to the scheme was changed in 2001 to extend eligibility to early

school leavers and to those in receipt of long-term illness payments. Two thirds of participants in the scheme are between the age of 21 and 35. Almost 3% are under 21 and 3% are over 55 years.

The group were satisfied that the age criteria does not warrant change at this time

Qualifying Payment
When the scheme was introduced only those who were in receipt of unemployment payments were eligible to apply. The scheme has evolved over time and now includes all social welfare payments to people of working age with the exception of those in receipt of Pre Retirement Allowance (PRETA) and Basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance which is administered by the Health Services Executive (HSE) on behalf of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Pre-Retirement Allowance is a means tested payment to those aged 55 or over and who have opted to retire from the labour force. 3% (227 participants) of the current BTEA caseload consists of people over the age of 55 years. In the context of providing support to those of working age the group were of the view that PRETA should be considered a qualifying payment for the purposes of the scheme.

Basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance is a weekly means tested payment paid to people who are either awaiting a decision on an application for a primary benefit/allowance or where it has been established that they have no entitlement to another payment, e.g. Disability Allowance, and their means are insufficient to meet their needs. The latter group is made up of 2,900 'Sick No Benefit' payments to people who are certified unfit for work but do not qualify for Disability Benefit or Disability Allowance. While most of those claims (72%) are in payment for one year or less the balance (28%) represent a long-term welfare group. In addition, there are some 727 homeless people who are in receipt of supplementary welfare allowance for a minimum period of 9 months and who also represent a long-term welfare group.

It is the view of the Group that PRETA should be treated as a qualifying payment on the same basis as UA and that 'Sick No Benefit' cases should be treated on the same basis as Disability Allowance for eligibility for BTEA.

Duration of Qualifying Payment
When the SLO and TLO options were introduced, applicants for BTEA were required to be in receipt of a qualifying payment for a period of 15 months for both schemes. This was reduced to 12 months in 1993 and to 6 months in 1995. The qualifying duration for TLO was changed to 15 months in 2004 and subsequently changed to 12 months in the budget 2005. The qualifying duration for SLO remains at 6 months. The difference in the duration requirement between both SLO and TLO options reflect the priority given to achieving the targets on upper second level education.

The scheme is available to a broad customer base. However the Group feel that more should be done to increase the level of participation from those who are long-term on welfare payments. Extending or otherwise changing the qualifying period will not in itself bring this about.

It is considered that the present duration parameters should continue to be monitored and, in the meantime, consideration should be given to moving away from the self select nature of the scheme to a more proactive approach of engaging with the customer base and in particular with those on a long term welfare payment.

The Group looked at the position of asylum seekers and refugees who are paid supplementary welfare

allowance while awaiting a decision on their status. When they are awarded asylum or refugee status they are then transferred to the appropriate primary payment. However the period spent on SWA pending the decision on application for asylum is not counted as a qualifying period for BTEA purposes.

The Group is of the view that in the case of refugees moving from SWA to primary qualifying payments (following award of refugee or asylum status), the duration of their SWA basic payment should count towards the qualifying period for BTEA purposes.

The Group is aware of variations in the eligibility criteria across the range of educational schemes administered by various Departments and agencies and targeted at social welfare customers. The anomalies arising will be addressed in chapter 5.

The Group also examined the current postgraduate provisions of the scheme, these are the Higher Diploma in all disciplines and the Graduate Diploma in Education, and agreed that this did not warrant revision at this point.

4.3.4 BTEA Payment

BTEA is a non means-tested payment and participants receive the maximum weekly rate of their qualifying payment. In addition a Cost of Education Allowance of €254 per annum (€400 from September 2005) is paid to all participants and they may also retain secondary benefits such as medical card and rent subsidy subject to meeting certain criteria. It should also be noted that all participants on BTEA can work part time. The LMR survey showed that 34% of participants took up this option. In addition 51% of those interviewed received a third level grant or scholarship.

In considering the BTEA payment the working group did not consider the adequacy of the qualifying payment as this was outside the remit of this review. In the wider context consideration might be given to the purpose of third level grants and what if any element therein is apportioned to income maintenance. This merits further research in the context of general education supports but again is outside the scope of this review.

Cost of Education Allowance
A Cost of Education Allowance of £100 was introduced in 1997 in recognition of the additional costs involved in returning to education. The allowance was increased in 1999 to its present rate of €254. The budget 2005 has increased this rate to €400 with effect from September 2005.

It is the view of the Group that this allowance should be reviewed in the wider context of educational supports available to social welfare recipients.

Up-rating Payment
Recipients of BTEA who are on a reduced rate of the qualifying payment have that rate increased to the maximum rate for the duration of the BTEA claim. The up-rating was introduced as an additional incentive to customers to engage with the scheme. It is estimated that 1,400 of the 7,648 in receipt of BTEA in 2003/2004 had their payment increased to the maximum rate at a cost of €1,759,200 per annum approx. 97% of these payments were means based while the remainder were on a reduced rate benefit payment. The group consider this up-rating of payment to be inequitable in that it is in effect increasing payment for those who had means without providing any corresponding increase for those who did not have means.

The group suggests that consideration should be given to not increasing the primary payment to the maximum rate but that instead the appropriate level of supports required to meet educational costs should be provided through education provision.

Duration of Payment
From 1996 to 2002 BTEA was paid during holiday periods and participants could also take up full-time work during the holidays. From 2003 BTEA is no longer payable during the summer holidays for those who were formerly in receipt of an unemployment payment. Participants who can not get full-time employment during the summer can apply for unemployment payment.

In 2003 74% re-applied for their unemployment payment. This number reduced to 62% in 2004. While the number who reapplied for unemployment payment in the summer of 2003 was very high, the trend is downwards.

The Group does not recommend any change to this measure but the position should continue to be monitored.

The Group is aware of variations in education supports payments available across the range of educational schemes administered by various Departments and agencies and targeted at social welfare customers. This issue will be considered in chapter 5.

BTEA and VTOS Payments
There are some inconsistencies in the income and educational support response available to social welfare customers in the context of the payments attaching to the VTOS and BTEA payments.

Unemployed people on a VTOS programme receive a training allowance funded by the DES equivalent to the maximum rate of the primary social welfare payment and additional childcare, meal allowances etc., if appropriate.

People in receipt of other welfare payments, for example, Disability Allowance or One Parent Family Payment who participate in a VTOS programme, do not receive the VTOS training allowance but continue to receive their primary social welfare payment at the maximum rate; however, as VTOS participants, they, may qualify for additional supports in the form of childcare and other educational supports from the VEC.

In addition, persons pursuing a PLC course may qualify for a Back to Education Allowance from DSFA or a VTOS training allowance from DES through the VEC. A BTEA student on PLC receives a cost of education allowance, and may qualify for a means tested maintenance grant. A person pursuing a PLC programme under the VTOS receives a meal/travel allowance, books and materials, and childcare assistance if appropriate. The student may also be entitled to a weekly training bonus of €31.80 and may be eligible for a means tested maintenance grant.

The group considers that the current arrangements for income support and educational support need to be streamlined and that all social welfare recipients receive an equitable response.

4.3.5 Scheme Awareness

Information on the scheme is available through the Department's information services, through the network of local social welfare offices, Citizen Information Centres and through the Department's website (www.welfare.ie).

Full details of the scheme are set out in Booklet SW70 and in the Guide to Social Welfare Services (SW4), which are widely available from all of the above outlets.

In addition Information Officers and Facilitators based in the Department's local offices regularly give presentations on social welfare services, including the BTEA scheme, to community groups and staff of local agencies.

Participation levels were looked at in chapter 3 (3.8.1) and showed that the numbers participating increased each year. While participation at second level has increased as a percentage of total participation from 10.55% in 1998/99 to 28.63% in 2003/04 it is felt that while the cap on VTOS places has contributed to this increase, more needs to be done to increase the level of engagement at this level.

Table 4.8 below shows the educational levels of those on the live register in 1997. 36% had no secondary education and 69% had not completed upper second level education.

Table 4.8 Educational levels of people on the Live Register, 1997

Year	No Formal Education	Primary Education	Inter/Group Cert.	Leaving/ 'A' level	Third level non-Uni.	Third level Uni.	Higher Degree Level	Total
1997	2,066	74,135	69,277	46,525	11,606	5,405	935	209,949
%	.98	35.31	33.00	22.16	5.53	2.57	.45	100.00

Source: ESRI No .40. May 2001 'Employability' and its relevance for the Management of the Live register.

Table 4.9 below shows the educational attainment levels of lone parents in 1997. 46.7% had no secondary education and 71.7% had not completed upper second level education.

Table 4.9 Levels of Educational Attainment Amongst Lone Parents (1997)

Year	Primary level	Lower Secondary	Higher secondary	Third level(non-university)	Third level (University)	Not stated	Total
1997	59,700	32,000	23,300	7,500	4,900	400	127,800
%	46.8	25.0	18.2	5.9	3.8	0.3	100

Source: LFS 1997 special tabulation

The Programme for Government is committed to providing a 'Second Chance Guarantee' whereby every person who left school without completing the junior cycle at second level will be offered the chance to participate in an adult education course.

The National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-2005 recommends a proactive approach in engaging with people of working age who are in receipt of a welfare payment to ensure that *'where possible they have the opportunity to avail of employment, education and training'*.

While the Department does provide information about the BTEA scheme through the sources mentioned above, it is considered that efforts should be made to create a greater awareness of the scheme particularly among those who are in receipt of a long term welfare payment and who would be available for either full or part-time work.

The current and future policy setting is outlined in the following chapter, chapter 5, which contains the Group's final recommendations.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 sets out the overall policy context for second chance education and the provision of income support to those availing of education provision. It sets out the current environment in which the BTEA scheme operates. This chapter will now examine the relevance of current BTEA policy in the prevailing economic and social climate taking account of recent and future developments with regard to programme for Government, EU strategy and integrated service provision locally. It contains the recommendations of the Working Group for the future of the scheme in the medium to long-term.

The availability of a range of programmes and supports to persons (including the target group) might lead one to conclude that this cross-departmental response ensures that persons endeavoring to access educational programmes and requiring welfare supports are catered for in a comprehensive way.

Such a conclusion in general might be true but the existence of the various programmes of themselves can and does lead to confusion both within Government Departments and agencies (including independent information providers such as Citizens Information Centres) as well as amongst potential customers. There also exists a perception that access to certain schemes is limited (e.g. VTOS).

Closer examination of the various supports indicate that different criteria and payments exist (see multi-agency grids at Appendix I) this raises issues in terms of equity in relation to participation in a programme dependant on what scheme was availed of to gain access. These anomalies suggest an incoherence in the development of schemes over time.

The recommendations of the Working Group are listed in Table 5.4.

5.2 Current Policy Context

The BTEA scheme was set up to provide a response to the needs of the long-term unemployed. At the time the scheme was launched in 1989/1990, the number of long-term unemployed was 128,200 or 9.8% of the labour force. By December 2004 this number had fallen to 28,900 or 1.5% of the labour force. This launch of the scheme marked a significant change in the Department's policy from one of passive payment to one of active engagement with our customers with a view to increasing their employability and a return to sustainable employment.

The BTEA scheme has evolved to embrace nearly all those in receipt of a welfare payment who are of working age. As pointed out in chapter 4 the target group is now potentially in the region of 400,000 welfare customers.

The rapid growth in the economy over the last decade has seen a steady decline in the unemployment rate to 4.3% in December 2004 and a very significant increase in the labour force from 1.2 million in April 1994 to1.9 million in December 2004. Projected growth rates in the short term would indicate a very positive employment environment.

In 20 years Ireland's economy has evolved from one reliant on high levels of emigration to its current reliance on net migration with the economy dependent on 30,000 migrant workers per annum. Most of these jobs are in the low skilled and services sectors.

As pointed out in chapter 2, Ireland is in the process of transforming itself into a high skills and knowledge based economy where it must continue to develop its capability to acquire and exploit knowledge for competitive advantage. This challenge to continue to develop and renew skills and knowledge applies to those who are unemployed as well as to those in employment. Policy development needs to ensure that all those of working age in receipt of a social welfare payment have the opportunity and the supports necessary to partake in this transformation.

In view of the changed economic climate, there has been a shift in policy away from employment programmes to focusing more on support for marginalised groups, young people and adults with less than upper second level education. It is evident that these groups should form the core group for the development/enhancing of pathways through education to sustainable employment. In the context of BTEA this group should continue to be targeted, incentivised and supported in accessing second chance education.

5.3 Reinforcing a Learning Culture

The emphasis on developing a learning culture is accepted worldwide and more particularly within the EU as our economies move into a post-industrial era. Life learning is no longer seen as the preserve of the professional classes or academics, rather, the need to up-skill, re-train and improve our knowledge base is considered an essential survival tool for the modern labour market and in terms of achieving social cohesion.

Lifelong learning has been defined by the European Commission as:

'all learning activity undertaken through-out life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective' [15]

The EU employment strategy together with the 2000 Lisbon Summit agenda has given further impetus to the creation and support of a knowledge economy.

At a National level both the Green and White papers on Adult Education have raised awareness and the profile of lifelong learning. The White Paper in particular aims to tackle the problem of low participation rates in adult education in the State, which are among the lowest in the OECD.

15 Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning October 2002

Also, the interrelationship between employability and social inclusion is well understood and documented. The need to put in place a strategic framework for the creation of a fair and inclusive society has been further recognised by the commitment entered into by the Government and social partners in both the **Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and Sustaining Progress.**

The current Programme for Government, Sustaining Progress, also provides for a range of supports for groups experiencing disadvantage and inequality, which will be enacted during its lifetime (2003-2005). The core objective underpinning this is:

'To build a fair and inclusive society and to ensure that people have the resources and opportunities to live life with dignity and have access to the quality public services that underpin life chances and experiences'

The DSFA Back To Education Programme encompassing as it does, the Education, Training and Development Option, the Part-Time Education Option (see Appendix E) as well as the Back To Education Allowance provides for the provision of income support for a wide group of welfare dependent people needing to avail of second chance education.

The Back to Education Allowance, as an option within DSFA's wider complement of income supports for those pursuing further education is specifically designed to encourage and facilitate people who are welfare dependent to improve their skills and qualifications and therefore their prospects of returning to the active work force. The scheme provides for participants to pursue full-time courses of study.

The numbers participating in the scheme have increased from less than 100 in 1990 when the support commenced to the current participation levels of 7,308 in the 2004/2005 academic year. Research carried out has shown that, in the case of the control group surveyed, 69% found that the BTEA scheme helped a lot in assisting them to gain employment and 63% of that group were in employment at the time of the survey.

The Working Group agrees that there is a continuing need for support for people who are welfare dependent and for other disadvantaged groups to be given a route into education and therefore out of the cycle of poverty. The working group agree that in the context of overall employment and education/training policy objectives and targets set out above there is a continuity basis for the provision of support to people who are on welfare. **It believes that public funds should continue to be spent on the provision of educational supports (i.e. books, materials, meal allowances, travel allowances and childcare) while at the same time maintaining a level of income support for these groups.**

5.4 Catering for Diversity

The scheme currently caters for almost all of the categories of social welfare payments for people of working age with the exception of the Pre-retirement Allowance (PRETA) and supplementary welfare allowance (SWA). It is now appropriate to consider whether these social welfare schemes should continue to be excluded from BTEA, given current labour market demands and the need to develop a skills base together with restricting opportunities to retire early or indeed work longer life hours. **The Working Group is of the view that, the scheme should be enhanced to extend eligibility to all people of working age (i.e. between 18 and 65 years) on welfare payments and is therefore recommending that Preta be a qualifying payment for the scheme. Periods spent in receipt of supplementary welfare allowance for certain groups (i.e. Refugees who were in receipt of SWA pending**

Refugee status) should count towards the qualifying period for eligibility and persons in receipt of Sick No Benefits (SNB)/homeless persons on SWA should be able to access the scheme subject to satisfying the eligibility criteria. This will help to ensure that the scheme is as inclusive as possible and is catering for all customers of working age. The Group also recognised the need for the scheme to take account of diversity within its target groups (e.g. the extent to which the scheme caters for unemployed customers who are Travellers, or lone parents who have disabilities). Target groups and targeting strategy is discussed in chapter 4 and this is also dealt with in the context of the Integrated Proofing Exercise (outlined in chapter 1). The exercise highlights the need for more systematic naming of and targeting of specific groups and the need for collation of data on participation levels by all these groups.

The group is of the view that there is a need to track participation and outcome for the diversity of people within the target groups by incorporating this into a scheme tracking/monitoring system. Against this background the Working Group sees a need to re-consider the target group for the scheme and re-define the objective of the scheme in this context. More importantly it identifies a requirement to provide income support to those availing of second chance education and to administer for this effectively and in an integrated way so that unemployment, disadvantage and social exclusion are addressed.

5.5 Validity of Objectives

As stated in chapters 2 and 4, significant changes have arisen in the labour market since the scheme was established and this has created a need to re-focus the scheme's objective so that it emphasises the scheme's high level goal of assisting those of working age and who are most vulnerable to secure sustainable employment. The Group agreed that the objective of the Back To Education Allowance Scheme should be revised to: **'To facilitate participation in education by social welfare customers of working age who are most distant from the labour market in order to enhance their employability and assist them in accessing sustainable employment'**

5.6 Future Policy and Organisational Direction

Three key Departments, Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA), Department of Education and Science (DES), and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), share responsibility in delivering the response required to meet the needs of the **same** target group. The DSFA has a responsibility for income supports, DES for educational provision and DETE for employment and training. It is important that the role and input from each Department is recognised.

The National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) process provides a framework by which a joined up approach to the delivery of educational supports to those most distant from the labour force can be delivered. The utilisation of this existing process to deliver educational supports will facilitate the full integration of educational supports into the Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs). The educational options will be on par with other ALMPs options. This process would replace the self select nature of the current arrangements with a more proactive engagement with our customers.

In recent times Government has introduced a number of enhancements to the Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs). These include;

- Rollout of National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) referral process
- High unemployment area programme was launched in 2002. The objective of the programme is to identify and break down the barriers experienced by unemployed people in accessing jobs,

training, education and other progression options. During 2002 2,000 customers were catered for under the programme.

- A high Supports Process, aimed at helping those experiencing particular employability barriers was implemented in five areas in 2003. In 2004 this was rolled out to all Regions.
- FÁS has introduced a Pathways programme to cater for participants where it is found that existing guidance, training or employment options are not suitable. The purpose of the programme is to identify the most appropriate development pathway for each participant.

As stated in chapter 2, the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) 2003-2005, represents a response to the European Employment Guidelines and its targets interact with some of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) targets, they are:

- *Have in place a proactive policy of engagement with people of working age on social welfare to ensure that, where possible, they have the opportunity to avail of employment, education and training options.*
- *Create new opportunities for unemployed people and for marginalised groups to access employment and training.*
- *Eliminate any remaining gaps/disincentives to employment/training in the application of secondary benefits systems so that, at a minimum nobody is materially worse off as a result of taking up employment, training or education opportunities.*
- *Ensure that those in low pay have access to higher incomes and the opportunity to progress to better paid and more highly skilled employment.*

The following are the relevant key education, employment and unemployment targets outlined in the NAPS:

- *To reduce the proportion of the population aged 16-64 with restricted literacy to below 10 to 20% by 2007.*
- *To reduce the number of young people who leave the school system early, so that the percentage of those who complete upper second level or equivalent will reach 85% by 2003 and 90% by 2008.*
- *The elimination of long-term unemployment as soon as circumstances permit but in any event not later than 2007.*
- *The reduction in the level of unemployment experienced by vulnerable groups towards the national average by 2007.*
- *The achievement of the targets/objectives set in the National Employment Action Plan 2003-2005.*

NAPs strategy has made progress in reducing consistent poverty, raising incomes and living standards of those who rely on social welfare and increasing employment. The focus set out in the NAPs has been endorsed in the National Development Plan (NDP) and in the commitments in the programme for Sustaining Progress.

5.7 Policy and Organisational Options

In arriving at its final recommendations for the future of the scheme the Group considered the changed environment in which the scheme currently operates.

Option 1: Continue scheme as is with some refinement

The Group considered the feasibility of the scheme continuing moreorless in its current format with some key refinements, many of which are already outlined in chapter 4, as follows:

- Focus on those most distant from the labour market
- Extend eligibility for the scheme to other welfare schemes: PRETA, Sick No Benefits (SNB).
- Periods spent on SWA for those customers pending Refugee status (once Refugee status is granted) should count towards the qualifying period for BTEA.
- The BTEA rate of payment should be equivalent to the rate of the social welfare qualifying payment (i.e. no raising the rate to the maximum).
- Review to be carried out in relation to the purchasing value, in real terms, of the Cost of Education Allowance.

- The Cost of Education Allowance to be paid at award stage of BTEA application in all cases.
- Localise the administration of the scheme.
- Uniformity of controls to be introduced to the localised administration.
- Examine the feasibility of upgrading/replacing the current computer systems.
- Reviews (i.e. the non-statutory appeals for applications disallowed) on all applications to be carried out centrally in ESS Section.
- All policy for the scheme to be formulated centrally in ESS Section.
- Examine the scope for linking with Live Register profiling and NEAP for targeting the scheme strategically.

Impact of retaining the scheme as is with the above refinements:

- Localisation of the administration will lead to improved efficiency and enhanced customer service.
- ESS HQ as the sole reviewer will ensure uniformity in all cases reviewed
- For the Departments involved and Government, the BTEA scheme objectives comply with the provisions of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP), the EU Employment Strategy and on a national level, with both the Green and White papers on Adult Education.
- The administrative nature of the scheme means that it can be adapted readily to meet a changing education/labour market and welfare environment without recourse to legislative processes.
- The scheme will be more cost effective and in keeping with the Modernisation Action Programme and Delivering Better Government.
- Control of the scheme will be administered locally and uniformly thereby freeing up resources in ESS HQ.
- Localisation of the administration will lead to improved efficiency.
- An inequity with regard to payments (SLO versus VTOS) still exists.
- There is a lack of clarity around service provision (e.g. DSFA versus DES).
- Duplication of effort would continue.

Estimated costs of retaining the scheme as is with some refinements:

The estimated costs of extending eligibility to Preta customers, SNB and homeless customers and to allowing periods spent on SWA by Refugees to count towards the qualifying period are as follows:

- For Preta customers : €0.6 million in year 1
- For SNB & homeless customers: €0.5 million in year 1

- For periods spent in receipt of SWA by Refugees (while Refugee status was pending): €3 million in year 1.

These figures are based on estimates arrived at in ESS section drawing on the estimated numbers of Preta customers who would transfer over to BTEA. The estimate for SNB cases is based on the current levels of participation in the scheme by people coming from illness related payments which currently represents 0.6% of those schemes in total, in relation to homeless people the estimated take-on would be minimal to nil. The estimate for take-on from Refugees who were in receipt of SWA pending Refugee status being granted is estimated based on the current numbers of BTEA participants who are from non-EU countries, which is 338.

Total estimated costs in year 1: €4.1 million.
There would also be some savings from the cessation of the current practice of increasing the qualifying payment to the maximum rate, which are estimated at €1.8 million per annum.

Option 2: Transfer the Second level Option (income support and Cost of Education Allowance) to Department of Education and Science

This scenario would involve the Department of Education and Science (DES) expanding VTOS to include both the income support and educational (Cost of Education Allowance) support elements of SLO. DSFA would retain the Third Level Option as part of its education, training and development options.

Impact of Department of Education and Science taking over the Second Level Option of BTEA

- It would eliminate the anomalies, which currently exist between SLO and VTOS in relation to income and educational supports.
- It would mean that income support and educational supports were provided by one agency for the duration of the course.
- It would ensure equality of treatment for all eligible participants.
- Participants would no longer be able to opt from SLO to VTOS and vice versa.
- DSFA could focus on its core business of providing income support.
- DSFA would reduce administrative work and resources.
- Income support is not DES core business.
- There would be potentially high costs for DES in taking on a growing number of SLO participants.
- There would be additional administrative costs for DES to take on.
- The DES objective with regard to second level education does not focus exclusively on employability.

Estimated Costs for Option 2:
There are currently 3,023 SLO participants, the estimated costs for DES taking over these would include the income support and the Cost of Education allowance currently paid by DSFA to participants. The current programme expenditure for DSFA for this group is €21.2 million for 2005. In order to establish costs to DES it is necessary to establish at what rate DES would pay income support and what the average amount of DES educational supports to this group would be and there would be the considerable add–on factor of administrative costs.

This option would also yield savings of €21.2 million in year 1 to DSFA plus administration costs.

Option 3: SLO and TLO (income support and Cost of Education Allowance) are transferred over to Department of Education and Science.

In this scenario both strands of the BTEA scheme are transferred over to DES.

Impact of Department of Education and Science taking over the Third Level Option of BTEA in addition to the Second Level Option.

As at option 2 above plus:

- It would create an integrated scheme of support for the target group.
- DSFA could focus on enhancing the employability of the target groups through access to other supports (e.g. services provided by Facilitators locally, NEAP, FÁS Training courses).
- It would be a further enhancement of the streamlining of payments (SLO to TLO)
- It would be a diversion from the current DES brief of providing education provision, in the main, to providing income support to third level participants as well as to second level participants.
- Many of the existing colleges covered under the BTEA scheme do not come under the DES administration.
- Excessive administration costs for DES and the VEC's and other associated costs such as childcare.

Estimated Costs for Option 3: The total programme costs for BTEA for DSFA is €40 million for 2005. This cost would then transfer to DES in addition to the administrative costs which are considerable.

Option 4: DSFA provide Income Support DES provide Educational Support
In order to do this to effect it is necessary to make the fundamental distinction between the provision of income support and educational support and to clearly separate out those two functions primarily between DSFA and DES. The FÁS role is key also but at a later stage in the process.

This option effectively means that the income support element of the Department of Education and Science VTOS programme will be integrated into DSFA income support provision. Income support for those availing of Third Level education will continue to be paid via the social welfare primary payment and in the case of both the second and third level options the Cost of Education Allowance will transfer to DES. Both the present SLO and TLO will become assimilated into a new overarching second chance education scheme. The initial step to progressing this is to separate out the roles of the two key agencies. **The Group agrees that it is essential to separate out the roles of DSFA, which provides income support, and DES, which provides for the delivery of courses and educational supports.**

Impact of moving to an Overarching BTEA (SLO/TLO) Scheme

- There will be clarity around service provision (income support by DSFA and educational supports by DES).
- Will eliminate differences in treatment of adults on income support wishing to continue education and training.
- Will enable DES to concentrate on programme development in terms of target groups, learning content, certification, progression, learning supports and quality.
- Will eliminate a substantial amount of work in VECs in relation to eligibility decisions and payment procedures at VEC HQ and adult education centre levels, and within DES.
- Will support policy towards greater integration and coherence in the provision of further and adult education opportunities to meet the educational needs of the target group
- Will harmonise procedures in terms of decision-making on eligibility to participate in educational options by the overall client group
- Will eliminate excessive administration at local level in DSFA arising from queries from VECs relating to welfare category of participants for purposes of determination of eligibility for training allowances

- Will give complete overview of participation in educational opportunities by key target group
- Will provide data on educational outcomes
- Will bring the focus back onto income support provision in DSFA
- Loss of DSFA ability to incentivise customers through the transfer of the Cost of Education Allowance to DES.
- Legislative difficulties re; customers signing the Live Register who opt to study full-time as they are currently prohibited from this through UA/UB legislation.[16]
- Ensuring complementarity of objectives between the BTEA Second Level Option and the educational programmes recognised for the purpose of eligibility for the allowance
- Separating the income/learning support elements from the learning opportunity element of VTOS and getting this message across to all the local stakeholders.

In summary, all income support for those who are welfare dependent and who are pursuing second chance education will be provided through the primary social welfare payment, which will continue at its current rate (no maximum rate applied). For those participating in a VTOS programme registration fees and exam fees will continue to be paid through the VECs as appropriate. Additional funding provided to VTOS participants for example for books will be paid from the transfer of the BTEA Cost of Education Allowance to DES.

Re Estimated Costs of an Overarching BTEA (SLO/TLO) scheme
This will involve the continuation of payment of the primary social welfare payment at the existing rate to those pursuing second chance education. The Cost of Education allowance will transfer to DES and would be administered there as part of its educational supports.

Table 5.1 sets out costs of BTEA and VTOS based on current take up rates of 7,308 BTEA and 5,538 VTOS participants and estimated levels of spend in 2005 (€52.3m BTEA and €53m VTOS) as follows:

- BTEA SLO/TLO excluding COE Allowance for 7,308 €49.38m
- COE Allowance based on 7,308 @ €400
- VTOS Training Allowance for 3434 persons formerly on UA/UB
- Training Bonus payment of €31.80 per week to 3548 VTOS participants formerly in receipt of a social welfare payment for over 12 months
- Meals/Travel for all 5538 VTOS participants
- Childcare in respect of 1180 children for 919 VTOS participants. The allocation of €5.5m is not paid from VTOS subhead.

Note: The VTOS budget 2005 amounts to €53m. €38m of this is allocated to "non pay" expenditure. The costs above (except childcare) are covered under this and amount to €31.9m. The remaining €6.1m covers overheads including rent/accommodation and books and materials.
The VTOS "pay" expenditure of €18m covers salaries etc..

16 A person who applies for unemployment assistance or unemployment benefit must be available for, capable of and genuinely seeking work, and must also satisfy other conditions in order to receive a weekly payment, Section 42(4) (a) Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act 1993..

Table 5.1 Current costs of BTEA including COE/VTOS

Department	Payments	Cost
Social & Family Affairs	BTEA (SLO/TLO) excluding COE Allowance	**€49.38m**
Social & Family Affairs	COE Allowance	**€2.92m**
Education & Science	VTOS Training Allowance	**€24.3m**
Education & Science	Training Bonus for Long Term unemployed	**€4.7m**
Education & Science	Meals/Travel	**€2.9m**
Education & Science	Childcare (not included in VTOS sub-head)	**€5.5m**
Total Cost		**€89.7m**

Table 5.2 sets out future costs of BTEA DSFA income support/Education & Science education provision also based on current take up rates and estimated levels of spend in 2005 as follows:

- BTEA income support to current 12,846 BTEA/VTOS participants, less €1.8m and €1.36m which will be saved from the cessation of increasing payment to the maximum personal rate for BTEA and VTOS participants. It also allows for €0.95m savings on non payment of VTOS during summer months (taking account of possible 74% returning to LR)
- Extended eligibility to Preta customers (€0.6m), SNB customers and the homeless (€0.50m), and allowing periods spent on SWA by Refugees to count towards the qualifying period (€3m) as already outlined
- Current COE Allowance
- Extended COE Allowance to 5,538 VTOS participants (€400)
- Childcare at existing VTOS allocation

Table 5.2
Future costs of BTEA DSFA income support/Education & Science education provision

Department	Payments	Cost
Social & Family Affairs	BTEA Income Supports	**€69.57m**
Social & Family Affairs	Extended eligibility	**€4.1m**
Education & Science	COE Allowance	**€2.92m**
Education & Science	Extended cost of COE Allowance	**€2.26m**
Education & Science	Childcare	**€5.5m**
Total costs		**€84.35m**

Recommendation
Having considered the options outlined above, the group recommends that option 4 provides the appropriate mechanism for the future delivery of the scheme.

In addition the following refinements to the scheme and its administration are recommended by the group:

- Extend eligibility for the scheme to other welfare schemes: PRETA, Sick No Benefits (SNB).
- Periods spent on SWA for those customers pending refugee status (once refugee status is granted) should count towards the qualifying period for BTEA.
- The BTEA rate of payment should be equivalent to the rate of the Social Welfare qualifying payment.
- Reviews on all applications to be carried out centrally in ESS Section.
- All policy in relation to income support for participants in the scheme to be formulated centrally in ESS Section in consultation with DES.

The group considered that this approach might be delivered in two phases; phase one would focus on streamlining the supports available at second level while phase two would complete the transition for the future delivery of service by streamlining the supports for those of working age and in receipt of a social welfare payment at third level.

The working group recommends that this re-alignment of functions should be implemented and for the following reasons:

- It would provide a more streamlined and proactive approach to the delivery of the scheme.
- It will facilitate engagement with those most distant from the labour market
- It will separate the income support elements from the educational support element of the educational options available to those of working age who are in receipt of a social welfare payment and satisfy the other conditions attaching to the scheme.
- DSFA will have responsibility for the provision of the income support element while DES will have responsibility for the provision of the educational support element.
- It will merge the income support elements of VTOS - qualifying criteria, income support into an overarching scheme, which would provide income support to those pursuing a full time course approved by DES.
- It will merge the educational supports elements of BTEA into an overarching scheme that would provide educational support to those pursuing a full-time course approved by DES.
- It equalises the income and educational provision for all eligible clients within an overarching scheme.
- It will eliminate wasteful duplication in administration within the two Departments
- It will provide a one-stop shop for the eligible client group
- It will allow for interaction with a database to be developed by DES to monitor course participation and outcomes in further and adult education.
- It will provide a basis to address all of the issues raised in the previous chapter.

Implications for Future Programme Participants

- Proactive engagement with the education options which will enhance engagement with target group and streamline the application process.
- the retention by *all* participants of *income support payments* from DSFA (there will be no interruption in the payment of the primary payment)
- the removal of the VTOS weekly *training bonus* paid to participants who are in receipt of benefits for more than one year

- the elimination of the existing anomalies relating to *working* outside of attendance at courses and *holiday periods*
- the replacement of the current ad hoc arrangements at local level to supply students with books and materials with the BTEA *cost of education allowance*
- The discontinuation of allowances for small meals, and travel- **however provision will have to be made to address need in this area.**

Issues for Consideration

- Engagement of all people of working age on welfare payments with NEAP.
- The provision of alternative funding arrangements for meals, travel etc to encourage and support participation on VTOS by the most economically disadvantaged.
- Childcare funding, currently provided to some VTOS participants, needs to be retained/reviewed
- The current system of payment of registration/exam fees (through the VECs), to be retained
- Arrangements to facilitate the transfer of educational supports to those at third level to DES.
- Consider level of educational support required for those participating in a third level option in the context of supports currently provided by DES.

Challenges of joined up approach

- Full integration of education option into the NEAP process
- Ensuring complementarity of objectives between a new overarching back to education scheme and the educational programmes recognised for the purpose of eligibility for the allowance
- Separating the income/education support elements from the educational opportunity element and getting this message across to all the local stakeholders.
- Managing the transfer of funds between DSFA and DES
- Promoting the new overarching Back to Education system.
- Managing the additional administrative work at local level (DSFA and FÁS).
- Managing the transfer of the Cost of Education Allowance from DSFA to DES.

Funding Arrangements

The separation of income and educational support will involve the following changes to the provision of the necessary funding.

- the transfer from DES to DSFA of funding for *current training allowances* to cover income support for VTOS participants on UA and UB prior to joining VTOS. On January 2004, approx. 3,548 VTOS participants were in receipt of a training allowance at a total cost of €25.4m.
- The transfer from DSFA to DES of funding for the *cost of Education Allowance*. This is estimated at 1.2m (3,023 participants at a cost of €400 per participant).

Performance Indicators

Having regard to the revised objectives of the scheme, the group agreed the following performance indicators. The joined up nature of the proposed delivery of service will require input from all of the three departments/agencies involved. The information collected for each indicator should have due regard to the requirements of the equality agenda.

Table 5.3 Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Source of information	Frequency of Reporting	Specific Questions
Education referral rate	DETE	Annually	Total number referred from NEAP to Educational support and as percentage of those referred to NEAP
Take up rate	DETE	Annually	Percentage of those referred via NEAP who take up educational option and to breakdown by duration on primary payment
Completion & certification rate	DES	Annually	Total numbers who completed course, numbers who received certification and the numbers of repeats arising.
Educational level attained	DES	Annually	Percentage who attained second or third level qualification by course type showing breakdown by socio-economic status.
Progression rate	DES/DETE/DSFA	Annually	Total numbers and Percentage who progressed to employment or to further education or training and to evaluate this over time to assess sustainability of employment.
Sign-off levels	DSFA/DETE	Monthly	Percentage of those referred to education option who sign-off live register.
Payment turnaround rate	DES	Quarterly	Percentage of educational support payments made within 4 weeks of commencing course. Target 95% paid within 4 week of commencement of course.
Unmet demand rate	DES	Annually	Total numbers by course whose course needs were not met due to unavailability of course or place on course
Education support review	DES	Annually	To evaluate the adequacy of educational support payments.

5.8 Future Service Delivery

In separating out the respective roles i.e. income support versus education provision, then, in the first instance, the BTEA scheme, as is, needs to be amended so that social welfare customers who fulfil the eligibility criteria are facilitated to pursue second and third level courses within the existing framework of their social welfare primary payments. This, although challenging from the SW legislative view point, would enable applicants to continue to retain their welfare payment while pursuing second chance education in the same manner in which those pursuing the Education, Training and Development Option do at present (see Appendix E). There will be significant advantages in so doing.

- From a customer's point of view, especially those who are long-term recipients the process needs to be as simple and seamless as possible. Undertaking or resuming a full-time course of study creates additional expense and also involves a significant change in routine for the applicant and their family.
- While it would still be necessary for customers to apply and be approved the process would be more streamlined than at present. For example, the application form could be simplified, especially Part 1 and Part 3 which request personal and social welfare details, details which are already available on the primary scheme.
- It would eliminate the administrative work involved in closing the primary payment and registering and awarding the BTEA. A person may switch to and from their primary payment a number of times during the lifetime of a BTEA claim especially following the recent change

whereby BTEA is no longer paid during the summer holiday period.

- It will precipitate a full review of the summer payment arrangements (see chapter 5, Section 5) which is necessary due to the high numbers of BTEA participants who signed on the Live Register and were paid since the new arrangements were introduced in 2003.
- The simplification and streamlining of income support provision in this way, for those pursuing second chance education, underpins the income support role of DSFA and removes the barriers to provision of an integrated service with DES and DETE.

The Group agrees that the target group should be facilitated to avail of second chance education through their primary social welfare payment and that the current BTEA summer payment arrangements be reviewed at an early date.

The Group agrees that income support provision should be equalised for participants in similar circumstances and that a full cost/benefit analysis of the equalisation be carried out by a Working Group comprising representatives from DSFA and DES. The Working Group will also oversee the integration of VTOS income support provision back into DSFA income support.

5.9 Delivery of the Service Locally

In the new streamlined Back To Education/second chance education and VTOS structure the emphasis will be on local delivery of educational supports, advice and decision making in a 'one-stop shop' facility.

In practice this will mean that the local VEC will be the first point of contact for all eligible clients wishing to pursue a course of education. Clients will present there to apply for participation in particular courses, their social welfare status will be established through a shared database (e.g. ISTS) and a decision will be made. This decision and any other relevant information will then be transmitted back to the applicant's Social Welfare Local Office.

The sharing of information between DSFA and DES will require a streamlining of the format in which data is currently recorded in both agencies. This data can then be shared and used for the speedy processing of applications for courses at local level.

In the longer term the sharing of client information such as identity and social welfare status will be accessible through the use of the Public Services Broker (PSB) system.

The Group agrees that the VEC will become the main access route for the target group in applying for second chance education in the further education sector.

There will continue to exist a referral role for other agencies such as DSFA and FÁS.

5.10 Framework for a streamlined Income Support/Education Support Service

It was apparent to the group from the outset that there are a lot of educational options provided by various State agencies to the target group. The group recognised that some overlap does exist in the provision of service and that this and the range of options available can make it difficult for the customer to engage with the appropriate service.

While the information on the BTEA Scheme is made available in the normal manner, there is no proactive engagement with the target group in relation to the scheme. Recruitment for the scheme

seems to be mainly through self-selection and this is dependent on a number of factors including a level of motivation on the part of the applicant.

The BTEA scheme and the range of educational supports are part of a broader engagement with the target group. In order to deliver on the NAPS targets there is a need for a coordinated approach from all Departments involved to ensure the effective delivery of the desired outcomes. As previously stated, BTEA is one of a range of ALMPs which include the Back to Work Allowance and NEAP (see chapter 2, section 2.3.2).

Under the current NEAP referral system all unemployed customers aged between 18 and 55 years who cross the 6 month threshold on the Live Register are referred to the services of the FÁS Employment Services Officers. It is anticipated that some 36,000 people will be referred under this process during 2004.

FÁS Employment Services has a case management approach to dealing with all Employment Action Plan (EAP) clients, which involves an initial interview and follow-up meetings. In addition to job placement the referral system includes FÁS training courses and apprenticeships for those who are job ready. For those who are not ready to progress directly into training or employment there is the High Supports Process. This is aimed at those experiencing extreme employability barriers such as drug addiction, alcoholism and behavioural problems.

The Group was in agreement that to provide an enhanced EAP service to clients then education options as well as training and other referral options needs to be systematically incorporated into the model.

This would mean that, in addition to the VEC/DES route to BTEA/VTOS etc; an EAP client would, depending on his/her particular circumstances, be advised about second chance education/educational supports by the FÁS Employment Services Officer through the EAP process.

5.11 Future Skills Needs

As stated in chapter 2, section 2.3, the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) has as its main objective, job creation and sustainability with a regional equity in terms of employment opportunities. In order to achieve that, and to eliminate long-term unemployment, quality education and training is essential to provide the highest standard of graduates in sufficient numbers in the relevant fields to meet skills deficits in the labour market.

The Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in FÁS is charged with establishing a database of relevant information, which will be used for planning for the skills requirements of the future.

Indications are that there will be substantial increases in third level and training course places available in the ICT and Life Sciences faculties to meet the demand for jobs in the sciences, technology and engineering industries.

5.12 Conclusion and Recommendations

The recommendations of the Working Group will shape the future of second chance education and income support for the target group of welfare dependent people. They will also structure the delivery of these services in a more cohesive way, building on and developing the 'joined-up' Government strategy, providing enhanced customer service and more effective outcomes. This approach to dealing with the needs of the target group will help ensure that those who are most in need of this assistance

are directed to it through the NEAP referral system with the appropriate educational supports provided by the DES and a standard rate of income support being provided by DSFA.

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Table 5.4

Recommendation 1.
The Group agreed that the objective of the Back to Education Scheme should be revised to: 'To facilitate participation in education by social welfare customers of working age who are most distant from the labour market in order to enhance their employability and assist them in accessing sustainable employment'

Recommendation 2:
The Group recommends separating out the roles of DSFA, which provides income support, and DES, which provides for the delivery of courses and educational supports. This will be done on a phased basis commencing with second level supports.

Recommendation 3:
The group recommends that the DES (and its Agencies) should provide for all educational supports while the DSFA should provide income at the rate of the primary payment.

Recommendation 4:
It is recommended that the current BTEA summer payment arrangements for persons previously unemployed should be monitored.

Recommendation 5:
It is recommended that a Working Group comprising representatives from the relevant Agencies be set up to oversee the integration of VTOS income support provision back into DSFA income support.

Recommendation 6:
The NEAP process should be enhanced, or if considered more appropriate an equivalent alternative process should be developed, to provide full proactive engagement with the target group in relation to all the options available to them. Where an education option is considered to be most appropriate in the context of second chance or further education, referral to the BTEA should be made.

Recommendation 7:
The group recommends that the VEC become the main access route for the target group in applying for second chance education in the further education sector.

Recommendation 8:
The group recommends that education options which are currently advised to customers under the NEAP reference process be formally documented and reported.

Recommendation 9:
The group recommends that the scheme be extended to include all those of working age in receipt of a welfare payment.

APPENDICES

Appendix: A
Consultation Process
PLANET

Planet, the Area Partnerships' network, expressed its concern at the changes in the eligibility criteria for the scheme, i.e. having to be 15 months unemployed instead of 6 months, it expresses the view that this is a retrograde step and is not justified.

Issues of concern in relation to the operation of the scheme:

1. Non-Payment through the summer

- Several clients of the LEC service came in to the Jobs Club over the summer. One individual in his third year of a BA in Humanities at St Pat's spent 5-6 weeks looking for work in the Jobs Club and eventually had to sign on just to keep going – very stressful period.
- Very stressful as clients have financial commitments so if they cannot obtain work quickly they will default. If they have children who are also at school the cost of childcare would be more than the basic wage that many clients would be receiving on student jobs

2. BTEA as a factor in the uptake of education by those on Social Welfare Payments

- The continued basic pay is a huge factor in the decision to take up the opportunity of returning to education. These clients have grown up in an area with traditionally very low uptake of third level education. Financial support for living and subsistence cannot come from any other source.

INOU

Current difficulties of the BTEA system

' The decision to raise the qualifying period from 6 months to 15 months for the third level option will greatly hinder unemployed people's access to second chance education. The current threshold of six months is sufficient to provide an opportunity for people to enhance their employment prospects and prevent the drift into long-term unemployment. The longer a person is unemployed the greater the supports necessary to assist them to return to education and the workforce.

The other recent changes to limit the payment of the allowance to the academic year only applies to those who were in receipt of Unemployment Assistance and Benefit (UA/UB) prior to returning to education.'

'For the recipient, the transition between claiming the BTEA to seeking a UA/UB can take a few weeks thereby increasing students' risk of poverty, hardship and exclusion. This is exacerbated when the claimant can not fulfil all the requirements to receive UA/UB, for instance how can a student prove they were available and genuinely seeking work if they have just finished the academic year and plan to return to education in Autumn? The decision to restrict the Postgraduate option of the BTEA to only students pursuing the H.Dip or Primary Teaching courses is discriminatory. It also restricts the employment opportunities for those seeking to better themselves but unable to afford post-graduate courses.'

'The BTEA qualifying period for the third level option should not be 15 months. Also the BTEA should not discriminate against unemployed people and therefore the allowance should be paid to these recipients throughout the summer months like all the other recipients.

The relationship between educational disadvantage and incidence of unemployment must be borne in mind when assessing the BTEA. Therefore to increase the participation of vulnerable groups and consequently mature students in third level education, the extension of the BTEA to cover part-time courses should be examined'.

NUI GALWAY

Mature Students' Officer: 'In summary, having worked closely with mature students over the past five years, it is my view that the BTEA scheme has served the individual student superbly and has offered them a level of financial security that has enabled them to fulfil their potential and achieve their academic objectives. The BTEA, I would contend, has been extremely successful at tackling long-term disadvantage through adult education, thereby redressing the lack of provision suffered by many people from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-achieving schools. The students receiving BTEA assistance have been and are, working hard to be able to move away from government support and into decent employment. They are actively working towards the fulfilment of that vision which informed and give rise to the scheme in the first place. Furthermore, it must be said that the scheme has been administered with sensitivity, efficiency and fairness, and the staff in the Dublin BTEA office in particular should be complimented on their professionalism and responsiveness at all times.

With regard to the 'Suggestions' section of this submission, I have but one suggestion to make, and it is one which I cannot make forcefully enough – **Leave the scheme in place!** To implement the proposed changes in relation to an increase in the number of qualifying months from six to fifteen would be ludicrously counterproductive and totally at odds with the philosophy expressed in the Government's White Paper on Adult Education, published in July 2000:

> 'Adult education thus becomes more than a right; it is a key to the twenty-first century. It is both a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society.'

I sincerely hope that the Minister and her advisers will see the benefits of re-thinking the proposed changes and rejecting them in favour of retaining the scheme as it currently operates. In doing so she will be continuing to empower socio-economically disadvantaged people to pursue an education which will benefit not only themselves and their immediate families but the economy as a whole.

I have often considered that it might be more appropriate that these people, once they become registered students, would become exclusively the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science, that all payments be made to them from this source by way, say, of a much enhanced maintenance grant in the region of €9,000 or €10,000, paid in three instalments each academic year.'

AREA DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Recommendations on Back to Education Allowance.

'In any review of the operation of the Back to Education Allowance the following factors should be taken into account:

The Scheme should continue be available as a support to the most distanced from the labour market.

In disadvantaged areas it should operate as a key support to progression into employment for the long term unemployed and other categories of social welfare recipients distanced from the job market.

The age limit should not apply to at risk persons availing of or participating in a specifically designed training path in LDSIP areas or other course where participation is sponsored by the LDSIP funded groups and where the course is likely to lead to improved employment possibilities either

The Terms of the part time education courses should apply to those persons also in circumstances where a LDSIP funded body is sourcing or providing the training as part of a suite of supports to the target groups, where the course is likely to lead to improved employment possibilities.

Small support payments (paid by a state agency or LDSIP funded body) towards books, materials, meal breaks, childcare and in certain circumstances transport should not effect social welfare or rent and mortgage supplement payments or effect the differential rents paid to local authorities'.

ST ANGELA'S COLLEGE

Access Programme Coordinator:
'The scheme should be open to mature students attending part-time undergraduate courses at third level to increase the opportunity of adults returning to education'

TREOIR

'It has come to our attention through queries to Centre that Back to Education Allowance is not available to students who become parents during the course of their studies'

'For students who are in receipt of Rent Supplement while they are parenting full-time, it becomes impossible to return to their courses without the support of the BTEA, or more importantly, the secondary benefits that are associated with it.'
'Would it be possible that this policy be reviewed in the light of its unequal and detrimental effect on parents so that parents can become eligible for BTEA even though they have already commenced their studies?'

TUI

Assistant General Secretary 'TUI is opposed to the decision of the Minister for Social and Family Affairs to increase the unemployment period for eligibility to the Back to Education Allowance from 6 months to 15 months for new applicants intending to commence 3rd level courses of study with effect from September 2004'.

'TUI is also of the view that the Back to Education Allowance should have broader application, to include persons who wish to pursue postgraduate education'.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK.

Mature Student Officer: 'Changes in the conditions for the granting of the BTEA to the long term unemployed category will I am convinced have a detrimental effect on recruitment of mature students'.

'It is possible and, indeed likely, that many students will attempt to have their places in university deferred for a further year in order to enable them to qualify for allowances.'

' It seems incomprehensible that, in spite of the Government's stated and reiterated commitment to increased Mature Student educational opportunity, a resource which eased the path of such students into third level education should be curtailed to this extent.'

Appendix: B
Outcome of LMR Survey

B.T.E.A Presentation to Department of Social & Family Affairs
By Lansdowne Market Research March 2004

Introduction

Lansdowne Market Research was commissioned to conduct a study to assess the effectiveness of the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) programme which is designed to assist the long term unemployed into the labour market.

Main objectives

- To evaluate the effectiveness of the BTEA programme
- To determine the recipients current status
- To ascertain the recipients BTEA experience

Methodology

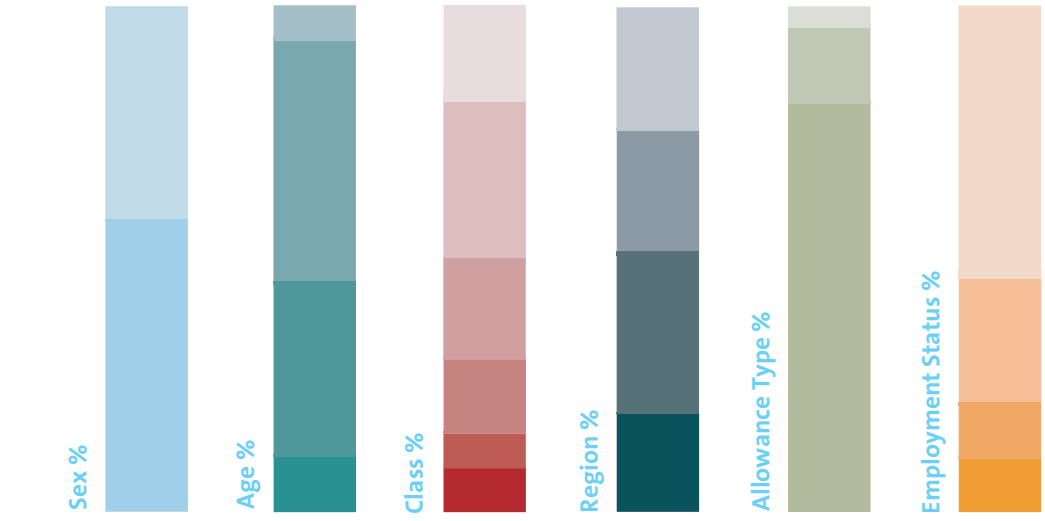
- Telephone study amongst a random sample of 551 BTEA recipients
- Leads supplied by the Department of Social & Family Affairs
- Leads break down as follows

Total Number Received	Total Telephone Numbers Sourced	Total Number Successful Interviews
7,427	2,923	551

All interviews conducted between November 24th - December 5th 2003, along with supplementary interviews with Lone Parents conducted between 5th and 12th March 2004.

Section 1: Sample Profile

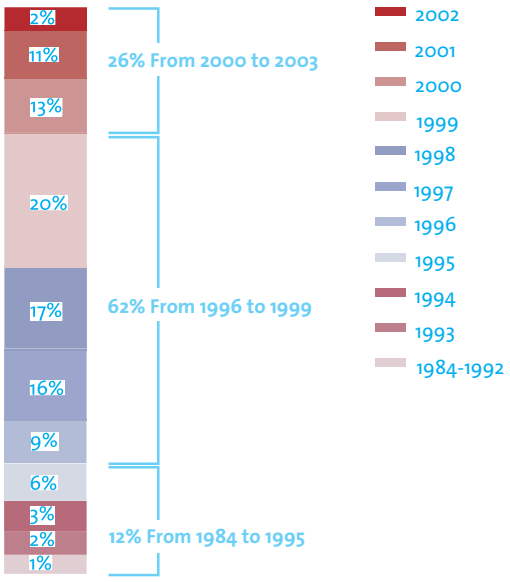
(Base: All Respondents)



( ) Population Profile

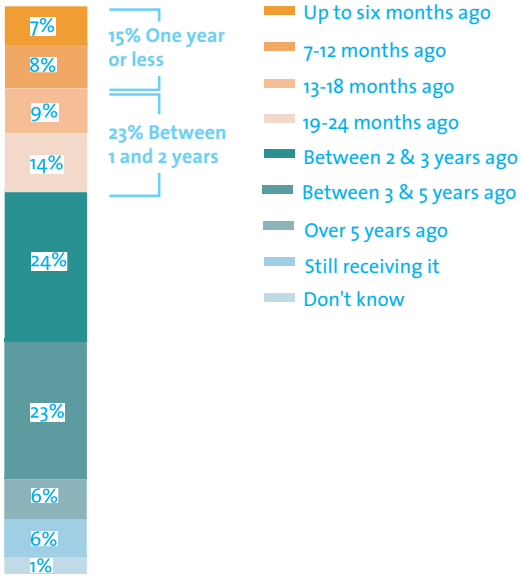
Year B.T.E.A. First Received

(Base: All Respondents)



Length Of Time Since Last in Receipt Of B.T.E.A.

(Base: All Respondents)

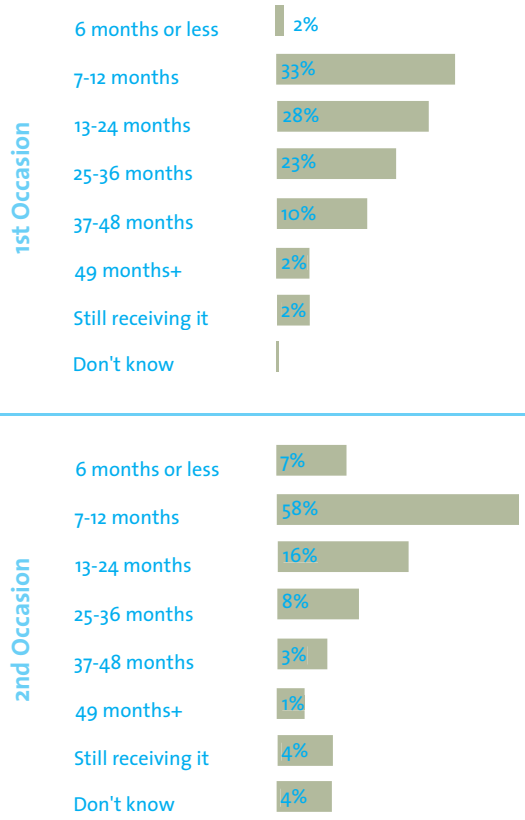


Section 2: B.T.E.A. & Other Grants - Details regarding Allowance Receipt

Number Of Occasions That B.T.E.A. Was Received
(Base: All Respondents)

- One Time 79%
- Four or more times 2%
- Three times 3%
- Twice 16 %

Length Of Time In Receipt Of Allowance On Each Occasion
(Base: All Respondents)



Whether Additional Financial Support Received Whilst On The B.T.E.A.
(Base: All Respondents)

- No 49%
- Yes 51%

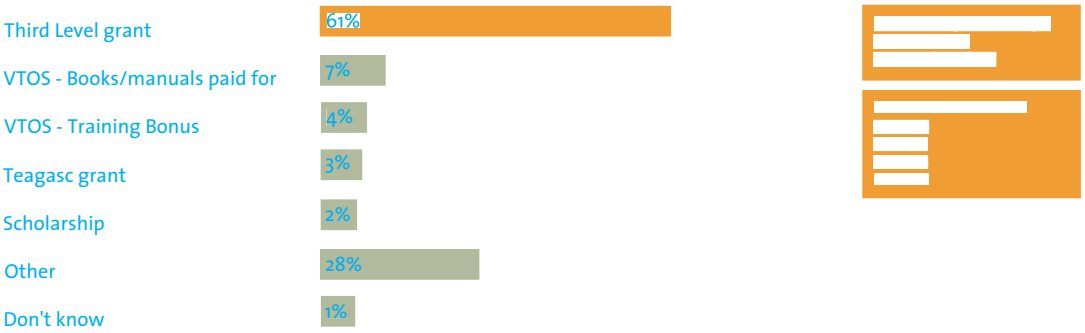
Incidence higher amongst Men vs Women (57% vs 47%)

Additional Support more likely amongst those receiving BTEA twice (61%)

Incidence X Social Class
AB 48%
C1 58%
C2 46%
DE 53%

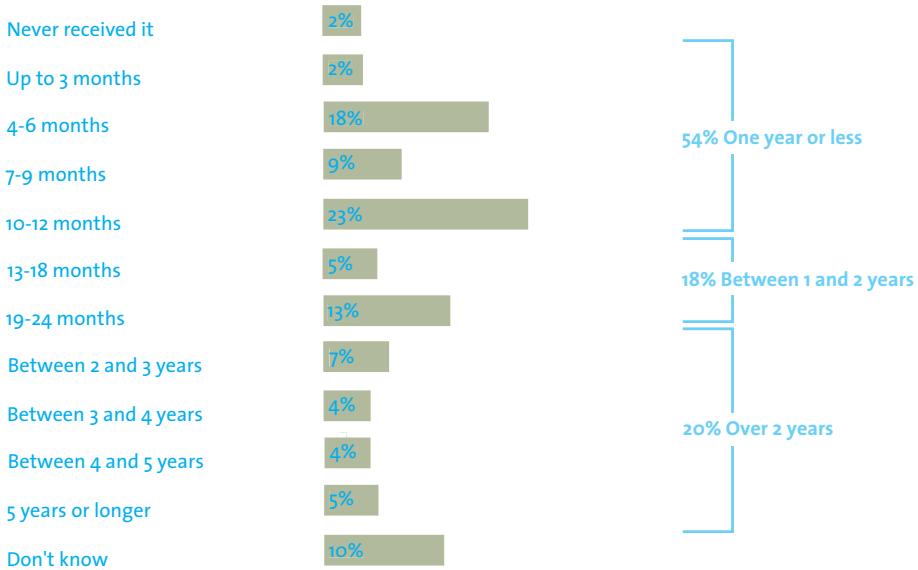
What Type Of Additional Allowance Was Received

(Base: All Receiving Additional Allowance n=248)



Length Of Time In Receipt Of Social Welfare Payments Prior To Any B.T.E.A

(Base: All Respondents)



Section 3: Course Of Study Taken & Qualification Achieved

Course Of Study Taken On First Occasion
(Base: All Respondents)

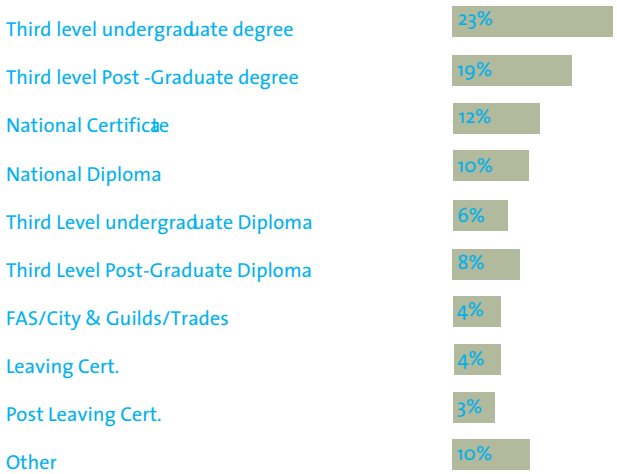
	Social Class			
	AB%	C1%	C2%	DE%
Third Level Undergraduate Degree	53	39	27	22
National Certificate	9	19	25	22
Third Level Undergraduate Diploma	10	9	8	12
National Diploma	7	9	7	7
Post Leaving Certificate	3	6	9	5
Third Level Postgraduate Diploma	6	5	5	5
Leaving Certificate	1	2	4	11
FAS/City &Guilds Undergraduate/Trades Diploma orCertificate	4	4	3	6
Third Level Postgraduate Degree	2	3	2	3
Other	3	5	5	6

Profile Of Those On The Scheme x Main Courses Of Study Taken 1st Occasion
(Base: All Respondents)

		1st Occasion		
		Any 3rd Level Undergrad (42%)	National Cert (19%)	Any 3rd Level Postgrad (9%)
	Base:	210	96	43
		%	%	%
Sex	Male	42	40	40
	Female	58	60	60
Age	<34	59	42	59
	35-54	35	51	38
	55+	6	7	2
Class	ABC1	64	42	49
	C2DE	32	51	36
	F	1	6	4
	Not Stated	2	1	11
Current Work Status	Full-time	55	43	51
	Part-time	12	14	15
	Unemployed	15	25	21
	Other	18	18	13

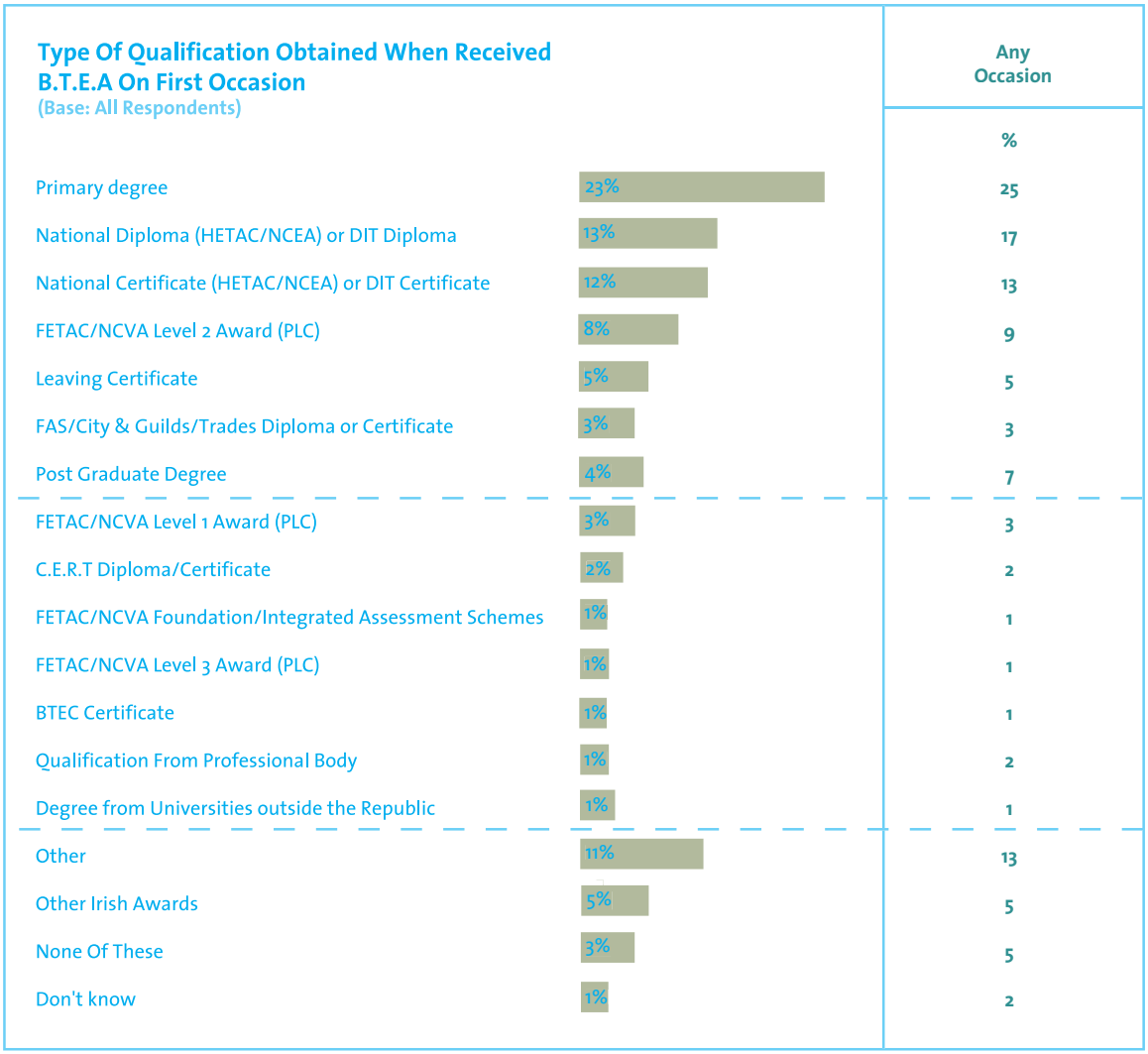
Course Of Study Taken On 2nd Occasion

(Base: All In Receipt of BTEA Twice or More)

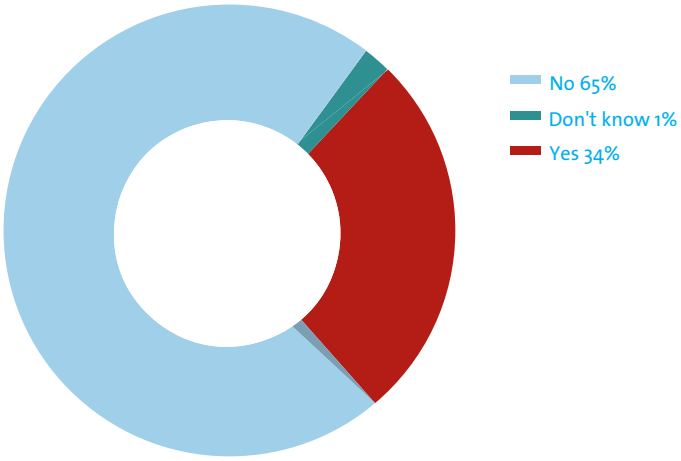


Type Of Qualification Obtained When Received B.T.E.A On First Occasion

(Base: All Respondents)

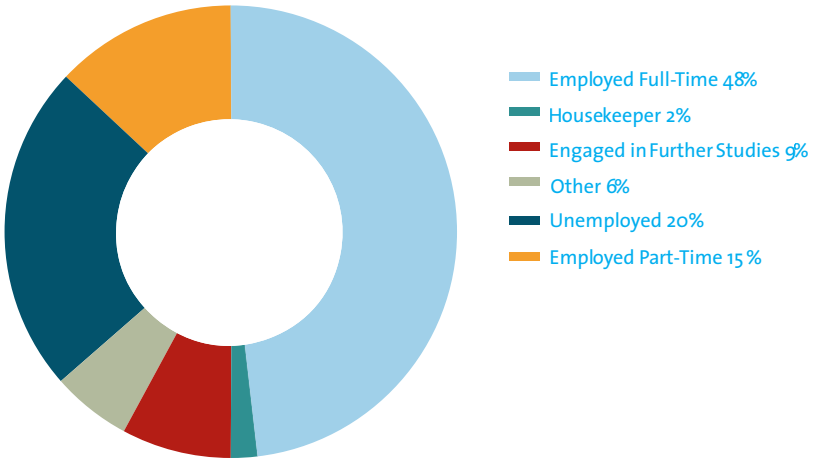


Engagement In Part-Time Work Whilst On B.T.E.A.
(Base: All Respondents)



Section 4: Employment Status

Current Employment Status
(Base: All Respondents)



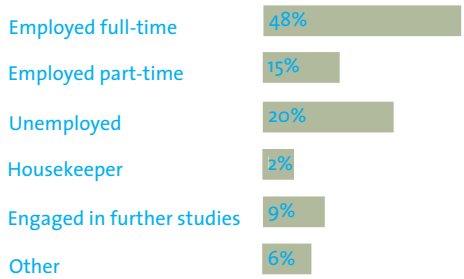
Highest Incidence Amongst..
25-34 years 58%
AB 66%
C1 63%

15% of Lone Parents

Highest Incidence Amongst..
Males 29%
The incidence also increases amongst those who have received B.T.E.A. more than once

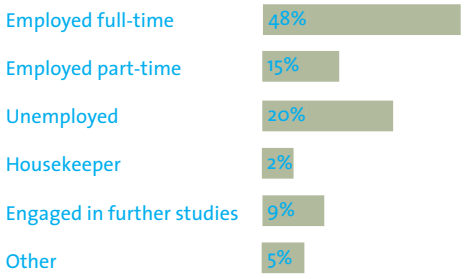
Incidence X Age Group
18-34 19%
35-54 19%
55+ 36%

Current Employment Status
(Base: All Respondents)



	SEX		AGE			Social Class			
	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Employed full-time	49	47	(58)	[40]	[16]	(66)	(63)	48	[19]
Employed part-time	[12]	17	[10]	(22)	(19)	14	13	(20)	[13]
Unemployed	(29)	[15]	19	19	(35)	[11]	[6]	[16]	(47)
Housekeeper	0	4	2	3	3	2	2	3	3
Engaged in further studies	8	11	[7]	(12)	(16)	[4]	(13)	8	10
Other	2	7	4	5	(8)	[3]	4	4	(8)

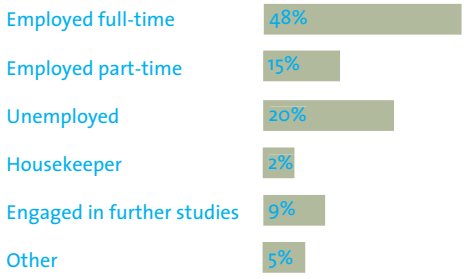
Current Employment Status X Length Of Time Since Last Receipt Of BTEA
(Base: All Respondents)



*Note: Small Base Size

	WHEN LAST IN RECEIPT OF BTEA				
Base	1-6 Months (41)	7-12 Months (46)*	13-24 Months (130)	Between 2 and 3 Years (135)	Over 3 Years (163)
	%	%	%	%	%
Employed full-time	29	39	42	(53)	(62)
Employed part-time	15	(20)	18	13	16
Unemployed	(32)	(26)	(28)	21	12
Housekeeper	-	(7)	2	2	2
Engaged in further studies	(17)	4	5	7	2
Other	7	4	4	4	5

Current Employment Status X Length Of Time in Receipt Of Social Welfare
(Base: All Respondents)



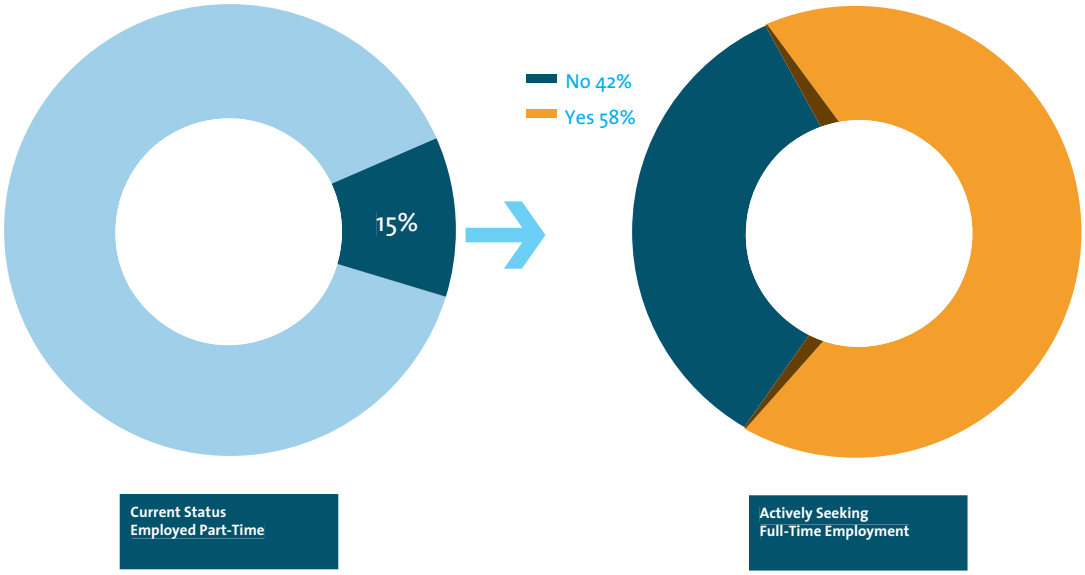
*Note: Small Base Size

	LENGTH OF TIME IN RECEIPT OF SW PAYMENT				
Base	Up to 6 Months (108)	7-12 Months (171)	13-24 Months (98)	25-36 Months (38)*	Over 3 Years (72)
	%	%	%	%	%
Employed full-time	(53)	49	51	(50)	42
Employed part-time	17	14	16	8	(13)
Unemployed	14	23	20	13	23
Housekeeper	2	1	(5)	3	1
Engaged in further studies	9	9	2	(16)	(14)
Other	6	4	3	(10)	6

◯ = Above average

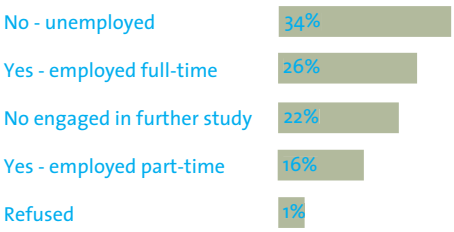
Incidence Of Part-Time Workers Seeking Full-Time Work

(Base: All Those Working Part-Time)



Employment Following Participation B.T.E.A.

(Base: All Not Currently Working - 184)



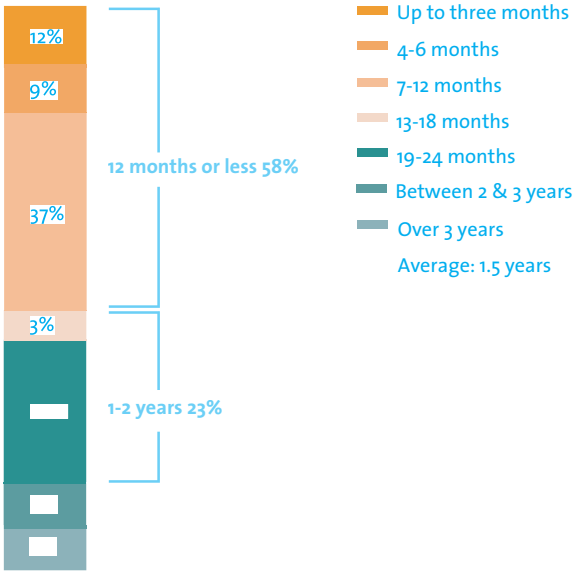
*Note: Small Base Size - 26 respondents

SEX		AGE			
Male	Female	18-34	35-54	+55*	Currently Unemployed
%	%	%	%	%	%
(40)	30	29	35	(50)	(45)
(35)	20	(39)	18	1	(34)
13	(29)	17	(30)	19	6
12	18	15	14	(23)	15
-	2	1	2	-	-

The majority of those who were engaged in further study following B.T.E.A. are still students

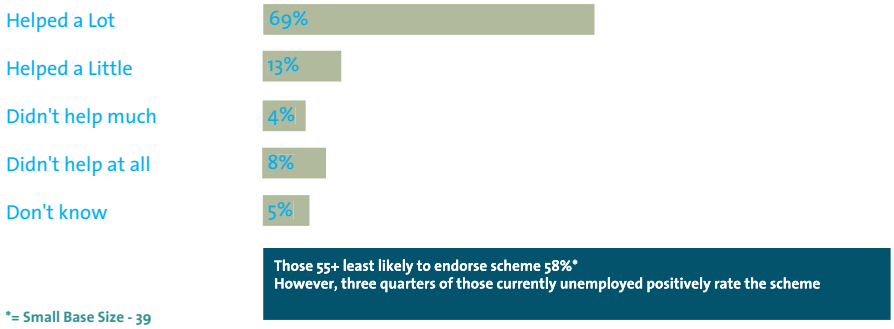
(◯) = Above average

Length Of Time In Employment Following Your Participation In Scheme
(Base: All not currently working but were working Full/Part-time at some point following participation -82)



Section 5: Attitudes Towards B.T.E.A. Scheme

Extent To Which B.T.E.A. Scheme Helped To Get Employment
(Base: All Respondents)



*= Small Base Size - 39

Likelihood Of Returning To Education if B.T.E.A. Had Not Been Available

(Base: All Respondents)

- Don't Know 2%
- Yes - Would Have 29%
- No - Would Not Have 69%

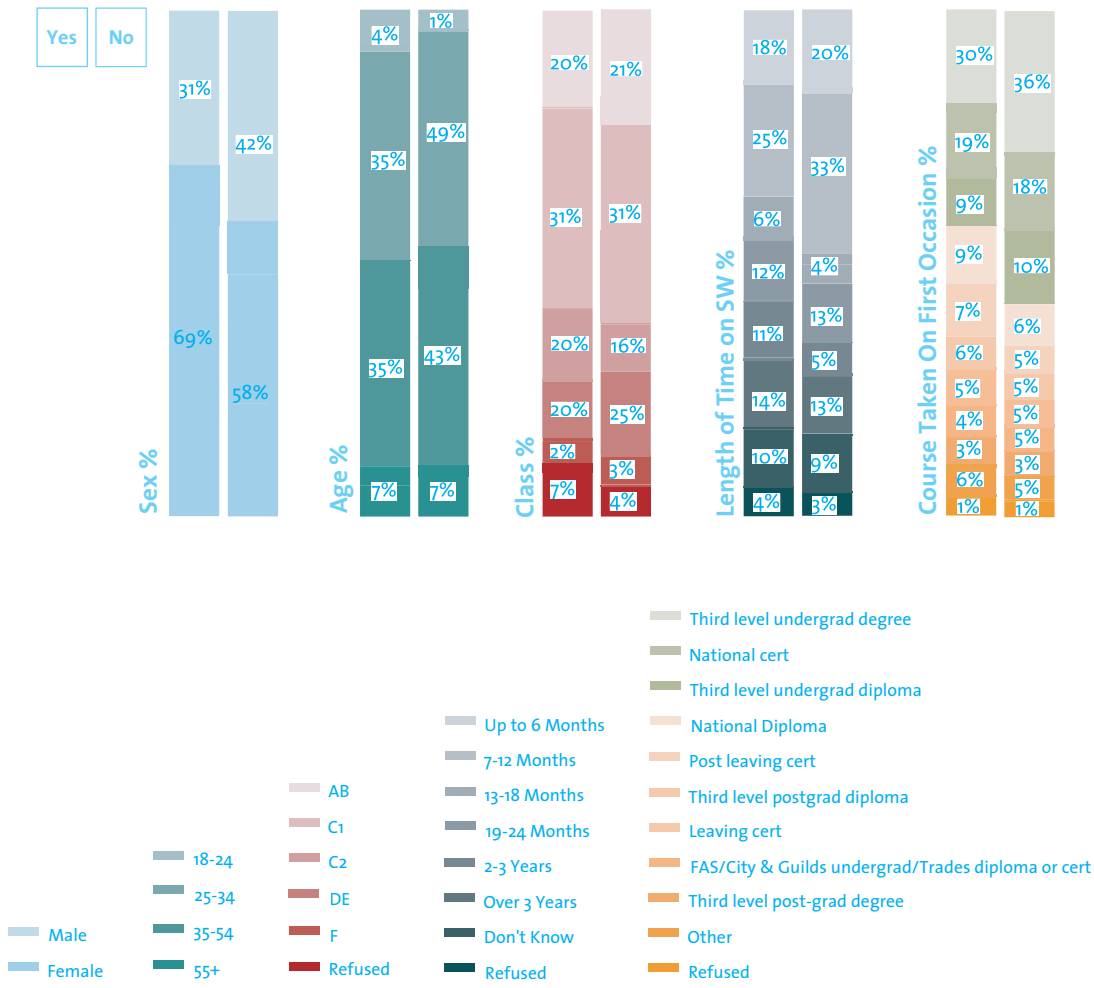
Males 76%
Females 64%

50% of lone parents make this claim

Of those who would not have gone back to education if BTEA had not been availability 22% are currently unemployed

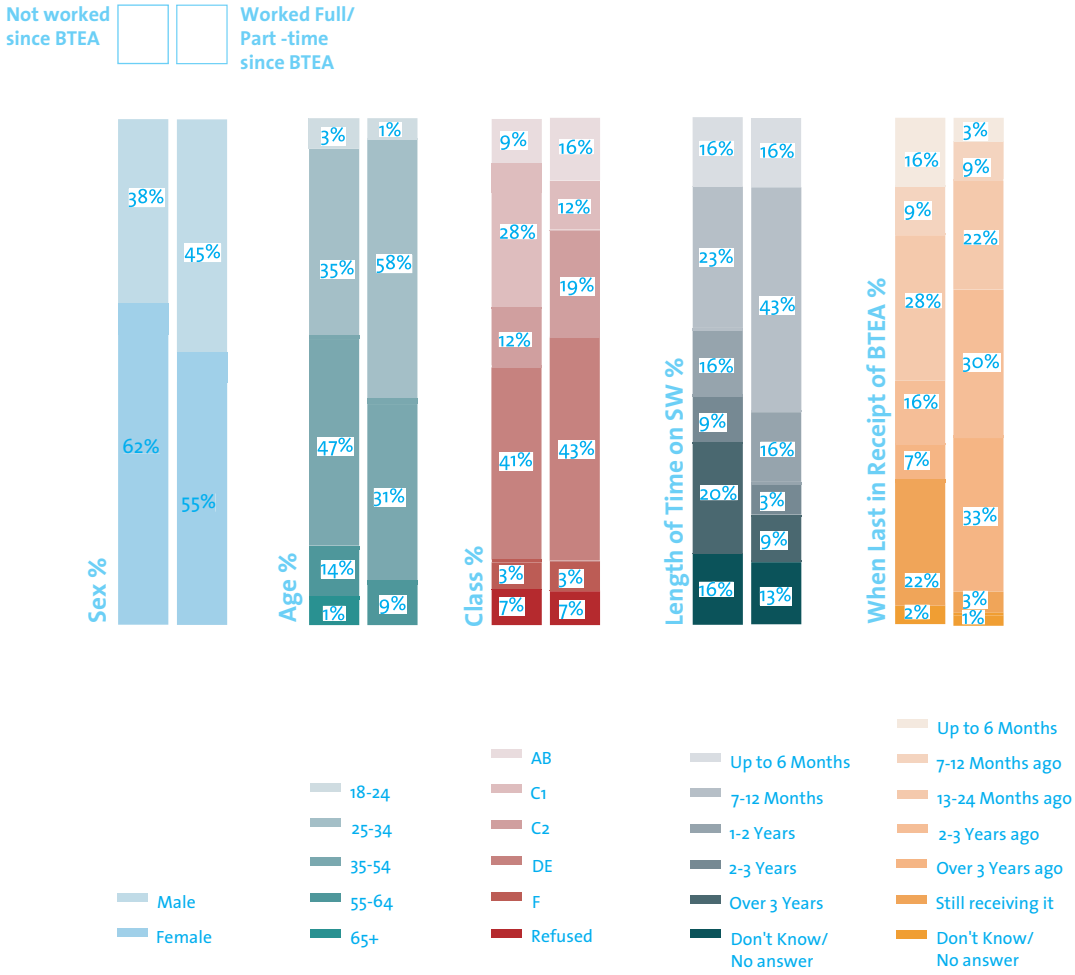
Likelihood Of Returning To Education if BTEA Had Not Been Available

(Base: All Respondents)



Profile of Those Who Have Not Worked Since BTEA vs Those Who Have

(Base: All except those currently employed full/part-time)



Summary and Conclusions

General

One in every five surveyed had received the Back to Education Allowance on more than one occasion with half of all recipients receiving additional financial support whilst on the scheme. Over half of those receiving additional financial support received it in the form of a third level grant, with no particularly significant differences in this incidence rate amongst the different socio-economic groups. Those in the C2 (skilled working class) group were **marginally** less likely to have received this grant. One third of all BTEA recipients engaged in part-time work whilst on the scheme.

Just over half of those interviewed were aged less than 35 years at the time of interview. Approximately one in every 14 were aged 55 or over. Over half last received the BTEA over two years ago.

Social Welfare Status Prior to BTEA

Prior to participation in the BTEA scheme, nearly two thirds had been in receipt of Social Welfare payments for two years or less. Indeed, 54% had been receiving payments for less than one year and 20% for less than six months. These findings clearly contradict the schemes' objective of targeting the long-term unemployed.

Course of Study Taken and Qualifications Achieved

The top three courses taken by those receiving the allowance on the first occasion are - a third level undergraduate degree (34%), the National Certificate (19%) and a third level undergraduate diploma (10%)

Current Employment Status

Nearly half of those who have participated in the scheme are currently in full-time employment. This incidence is highest amongst those aged 25-34 years. Almost one in seven participants currently work part-time and one in five are currently unemployed. This incidence of being unemployed is highest amongst men. Approximately one in every nine BTEA participants has not been employed at all since their participation in the scheme.

Examining the relationship between employment and length of time on social welfare prior to BTEA, it is clear that those receiving welfare payments for less than six months are more likely to be employed than those on long term social welfare. It is worth noting that the age profile for short-term welfare recipients is considerably younger.

Levels of unemployment are highest amongst those who have only recently completed their participation in the BTEA. The level of unemployment decreases as the length of time since participation in the scheme increases.

Given this fact, it is important that any assessment of the schemes effectiveness also takes into account the opinions of the participants themselves. In this regard, the vast majority felt that the scheme helped them to gain employment and nearly three quarters believe that they would have been unlikely to return to education if this scheme had not been available. Three quarters of those who are currently unemployed also positively rate the scheme.

Just 7% of those interviewed were aged 55 or over. Given the stated need to keep people in the workplace longer, initiatives to make the scheme more attractive/accessible to this age group warrant attention.

Appendix C

Forecasted Occupational Trends within the Irish Labour Market 2001-2010

Occupation Type	2001 in (000s)	2010 in (000s)	% Change 2001-2010
Agriculture	103.1	95	-7.9
Managers	164.3	197.3	+20.0
Proprietors in Services	49.9	63.6	+27.2
Health Professionals	11.9	18.0	+52.1
Education Professionals	67.3	85.6	+27.3
Clergy	3.6	2.8	-22.1
Science Professionals	6.8	9.3	+37.0
Software Eng. Professionals	8.1	12.3	+52.0
Other Eng. Professionals	30.2	39.3	+30.3
Business/Fin/Legal Profs	39.5	56.5	+42.5
Other Professions	21.6	31.4	+45.5
Health Assoc Professionals	52.4	80	+52.7
Science Assoc Professionals	11.4	15.7	+37.7
Computer Assoc Professional	14.1	22.7	+60.5
Engineering Assoc Profs	13.2	14.8	+11.9
Catering Assoc Professionals	17.4	21.5	+23.6
Other Associate Prof	35.1	54.0	+53.8
Clerical	210.6	249.5	+18.4
Electricians Elect. Fitters	28.9	28.5	-1.3
Fitters and Mechanics	37.8	40.9	+8.2
Skilled Building Workers	60.3	59.1	-2.1
Metal/Eng Craft Workers	17.8	17.3	-3.3
Woodcraft Workers	33.1	32.5	-1.6
Clothing Textile Workers	6.8	4.5	-34.1
Printers	8.1	7.8	-3.9
Other Skilled Workers	4.8	4.5	-6.3
Electrical/Electronic Ops	27.7	31.1	+12.3
Metal/Engineering Ops	15.9	13.8	-12.7
Food Drink Tobacco Ops	26.5	26.7	+0.8
Other Productions Ops	89.3	91.5	+2.5
Drivers	60.2	76.5	+27.0
Other Transport Workers	15.4	15.4	-0.3
Sales Agents	33.1	38.6	+16.9
Sales Assistants	88.6	104.3	+17.8
Other Sales Workers	11.1	15.1	+36.0
Army Gardai Prison Offs	20.7	28.3	+37.2
Other Security Workers	17.4	25.5	+46.8
Catering Occupations	22.7	32.4	+42.8
Other Personal Services	24.8	33.1	+33.7
Occupation Unstated	11.4	13.1	+15.1
Childcare and Related Ser	13.5	29.1	+116.5
Care Assistants	25.8	44.1	+71.0
Unskilled Manual	85.9	80.0	-6.8
Total	1647.9	1963.0	19.1

Tabulated from Table 2.12 FÁS/ESRI Manpower Forecasting Studies Report No:11 Jan 2004, p44.#

Appendix D
FÁS

Training Programmes for the Unemployed
Specific Skills Training
FÁS under the Specific Skills Training Programme provides a large range of employment led training courses of an industrial and commercial nature such as E-Commerce, Information Technology, Manufacturing, Engineering, Logistics, Services, Marketing which are available to the unemployed, redundant workers, persons wishing to up-date their skills, for school leavers and others entering the labour market. These courses are available to applicants who are above the statutory school leaving age and are out of full time education, unemployed persons or redundant workers and those seeking to enter or re-enter the labour market. Costs for all day training courses are borne by FÁS. Normal FÁS training allowances apply for the duration of the training course. Accommodation costs are subsidised for trainees who must live away from home during the course and transport costs are also subsidised for trainees who have to travel three miles or more from their residence to the place of training

Traineeship
The FÁS National Traineeship programme which was developed in 1998 is a system of market led training tailored to the needs of Irish industry, enterprise and local businesses and involves alternating periods of training in a FÁS Training Centre and in the employer's workplace. These courses are available to applicants who are above the statutory school leaving age and are out of full time education, unemployed persons or redundant workers and those seeking to enter or re-enter the labour market. The training content and occupational standards are based on employer consultation and lead to nationally recognised certification. Trainees develop and learn a range of specific occupational skills and achieve a formal occupational qualification. Traineeships are currently available in a wide variety of occupations in the following industrial/commercial sectors: Aviation, Information Technology, Multimedia, Construction, Clothing, Retail Sales and Manufacturing. Costs for all day training courses are borne by FÁS. Normal FÁS training allowances apply for the duration of the training course. Accommodation costs are subsidised for trainees who must live away from home during the course and transport costs are also subsidised for trainees who have to travel three miles or more from their residence to the place of training

Community Delivered Training and Employment Programmes
A number of FÁS training programmes are delivered through community organisations on behalf of FÁS including Job Initiative and the Social Economy Programme. FÁS contracts with community and voluntary organisations for the delivery of training for persons who require a non-formal approach and methodology. These include Community Training Centres for early school leavers, Specialist Training Providers for persons with a disability and Job Initiative for older unemployed persons.

Local Training Initiative
Local Training Initiative a new modular programme, incorporates activity, which was undertaken during the last Community Support Framework under the Community Youth Training Programme (CYTP). It is an important progression option for recently redundant workers, new entrants to the labour market, persons who have acquired basic skills on Community Employment and those who have undergone training under the early school leavers measure. Community Training is primarily a workplace based training measure, but includes 'off the job' modules. It involves local communities who are developing infrastructures or services involving unemployed people learning 'on the job'. Participants are local unemployed people. It is particularly suitable in the area of up-dating and re-training unemployed people across a range of skills, and opens up training opportunities to unemployed persons in remote and small communities.

Job Initiative
The primary purpose of the JI programme is to assist long-term unemployed persons to prepare for work opportunities in the open labour market. The programme achieves this by providing participants with training and development opportunities and work experience. It provides full-time employment for persons who are over 35 years of age, who have previously been unemployed for 5 years or more, and are in receipt of an appropriate social welfare payment over that period. Participants on JI work a standard 39 hour week, and the contract length is three years.

FÁS NetCollege
FÁS NetCollege offers distance learning through the medium of the Internet and supports life long learning by joining knowledge with technology to produce a meaningful learning experience through on-line distance training. FÁS NetCollege courses are designed to enable those who wish, to upgrade their skills or acquire new skills. Unemployed persons (UA and UB), Lone Parents, Persons in receipt of Disability Benefit or Allowance are registered free of charge with official documentary evidence from the Dept of Social & Family Affairs indicating current payment status. While the full rate fees are charged to Employed Persons Self-employed Persons, Community Employment Participants (CE) and Job Initiative Participants, FÁS Trainees on related courses i.e. the certification on a trainees day-time course matches the FÁS Net College on-line course certification option are registered free of charge.

Pre-Apprenticeship Programme
If you do not meet the educational requirement to commence an apprenticeship there are other ways in which it is possible to qualify for a job as an apprentice. You can satisfactorily complete a preparatory training course approved by FÁS and be successful at an assessment interview. You may qualify if you are over 25 years of age, have had a minimum of 3 years work experience relevant to your chosen occupation and are successful at an assessment interview. Many employers look for higher entry requirements for their particular needs.

Bridging/Foundation Courses
FÁS offers a number of Bridging and Foundation Training Programmes to assist individuals to meet the eligibility criteria for entry, which leads to progression to mainstream Specific Skills Training and Traineeship.

Early School Leavers
FÁS in co-operation with the Department of Education and Science provides a range of services for early school leavers including Foundation Training, Linked Work Experience, Bridging Training and Pre-Apprenticeship which lead to progression to mainstream skills training programmes and Advisory Supports in the form of Advocates to assist progression and flexible part-time and work based options. Young people who leave school early i.e. at the minimum school leaving age and without completing the full second-level cycle, often experience particular difficulties in the jobs market. Some do make their way out into out-of-school programmes, such as the Local Training Initiative or FÁS mainstream courses, but most find it almost impossible to compete with more qualified candidates for work and training.

Community Training Centres
These centres are aimed at out of school people most in need of basic vocational training and are managed by representative community committees. Community Training Centres play a major role in the implementation of YOUTHREACH.

YOUTHREACH is a specially designated programme, which does not have any entry requirements. The training which is delivered in Community Training Centres is full time, includes a training allowance and covers a range of vocational skills, general education and work experience leading to Foundation Certification through FETAC and state examinations such as Junior Certificate and Applied Leaving Certificate.

FÁS Jobs Club
FÁS contracts with community and voluntary groups for the provision of Job Club support for long term unemployed persons who are referred by FÁS Employment Services of the Local Employment Service (LES) so that they may receive help in their job seeking. Job Clubs provide formal training sessions in job seeking skills, job application and interview skills over a 5/6 week period. In addition the Job Club provides telephone, fax, and computer facilities which can be availed of by job seekers even after they have completed their training.

Special Training Provision
In the mainstreaming of services formerly delivered through the National Rehabilitation Board (NRB), FÁS acquired responsibility for the provision of vocational training for persons with special needs. FÁS contracts community and voluntary organisations for the delivery of a range of training programmes to enable such persons to progress onto mainstream training such as Specific Skills Training or Traineeship or gain direct access into the labour market.

Supported Employment
The FÁS Supported Employment Programme is designed to assist in the integration of persons with a disability into a job in the open labour market, leading to independence and career progression. On-the-job-training and individualised supports are key elements to Supported Employment. Employment related supports to help people with disabilities gain or retain employment are now also available through FÁS.

Payment Arrangements

Summary of FÁS Training Allowances: Adult Trainees [17]

Age Group	Full Time € Euro	Part Time € Euro
Trainees aged 15/16 years	54.90	
Trainees Aged 17 Years	68.60	
Trainees Aged 18 Years & Over	134.80	
Trainees - Part-time (20 hrs/week)		77.60

17 Effective: 1 January 2004

Appendix E

Department of Education and Science
Further and Adult Education Programmes in the VEC Sector

Youthreach
Provides a two-year programme of integrated education, training and work experience for 15 to 20 year-olds who are in the labour market for at least six months and who left school without formal education qualifications. The programme has expanded since its introduction and is now offered in over 100 locations, through special out-of-school centres provided by Vocational Education Committees and a network of FÁS-funded Community Training Centres. There are of the order of 6,500 places nationally at present of which 3,258 are in the VEC sector.

Senior Travellers Training Centres (STTC)
A network of 32 Senior Traveller Training Centres provides an out-of-school programme for traveller early school leavers, with a specific emphasis on catering for the cultural needs of the travelling community. Approximately 1,000 places are available nationally in these centres, which operate in the VEC sector.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)
The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme is a second chance education and training programme which provides courses of up to two years duration for unemployed people. Courses include a wide range of subjects and activities and certification is available at a range of levels.

To be eligible for the scheme, applicants must be aged 21 years or over, unemployed for at least six months and in receipt of specific social welfare payments.

Participants receive a training allowance in lieu of an unemployment benefit, equivalent to the maximum rate. Participants with entitlement to other social welfare payments, such as one parent family payment continue to receive their payment from the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Participants also receive a small lunch allowance and may be eligible for a travel allowance, depending on the distance between the participant's home and the VTOS Centre. Some provision is made for childcare under this scheme.

VTOS was introduced in 1989 and, up until 1998, the scheme was targeted at those on the live register, i.e. in receipt of unemployment assistance, or unemployment benefit, with a 10% cap on participation by people in receipt of one-parent family payment and disability allowance. In September 1998, this 10% cap was lifted and these categories were allowed apply for a place on the programme on an equal footing. Other categories of social welfare recipients were added subsequently.

VTOS Eligibility Criteria
To participate in VTOS, an applicant to be at least 21 years of age, and at least six months in receipt of specified social welfare payments.

Social welfare categories include the following:

- those on the live register (UA/UB), one-parent family payment, disability allowance, disability benefit, invalidity pension, blind person's pension, deserted wife's allowance/benefit, widow/widower's contributory/ non-contributory benefit.

- Dependent spouses of those eligible, and those signing for credits for at least six months may also apply to join a VTOS course. Periods spent on FÁS training courses, CE schemes, Job Initiative and Youthreach programmes can count towards the six month qualifying period.

Allowances and Other Supports

- A student with a prior entitlement to unemployment benefit or unemployment assistance receives a training allowance in lieu of their unemployment payment, at a rate equivalent to the maximum of Unemployment Benefit.
- Students with entitlement to other categories of social welfare payment, for example a one-parent family payment, continue to receive payment from the Department of Social & Family Affairs.
- Students who were in receipt of an eligible social welfare payment for at least 12 months directly before joining the programme are entitled to a training bonus of €31.80 per week
- Students can retain entitlements to any secondary benefits they had prior to joining the programme- e.g. Christmas bonus, fuel allowance, diet supplement.
- Students may work part-time. Rent of mortgage supplement will be affected by any additional income. However, the first €50 of weekly earnings from part-time employment will not affect this supplement.

Additional Supports

- Students may be eligible for childcare support
- Students receive (financial) support in relation to books, materials, examination fees
- Guidance is available to the majority of VTOS participants through the Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI)

Profile of VTOS participants

Statistics at the 1st January 2003 show the following:

Gender:

- 67.02% of participants were female (68.83% in 2004)
- 32.98% of participants were male (31.17% in 2004)

Age:

- 21-24 17.77% (17.45% in 2004)
- 25-39 45.03% (45.77% in 2004)
- 40+ 37.20% (36.78% in 2004)

Performance Indicators

- Progression to employment, or further education and training
- Participation rates.

The figures for those progressing to employment, further education and training or other non-specific activity are as follows:

	2002	2003	2004
After completing 1 year course	81.14%	76.32%	73.94%
After completing 2 year course	76.55%	75.34%	75.22%

Educational and Training Content
Participants in the "core" VTOS programme may pursue subjects in the Junior or Leaving Certificate Programmes or modules or awards certified by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). "Core" VTOS means VTOS-eligible trainees pursuing full-time courses in groups consisting of VTOS-eligible trainees only.

Participants on VTOS may also participate in "dispersed mode" in VEC schools and colleges "Dispersed mode" means VTOS –eligible trainees pursuing full-time courses within other programmes recognised by the Department of Education and Science.

Participants gain various levels of qualifications through their VTOS programme over one or two years. In addition, each year a number of VTOS participants who have completed a one-year programme in a 'core' VTOS and have the necessary level of educational attainment choose, for their second year, to participate in VTOS in 'dispersed mode' in a Post-Leaving Certificate Programme in VEC schools and Further Education Colleges.

Number of VTOS Participants at 1 January 2005

VTOS Category	Male	Female	Total
Core	1,126 (20.33%)	2,677 (48.34%)	3,803 (68.67%)
Dispersed	602 (10.87%)	1,133 (20.46%)	1,735 (31.33%)
Total	1,728 (31.20%)	3,810 (68.80%)	5,538 (100%)

Age Profile of VTOS Participants – I January 2005

Age Range	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
21 - 24	5.55	11.66	17.21
25 - 39	13.65	32.16	45.81
40 +	12.01	24.97	36.98
All *	31.20	68.80	100

* Small variation due to rounding

Vocational Preparation and Training (Post Leaving Certificate Courses - PLC)
Full-time one and two-year programmes of integrated education, vocational training and work experience are provided in schools and colleges outside the third level sector. These programmes are offered to those who have completed senior cycle or equivalent and who need further training to enhance their chances of gaining employment. There are over 1,000 courses to choose from in over 60 disciplines. Participants may be eligible to receive a student maintenance grant.

Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)
The BTEI offers flexible part-time Further Education programmes so that people can combine their learning with family, work and other responsibilities. The BTEI will play a key role both in addressing the needs of those with minimal or no educational qualifications and in providing a re-entry route for those who wish to upgrade their skills in line with emerging needs. There are currently 6,000 BTEI places and a further 1,000 will come on-stream in 2005.

Adult Literacy
Adult Literacy is provided locally throughout the country through the Vocational Education Committees, funded by the Department. The National Development Plan committed €101 million to this in the period 2000-2006 with a target of reaching 113,000 participants. The target has been exceeded, on an annualised basis, with approximately 30,000 participants in 2004. The provision allows for a minimum of 2 hours tuition per week starting at one-to-one tuition, leading to group tuition as the participant progresses. In addition there are strategies to expand the delivery of literacy provision through initiatives including workplace literacy and the media literacy.

Community Education
Funding is provided annually to Vocational Education Committees to support community-based education provision. Each VEC employs a community education facilitator whose role is to support the development of new community-based learning groups; to network providers and help them access funding, to share good practice and monitor quality, and to promote the development of partnerships with the statutory sector.

DSFA Back To Education Programme - Income support provision for certain Social Welfare customers availing of second chance education. This is the Education Training and Development Option (ET&D) and the Part Time Education Option (PTEO) Education Training and Development Option (ET&D)

The qualifying conditions for receipt of Unemployment Benefit or Unemployment Assistance require a person to be available for and genuinely seeking work. A person pursuing a full-time day course of study would not satisfy this condition and, therefore, would not qualify for an unemployment payment.

However, under the Education, Training and Development (ET&D) Option of the Back to Education Programme an unemployed person is deemed to be available for work while pursuing a course of study and, consequently may retain their unemployment payment.

In circumstances where the course of education, training or development is organised or initiated by a Facilitator, the participant may receive an additional payment of €31.80 per week towards out of pocket expenses.

Generally, the ET&D option covers course of education, training or development that are not recognised for BTEA purposes. To qualify for this option, a person must be at least 21 years of age and in receipt of Unemployment Benefit or Unemployment Assistance for at least six months (156 days). Provision is made for 18 to 20 year olds provided they are out of formal education for at least 2 years.

Part Time Education Option (PTEO)
The Back to Education Programme takes cognisance of the fact that many people may wish to pursue part-time course of study as an alternative to the more structured full-time course available under the BTEA scheme and the ET&D option.

Unlike the BTEA scheme and the ET&D option there is no specific eligibility criteria for the Part Time Education Option. A person may be of any age and may be in receipt of an unemployment payment for any length of time prior to starting a part-time course of study. Under this option participants retain their unemployment payment on the basis that they remain available for and genuinely seeking work.

Appendix F
Historical Development of Scheme

Measures introduced 1993 – 1997

- In 1993 the necessary period of unemployment was reduced to 12 months and the scheme was extended to recipients of One Parent Family Payment, and Deserted Wife's Benefit, and Widows/Widowers Contributory Pension provided the applicant was in receipt of payment for a qualified child dependent.
- In 1995 the qualifying period for participation was further reduced to 6 months. The minimum age requirement for accessing Third Level Allowance was also reduced from 23 to 21 years

A new feature was also introduced in 1995, allowing participants to avail of postgraduate courses. Persons had to be at least 24 years of age on commencement of such courses.

The Third Level Allowance was established as a separate stand –alone scheme with effect from September 1996.

The Second Level Allowance Scheme (which heretofore had no specific title other than a Second Level initiative) was established on a similar basis in April 1997.

The schemes were re named Second Level Option (SLO) and Third Level Option (TLO) and merged into a unified Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) Scheme in January 1998.

Appendix G
Summary of developments 1998 – 2005

Year	Measure Introduced
1998	Persons in receipt of Disability Allowance and Blind Pension became eligible to participate on the scheme.
	Annual Cost of Education Allowance increased from €127 to €190.
1999	Annual Cost of Education Allowance increased from €190 to €254.
2000	From September 2000 persons in receipt of Invalidity Pension, Unemployability Supplement and Carers Allowance became eligible to participate on the scheme.
	A Qualified Adult of a BTEA eligible person could "take over" the relevant payment in order to access the BTEA. The original payee was then entitled to sign for credits. This arrangement is known as ' Spousal Swap'
	Periods spent on Back to Work Allowance, FÁS Jobs Initiative, and Job Start could be counted towards the 156 days qualifying condition.
2001	From September 2001 early School Leavers (18-20 year olds) qualified for BTEA provided they were 2 years out of formal education. This provision applies only to UA/UB and One Parent Family recipients.
	People with Disabilities who accessed CE Schemes through the National Rehabilitation Board (NRB) became eligible to participate on the BTEA without having to establish SW entitlement.
2002	Persons in receipt of Deserted Wife's Allowance/Benefit, Widows Contributory /Non Contributory Pension and Prisoners Wife's Allowance without child dependents became eligible to participate on the scheme.
	Extension of the BTEA scheme to persons in receipt of Disability Benefit for 3 years or more.
	Qualified Adults became eligible to access BTEA in their own right i.e. SW customer to retain their personal payment while dependent spouse - on accessing the scheme - awarded a payment equivalent to full personal rate of SW payment. This measure replaced 'Spousal Swap'
2003	Summer payment to BTEA participants previously on an unemployment payment discontinued.
	From January 2003 payment of BTEA to those pursuing postgraduate courses discontinued, with the exception of those pursuing Higher Diplomas (H.Dip) in all disciplines and Graduate Diplomas in Primary School Teaching.
2004	From September 2004 the qualifying period for TLO increased from 6 months to 15 months. This measure only applies to TLO and does not affect SLO applicants.
2005	From September 2005 the qualifying period as outlined above will be reduced to 12 months. From September 2005 the annual Cost of Education payment will increase to €400

Appendix H

PROGRESSION OF A BTEA CLAIM

Scheme advertised through information booklets, SW publications, SW website, Comhairle website, CICs (Citizens Information Centres) mailshots to potential customers etc.

Courses are self selected by applicant. Completed application forms sent to location dealing with customers' SW payments.

Unemployment Payments	One Parent Family Payment	Invalidity Pension DA etc

SWLO SLO decisions/payments/ reviews. TLO applications forwarded to ESS HQ for decisions/reviews then returned to SWLO for payment.	PSO Sligo All SLO/TLO decisions/ payments/ reviews	SWSO Longford All SLO/TLO decisions/ payments/ reviews

ESS HQ
TLO decisions/reviews from SWLOs. Outcome of decision/reviews notified to SWLOs where claims are then put into payment and maintained.

APPENDIX I GRIDS

Appendix I (i)

Number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Social Welfare Categories:	Organisation	Programme	Principal Payment	Meal/Travel Allowance	Free books & materials	Training Bonus	Childcare support	Student Support Grant	Duration of payment
Unemployment Benefit	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of UB	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course except summer holidays
Unemployment Assistance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of UB	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course except summer holidays
One-ParentFamily Payment	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of OPFP	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course
Invalidity Pension	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of INVP	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course
Disability Allowance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of DA	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course
Disability Benefit	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of DB	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course
Blind Pension	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of BP	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course
Deserted Wife's Allowance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of DWA	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course
Deserted Wife's Benefit	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of DWB	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course
Widow / Widower's contributory pension	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of WCP	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course
Widow / Widower's non-contributory pension	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of WNCP	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course
Prisoners Wife's Allowance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of PWA	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course
Farm Assist	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of UB	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course
Carer's Allowance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of CA	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course
Unemployability Supplement	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	BTEA	BTEA @ max. rate of US	No	Annual payment of €254 towards cost of books etc.	No	No	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of course

Appendix I (ii)

Number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Social Welfare Categories:	Organisation	Programme	Principal Payment	Meal/Travel Allowance	Free books & materials	Training Bonus	Childcare support	Student Support Grant	Duration of payment
Unemployment Benefit	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of UB subject to satisfying normal qualifying conditions	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course except summer holidays
Unemployment Assistance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of UA subject to satisfying normal qualifying conditions	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course except summer holidays
One-ParentFamily Payment	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of OPFP	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course
Invalidity Pension	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of INVP, subject to special permission	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course
Disability Allowance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of DA, subject to special permission	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course
Disability Benefit	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of DB, subject to special permission	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course
Blind Pension	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of BP	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course
Deserted Wife's Allowance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of DWB	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course
Deserted Wife's Benefit	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of DWA	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course
Widow / Widower's contributory pension	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of WCP	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course
Widow / Widower's non-contributory pension	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of WNCP	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course
Prisoners Wife's Allowance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of PWA	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course
Farm Assist	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of FA	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course
Carer's Allowance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of CA provided course does not exceed 10 hours per week	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course
Unemployability Supplement	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	PTEO	Retention of US	No	No	No	No	No	Duration of course

Appendix I (iii)

Number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Social Welfare Categories:	Organisation	Programme	Principal Payment	Meal/Travel Allowance	Free books & materials	Training Bonus	Childcare support	Student Support Grant	Duration of payment
Unemployment Benefit	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)	Courses of Education, Training or Development (ET&D) not covered under BTEA	Retention of UB (deemed available)	No	No	Yes, for short-term courses initiated by a Facilitator	No	No	Duration of course except summer holidays
Unemployment Assistance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of UB (deemed available)	No	No		No	No	Duration of course except summer holidays
One-Parent Family Payment	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of OPFP	No	No		No	No	Duration of course
Invalidity Pension	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of INVP, subject to special permission	No	No		No	No	Duration of course
Disability Allowance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of DA, subject to special permission	No	No		No	No	Duration of course
Disability Benefit	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of DB, subject to special permission	No	No		No	No	Duration of course
Blind Pension	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of BP	No	No		No	No	Duration of course
Deserted Wife's Allowance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of DWB	No	No		No	No	Duration of course
Deserted Wife's Benefit	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of DWA	No	No		No	No	Duration of course
Widow / Widower's contributory pension	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of WCP	No	No		No	No	Duration of course
Widow/ Widower's non-contributory pension	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of WNCP	No	No		No	No	Duration of course
Prisoners Wife's Allowance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of PWA	No	No		No	No	Duration of course
Farm Assist	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of FA	No	No		No	No	Duration of course
Carer's Allowance	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of CA provided course does not exceed 10 hours per week	No	No		No	No	Duration of course
Unemployability Supplement	DSFA (www.welfare.ie)		Retention of US	No	No		No	No	Duration of course

Appendix I (iv)

Number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Social Welfare Categories:	Organisation	Programme	Principal Payment	Meal/Travel Allowance	Free books & materials	Training Bonus	Childcare support	Student Support Grant	Duration of payment
Unemployment Benefit	DE&S (www.education.ie)	VTOS	VTOS Training Allowance @ max. UB paid by DE&S	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of programme - up to 2 years
Unemployment Assistance	DE&S (www.education.ie)	VTOS	VTOS Training Allowance @ max. UB paid by DE&S	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of programme - up to 2 years
One-ParentFamily Payment	DE&S (www.education.ie)	VTOS	Retention of OPFP @ max. rate	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of programme - up to 2 years
Invalidity Pension	DE&S (www.education.ie)	VTOS	Retention of INVP @ max. rate, subject to special permission	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of programme - up to 2 years
Disability Allowance	DE&S (www.education.ie)	VTOS	Retention of DA @ max. rate, subject to special permission	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of programme - up to 2 years
Disability Benefit	DE&S (www.education.ie)	VTOS	Retention of DB @ max. rate, subject to special permission from DSFA	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of programme - up to 2 years
Blind Pension	DE&S (www.education.ie)	VTOS	Retention of BP @ max. rate	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of programme - up to 2 years
Deserted Wife's Allowance	DE&S (www.education.ie)	VTOS	Retention of DWB @ max. rate	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of programme - up to 2 years
Deserted Wife's Benefit	DE&S (www.education.ie)	VTOS	Retention of DWA @ max. rate	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of programme - up to 2 years
Widow / Widower's contributory pension	DE&S (www.education.ie)	VTOS	Retention of WCP @ max. rate	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of programme - up to 2 years
Widow / Widower's non-contributory pension	DE&S (www.education.ie)	VTOS	Retention of WNCP @ max. rate	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of programme - up to 2 years
Prisoners Wife's Allowance	DE&S (www.education.ie)	VTOS	Retention of PWA @ max. rate	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	Yes, if course eligible & subject to means test	Duration of programme - up to 2 years
Farm Assist	DE&S (www.education.ie)	Not eligible for VTOS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Carer's Allowance	DE&S (www.education.ie)	Not eligible for VTOS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Unemployability Supplement	DE&S (www.education.ie)	Not eligible for VTOS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Appendix I (v)

Number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Social Welfare Categories:	Organisation	Programme	Principal Payment	Meal/Travel Allowance	Free books & materials	Training Bonus	Childcare support	Student Support Grant	Duration of payment
Unemployment Benefit	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	FÁS Training	FÁS Training Allowance @ standard or equivalent rate of UB	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	No	Duration of course
Unemployment Assistance	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	FÁS Training	FÁS Training Allowance @ standard or equivalent rate of UA	yes	yes	Yes, subject to length of time on SW payment	yes	No	Duration of course
One-ParentFamily Payment	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	FÁS Training	Standard FÁS Training Allowance & retention of OPFP subject to means test by DSFA	yes	yes	No	yes	No	Duration of course
Invalidity Pension	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	FÁS Training	Standard FÁS Training Allowance & retention of INVP subject to special permission from DSFA	yes	yes	No	yes	No	Duration of course
Disability Allowance	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	FÁS Training	FÁS Training Allowance @ equivalent rate of DA	yes	yes	No	yes	No	Duration of course
Disability Benefit	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	FÁS Training	Standard FÁS Training Allowance & retention of DB subject to special permission from DSFA	yes	yes	No	yes	No	Duration of course
Blind Pension	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	FÁS Training	FÁS Training Allowance @ equivalent rate of BP	yes	yes	No	yes	No	Duration of course
Deserted Wife's Allowance	DE&S (www.education.ie)	FÁS Training	Standard FÁS Training Allowance & retention of DWA subject to means test by DSFA	yes	yes	No	yes	No	Duration of course
Deserted Wife's Benefit	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	FÁS Training	Standard FÁS Training Allowance & retention of DWB	yes	yes	No	yes	No	Duration of course
Widow / Widower's contributory pension	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	FÁS Training	Standard FÁS Training Allowance & retention of WCP	yes	yes	No	yes	No	Duration of course
Widow / Widower's non-contributory pension	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	FÁS Training	Standard FÁS Training Allowance & retention of WNCP subject to means test by DSFA	yes	yes	No	yes	No	Duration of course
Prisoners Wife's Allowance	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	FÁS Training	Standard FÁS Training Allowance & retention of PWA subject to means test by DSFA	yes	yes	No	yes	No	Duration of course
Farm Assist	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	Not eligible for FÁS Training	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Carer's Allowance	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	Not eligible for FÁS Training	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Unemployability Supplement	DET&E (www.entemp.ie)	Not eligible for FÁS Training	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Appendix J

Payment and Recording Systems

ISTS
All BTEA claims dealt with through the SWLOs are paid through the Department's computerised payment system for Integrated Short Term Schemes (ISTS). The system which was designed in 1992/1994, went into use for Unemployment Assistance/Benefit in 1995. It has been subsequently updated to cater for payment of Supplementary Welfare Allowance, Disability Benefit, etc. ISTS provides greater integration of claim information improves control of schemes and greatly reduces the possibility of duplicate or overlapping payments for customers and dependents. There are three payment methods on ISTS: cheque, postdraft/EIT (Electronic Information Transfer) and EFT (electronic fund transfer). The system issues payments of amounting to some €54 million to the Department's 340,000 customers weekly.

PENLIVE
All BTEA claims dealt with by PSO and SWSO Longford are made through the Penlive payment system. The system also deals with Disability Benefit applications (both SLO and TLO), which are also paid through Penlive in BTE Section (due to the lack of functionality as currently provided for BTE claims from UA/UB customers).

The pensions application or Penlive system was originally designed in 1986 and has been continually enhanced. The system caters for almost 650,000 claims spread over a total of 23 pension schemes. In the year ending December 2002 Penlive issued payments to the value of over Euro 4.4 billion. The payment methods through Penlive are: PPO (Personal Payable Orders/ Pension Book), EFT, EIT and cheque payments.

Penlive supports a number of geographically dispersed users. Users i.e. those who actually enter and maintain the data are located in Dublin, Longford and Sligo. External users, such as the Health Boards and FÁS avail of a number of the Penlive facilities through Infosys which gives a limited read only access to the Department's data to a number of internal and external public service users.

Third Level Allowance (TLA) recording application
Back to Education section utilise their own recording system on OFFICE (the Department's Word Processing and email system). It has been in use since 1994/1995. This standalone system is used to register applications for BTEA (Third Level Option/LR cases) and to record details of all decisions (approvals and non approvals). In addition to details common to ISTS and Penlive such as PPS number, Name address, date of birth, claim status, the application also records

- date application received
- Type of qualification pursued
- Title of course, College name and other remarks.
- Decision maker's name.

The TLA application system also generates approval forms for issue to applicant and relevant SWLO, non approval notice for SWLO (non approval notification to applicant is done manually). The application also generates address labels which are used for issuing resumption forms each year. Although only in use in BTE Section, 'read-only' access for SLWO's is currently being considered. Details relating to the courses being pursued and colleges attended is maintained for statistical purposes and is useful in answering Parliamentary Questions, letters from customers and public representatives, FOI Requests and to inform decision-making for annual Budget.

Appendix K Social Class Definitions

Guide to Grade "A" Households Upper Middle Class

Accountant (chartered) - Own practice or Partner/Principal in practice with 12+ employees
Actor
Advertising Executive - Director/Partner/ Principal in Agency with 12+ employees
Architect - Own practice or Partner/Principal in practice with 12+ employees
Auctioneer - Own business or Director/ Partner/Principal in business with 12+ employees

Bank Manager (Large branch with 12+ employees)
Barrister - Own practice or Partner/Principal in practice with 12+ employees
Botanist
Business Proprietor (with 12+ employees)
Buyer (Senior) in leading Wholesale/Retail establishment

Captain - Irish Naval Service/Large merchant vessel
Church Dignitaries (Bishop and above) any denomination
Civil Servant (Secretary/Assistant Secretary)
Colonel - Army
Commander - Irish Naval Service
Company Director (in firm with 12+ employees)
Company Secretary (in firm with 12+ employees)
Computer Consultant (in firm with 12+ employees)

Grade "A" (cont'd)

County Planning Officer (Principal/Senior Official; Local Government)

Dentist - Own practice or Partner/Principal in practice
Doctor - Own practice or Partner/Principal in practice

Editor - National Newspaper or Magazine
Engineer - Senior (qualified with University degree) - own practice or Partner/ Principal in practice with 12+ employees

Fire Officer (Chief)

Garda (Chief Superintendent)
General - Lieutenant or Major – Army
Government Member (T.D)

Headmaster/mistress - large secondary school

Insurance underwriter

Journalist (Senior) - own column in National Newspaper/Magazine

Librarian - qualified, in charge of large library
Lieutenant Colonel - Army/Air Corps

Manager of large Factory/Business/Hotel/ Department etc. responsible for 12+ employees
Matron of large Teaching Hospital

Grade "A" (cont'd)

People living in comfort on Investments or Private Income
People (retired) where H/H would have been Grade "A" before retirement
Physician
Physicist
Pilot (Commercial Airline)
Professor - University
Public Relations Executive - Director/ Principal/Partner in Agency with 12+ employees

Research - Director/Principal in Agency with 12+ employees

Scientist - Senior Industrial
Solicitor - own practice or Partner/Principal in practice with 12+ employees
Specialist - Medical profession
Stockbroker
Surgeon
Surveyor (Chartered) - own practice or Partner/Principal in practice with 12+ employees

Town Clerk (City Manager, other Senior Principal Officer; Local Government)
Treasurer (Senior Principal Officer; Local Government)
Veterinary Surgeon - own practice or Partner/Principal in practice

Guide to Grade "B" Households Middle Class

Accountant - Qualified; no practice; employed as Executive
Architect - Qualified; no practice; employed as Executive

Bank Manager (small branch office - up to 12 employees)
Business Proprietor (with 3-12 employees)

Captain - Army/Air Corps
Civil Servant (Principal Officer/Assistant Principal Officer)
Commandant - Army/Air Corps
Computer Consultant (with 3 – 12 Employees)

Engineer (Qualified - University degree) - no practice; employed as Executive; not Grade "A"
Ensign - Irish Naval Service

Fire Officer (Assistant Chief)

Garda - Superintendent/Inspector

Headmaster/mistress in primary or Secondary smaller school

Insurance Company Manager (small branch office - up to 12 employees)

Journalist - not senior enough for Grade "A"

Lecturer - University or Technical College

Grade "B" (cont'd)

Librarian - Senior, Qualified; in charge of small branch library
Lieutenant, First - Army
Lieutenant - Commander - Irish Naval Service
Local Government Officer - Senior

Manager of Factory/Business/Hotel/ Department responsible for 6-12 persons
Matron - Non-Teaching Hospital

Parish Priest (or equivalent in any denomination)
People, with smaller private incomes than Grade "A" living less luxuriously
People (retired); H/H before retirement would have been Grade "B"
Pharmacists - Qualified (University degree); own business with 3-12 employees
Professional people - not yet established; qualified less than 3 years

Sales Manager(Area) responsible for 6-12 persons
Sister/Tutor in large hospital
Solicitor - Qualified; no practice; employed as Executive, not Grade "A"
Surveyor - Qualified; no practice; employed as Executive, not Grade "A"

Teacher - Senior Secondary; in charge of Department
Technician - with degrees in Electronics/ Computers/Aircraft/Chemicals/ Nuclear Energy

Guide to Grade "C1" Households 1 Lower Middle Class

Bank Clerk
Buyer (except Senior Buyer)

Civil Servant - (H.E.O./Junior Executive Officer/Staff Officer/Clerical Officer/Clerical Assistant)
Clerical Employees - supervisory grades; non-manual workers
Clerk (Articled)
Clerk (Despatch)
Clerk (Receptionist)
Clerk (Typist)
Clerk (National/Local Government)
Clerk (Insurance)
Commercial Traveller/Company Representative
Curate (or equivalent in any denomination)

Draughtsman
Driving Instructor

Entertainer (Actor/Musician etc. - main occupation but not well known or established)

Garda Sergeant

Insurance Agent - door to door

Laboratory Assistant
Leading Seaman - Irish Naval Service
Lecturer - Junior, University
Library Assistant - not fully qualified Librarian
Lieutenant - School/Cadet - Army
Lieutenant - Sub - Irish Naval Service

Grade "C1" (cont'd)

Machine (Office) Operator (Punch Card, Calculating, Accounting only)
Manager of Factory/Business/Hotel/Office/ Department - responsible for 1-5 persons
Midwife

Nun - any denomination; but not those with special responsibilities
Nurse - Student, Staff, Sister - all State Registered

People (retired) who before retirement would have been Grade "C1"; who have pensions rather than State or very modest private means
Petty Officer - Irish Naval Service
Physiotherapist
Proprietor - Shop or Business - with 1-2 paid employees

Radiographer
Receptionist

Secretary
Sergeant - Army
Student in any third level institution

Teacher - Primary, Secondary, Vocational - without special responsibilities
Technician/Engineer - (no degree but Technical/Professional qualification)
Telegraphist
Telephonist
Telex Operator
Typist
Warrant Officer - Irish Naval Service

Guide to Grade "C2" Households

Skilled Working Class

AA Patrolman
Ambulance Driver

Baker
Barber
Barman - Head - in charge of others
Blacksmith
Brewer
Bricklayer
Butcher

Cabinet Maker
Carpenter
Charge - Hand
Chef
Coach Builder
Cobbler (Shoemaker)
Compositor
Coppersmith
Corporal - Army

Dental Mechanic/Technician
Driver - Bus
Driver - Long Distance Heavy Lorry
Driver and Shunter (Engine)
Driver - Taxi, Who owns his own taxi
Dressmaker

Electrician
Electrotyper
Engraver (Process)
Excavator (Crane Driver)

Filler
Finisher - Paper and Board Manufacturer
Fireman - not leading
Fitter - Electrical
Fitter – Mechanical

Grade "C2" cont'd)

Foreman
Furnace Man

Ganger
Garda - ordinary
Gardener/Groundsman - Head - in charge of other employees
Glazier
Grinder
Guard - Goods and Passenger

Hewer
Housekeeper - in charge of others

Joiner

Knitter - skilled in Hosiery/knitted goods

Linesman (ESB)
Linotype Operator

Machine Man
Maltster
Manager - small shop; does most of work; not in charge of anyone
Mason
Millwright
Miner
Motor Mechanic
Moulder

Nylon (skilled in production)

Overlooker
Overseer (mainly manual work)

Panel Beater
Painter
Pastry Cook

Grade "C2" (cont'd)

People (retired) who before retirement would have been Grade "C2"; very modest private means; small pensions other than state
Plasterer
Plater
Plumber
Prison Officer
Proprietor - small shop; no paid employees
Putter

Riveter

Seaman - Able - Irish Naval Service
Security Officer (e.g. Securicor etc.)
Self-employed - Skilled; no paid employees - unskilled; 1-4 employees
Setter
Shipwright
Shop Assistant - Head - in charge of others
Signalman
Sorter - Post Office
Smelter
Sprayer
Stereotyper
Stevedore

Tailor - Cutter and fitter
Telephone installer
Toolmaker
Turner
Typesetter

Upholsterer

Vehicle Builder
Waiter - Head - in charge of others
Weaver
Welder

1.2 Guide to Grade "D" Households
Other Working Class

Apprentices (those apprenticed to skilled trade)
Assembler
Attendant in hospital

Barman (no special training/responsibilities)
Blender
Boilerman
Bottler
Breadman

Carder
Caretaker
Chimney Sweep
Cleaner
Comber
Conductor (Bus)
Cook

Docker (Dock Worker)
Domestic Servant
Dough Mixer
Doubler
Drawer
Dustbin man/refuse collector
Dyer

Fisherman
Forestry Worker

Gardener/Groundsman (not in charge of others)
Gardener (Market) - no employees

Housekeeper (Not in charge of others)

Labourer
Laundry Worker
Lorry Driver (Local)

Machinist (Tailoring)
Mate (to those of "C2" occupation category)
Meter Reader
Milkman

Opener
Oven-man

Park-keeper
People (retired) who before retirement would have been Grade "D"; have small pensions other than State; very modest private means
Porter - Railway/Hospital
Postman
Presser
Processor
Private or equivalent - Army

Roundsman

Seaman - Ordinary - Irish Naval Service
Shop Assistant - no special training/ responsibilities
Spinner
Storeman/Storekeeper - no special training/ responsibilities

Taxi Driver (who does not own cab)
Textile Printer
Ticket Collector
Tractor Driver
Twister

Grade "D" (cont'd)

Underground worker - unskilled

Van Driver/Van Salesman

Waitress/Waiter (unless Head Waiter)
Warehouseman
Watchman
Window Cleaner
Woolsorter
Workers in general who are unskilled or semi-skilled

Guide to Grade "E" Households

2 Lowest Level of Subsistence

Casual/Part-time or lowest grade workers

Pensioner - Old age, disability, Widows Pension - who are dependent on State Aid or Pensions only, with no other source of income

People who are unable to take their place in the higher grades owing to periods of sickness / unemployment or lack of opportunity and are dependent on Social Security or whose private means are so modest as to be no more than basic Society Security payments

Respondents will only be graded "E" if the Head of the Household is "E" and no other member of family is the Chief Wage Earner

Grade "F"

Guide to Grade "F50+" Households

Large Farmers

Farmers or Farm Managers of holdings of 50 acres or more

Guide to Grade "F50-" Households

Small Farmers

Farmers or Farm Managers with holdings of less than 50 acres

Farm Workers/Labourers

Appendix L

International Comparisons
Source: ALMP, MISSOC

Schemes in other EU Member States (i)

Introduction
This appendix provides a brief outline of the provision of social welfare income support for persons pursuing second chance education in some other EU Member States. Unless otherwise stated, the source of the information is MISSOC (Mutual Information System on Social Protection): Table XI – Guaranteeing sufficient resources – Measures stimulating social and professional integration.

Belgium
In Belgium if you are long term unemployed, you need to be subscribed to the regional bureaus for re-integration on the labour market. Since Belgium is a federal country, these bureaus have been linked to the three communities in Belgium i.e. Flanders Region, Walloon Region & Brussels Capital Region.

These bureaus send job vacancies to all unemployed people and offer several schooling and training opportunities to unemployed people with low academic attainment. In order to keep unemployment payments people have to agree to subscribe (free of charge) to these opportunities and are also obligated to apply for the different jobs that they are advised of. Person's unemployed for more than one year receive a bonus (in addition to their unemployment payment) of g1 for each hour they spend on a course organised by the VDAB.

Although unemployment is quite high, there are still sectors in which employers do not find enough employees. These professions are called 'knelpuntberoepen' (bottleneck professions). Person's who return to education to gain relevant qualification required for 'knelpuntberoepen' are supported regardless of whether they are unemployed or not. Following the successful completion of the first year of study, they receive a bonus of €200 and on completing the course they receive an additional €200. If they manage to get a job in the 'knelpuntberoepen' sector they receive another bonus of €350.

Denmark
Re-training, flexible jobs, job training, education/training and other activation measures. Municipalities must offer a flexible job to the person whose capacity for work is permanently reduced.

Germany
A part of earnings from work is not taken into account for the calculation of social assistance payments.

It is possible to pay a benefit for 12 months to recipients of social aid who take up an employment as an encouragement for them to take up a new job.

Back to work assistance (Hilfe zur Arbeit):
In Order to encourage people to take up work it is possible to offer an employer allowance or other appropriate means (e.g. hiring-out of labour or temporary employment contracts).

Creation of jobs as regular employment relationships (employment contracts which are liable to social insurance – social assistance fund may cover costs), creation of additional jobs and jobs which are of benefit to the public (employment relationships subject to social insurance legislation or compensation for additional expenditure without employment contract). Co-operation with the labour offices. In case

the beneficiary refuses to take up reasonable work, the standard rate (Regelsatz) allowance shall be reduced imperatively by 25% and further reductions to follow.

Counselling and support should help to prevent and overcome the need for social assistance.

Spain
Theses measures are part of the various social programmes of the Autonomous Communities (Comunidades Autónomas) to combat poverty and social exclusion. The benefits are almost always accompanied by occupational integration measures, training, integration programmes, etc.

Iceland
Local Authorities Social Services
No general scheme. Several Local Authorities invite clients to take part in different programmes aimed at improving their living conditions. The Local Authorities provide social counselling, consisting of guidance in the field of finances, housing, upbringing of children, divorce etc. Local employment Agencies assist the unemployed with their search for employment, supply information and advice on job choice and vocational training and ensure that the unemployed have access to advice and remedial measures such as education programmes or vocational training, based on individual needs.

Italy
Special initiatives for professional training in particular for the integration of certain groups (women, young people).

Liechenstein
The avoidance and overcoming of social need should be encouraged by advice and support. Increases to social assistance are paid out to social assistance beneficiaries for commencing employment. The unemployed remain liable for work placement and are given advice and support in looking for work. There are opportunities for further training and work-programmes for re-integration.

Luxembourg
An integration allowance (indemnité d'insertion) is granted when the beneficiary signs an integration contract (contrat d'insertion), takes part in an integration activity and accepts any job assigned by the employment administration.

Netherlands
Plan of action with all concrete arrangement made for job interview courses, the acquisition of work experience (through ELMP's) and participation in social integration programmes.

Earnings exemptions: Part of the earning from (part-time) employment is not taken into account in order to stimulate finding employment.

Norway
Social services may set conditions for receiving social financial assistance. The terms have to be linked to the claimants need for help, and be aimed at making him or her better able to manage on their own.
Portugal
These measures are part of the social integration programme which, in conjunction with the benefit, seeks to create favourable conditions for the socio-professional integration of the recipient and his family members.

Finland
Some activating measures for long-term and the young benefit-recipients.

Sweden
Social Assistance for persons at the labour market disposal is connected to active measures in order to achieve gainful employment.

United Kingdom

Income disregards:
In calculating Income Support, earnings of GBP 5 (€7.67) per week for single claimants and GBP 10 (€15.00) per week for couples are disregarded. Certain groups qualify for a higher disregard of GBP 20 (€31.00) per week e.g. lone parents, the sick and the disabled.

New Deal for Lone Parents:
Personal Adviser meetings are compulsory for lone parents, whose youngest children are aged at least 5 years and 3 months. They are also compulsory for existing claimants. Service provides advice and help to find lone parents work. Initiative is aimed principally at lone parents on Income Support whose child is aged 3 or above.

Other Measures:
Development of the tax and benefit systems aims to ensure that people are better off working and are not discouraged from increasing earnings. Income Support ('run-on') is paid to lone parents for two weeks after beginning work if they have moved off benefit. Also, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit are extended for 4 weeks. For claimants of IS/JSA receiving help with mortgage interest, there is a 'run-on' of 4 weeks. The Working Families Tax Credit - an – in-work tax credit aimed at making work pay for families with children. Other measures include help with rent through housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) once the person is in work if they are on low pay.

Appendix M

Poverty Proofing

Introduction
Following the Government decision of 23rd July 1999, in line with a Partnership 2000 commitment to the strengthening of administrative procedures for poverty proofing in the context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), it is now a requirement that significant policy proposals show clearly the impact of the proposals on groups in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty. This requirement extends to all reports completed under the Expenditure Review Process.
Poverty is defined in the NAPS as follows:

'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 involves addressing a series of questions that will identify the impact of the proposal/s on the poor. The Working Groups deliberations in this regard are set out below.

Proposals

What is the primary objective of this policy/programme/expenditure proposal?

This report recommends that:
Education opportunities should be provided to all those of working age in receipt of a primary social welfare payment provided they satisfy the scheme conditions.
In order to achieve effective delivery to those most distant from the labour market, the scheme will be delivered in a joined up way by utilising the resources of DSFA, DES and DETE.

Does it ...

i) help to prevent people falling into poverty?

Yes, the scheme is an active labour market programme designed to assist people (who have difficulty entering the labour market through a lack of skills and qualifications) gain the necessary qualifications to get a foothold in the jobs market and therefore out of long-term unemployment and the poverty trap.

ii) reduce the level (in terms of numbers and depth) of poverty?

Yes, those people who access employment with the assistance of the scheme will enhance their circumstances and their financial status.

iii) ameliorate the effects of poverty?

As at 2 above.

iv) have no effect on poverty?

No.

v) increase poverty?

No.

vi) contribute to the achievement of the NAPS targets?

- Yes, by helping to reduce the proportion of the population aged 16-64 with restricted literacy to below 10 to 30% by 2007.
- By helping to reduce the number of young people who leave the school system early, so that the percentage of those who complete upper second level or equivalent will reach 85% by 2003 and 90% by 2008.
- By helping to eliminate long-term unemployment.
- By helping to reduce the level of unemployment experienced by vulnerable groups towards the national average by 2007.
- By contributing to the achievement of the targets/objectives set in the National Employment Action Plan 2003-2005.

vii) address inequalities which might lead to poverty

Yes, by making the scheme accessible to all social welfare customers of working age and by extending eligibility to the scheme to Sick No Benefits (SNB) customers and homeless people in receipt of SWA.

Yes, by allowing periods spent in receipt of Supplementary Welfare Allowance by Asylum Seekers (while seeking Refugee status and once status is granted) to count towards the qualifying period for the scheme.

Yes, in that the proposed joined–up approach to income support/educational support via the NEAP framework will endeavour to tackle educational disadvantage experienced by the unemployed and other vulnerable groups through early intervention case management.

viii) as proposed, reach the target groups?

The report recommends a more structured approach to targeting and targeting strategy so that the most vulnerable groups in society can be helped to progress from unemployment and poverty and into employment with the assistance of this support.

What is the Rationale and Basis of Assessment (data/information) behind each of these replies?

As stated in the report the scheme has assisted over 10,000 people to attain the necessary qualifications to compete in the jobs market and for many of them to break from the cycle of poverty and disadvantage.

The revised objective of the scheme will bring the focus more acutely on all those social welfare customers of working age including other vulnerable groups who have, to-date, been excluded from accessing the scheme.

The integrated approach to the scheme's delivery by DSFA/DES and DETE will provide an enhanced service to those people who need it most through a more streamlined referral process and the elimination of the current self-select system.

If the proposal has the effect of increasing the level of poverty, what options might be identified to ameliorate this effect? N/A.

If the proposal has no effect on the level of poverty, what options might be identified to produce a positive effect? N/A.

Appendix N

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APPENDIX 0

GLOSSARY

A.C.C.A.	**Association of Chartered & Certified Accountants**
Admin	**Administration**
All-in-1	**Computer Word Processing**
ALMPs	**Active Labour Market Programmes**
AMD	**Áras Mhic Dhiarmada**
AONTAS	**National Association of Adult Education**
B.A	**Bachelor of Arts**
B. COMM	**Bachelor of Commerce**
B.L.	**Bachelor of Law**
BPP	**Blind Person's Pension**
B.Sc.	**Bachelor of Science**
BEO	**Branch Employment Office**
BMW Region.	**Border Midlands Western Region**
BTE	**Back to Education**
BTEA	**Back to Education Allowance**
BTEC	**Business and Technology Education Council.**
BTEI	**Back to Education Initiative**
BTW	**Back to Work**
BTWA	**Back to Work Allowance**
CA	**Carers Allowance**
CAO	**Central Applications Office**
C. E.	**Community Employment**
CES	**Community Employment Schemes**
CICs	**Citizens Information Centre**
CO	**Clerical Officer**
COE	**Cost of Education**
CPI	**Consumer Price Index**
CSO	**Central Statistics Office**
CTB	**Council Tax Benefit**
CYTP	**Community Youth Training Programme**
DO	**Deciding Officer**
DA	**Disability Allowance**
DB	**Disability Benefit**
D & E	**Lower Socio-Economic Groups**
DET &E	**Department of Enterprise Trade & Employment**
DE&S	**Department of Education & Science.**
D/Education and Science	**Department of Education and Science**
D/Finance	**Department of Finance**
DES	**Department of Education and Science**
DOF	**Department of Finance**
DSFA	**Department of Social & Family Affairs**
DSW	**Department of Social Welfare**

DWA	Deserted Wife's Allowance
DWB	Deserted Wife's Benefit
E-Commerce	Electronic Commerce
EAP	Employment Action Plan
EFT	Electronic Fund Transfer
EIT	Electronic Information Transfer
E-Mail	Electronic Mail
EO	Executive Officer
EOS	Educational Opportunities Scheme
E&S	Education & Science
ESS	Employment Support Services
ESF	European Structural Fund
ESRI	Economic Social Research Institute
ET&E	Enterprise Trade & Employment
ET&D	Education Training & Development Option
EUR	Euro
EU	European Union.
FÁS	Foras Aiseanna Saothair
FETAC	Further Education Training Awards Council
FOI	Freedom of Information.
GEN	General
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOVT	Government
HB	Housing Benefit
H. DIP.	Higher Diplomas
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council.
HND	Higher Diploma Courses (Northern Ireland)
HR	Human Resources
HQ	Headquarters
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
ICT	Information & Communications Technology
IDEA	Interaction Data Extraction and Analysis System
IFSRA	Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INFO	Information
INVP	Invalidity Pension
IPICS	Irish Production and Inventory Control Society.
ISTS	Integrated Short Term Schemes
IT	Information Technology
JFs	Jobs Facilitator
JI	Job Initiative
LDSIP	Local Development Social Inclusion Programme
LEC	Local Employment Centre

LES	Local Employment Service
LMR	Lansdowne Market Research
LOS	Local Offices
LP	Lone Parents
LR	Live Register
LT	Long Term
Max	Maximum
MISSOC	Mutual Information System on Social Protection
N/A	Not Applicable
NALA	National Literacy Agency
NAPS	National Anti Poverty Strategy
NTCB	National Tourism Certification Board
NDP	National Development Plan
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NEAP	National Employment Action Plan
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification (Northern Ireland)
NRB	National Rehabilitation Board
NCVA	National Certificate Vocational Award
OAP	Old Age Pension
OECD	Organisation of European Co-Operation and Development
OPFP	One Parent Family Payment
OT	Overtime
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PENLIVE	Pensions Live System
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
POSTGRAD	Postgraduate
PPO	Personal Payable Order
PPS	Personal Public Service Number
PQs	Parliamentary Questions
PRETA	Pre Retirement Allowance
PRSI	Pay Related Social Insurance
PS	Payment Suspended
PSB	Public Services Broker
PSO	Pension Services Office
PTEO	Part-Time Education Option
PWA	Prisoners Wife's Allowance
Q2	Quarter 2
QNHS	Quarterly National Household Survey
QFA	Qualified Financial Advisor
R & D	Research & Development
RTE	Radio Telifis Eireann
SG	Secretary General
S/HE	She/He

SEC. BENS.	Secondary Benefits
SES	Social Employment Schemes
SLA	Second Level Allowance
SLO	Second Level Option
SMI	Strategic Management Initiative
SS	Spousal Swap
SNB	Sick No Benefit
SST	Specific Skills Training
STATS	Statistics
SW	Social Welfare
SWA	Supplementary Welfare Allowance
SWLO	Social Welfare Local Office
SWSO	Social Welfare Services Office
TEAGASC	Irish Agriculture and Food Development
TLA	Third Level Allowance
TLO	Third level Option
U.A.	Unemployment Assistance
U.B.	Unemployment Benefit
UK	United Kingdom
UK GOVT	United Kingdom Government
Undergrad	Undergraduate
US	Unemployability Supplement
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
VPT	Vocational Preparation & Training
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
WEC	World Economic Competitiveness
WG	Working Group
WIT	Waterford institute of Technology
WP	Widow's/Widower's Pension
WWW	World Wide Web

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Notes

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