



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta
National Economic & Social Council

Moving from Welfare to Work: Low Work Intensity Households and the Quality of Supportive Services

No.146 June 2018

National Economic and Social Council

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Abbreviations

ACS Affordable Childcare Scheme	FET Further Education and Training	PLC Post Leaving Certificate [course]
CE Community Employment	FIS Family Income Supplement (now Working Family Payment)	PPP Personal Progression Plan
CSO Central Statistics Office	GNP Gross National Product	QA Qualified Adult
CV Curriculum Vitae	HAP Housing Assistance Payment	QNHS Quarterly National Household Survey
CWO Community Welfare Officer	IT Information Technology	QQI Quality and Qualifications Ireland
CYPSC Children and Young People's Services Committee	JA Jobseeker's Allowance	RAS Rental Accommodation Scheme
DEASP Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection	JB Jobseeker's Benefit	SICAP Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
DES Department of Education and Skills	JI Jobs Initiative	SILC Survey of Income and Living Conditions
DSP Department of Social Protection	JST Jobseeker's Transition	VTOS Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
ECCE Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme	LCDC Local Community Development Committee	
ECDL European Computer Driving Licence	LES Local Employment Service	
ESRI Economic and Social Research Institute	LFS Labour Force Survey	
EU European Union	MABS Money Advice and Budgeting Service	
ETBs Education and Training Boards	NEETs Not in Employment, Education or Training [people]	

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In Ireland, the percentage of people living in households where no-one is working or where there is only marginal attachment to the labour force is higher than in most other European countries. These 'low work intensity' households experience much higher poverty rates and there is a long-lasting negative impact on the children growing up in these homes. There are also significant costs to the State from the income transfers necessary to support the households.

This report examines the experiences of low work intensity households and the services they interact with, through 92 interviews with households, service provider organisations, employers, senior officials in government departments and agencies, and national stakeholder organisations.

The research was carried out in a disadvantaged suburb in Dublin in 2016-2017. The area exhibits the characteristics of low work intensity households: higher levels of unemployment, lower education levels, higher rates of disability, households more likely to contain children and more likely to be headed by a lone parent, more likely to be in the manual social class, and more likely to be in rented social housing.

The study found that there is a diversity of low work intensity households: unemployed people, lone parents, people with an illness or disability and ethnic minorities. They avail of a range of income support payment schemes. Most had labour market experience and low levels of education but many also have ambition to improve their lives and the lives of their children. The main reasons why people were not working at the time of the interviews were because they lost their job due to the economic crash; they left work to care for children; they or a family member developed an illness or disability; or other reasons, including being a Traveller or African migrant who found it difficult to get work.

The research also found that the social welfare and employment support system, i.e. Intreo, the Local Employment Service and JobPath, is generally supportive, and more benign than in some other countries. However, there can be a lack of trust between service users and Intreo, and at times, people feel they have no choice in relation to the activation/training options offered. Some also felt there was not enough places on sought-after courses with good labour market potential. In addition, service users reported that it can be difficult to get information on the options open to them.

These findings suggest three overarching conclusions:

- First, there is a need to develop a stronger focus on the household, by continuing work to expand activation supports to adult dependents, people with a disability, and carers who wish to enter employment.
- Second, coordination needs to improve and this requires stronger links between the employment support services and employers, and between the wide range of services to support jobless households. Resources for co-ordination need to be provided; and
- Third, the intensity of support available to ensure effective outcomes should increase, particularly for those most distant from the labour market, such as lone parents, people with illness/disability; and those with literacy difficulties, poor English, no work experience or contacts, a history of addiction or time in prison.

The study's findings also provide more specific guidance on key issues arising from the research, which have implications for a range of government departments and agencies.

For employment support services it points to the need for:

- Tailored supports for those most distant from the labour market;
- Adequate time for case officers to engage with clients, and pairing of the most disadvantaged clients with the most experienced and qualified case officers; and
- Ensuring that those who have completed employment support schemes, such as CE, are linked effectively to employment; along with recognition that this also supports social inclusion and community services.

For particular services it points to the need for:

- More affordable childcare, particularly after-school care;
- More public housing, and additional affordable private sector housing;
- Greater promotion of the fact that those leaving welfare to take up employment can keep their medical card for three years;
- Considering the possibility that those with an on-going illness could retain their medical card for the duration of their illness; and
- Greater support for those on low incomes to enable access to transport and IT that facilitates moves into training and employment.

For further education and training it points to the need for:

- Financial support to cover the full costs of those in jobless households attending education and training, including childcare and transport;
- Improving career guidance provision and ensuring it is consistently available;
- Upskilling the low skilled in employment, making greater use of the National Training Fund and Skillsnet;
- Stronger links between training and the labour market, by linking training resources to skills needs, and involving employers more in curriculum development, work placement and recruitment;
- Reducing early school leaving further by providing more alternatives to school-based education;
- Supporting disadvantaged groups with higher education qualifications to access appropriate employment; and
- Further research on why people who undertake multiple training courses do not progress to employment.

For supports to help people move from welfare to work it points to the need for:

- Measures that provide more certainty for people with children, and/or in precarious employment, to reduce the risk of moving into paid work;
- Better tapering of payment withdrawals for people with children, to incentivise opportunities to take a job;
- More timely assessment and payment of income supports and secondary benefits; and
- Awarding the Working Family Payment automatically to eligible households moving from welfare to work.

In relation to employers it points to the need for:

- Employment support and training services that engage more comprehensively and consistently with employers;
- Employers to be encouraged to engage more with applicants with atypical CVs, e.g. through recognising the value of volunteering; and
- Actions to be continued that address negative issues arising from precarious working practices.

For institutions and service provision it points to the need for:

- Greater trust between service users and service providers to ensure effective engagement;
- Additional flexibility to allow local service delivery to be better tailored to meet people's needs;
- More funding to address the needs of disadvantaged groups;
- Poor neighbourhoods to have adequate resources to self-finance community services; and

Evaluation to continue to be built in to all programmes, and data to be collected that adequately captures service outcomes, including 'distance travelled', as well as acting on the evidence gathered from data and evaluations.

Chapter 1

Background

1.1 Introduction—Why Focus on Jobless Households?

This NESC report is concerned with understanding household joblessness and identifying ways in which the lives of people in such households can be improved. The information in the report is based on 92 qualitative interviews carried out with jobless households, service provider organisations, employers, senior officials in government departments and agencies, and national stakeholder organisations. The findings are outlined in more detail in a longer report available on NESC’s website, www.nesc.ie. This executive report summarises the findings, and the key issues and messages, arising from the research.

Household joblessness is comparatively high in Ireland.¹ Eurostat data show that, in 2016, in Ireland, 11.6 per cent of adults aged 18-59 lived in households where no-one was working. The EU27/28 average then was 10.1 per cent, with Ireland’s rate being seventh highest.^{2,3} Meanwhile, 13.4 per cent of 0-17 year-olds were living in households where no-one was working, the third highest rate in the EU.⁴ As a result, this issue has been a policy concern in Ireland for some time. The *Programme for a Partnership Government* (Government of Ireland, 2016) acknowledged the high rate of jobless households in Ireland and identified a range of actions to address the problem. These actions include a more integrated framework to promote social inclusion, supports for low-income families, and a dedicated *Pathways to Work for Jobless Households* (DEASP, 2017a) to support jobless households into employment. The Country-Specific Recommendations from the European Council on Ireland’s 2017 National Reform Programme also raised concerns about the low work intensity of many households in Ireland⁵ despite substantial falls in unemployment,

¹ There are two commonly used but different measures of household joblessness: one where no-one in the household is in employment (Labour Force Survey, LFS) and one which measures very low work intensity where the adults spent less than 20 per cent of their time over the last year in paid work (Survey of Income and Living Conditions, SILC). The CSO uses the first definition but this report will look at research using both measures, as similar issues often lead to absence of work and low work intensity.

² Based on the EU Labour Force Survey.

³ See <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do> Accessed on 20 March 2018.

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00181&plugin=1> Accessed on 20 March 2018.

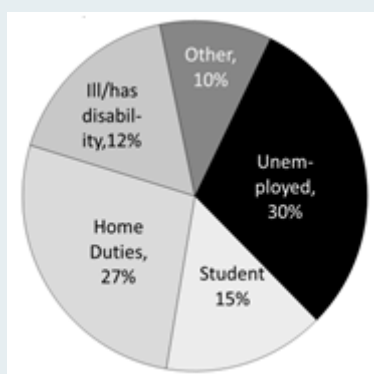
⁵ The EU poverty target includes jobless households as one of its three measures.

contending that barriers to inclusive growth still exist (European Commission, 2017). The European Council recommended that Ireland implement an integrated package of policies to address the needs of low work intensity households.

1.2 Understanding Household Joblessness

Household joblessness is distinct from unemployment, which is usually defined as referring to individuals who are not working but are actively seeking employment. An analysis by the ESRI, using SILC data from 2010,⁶ showed that in Ireland 30 per cent of adults (aged 18-59) in low work intensity households were unemployed, 27 per cent were on 'home duties', 15 per cent were students, 12 per cent had an illness or disability and 10 per cent had other reasons for being jobless (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Principal economic status of very low work intensity households in Ireland, 2010



Source: Watson *et al.*, 2013.

1.3 Characteristics of Jobless Households

A more recent ESRI study showed that 42 per cent of Irish jobless households comprise several adults and children, while 26 per cent are lone-parent households

⁶ SILC 2010 data is the most up-to-date data available at this level of analysis.

(Watson *et al.*, 2015).⁷ Some 21 per cent are households with several adults and no children, and 10 per cent comprise single-adult households.⁸ Persistent joblessness is more common for women, older adults, those with less education, adults with a disability and one-adult households. Those who live in low work intensity households are also more likely than others to have never worked or to be in the unskilled social class, to be renting their accommodation, to be single or parenting alone, and to either have a disability or to live with someone with a disability.

1.4 The Impact of Household Joblessness

A key consequence of living in a jobless household over a period of time is the risk of poverty. The at-risk-of-poverty rate in 2016 for those in households where no-one was working was 42 per cent, compared to 17 per cent for the population in general (CSO, 2017a). Levels of basic deprivation are also high in jobless households; 38 per cent of households where no-one was working experienced two or more types of enforced deprivation, in 2016, compared to 21 per cent on average (CSO, 2017a).

Household joblessness has a strong and lasting impact on the children living in such households. Poor children have lower returns on educational investments, and lower skills and productivity in the longer term. There is also the risk of the transmission of joblessness and poverty across generations. Research by the Combat Poverty Agency indicates that, where neither adult was in work, 80 per cent of children experienced recurrent or persistent low income (Nolan *et al.*, 2006). There is also a higher likelihood that they themselves will be unemployed, and place greater demands on public services such as health, welfare and social protection. At societal level, there is the risk, with loss of social cohesion, of anti-social behaviour and increased crime.

A third important issue arising from household joblessness is the long-term financial sustainability for the State of supporting such households through income transfers. In 2016 total social welfare expenditure was €19,867m, which was 29 per cent of gross current government expenditure, and equivalent to 9 per cent of GNP. Working-age income supports made up 20 per cent of this expenditure (DEASP, 2017b).

⁷ Based on the Quarterly National Household Survey, which uses the Labour Force Survey definition of joblessness.

⁸ These figures are based on an analysis by the ESRI examining how the profile of persons aged 0 to 59 in jobless households changed over the period from 2004 to 2014 by household type (Watson *et al.*, 2015: 17-18).

1.5 NESC Study on Jobless Households

To gain deeper understanding of the factors underlying household joblessness and low work intensity in Ireland, NESC decided to undertake a qualitative research study. The research aimed to understand the circumstances of, and decision-making in, low work intensity households; their interaction with front-line service providers; how service providers carry out their work and how national-level policy design and implementation operate, and the extent of integrated service provision.

The study was carried out in a disadvantaged suburb of Dublin. The area was chosen as it has a concentration of jobless households which contain children, and a range of public services and community interventions to tackle household joblessness and disadvantage. It also has employment opportunities available locally. The area is not named, to protect the confidentiality of those who were interviewed as part of the research. The findings and messages from the research, therefore, relate to urban disadvantage. It is acknowledged, however, that joblessness is also a concern in rural areas, which require regional specific strategies.

A socio-economic profile of the area showed that the population were more likely than the population of Dublin overall to have characteristics that are often found in jobless households. For example, in the study area, compared to Dublin overall:

- levels of unemployment were higher;
- education levels were lower;
- rates of disability were higher;
- households were proportionally more likely to contain children, and almost twice as likely to be headed by a lone parent;
- households were less likely to have a personal computer, Internet connection, or a car;
- more than half of households were in a manual social class; and
- most of the population lived in rented social housing.

In terms of ethnic background, the parts of the study area with a higher than average proportion of Black/Black Irish and Travellers among the population had much higher unemployment, while the parts with a higher than average proportion of White non-Irish had higher employment rates (in line with national figures).

The study area has a range of employment opportunities, concentrated in shopping centres, industrial estates and several public-sector organisations, including schools. Almost half of those at work in the wider neighbourhood around the study area are

employers, managers and professionals, but those living in the study area are more likely to be manual workers, and so are under-represented in the former positions.

1.6 The Study Approach and Methodology

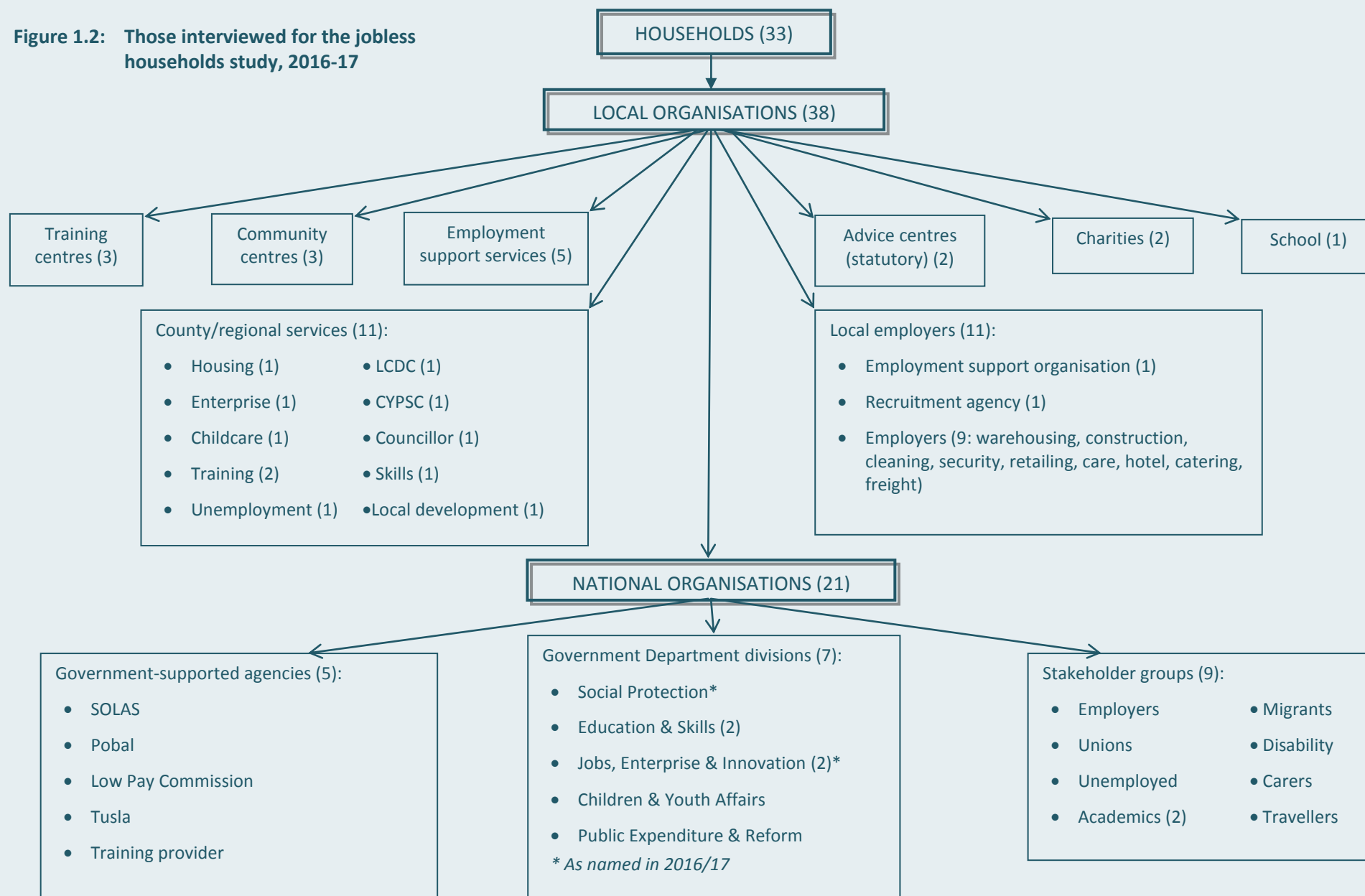
Semi-structured interviews were judged to be the most effective way to probe the reasons why households remain jobless. The experiences and views of four different groups were sought, to provide a 360-degree view of the issues underlying household joblessness, and the possible solutions to problems identified. These four groups were:

- local households;
- local service providers—both front-line workers and managers;
- local employers; and
- regional and national decision-makers, and national-level stakeholders.

Altogether, 92 interviews were carried out. In 2016, 33 low work intensity households were interviewed, followed by 16 local service provider organisations and 11 local employers. In 2017, 11 service managers at regional or county level were interviewed as well as 12 senior officials in government departments and agencies, and nine other national stakeholders. The number and type of organisations where individuals were interviewed are listed in Figure 1.2.

The household interviewees were identified through advertisements and contact with local organisations. Households sought were those where the adults were not working or working less than 10 hours a week (the 'low work intensity' definition of a jobless household). This was to increase the number of households who could potentially take part in the study, and to throw light on the experience and potential in these households for moving from joblessness into employment. The service providers were then chosen, based on the services which the households reported using. Issues discussed in these interviews included the household's experience of employment (if any) and unemployment, training and education, job search and activation, interaction between households and a range of services, and the household's future plans and expectations.

Figure 1.2: Those interviewed for the jobless households study, 2016-17



The employers interviewed were from a range of low-skilled sectors, as these were the sectors in which household interviewees had worked, or were seeking work. These sectors were retailing, catering, cleaning, hotels, home care, construction, security, warehousing and freight. The companies varied considerably in size, from a sole trader-run business to one with 15,000 employees. Some businesses were locally owned and operated, while others were branches of multinationals. A recruitment agency and an employer-representative group were also interviewed.

When all other interviews had been completed, a range of decision-makers at county/regional and national level were interviewed, to find out more about the policy decisions taken in relation to jobless households. Interviews were also held with stakeholder organisations working in the policy areas identified in the study. Interviewees from these two groups worked in the policy areas of activation, education and training, employment conditions and regulation, enterprise development, social inclusion, community development, housing, care, disability, and the position of migrants and Travellers.

As all interviews were confidential and anonymised, interviewees were given pseudonyms. The interviews were transcribed and the transcriptions were then analysed line by line. The findings are grouped under various themes, which are outlined in further detail throughout this report.

1.7 Welfare and Unemployment Policy and Practice

For many years the Irish Government had a ‘passive’ approach to supporting the unemployed, with little conditionality⁹ attached to receiving unemployment payments. As a result, it was possible to remain on unemployment benefits over an extended period of time. However, in 2011, with rising numbers unemployed, and the intervention of the ‘Troika’,¹⁰ a new ‘active’ approach to unemployment payments was adopted. Activation programmes are common in developed countries, and have evolved from their introduction in the 1990s to the present day. Some activation policies and programmes focus on education and training to improve the capabilities of participants in seeking work, while others emphasise early transitions into work, or a ‘work first’ approach. The choice of strategy reflects different understandings of the causes of worklessness. In most countries, activation models reflect a blend of both strategies (Lodemel & Moreira, 2014).

⁹ Conditionality links the right to welfare payments to expected behaviours from the welfare recipient. If the welfare recipient does not comply with the expected behaviours (e.g. take part in activation, continue to job-seek), their welfare payment may be cut.

¹⁰ The term Troika refers to the presence of the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund in Ireland between 2010 and 2013, as part of the financial rescue plan necessitated by the recession of 2008.

Ireland's activation approach is outlined in the Government's strategy document on this, *Pathways to Work*, introduced in 2012 and updated a number of times since.¹¹ This approach includes the establishment of Intreo, a one-stop-shop where those registered as unemployed can claim benefits and at the same time receive job-seeking support services. Greater conditionality was also introduced. Those in receipt of unemployment payments are now required to commit to engaging with Intreo's employment, advice and training referral services. If they fail to do so, it will lead to reduction or withdrawal of their Jobseeker's payment.¹² *Pathways to Work* also committed to contracting in a new job-seeking support service, JobPath, which has been in operation since 2015, and works with long-term unemployed individuals referred to it by Intreo. The Local Employment Service (LES), which has been in existence since the early 1990s, also provides job-seeking supports to those who are not employed.

1.8 Supports for those in Jobless Households

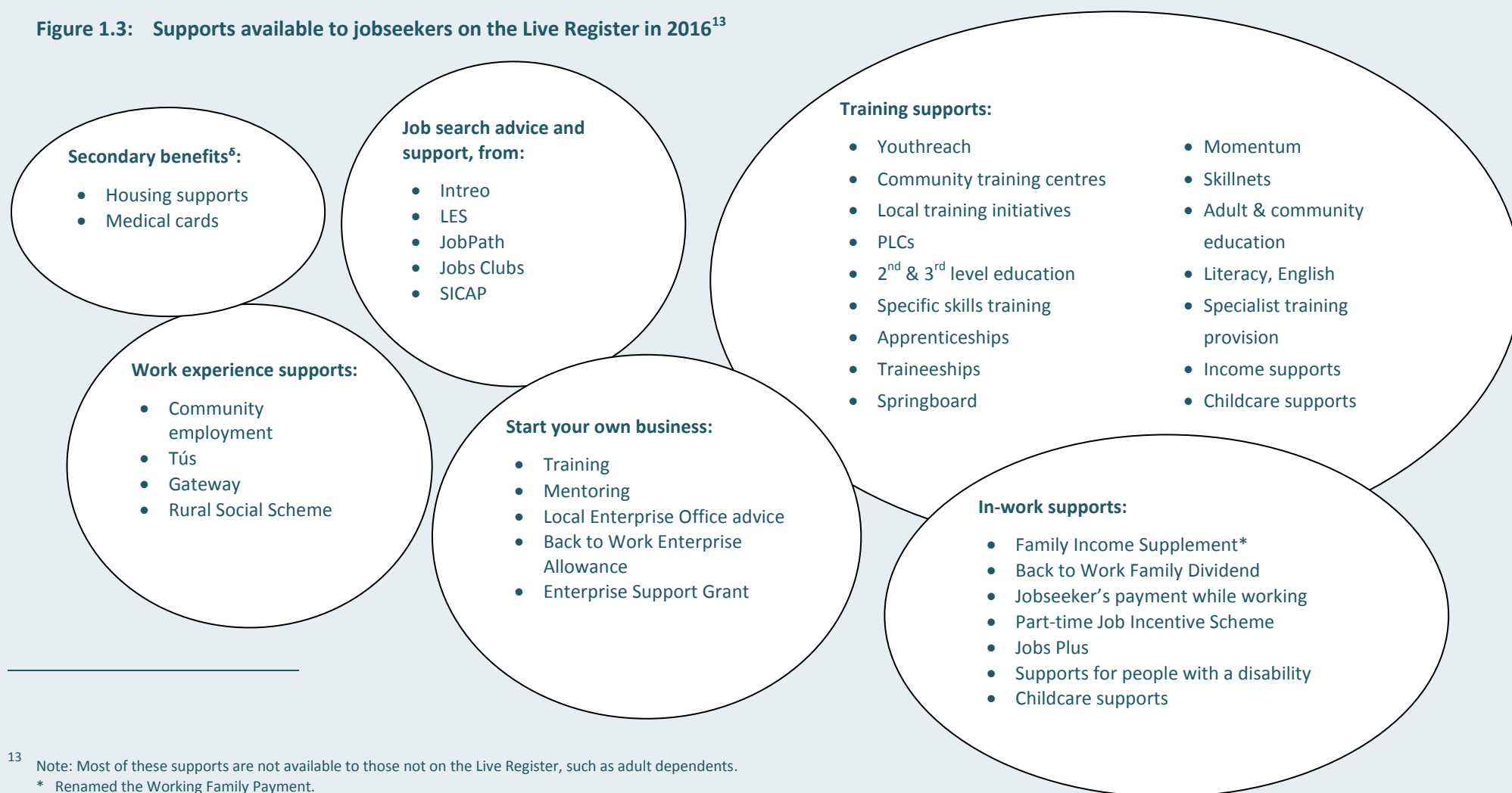
This section summarises briefly the supports available to those who were jobless in 2016, the year in which the households and local service providers were interviewed. A wide range of supports are available, from income supports administered by Intreo, to secondary benefits provided by a range of government departments, and job search, training and work experience support provided via the Intreo, LES and JobPath processes. There are also schemes to assist previously unemployed, or low-income employees, when in work. A summary of the services available to job-seekers to move into work is shown in Figure 1.3.

The numbers receiving the key income supports and secondary benefits, available to those in jobless households in 2016, are listed in Tables 1.1 to 1.4. In general, the income support payments go only to those who are not in employment, but some secondary benefits which are based on a means test (e.g. housing support and medical cards) may also be received by people in low-paid employment. Some training courses, e.g. apprenticeships and PLCs, are also available to those who are not jobseekers.

¹¹ *Pathways to Work 2012-2015* was followed up by *Pathways to Work 2013*, *Pathways to Work 2014-15*, and *Pathways to Work 2016-2020*. See <https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Pathways-to-Work-2016.aspx>, accessed 16 April 2018.

¹² See <https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Intreo---Frequently-Asked-Questions.aspx#q5>, question 11 (accessed 29 June 2017).

Figure 1.3: Supports available to jobseekers on the Live Register in 2016¹³



¹³ Note: Most of these supports are not available to those not on the Live Register, such as adult dependents.

* Renamed the Working Family Payment.

⁶ These secondary benefits are also available to those in employment, subject to a means test.

Table 1.1: Number of recipients and qualified adults* receiving an income support payment, 2016

Payment	Recipients	Qualified adults	All adults
Jobseeker payments:			
Jobseeker's Benefit	37,625	3,451	41,076
Jobseeker's Allowance ¹⁴	203,509	50,957	254,466
Jobseeker's Transition	14,751	n/a	14,751
Payments support caring:			
One-Parent Family Payment	40,317	n/a	40,317
Carer's Benefit	2,710	n/a	2,710
Carer's Allowance	70,457	n/a	70,457
Illness and disability payments:			
Disability Allowance	126,203	13,351	139,554
Partial Capacity Benefit	1,873	198	2,071
Incapacity Pension	55,532	7,040	62,572
Illness Benefit	54,492	8,137	62,629
Employment/work experience schemes:			
Community Employment	22,356	6,365	28,721
Tús	7,140	1,703	8,843
Other employment schemes	5,860	1,645	7,505
Self-employment income supports:			
Back to Work Enterprise Allowance	10,977	3,562	14,539
Short-Term Enterprise Allowance	390	unknown	390
Start Your Own Business Tax Relief ¹⁵	2,291	n/a	2,291
Income support for 2nd & 3rd level education:			
Back to Education Allowance	13,895	1,633	15,528

* Qualified adults are the adult dependents of those receiving an income support payment.

Source: Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services, 2016 (unless otherwise stated).

¹⁴ The Jobseeker's Allowance figures have had those on Jobseeker's Transition subtracted from them.

¹⁵ This figure applies to 2014. See <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2016-10-25a.398&s=%22start+your+own+business+relief%22#g399.g>, downloaded 24 August 2017.

Table 1.2: Number of households or individuals receiving a secondary benefit (to the nearest 500), 2016

Secondary benefits received by households		Secondary benefits received by individuals	
Local authority housing ¹⁶	141,000	Medical card ¹⁷	1,250,000
Rent supplement	45,000	Back to School Clothing & Footwear ¹⁸	283,000
Housing Assistance Payment	16,500	Community Childcare Scheme ¹⁹	25,000
Rental Accommodation Scheme	20,000	After School Childcare	500
Mortgage interest supplement	2,000	Community Employment Childcare	2,000
Fuel Allowance ²⁰	378,000		

Source: Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services, 2016; HSE, 2017, unless otherwise stated.

Table 1.3: Number of individuals registered in ETB training, 1 January 2016

Training for early school-leavers:		Training for those with a Leaving Cert:	
Youthreach	3,225	PLCs	30,501
Community Training Centres	1,540	Vocational training:	
Local Training Initiative	1,878	Specific Skills Training	3,420
Back to Education Initiative	33,675	Apprenticeships	10,316
VTOS	4,168	Traineeships	1,818
Part-time adult education:		Momentum	351
Literacy ²¹	8,986	Skillnets	5,915
English language	3,435		
Training for people with a disability:			
Specialist training	1,735		

Source: All figures on FET provision in this table are from the following publication, unless otherwise stated—<http://www.solas.ie/SolasPdfLibrary/FET%20Services%20Plan%202016.pdf>, downloaded 25 August 2017.

¹⁶ The figures on HAP, RAS and local authority housing were downloaded on 24 August 2017 from <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>

¹⁷ This figure refers to those aged under 65.

¹⁸ See <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-05-17a.369&s=%22back+to+school%22+footwear>, downloaded 24 August 2017.

¹⁹ For this and the other childcare figures cited in this table, see <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-01-31a.1951&s=%22community+childcare+subvention%22#g1953.r>, accessed 25 August 2017.

²⁰ See <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-03-28a.636>, downloaded 24 August 2017.

²¹ This includes both those enrolled in adult literacy groups and voluntary literacy tuition.

The numbers receiving the key supports available when moving from unemployment into work, or being in a low-paid job, are listed in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4: In-work supports for low-paid/recently unemployed, 2016

Family Income Supplement (now Working Family Payment) (number of households)	57,567
Back to Work Family Dividend (number of households) ²²	12,920
Part-time Job Incentive scheme	468
JobsPlus job creation incentive scheme ²³	4,323
Wage Subsidy Scheme ²⁴	2,200

Source: Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services, 2016 (unless otherwise stated).

A wide range of organisations deliver the supports available to those who are unemployed/in jobless households. These range from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, which provides the main income support payments and job-seeking advice, to local authorities providing housing support and small centres providing childcare places funded through, for example, the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE). The key state organisations funding or managing supports accessed by jobseekers are outlined in Figure 1.4.

²² See <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-01-24a.650&s=%22back+to+work+family+dividend%22+number#g651.g>, downloaded on 13 April 2018.

²³ See <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2016-11-24a.330&s=JobsPlus#g332.r>, downloaded on 26 April 2018.

²⁴ See <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2016-09-16a.2107&s=%22wage+subsidy+scheme%22+number#g2108.g>, downloaded on 13 April 2018.

Figure 1.4: Key state organisations funding or overseeing supports accessed by jobless households



Chapter 2

Description of the Household

Interviewees and their Circumstances

This chapter describes the household interviewees and outlines their circumstances, which are summarised in Figure 2.1.

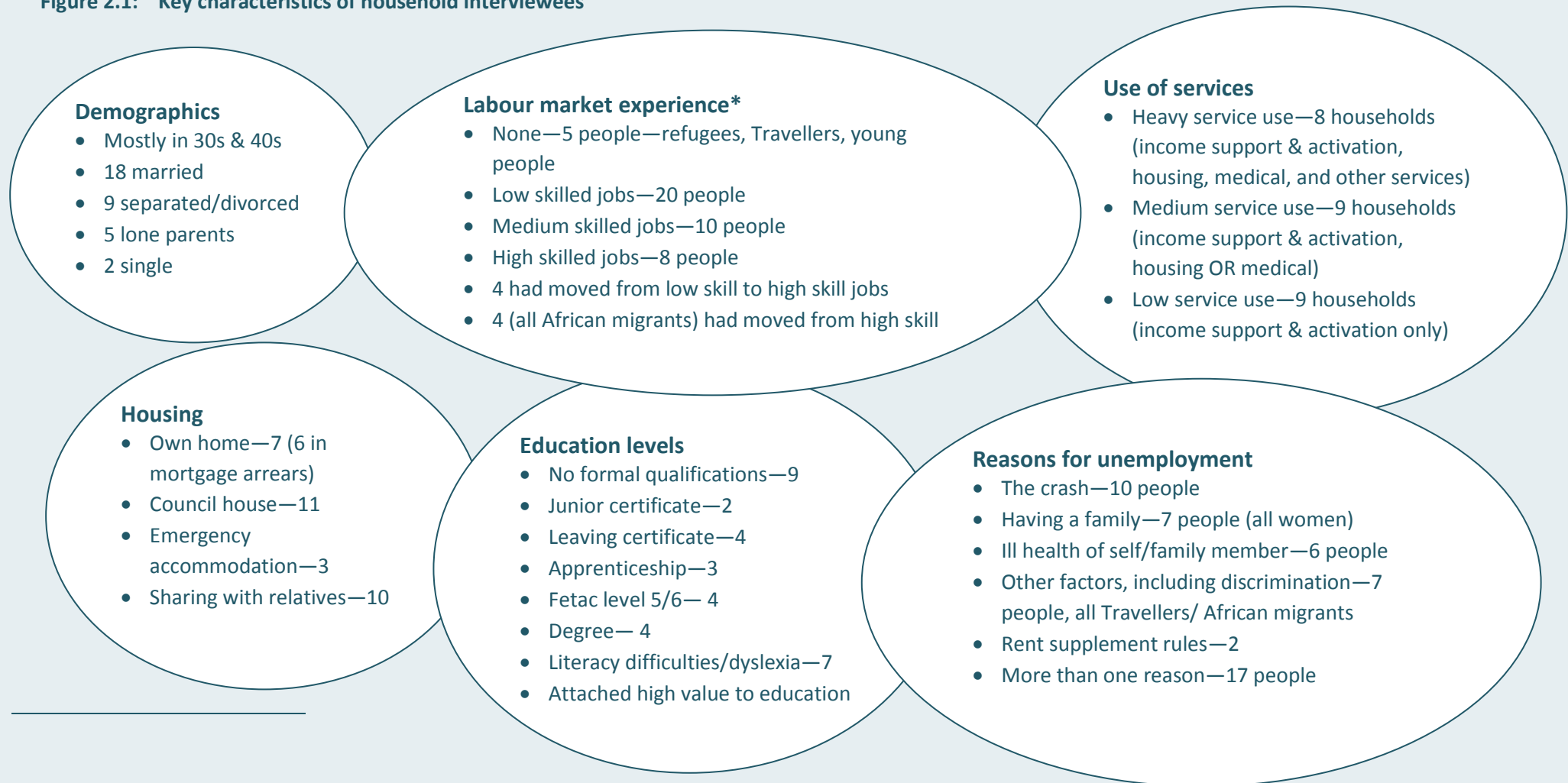
2.1 Demographics

Interviews were held with 34 individuals, from 33 jobless households. Fourteen interviewees were male and 20 female. They ranged in age from their early 20s to early 60s, with most interviewees in their 30s and 40s. Over half of the interviewees (18), were married or co-habiting. The next biggest category was people who were separated or divorced (9). Five other interviewees were parenting alone. In terms of household composition, just under half of the sample, 16 people, lived with their partner and children, and five lived with their children only. Intergenerational households were common; four interviewees lived with three generations of their family, and six others lived in a household made up of adult children and parents. One person lived with their partner only, and two people were single and lived alone.

2.2 Housing

Seven interviewees were living in their own home. Just one owned their home outright, and the other six were in mortgage arrears following loss of employment. A number of interviewees had previously lived in private rental accommodation, including three who were now in emergency homeless accommodation, but none reported that they were currently living in it. Eleven interviewees lived in a council house. A number had previously lived in the private rented sector and greatly prefer a council house, as the tenure is secure and the rent is pegged to their income which allows them to take up employment without losing their housing supports. Five interviewees wanted to live in a council house but were having difficulty accessing such accommodation due to the shortage of supply. Two of these five were separated men who felt that they would never get a council house as they were living alone and thus a low priority on a long housing list, as Will, a separated man living with his parents and brother, explained:

Ah jaysus, I'd say I'm probably about four hundred thousand ... on the list and I'm on it about six years ... I knew I'd never get a house, single fella you know. They don't have any single ... I'll be living with me ma for the rest of me life.

Figure 2.1: Key characteristics of household interviewees²⁵

²⁵ There were 34 interviewees. Information is not available on all characteristics for all interviewees.

* Several people had worked in more than one type of job.

2.3 Experience in the Labour Market

Altogether, only five interviewees of the 34 had no experience in the formal labour market. One was a school-leaver, one a refugee, and three were Travellers. Some of these five had worked on an employment scheme, but had not yet found employment in the wider labour market. The vast majority of the interviewees did, however, have labour market experience, often of many years. The jobs in which they worked were mainly low-skill ones, such as builder's labourer, security, shop work, bars, cleaning and factory work. It was difficult to earn a good income in such jobs, as Krystal, a lone parent with two children, outlined:

I have done cleaning, retail ... a few odd-jobs here and there ... but nothing kind of majorly concrete or anything that's kind of been substantial in terms of being able to bring in a decent income, and also be able to live comfortably.

Twenty interviewees had worked in such jobs. Ten had worked in medium-skill jobs, such as supervisors, dental nurses, and trades, and four had worked in high-skill jobs, as managers and accountants. Four people had been able to move from low-skill to higher-skilled jobs. Three were male, and young, and the fourth was an older woman. They were all Irish. Migrants tended to have the opposite experience; four African migrants had worked in a higher-skilled job in their country of origin, but were only able to find lower-skilled work in Ireland.

2.4 Reasons for Unemployment

There was a variety of reasons for the interviewees' unemployment, with the economic crash being a key one. Ten of the 34 had lost their jobs due to the crash; nearly all had been working in building at the time. A second common reason was having a family/childcare. Seven interviewees, all women, had left work for this reason. One lone mother had left her job as she found combining work, a long commute, and domestic life in poor accommodation too stressful. Six interviewees were unemployed due to the illness of themselves or another person. One interviewee had been addicted to drugs when younger, which had resulted in poor education qualifications and gaps in her CV, and this had a negative impact on her ability to gain employment now. Seven interviewees were African migrants or Travellers, and they felt that discrimination against them has a negative impact on their ability to gain employment, as described by Greta, a Traveller:

It is very, very hard for a Traveller to get a job. Once they know ... that you're a Traveller at all. ... [My eldest son] has put out loads of CVs but he didn't get a job, I think it's over being a Traveller ... he had an interview up there in [large retailer], and they didn't give it to him ...

the girl that was sitting beside him had the same experience, and she got it.

Among other reasons for being unemployed, some people had taken voluntary redundancy, and the contracts of others had come to an end; some had literacy difficulties, and some had no work experience. One person had left a job and another turned down a job offered, because rent supplement ceases to be paid once a person works over 30 hours per week, and they could not afford to cover rent and other living expenses on the minimum wage offered.

Having more than one reason for being unemployed was very common—this was the case for more than half of those interviewed. The people who are most likely to be facing multiple reasons for unemployment are African migrants and Travellers, who cited their ethnic minority status, literacy/English language proficiency issues, and lack of Irish work experience as barriers. With the addition of childcare responsibilities and sometimes family disability to these, Traveller women had the most barriers. For some people, the amount of time they were unemployed led to one issue compounding another (e.g. years in the asylum process, combined with no work experience and poor English, or parenthood leading to a long break from the labour market and no recent work experience). This shows the complexity of issues to be addressed in order to reduce joblessness.

2.5 Education

The interviewees had below average levels of completed education when compared to Dublin overall. In Dublin in 2016, the most common level of completed education was university, which applied to 40 per cent of the population. However, in the study area, the most common level of completed education was upper secondary (22 per cent), and only 18 per cent of the population had a university qualification. Of the 26 interviewees whose completed education level was known, nine had left school with no formal qualifications, at some stage before taking the Junior Certificate. Most of these were older or Travellers. Seven interviewees had literacy difficulties or dyslexia. Only four interviewees had degrees. Two of these were migrants who had completed their studies in their country of origin. They all felt that these degrees were not accepted in Ireland, as Tammy, an unemployed Nigerian woman with three children, said:

Even if you are a dentist, or ... teacher, or ... engineer, [you] still have to tear [up] [your] certificate when you come in here, and start again, 'cos there's no recognition of those certificates. Especially from the third-world countries. So that is one barrier for somebody that is well-to-do and is leaving and suddenly find himself, or herself, in Ireland. His certificate is tissue paper.

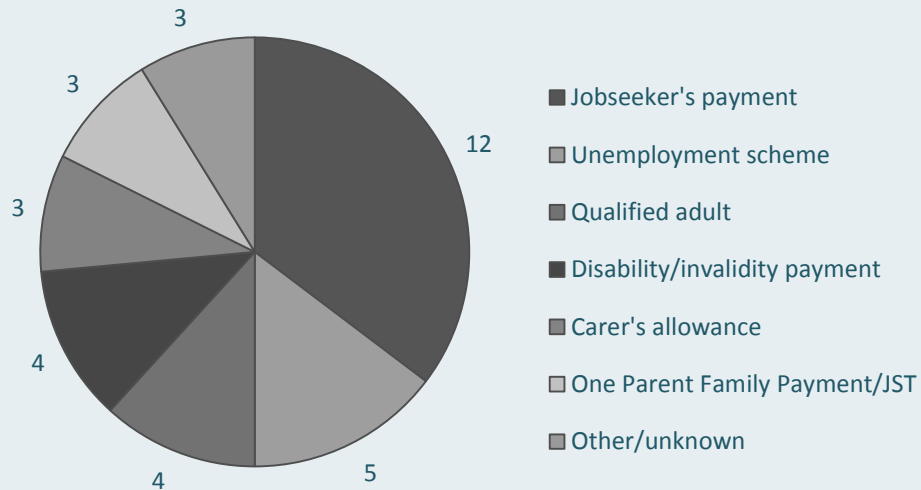
The interviewees were almost unanimous on the value of education, and nearly all very much wanted their children to get a good education. They wanted them to stay

in school as long as possible, and in many cases to go to college, so that they would have a good qualification that would help them get a job. Many felt that, without a good education, their children would not be able to compete for good jobs. However, although interviewees wanted their children to stay in school and finish the Leaving Certificate, a number noted that their children (usually boys) were more attracted by working and having a wage than staying in school—similar to some of the interviewees themselves when they were younger.

2.6 Income Support Payments

Interviewees were on a variety of social welfare payments (Figure 2.2). The variety of payments they were on is consistent with the patterns identified in jobless households by the ESRI (Watson *et al.*, 2013), which showed that these households comprise not only the unemployed, but also lone parents, carers and people with a disability.

Figure 2.2: Social welfare payments of interviewees



2.7 Courses

Intreo seems in almost all cases to have offered courses to interviewees on Jobseeker's Allowance. The courses undertaken, typically short, usually provide entry-level qualifications; for example, ECDL certification, Safe Pass, literacy training. While these are low levels of qualification, they are useful for the type of jobs which the interviewees had done or wished to do.

Some people had done many courses, while a few had done one or none. The number of courses an interviewee had done seemed to be related to their time on a welfare payment; those more likely not to have been employed for a long period (lone parents, those on disability, African migrants) often do many courses, as illustrated by Casper, a refugee:

The way I start ... introduction to electronics, second was delivery driver ... and first aid ... [and] security.

Some interviewees find the courses too basic, others find them too complex. From our small sample, it seemed that younger, more educated interviewees were more likely to find the courses too basic, while older interviewees and Travellers were more likely to find them too complex.

2.8 Employment Schemes

Five interviewees are currently on an employment scheme, but altogether almost half of the interviewees reported someone in their household being on one of these schemes at some stage, mainly Tús and CE (Community Employment), with one on Jobs Initiative (JI) and one interviewee's husband on JobBridge.

A number of scheme benefits were cited. As well as providing work experience, they pay an extra amount per week on top of the Jobseeker's payment, and participants generally feel that their work contributes to society. They get paid directly into their bank account rather than having to go to the post office to collect their 'dole'. Also, a number of participants reported not getting 'hassle' from Intreo when they are on an employment scheme.

However, others felt that CE does not lead anywhere, but is just a 'conveyor belt' of people going on and off the scheme, where in some cases the interviewee had to train in their replacement. There were similar views on JobBridge, with one interviewee finding it disillusioning and exploitative when people are taken on by organisations with little or no intention of giving them a job at the end of the scheme.

2.9 Intensity of Service Use

There were variations in the intensity of services used by the households. Eight families were 'heavy' users of services. These are defined as families availing of both housing and medical services, and sometimes special education services. Often there is a person with a disability or chronic illness in the household, and typically the household has other vulnerabilities. Traveller families and lone parents figure among the intensive service-user families. Nine families were 'medium' users of services—tending to avail of either housing or medical services. Finally, nine other interviewees were 'light' service users, typically only availing of training and Intreo services. Many of these light service users were single or separated males living with other family members. Intensity of service use seems to depend on the stage in the life cycle, family size, health and 'assets' in the widest sense (e.g. home ownership, higher levels of education, longer history of employment). Those with children, poor health in the family, and few 'assets' use most services. Single and separated men use (or get) least.

Views of services were mixed. Some interviewees were very happy with the services they received, others were not happy at all, and some commented on how they had improved over time. A number of people reported long waiting times.

Some interviewees provide services themselves. Five are on an employment programme in a community centre or organisation; others reported that they or a family member had previously been on such a programme. Twelve interviewees were currently volunteering, two more planning volunteer work, and four had volunteered in the past.

2.10 Informal Support Networks

Kinship networks were an important element in the interviewees' lives. Many of the low work intensity households had family members living outside the household who were working, and these were important networks on which the families relied. Only four respondents did not mention kinship networks, and, as might be expected, this was especially evident for migrant families. A number of interviewees also received support from friends, such as telling them about potential jobs and courses, helping them to look after children, or in some cases providing finance. For example, lone parents often relied on family support to help with their children, as stated by Irene, previously a lone parent:

Me ma was very good, like she'd take [my son] on weekends and all for me.

On the other side of the coin, many of the respondents provided support for other family members and friends, particularly through providing care, e.g. to elderly grandparents, parents, disabled siblings and grandchildren.

2.11 Resilience and Ambitions

A number of respondents displayed remarkable resilience in difficult circumstances. As well as being unemployed, several respondents and their families had experienced some of the following difficulties in their lives: poor education, illiteracy, illness, disability, war, death, demanding caring responsibilities, financial problems and overwhelming bureaucracy. Yet many had gone back to education, were retraining and/or were remaining positive and engaged with services.

Interviewees' desire to work was evident when asked where they would like to be in five years' time. Nearly all wanted to be working in five years' time; nine wanted to be in 'a job', while 10 others wanted to be in a specific job. There were a range of other ambitions: five wanted to see themselves more educated in five years' time, four to be financially secure, and three to own their own home. Four people (nearly all of whom were older, or had ill health) wanted to still be active in five years' time. Only four people had no particular ambitions. Some had been through traumatic experiences, and one suffered from depression.

Chapter 3

Key Themes

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the key themes identified from the experiences of the four groups of interviewees are outlined: engagement with employer support services; employment opportunities; moving from welfare to work, education and training, and the role of institutions in service provision. As is the case with all qualitative research, this research does not aim to be fully representative, but serves to illuminate the reasons why particular patterns are evident in larger-scale quantitative surveys, and to document the experience of the interviewees.

3.2 Engagement with Employment Support Services

The three main employment support services are Intreo, the LES, and JobPath. All households engage with Intreo in relation to their income support payment, but the extent of interaction depends on a person's welfare payment status. If they are unemployed and jobseeking, there is regular interaction with at least one of the three services. However, lone parents, those with a disability or a caring responsibility, or on an employment scheme, have little interaction with Intreo. Qualified adults do not engage directly with Intreo at all, as the direct interaction is through the main claimant, their unemployed partner. Some qualified adults felt degraded by not being treated as someone in their own right. Many who had been holding down full-time jobs, with their own bank accounts, etc, were shocked when they lost their job and went to Intreo and were treated as a 'dependent' of their husband/partner. Hannah spoke of this experience when she and her husband became unemployed:

You kind of get that feeling as well when you do go to like you know the Labour like ... the wife doesn't exist ... he gets paid for you ... there are times when I felt like a second-class citizen ... it's like you're a spouse, that's all you are. ... I went down [to the CWO] for beds, the girls needed new beds, we'd no money ... and he said to me 'it's not your claim, it's your husband's' ... I really felt like ... oh, my god, like how can you, how can you treat people like that because you're a spouse, you're a wife? ... It was a shock to me because I went from like

earning, with my own money, my name, my cheque, my payslip to you know, ... the thing that really affected me was depending on him always.

Qualified adults are not eligible for Intreo or JobPath services, although they can sometimes avail of LES services. Eligible lone parents are now able to avail of Intreo activation services once their youngest child reaches the age of seven, but a number of interviewees noted how difficult it can be to avail of this without support for childcare. For some lone parents, these changes are an opportunity, while for those further from the labour market it can be a challenge.

A range of experiences with Intreo were reported. Some interviewees seemed to have case officers and others not. No-one said they had a personal progression plan (PPP), even though the PPP is the key instrument for how a person is referred to services and for their progression towards paid employment. Some respondents felt that the services were good and that jobseekers needed to build on them by using their own initiative. Others suggested that Intreo case officers were going through the motions, ticking boxes to say they had dealt with a client, sending them on inappropriate courses or seeking unsuitable jobs, rather than trying to genuinely help people to find suitable work. Some service providers thought that, due to their high caseload, Intreo case workers were able to spend only a short amount of time with claimants, and so were providing referrals rather than long-term trajectories for career development, as Bertie, manager of a training centre, explained:

It is speed dating you know. You go in [to Intreo] for fifteen minutes ... I think it's got more to do with referrals than a placement process.

Interviewees reported numerous rules around eligibility for income and employment supports, depending on individual and household circumstances. The rules have been put in place to deal with various contingencies, but a lack of flexibility in their application has led to individuals 'falling through the cracks'. The rules can also be bewildering for those trying to transition to employment, and in some cases for staff in employment support and other services. Community centre staff and the Citizens Information Centres play an important role in providing people with information, and are trusted.²⁶ A number of interviewees noted that people fear engaging with Intreo in case their payment is endangered, and this leads to a lack of trust. Although Intreo services are seen to have improved, they still face the challenge of re-engaging those who do not have much faith in them. The complexity of the system, which makes it hard to understand and engage with, is also likely to lead to disengagement and lack of trust. This is problematic for the goal of engaging and supporting people towards employment.

All categories of interviewees reported the existence of sanctions for non-engagement with activation processes. In the Intreo office in the study area,

²⁶ For further information see <http://www.welfare.ie> or http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social_welfare/ or <https://www.inou.ie/workingforwork21/>.

Intreo's initial approach is not to apply sanctions, but instead to change the post office to which a person's social welfare payment is paid, as this means a person goes into the social welfare office to find out where their payment is. Only when a person does not attend activation appointments after having their payment made to a different post office are sanctions applied. The approach to sanctions was described by Jason, a senior official in a government department:

And why were [sanctions] introduced? [They're] introduced to get people to engage. Ok, that's the whole purpose ... you intend to encourage people.

In 2016, approximately 5 per cent of all those on a Jobseeker's payment were sanctioned, higher than in previous years, but a relatively low proportion.²⁷ The overall view was that, while sanctions are pressurising for claimants, they can be effective in getting people to attend activation events, and actively jobseek. However, the threat of sanctions can risk complete disengagement from the activation process. Wider questions arise as to whether claimants are in a position to compete for the jobs available, and the suitability and appropriateness of these jobs. Figure 3.1 summarises these issues.

Figure 3.1: Key Findings in relation to Employment Support & Training Services



²⁷ Calculated by comparing the figure on sanctions here <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-05-23a.729&s=sanctions+jobseekers#g731.r> (downloaded 26 April 2018), to the number on jobseeker's allowance, as in DEASP, 2017b.

Both Intreo and others see the LES as the appropriate service for more vulnerable jobseekers, but some wonder how effective the LES is at progressing these jobseekers, and report inadequate hard data on their outcomes, which seem to be mixed. Some argued that the changes made to the LES during the recession have diluted its core work. It is, however, trusted by its local community.

Two of the household respondents had experience of JobPath, neither of which was very positive. They felt threatened, fearing that their benefit would be cut if they did not attend activation meetings there. One interviewee felt that she was expected to take any job, anywhere, regardless of her particular circumstances. Initial data on JobPath shows that more of its clients are in employment after a year than their counterparts in Intreo (DEASP, 2017c). However, there were concerns that JobPath could be a 'conveyor belt to poorly paid jobs'. One JobPath provider interviewee also felt that its services may not be the best for everyone who is referred to it, as some would benefit from, for example, a CE placement, or supports for extreme disadvantage, such as literacy difficulties.

Four of the employers interviewed have had contact with Intreo, reporting a mainly negative experience, as outlined in figure 3.2. They felt Intreo was too slow to respond to queries, asked for too much paperwork and did not identify what they felt were suitable potential employees for them. Four were aware of JobPath, and one was 'trailing' with a JobPath provider, but at the time of interview they had not been able to fill any positions. Only one employer had heard of the LES, and lauded the role of the local partnerships in the 1990s as they connected with employers, but he felt this was no longer the case.

Figure 3.2: Key Findings in relation to Engagement with Employers

- Strongest by JobPath, weakest by Intreo
- Issues around data that can be shared with employers, and speed of responsiveness
- Not all training providers engaged comprehensively with employers

A number of interviewees noted the extent of change which had taken place since Intreo was established, with an overall view that the service had been improved and was generally working well. Household interviewees felt that both Intreo and the LES were now stricter about activation and job search than they had been previously. There were, however, some concerns about whether Intreo's culture

had changed from one of control to one of enabling, although it was argued that there was now a ‘presumption of honesty’ vis-à-vis claimants, as Daithi, manager in an income and employment support service, explained:

[There has been a] change in ethos really ... a presumption of honesty, ... a focus towards, you know, expediting the application to get a payment.

The Intreo service is considered by some to still be patriarchal in nature, as it does not engage directly with qualified adults. There were suggestions on how to improve these services. Several thought that greater tailoring and flexibility within the service was needed to meet the range of service users’ needs, although putting this into practise could be complex. Some thought more attention needed to be paid to caring commitments, such as allowing people being activated to take up part-time rather than full-time work.

3.3 Employment Opportunities

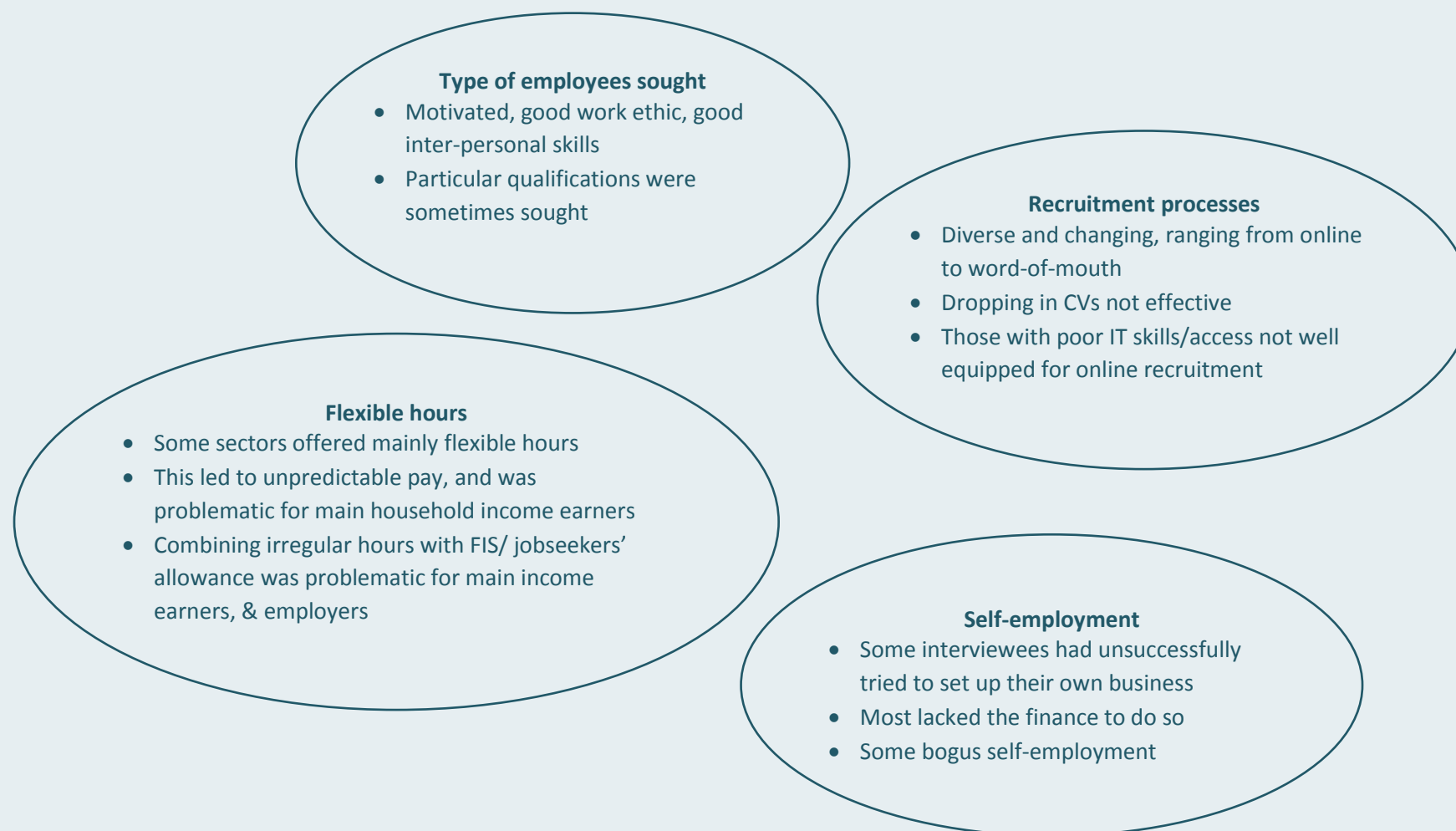
The study found that local employers tended to advertise job vacancies online, or to seek employees by word of mouth, especially through existing employees, with some advertising in the press and local venues. The way employers recruit staff has changed, as described by Adam, regional manager of a job-seeking support service:

How the labour market operates has changed, you know. Even the quality of basic job search skills, CV, ability to engage with IT, the ability to do an online application.

Digital and word-of-mouth approaches can put some long-term unemployed people at a disadvantage as they lack contacts with the labour market and may not always have the wherewithal to make online applications. Few employers were found to respond well to speculative CVs, as articulated by Denise, HR manager in a hotel:

We do have people that come in and just randomly hand in their CVs [at] the front desk ... but then you don’t know what role they’re interested in. [They] are better off when they apply ... specifically for a role.

In general, employers look for people who are well motivated and willing to be trained. They seek a good ‘attitude’ or ‘work ethic’ in potential employees, i.e. attendance, punctuality, good presentation and politeness. Depending on the nature of the job, some employers require various qualifications and certificates to demonstrate competence in certain areas. See Figure 3.3 for a summary of the issues which arose in relation to employment opportunities.

Figure 3.3: Key findings in relation to employment opportunities

The number of hours offered tended to be a bigger issue for potential employees than pay rates. The employers interviewed offered at least the minimum wage and often more, but many people struggled with low or variable hours, meaning that it was often difficult for a household's primary income earner to take jobs of a precarious nature. Many employers wanted a certain level of flexibility, although it depended on the nature of the business, with some employers offering very regular hours of work. Wesley, a national stakeholder, was of the view that new work patterns are here to stay:

Flexible working is here to stay and, you know, that's as much driven by consumer demand, technology, globalisation, all these other factors. Now you've got to ... kind of address it.

Family Income Supplement (now Working Family Payment), or Jobseeker's Allowance while working low hours, provided an extra income boost for many low-paid employees, but employers felt that it limited people's ability to work additional hours or take promotion. On the other hand, some interviewees wondered if, with these payments, the State was simply subsidising poor work practices.

A number of the household interviewees had tried or were interested in self-employment, and had availed of the range of supports available. However, many lacked the wherewithal to pursue this option, mainly because of a lack of finance, as stated by Casper, a refugee:

Yeah, I thought about that [setting up my own business], but unless you have money you can't start any business, you know. I would do my own business because my father used to do [that] as well, I remember some of that.

Service providers highlighted the supports available, including access to loans, but both they and some policymakers interviewed highlighted the risks involved in self-employment. Attention was also drawn to the increasing incidence of 'bogus self-employment',²⁸ particularly in the construction sector.

Social clauses and corporate social responsibility have some potential in encouraging employers to engage with people who are unemployed or at risk of becoming long-term unemployed. Some employers saw experience volunteering as a sign of commitment and ability to engage well with others, although there could be issues for those volunteering that prevented their progression to paid employment, such as a lack of childcare, or a history of addiction.

²⁸ Bogus self-employment relates to circumstances where a worker is classified as self-employed but their terms of work and working conditions are such that s/he should more appropriately be classified as an employee. From an employer's perspective, such arrangements may minimise obligations and costs arising from employment law and social insurance. From the worker's perspective, these types of arrangements can have a negative impact on employment rights and access to social insurance benefits, but these negatives might, in some cases, be compensated for by reduced tax and social insurance charges.

3.4 Moving from Welfare to Work

The research identified a number of challenges for household interviewees trying to move from welfare to work. Some of the interviewees are very far from the labour market, and contend with problems that are difficult to address, such as serious literacy difficulties, trauma, discrimination, a history of addiction or a criminal record. While some services address these issues, they are not available in all areas, and sometimes the service provision is not intensive enough to adequately address the problem. For example, most literacy support is still provided for only two hours a week.

Other household interviewees are closer to the labour market and contend with different problems. One issue is the confidence and motivation needed to seek a job, which often becomes diminished over a long period of confidence-sapping unemployment. Relationship break-up and addiction also negatively affected people's mental health, and a number of service providers and employers spoke about mental health difficulties and how they affected people's ability to look for jobs.

For some people, the rules of their payment could hamper take-up of employment. For example, some interviewees were in receipt of a carer's allowance, which allows them to be in employment or to take part in training of up to 15 hours per week. However, interviewees had not been able to find employment of 15 hours that they could combine with their care requirements.

Another key issue is the extent to which income from employment replaces income from social welfare and secondary benefits. Hannah found that income from employment was less than the income received from social welfare when her unemployed husband got a temporary job:

He took a job [as] Christmas work ... which was €400 a week ... we were getting €420 on the labour because we were getting fuel allowance ... [So] we actually lost, we lost out on €60 because of the €20, three weeks [of] €20. I think it was €30 petrol every week [as well, so] just taking a job for three weeks set us completely back.

For a number of those with children, employment on minimum wage rates does not replace the income and secondary benefits received while on welfare. Particular issues arise with the costs of housing, particularly paying private rents. Long-term rent supplement is being replaced by Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), which is tailored to people's means, but this payment is still being rolled out. In addition, it was reported that not all landlords want to take tenants in receipt of HAP, with demand greater than supply, as elucidated by Daithi, a local service provider manager:

It's not every landlord is going to sign up to HAP ... it's not a perfect solution is what I'm hearing.

The cost of medical treatment when taking up employment is a factor for some households. Those who were healthy or those who felt that their net income would be such that they would still be entitled to a medical card did not have concerns about losing it if they took up a job. However, a number of the interviewees who were actively seeking work and who had an illness, or an illness in the family, were concerned that they could lose the medical card if they took up paid employment, as Barbara, an unemployed household interviewee, outlined:

See this [the medical card] is what I have to watch. 'Cos I'm on medication and I'll be on it for the rest of me life ... the tablets alone are nearly seventy euro ... every month ... I can't afford then to lose the medical card ... yea, this is what you come up ... against.

Transport and IT can also be difficult to access while on a low income. Some interviewees had cars from when they were previously employed, but found them expensive to run. Many relied on public transport. Although there was a good public transport service to the city centre, many found transport expensive when they were on a social welfare payment, and some gave the expense of having to get a number of buses to low-paid jobs in a different suburb of the city as a reason for leaving a previous job. In relation to IT, 20 of the household interviewees mentioned a computer, with eight owning one, eight having access to one, and four not owning one. Lack of access to IT has implications for people's ability to apply for jobs online, to do on-line training courses and to connect to other services which are accessed on-line.

Affordable, accessible childcare is also essential for parents, particularly lone parents, to support them moving into employment and training. Care is needed not just for infants, but also before and after school and during school holidays. However, after-school care provision is inadequate, as Bradley, a senior official in a state agency, said:

After-school provision is completely inadequate in Ireland. There's no other way to call it ... I'd say a handful of schools maybe in the country are providing that kind of care. ... For people on low income or with very little money this is a real challenge.

Many parents sought part-time employment or flexible working arrangements to deal with childcare. Some employers were aware of childcare requirements and tried to accommodate them, while others were not in a position to do so or did not want to do so.

However, there are quite a number of long-term, and also relatively new, schemes which aim to address the loss of secondary benefits, and the costs of raising a family on a low income, when moving into work. These include Family Income Supplement (now the Working Family Payment), the Back to Work Family Dividend, Housing Assistance Payment, the retention of the medical card for three years, and the new Affordable Childcare Scheme. But awareness of these supports is low among many groups, and there seems to be a reluctance to seek information from Intreo on what supports might be available, as some people are fearful of making enquiries to

Intreo in case it affects their payment. In addition, some of the schemes to support people into work are relatively new and so they are not so widely known, nor are their likely impacts clear. Some, such as HAP, face supply challenges.

Another issue which arises is the importance of certainty. Those moving from welfare to work seek definite income; and precarious jobs, or supports which may or may not be awarded to them, are very off-putting, particularly if they have dependent children, as Tammy, a household interviewee, described:

People on benefit, and when they get a job, even before they get their first payment their benefit will be withdrawn from them. It's a frightening thing because when you're on benefit, you are in debt ... you're living from hand to mouth. ... You have no support and you haven't even got your first payment. So that system is not encouraging anybody to step out there and go for a job.

Those on carer's and disability payments were reluctant to come off their payment in case they could not access it again if they, or the person they were caring for, had a relapse or deteriorated. A number of groups also cite delays in accessing supports, such as FIS, which aim to ease the transition from welfare to work. Delays of even a few weeks are very problematic for long-term unemployed people, who have no financial cushion to fall back on.

A number of people had experience of employment support programmes. Views on the role of these programmes in helping people move back to work were mixed. Some, such as JobBridge, were reasonably successful in helping people to move from welfare to work, but faced criticism around pay levels and the financial costs of participating (Indecon, 2013). Community Employment (CE) and Tús are less successful in helping people move from welfare to work,²⁹ but can provide work experience for groups far from the labour market, as well as delivering important social outcomes. A number of interviewees felt that follow-up with participants on these two schemes to ensure they entered the labour force was poor, as noted by Damian, the manager of a community centre:

The Community Employment or Tús workers—they spend a year here, and they walk back out the door at the end of the year and there is no follow-up ... it just dies the minute they walk out that door.

²⁹ See, for example, DSP, 2015.

3.5 Education and Training

The relatively low education levels of the household interviewees, and literacy difficulties in some cases, puts them and their peers at a disadvantage in competing for jobs.

Early school leaving, while generally low, is higher than average in disadvantaged areas such as the study area, and among Travellers. Interviewees reported that issues which lead to early school leaving include lack of parental engagement and capacity, overly strict school disciplinary policies, a lack of teachers who are role models for disadvantaged groups, lack of supports for mental health difficulties, a school curriculum which does not engage all students well, and the ability to access employment, even if it is low-paid.

In terms of training for the unemployed, Intreo seems in almost all cases to have offered courses to jobseekers. Household interviewees reported both asking Intreo to refer them on to particular courses, and also being 'sent' on courses in which they had no interest. They felt that they had little choice about going on such courses, due to the threat of sanctions to their welfare payment where they did not engage with Intreo-directed training. Anita, the manager of a community centre, said she knew of people who had this experience:

You feel completely powerless, and the person behind the desk that you are talking to has the right to say 'yes' or 'no' to you, and has the right to impact financially on your life and on your family life, and has the right to say whether you can feed or not feed your children this week.

Trainers reported difficulties engaging people who did not want to be on a course.

There were also reports of complex eligibility criteria to access courses. Some people were not able to access courses they wished to do, while others were sent on many courses without progressing much, a situation described as 'the course carousel' by Bertie, manager of a training centre:

People just get onto the carousel of courses and just switch subject ... and follow it around. That's really difficult [and] when we talk about subjects that would lead to employment ... it's the real weak spot.

Interviewees also cited difficulties accessing childcare for training, and transport allowances which fell far below the costs of travel to the training centres, meaning that some trainees taking public transport to a course are at a financial loss. Figure 3.4 outlines some of the key issues arising in relation to training.

Figure 3.4: Key Findings in relation to Training

- Training offered to nearly all jobseekers via Intreo
- Complex eligibility criteria
- Choice—some interviewees went on courses they expressed an interest in; others felt ‘sent’ on courses
- Not enough places on some sought after courses
- Patchy career guidance availability
- Rates of lifelong learning are low, particularly for low skilled

Discussion of the availability of places on courses which had strong links to the labour force showed varying opinions, with training providers sure that there were adequate places on these, while other interviewees felt there were not. Some particular issues arose in relation to English language courses, as Bertie explained:

The English language provision, for instance, we don’t have a budget for to provide English language ... You must have heard this one that, you know, government don’t provide a specific budget strand to provide English language for migrants.³⁰

Career guidance was another concern. While there are qualified career guidance staff in the public employment and training services, its availability is patchy. The time which Intreo staff have to dedicate to this is also seen as too limited. Interviewees also confirmed that those most in need of career guidance (e.g. having a low PEX³¹ score) were not currently matched with the most experienced and qualified career guidance staff. Lack of career guidance can also lead to jobseekers doing courses which are not relevant to areas in which they subsequently seek employment, as highlighted by Gillian, case officer in a jobseeking support service:

³⁰ The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration notes: ‘The Department of Education and Skills provide annual funding to Education and Training Boards (ETBs) from which English Language tuition *may* be provided to adult migrants’ (author emphasis). See <http://www.integration.ie/website/omi/omiwebv6.nsf/page/infoformigrants-learningenglish-en>, accessed 5 December 2017.

³¹ PEX is the ‘probability of exiting unemployment’. Each recipient of a Jobseeker’s payment is profiled and given a PEX score.

We have to make sure that our clients are choosing the correct path ... because ... with a career path plan, ultimately they will move in to something that will be sustainable long term. Whereas if an individual is coming in and they're just being put on a course just to keep them busy or motivate them into doing something on a daily basis, it doesn't necessarily get the results that we need here.

The importance of links between training strategy and the labour market was stressed. It seems that improved links are being put in place, with the establishment of the Regional Skills Fora, and greater monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes from ETB courses. There were reports, however, of poor links between some training bodies and employers. Only one training organisation interviewed had a job placement service. It combined this with intensive engagement with employers on skills needs, and the ability to choose motivated trainees and provide them with a high level of training. It had a high job placement rate, of 74 per cent. Some interviewees who had done courses in organisations without such strong employer links felt that the courses 'led nowhere'.

Interviewees noted that the further education and training sector has often been the poor relative of higher education, but can play an important role in equipping many, including the more disadvantaged, for the labour market.³² A range of new apprenticeships have been introduced since 2014, and this new model is positive, opening up different sectors to this type of training, and offering advantages to both employers and those taking up apprenticeship places. However, some interviewees reported that disadvantaged young people lacked the qualifications and contacts to access these opportunities, such as the example given by Damian, manager of a community centre:

I met one young man and ... his only desire was to be a mechanic ... he was probably going to be the best mechanic you have ever met because he was taking his father's car apart every second day. [But] he couldn't make that breakthrough, because everywhere he walked into with his Applied Leaving Certificate ... no one would entertain him, no one would let him look inside the door ... he can't even get to that stage where you get your apprenticeship.

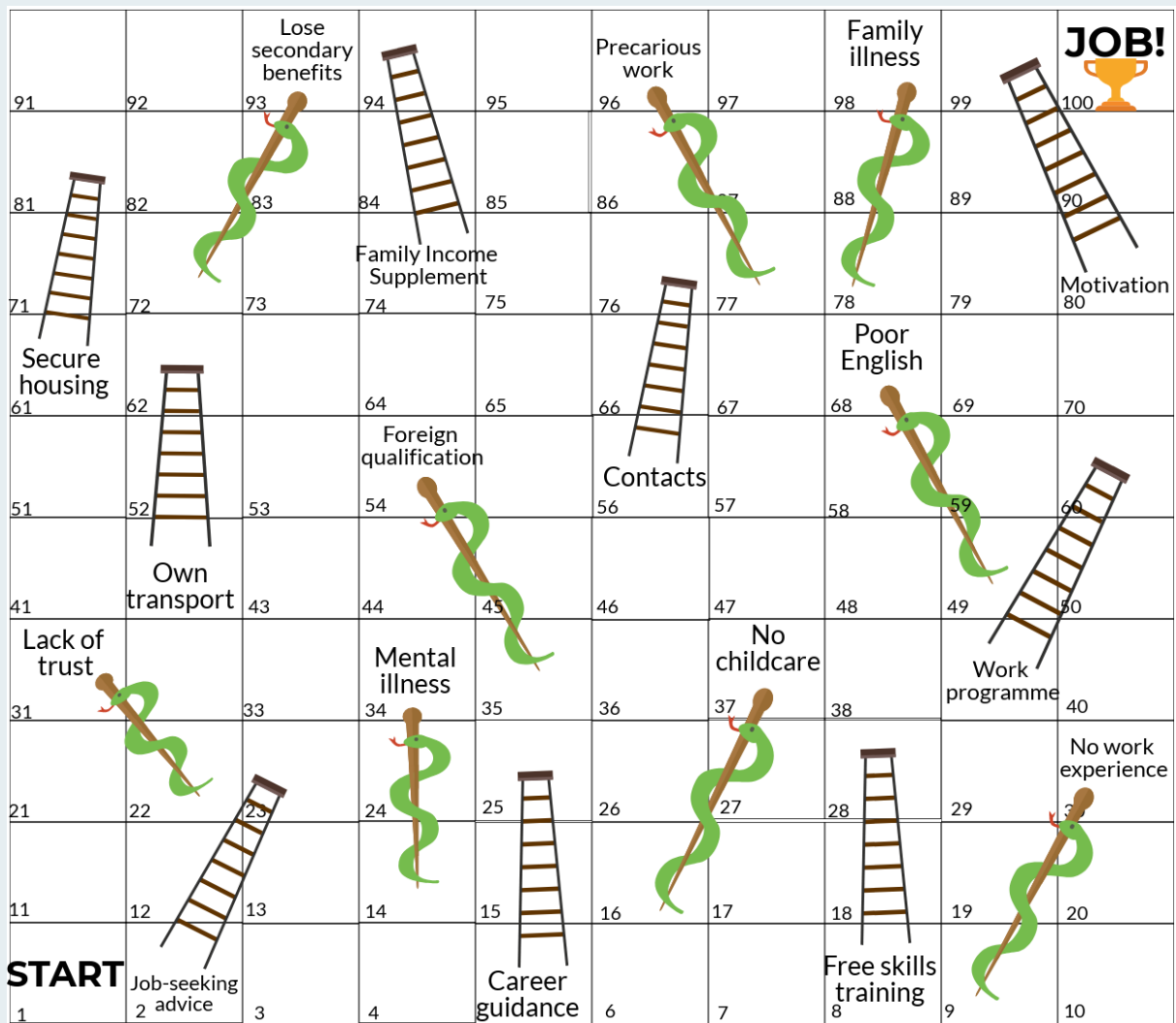
The interviewees stressed the importance of lifelong learning, in particular for those working in low-skill sectors, who are more likely to lose their jobs due to a downturn or automation. A number of trainers spoke of the importance of providing an educational experience which is not similar to that of school, as this allows better engagement with adults who had a poor experience in school when they were younger.

³² In rural areas, not only ETBs but also Teagasc can provide this type of education and training.

Meanwhile, poor recognition of migrants' qualifications holds them back from accessing more skilled jobs, as does a lack of accessible and/or affordable English language training.

To summarise the findings from the previous sections, Figure 3.5 illustrates some of the main barriers and enablers encountered by those who are jobless while trying to move into employment.

Figure 3.5: Key barriers and enablers in transitioning from welfare to work



3.6 The Role of Institutions in Service Provision

Some key changes have been made in services relevant to low work intensity households since the mid-2000s, in particular the introduction of a more active public employment service, HAP, and the new Affordable Childcare Scheme. These changes aim to provide more support for those who are not employed to move into the labour force.

However, interviewees felt that there was a continuing need for tailored supports within mainstream services, which is particularly critical for the groups furthest from the labour market (e.g. Travellers, some migrants, those with literacy difficulties, those with health or caring issues, and lone parents). Ivy, a national stakeholder, articulated this view in relation to people with a disability:

People [with a disability] would arrive at the door and unless they are deemed to be job-ready ... they didn't get a service, they were referred back to DSP or back to Rehab or a course.

It is also argued that disadvantaged areas need additional services, to combat the entrenched disadvantage within them, such as high concentrations of unemployment and lower than average education.

Interviewees also reported difficulty finding information, and communicating with some state services. For example, Intreo prioritises those who are physically in the building, leading to difficulties for services users and providers who try to access Intreo staff by phone. Interviewees felt that government department information is not always provided in a user-friendly way. Households often turn to Citizens Information Centres and community centres as trusted sources of information. There were also reports of different organisations collecting the same information from service users, which reduces the time available for direct service delivery by service providers and is frustrating for service users, as experienced by Gisela, manager in an enterprise support service:

So DSP or Intreo may have a meeting with a client [and collect] a huge amount of information and then they come down here and then they've got to fill in a huge amount of information as well. [And] that can be just frustrating ... because the information we collect, somebody has collected already ... [And] it takes up a lot of our time ... with all this extra paperwork.

Co-ordination of services was one of the strongest themes to emerge in relation to the role of institutions in supporting people into work. Co-ordination occurs at national, regional/county and local level, and between national and local levels. The study identified areas where co-ordination was working well. This occurs most where policy areas are well integrated, both vertically and horizontally, and where all stakeholders are engaged early. Regional or county-level co-ordination bodies (e.g. Regional Skills Fora, County Childcare Committees) can also work well, along with the use of sub-groups focusing on particular issues, good communication, and a focus on common areas of interest. Building good relationships is key. Co-

ordination difficulties were also identified and related to a lack of dedicated staff, funds and time to co-ordinate policies and services, as well as a lack of 'buy-in' from key organisations or not having the relevant people involved.

The ethos, values and culture of institutions are important in determining how they are perceived by staff, service users, other institutions and the general public. As mentioned previously, the building of trust is particularly important in delivering a quality service. Some argued that there had been a change in ethos in Intreo, from control to activation, although this view was not unanimously shared.

Funding was seen as an important element in the provision of quality services. A number of interviewees highlighted the cutbacks which took place during the recession, and that many of these services were only being gradually restored now. Reduced funding can lead to poor employment contracts for service providers, or services which are not properly used due to lack of investment in other areas (e.g. lack of after-school provision means that training facilities are under-used during afternoons and school holidays). However, the funding which is provided needs to be well targeted and well used in order to be effective.

In relation to the implementation of policy and delivery of services, a critical area is the extent to which services are able to meet jobseekers 'where they are at'. Sansa, a national stakeholder, expounds on what this means in practice:

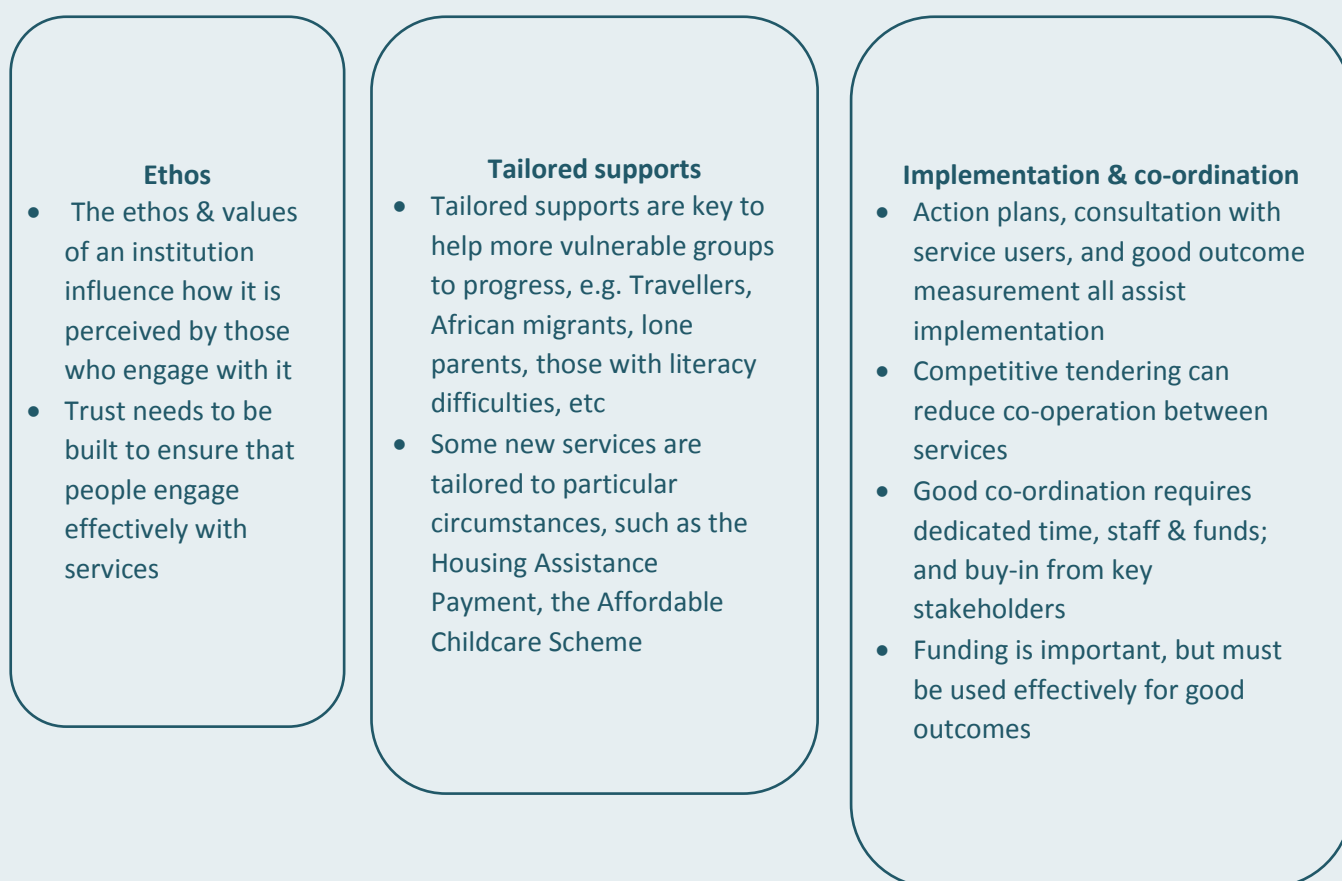
I think what's critical is the time being taken in the initial engagement to really assess the person, you know, in terms of their life experience, their work experience, their level of knowledge, their formal education, you know, and to really assess kind of where the person is at and where their opportunities are and how realisable are those opportunities. I think too often the system doesn't take the time to do that so people are then sent off to do things that may not be the best option for them.

Adequate time is needed, particularly to assess the interests, abilities and motivation of those who are most distant from the labour market, but time pressures mean that employment support services are not always able to provide this. Services need to be responsive, in terms of being timely and matching jobseekers' interests, abilities and motivation. Many interviewees stressed how flexible eligibility criteria could help to meet these needs.

A range of issues was raised in relation to policy implementation, including the use of action plans and working groups, which can be helpful, as is consultation with service users. There was a range of views on the use of private providers and competitive tendering. Some were of the view that contracted services provide more focused, outcomes-led services, and that they can increase the range of service available (as with the Early Childhood Education Scheme). However, this does not occur in all sectors (e.g. after-school care, rental property). Other interviewees expressed reservations about the cost and quality of the services provided, and whether they provided good value for money. Competitive tendering can lead to tenderers promising to deliver on what turn out to be unrealistic goals,

in order to win tenders; it can reduce direct contact between funders and service users, as well as limiting co-operation between local service providers who are competing for funding. For service users, this means poorer links between services which they need to access. Figure 3.6 summarises a number of these issues.

Figure 3.6: Key findings in relation to institutions and service provision



Greater use of data and evaluation to inform decision-making is evident, but many interviewees felt that this could be improved further. There was, however, some comment about how onerous the provision of data was for service providers, and some questioned how useful some of the information was in assessing the quality of services provided.

Chapter 4

Conclusions

4.1 Key Messages

The key messages from the research study are that **the social welfare and employment support system is generally supportive but that it: (a) lacks a household dimension; (b) needs to be better co-ordinated, and (c), in places, does not provide the intensity of support needed. These key messages are summarised in Figure 4.1.**

Other themes to emerge from the research are:

- ***Model of activation***: in helping vulnerable groups to overcome barriers they face, and the critical role of case officers.
- ***Tailored supports***: by providing care supports, ensuring access to affordable and secure accommodation, meeting health needs, and ensuring access to transport and information technology.
- ***Transitioning from welfare to work***: through tapering payment withdrawal, expanding the availability and quality of career guidance, experience of the education system, training pathways and progression, the expansion of apprenticeships, and the value of employment programmes and social enterprise.
- ***The role of employers***: requiring greater engagement with employers, paying attention to the quality of work, and supports for self-employment.
- ***Institutional features***: recognising the importance of institutional ethos among service providers in how they engage with service users, the significance of resources, mechanisms of policy delivery, and the need to assess and act on outcomes.

These key messages are based on the findings from the interviews. They have implications for a range of government departments and agencies.

Figure 4.1: Key messages from the research

The social welfare & employment support system is generally supportive

- It keeps people out of income poverty
- It tries to understand needs of jobseekers
- It is more benign than in some other countries

However,

- There is a lack of trust in Intreo
- People find it difficult to get information on the options open to them
- At times, people feel they have no choice on activation/training options offered
- It can be hard for vulnerable jobseekers to engage
- Better feedback measures are needed

There is a need to:**Develop a stronger household focus**

- Continue work to expand activation supports to qualified adults, people with a disability & carers who wish to work, etc

Co-ordinate better

- Create better links to employers
- Provide better links between services
- Ensure all the supports necessary to move from welfare to work are available
- Provide resources for co-ordination

Increase the intensity of support

- Provide more intensive support (e.g. in literacy education) to ensure effective outcomes, particularly for those most distant from the labour market

4.2 A Relatively Benign Social Welfare and Employment Support System

This study found that **the three main jobseeking support services, Intreo, JobPath and the Local Employment Service (LES), have, by and large, engaged proactively with people on the Live Register.** The interaction of household interviewees with the income and employment support services was variable, but in the main there is an understanding of the challenges people face in seeking work.

However, a number of shortcomings were also identified, such as lack of trust by service users in their engagement with Intreo, difficulties accessing information, and lack of choice around training and activation options. Household interviewees' experiences of Intreo very much depended on their interaction with their case officers and whether they felt their needs and motivations were being taken into account. Vulnerable jobseekers often found it difficult to engage with the system. There could also be stronger links between Intreo, LES and employers.

So, overall, while Ireland has adopted a more active case management approach than heretofore, it appears to be a more benign system than some of the models adopted in other countries, particularly those in other liberal regimes. The social welfare system has been relatively successful in keeping people out of income poverty and, in general, displays a level of humanity in seeking to understand people's needs and encouraging them into suitable jobs or courses to upgrade their skills. The system is still becoming embedded, so that more ongoing dialogue between Intreo officials and representatives of service users, through a formalised schedule of meetings or focus groups to review operational concerns and to quantify outcomes, would seem to be warranted.³³

4.3 Incorporate a Household Focus

Ireland's level of household joblessness is comparatively high, yet **most unemployed people are dealt with on an individual basis.** Low work intensity households are diverse, containing people who are officially unemployed and seeking work, but also qualified adults, people with disabilities, lone parents, carers, and young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). Many of these people would like to engage in education and training, or be in paid employment,

³³ The ESRI has also been commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of Intreo processes. See <https://www.esri.ie/projects/an-initial-evaluation-of-the-effectiveness-of-the-intreo-activation-process-reforms/>, accessed 14 March 2018.

possibly on a part-time basis, yet the income and employment support services often do not engage directly with them if they are not on the Live Register.

Pathways to Work 2016-2020, the Government's strategy to get people back to work, is focused on both getting long-term unemployed people back to work and on activating other people who, though not classified as jobseekers, have the potential and the desire to play a more active role in the labour force. These people are identified as, among other, the partners of existing Intreo clients (qualified adults), people with disabilities who wish to find work, and those carers whose caring responsibilities allow some time for employment. The interviews undertaken for the study across the range of interviewees indicated that more effort is required to action these commitments.

The Action Plan for Jobless Households, published in September 2017, concentrates on household joblessness in a number of ways. It **focuses on broadening active engagement to qualified adults who have a capacity to work**, by extending the Jobseeker's Transition model of activation (JST). In consultation with the disability sector, it is intended to reconfigure the main illness and disability payments, along with early intervention to support people with disabilities to take up or retain employment. There is a commitment to try to remove barriers through expanding access to free and subsidised childcare, further rollout of the HAP, and additional reform of welfare schemes to support working families. Interestingly, ***the Action Plan for Jobless Households also proposes piloting a family-focused case management approach where there are two or more jobless people in a household***. This would involve them attending together, voluntarily, for interview with a case officer to look jointly at their employment prospects and address any barriers to employment that may be shared. These are welcome initiatives.

In our study, we found that many qualified adults in particular sought work and engagement. Some were better qualified than their partners who were being engaged with by the employment support services and who were seeking work. However, many qualified adults were constrained in their ability to take up work by care arrangements. There are various ways in which Intreo processes allow qualified adults to receive payments and activation in their own right, such as split payments, swapping eligibility between spouses ('spousal swop') or the qualified adult establishing their own claim. However, often neither the qualified adults, nor in some cases the officials, are aware of these options. In many cases the agreement of their partner has to be sought.

These proposals to extend the JST to qualified adults who seek it, on a voluntary basis, and the possibility to seek part-time work (to dovetail with care arrangements) seem to be progressive improvements. The family-focused case management pilot is also an innovative development. It will be interesting to see the outcomes from the pilot, albeit that it challenges traditional family roles. It could signal a gradual advancement from the male breadwinner model that still underpins the social welfare system, but is much less evident in the labour market.

4.4 Better Co-ordination Needed

Better institutional co-ordination was one of the strongest themes to emerge in relation to supporting people into work. Connections are seen as key to gain maximum benefit from services and interventions; for example, better links from the public employment services, work programmes and training colleges to employers and the open labour market. At delivery level, there seems to be a need for more named contacts in Intreo, for all organisations interacting regularly with them. Currently, it seems that only some organisations have such contact details, and so time is wasted trying to contact relevant staff.

Clarity on the specific roles of the three main employment support services would be useful, i.e. between Intreo, LES and JobPath providers, so that people can be referred to the employment support service best able to meet their needs.

Other supports which connect individuals with employment are also necessary. For example, does the recently trained person have adequate affordable childcare, transport and housing to be able to take up work?

A number of co-ordination difficulties were highlighted in this study, particularly in relation to co-ordination bodies set up to bring together policies and programmes, e.g. the Local Community Development Committees and the Children and Young People's Services Committees. Key difficulties are lack of resources and lack of buy-in by key actors. In addition, government departments tend to deliver policy and allocate resources from central to local level, with reporting mechanisms from local to central level, which can make co-ordination across policy areas and departmental boundaries difficult. This structure is sometimes referred to as a 'siloed' approach. As acknowledged in a number of policy documents, these shortcomings need to be addressed to provide more effective and co-ordinated service provision. For example, in Slovenia a case management approach is adopted that involves a variety of services for those who are far from the labour market, in order to address problems which are not directly related to activation (Stropnik, 2015). It is also important to ensure that the various co-ordination bodies are adequately resourced and supported.

4.5 Greater Intensity of Support Required

As the number of people who are unemployed continues to fall, and those remaining unemployed are further from the labour market, it will be necessary to have more intensive engagement and supports for unemployed jobseekers.

The research has shown the range of policies and programmes being delivered to support unemployed jobseekers, but in some cases these initiatives are not being delivered at the intensity needed to make a substantive difference. Resources are important in this regard, as during the recession a number of services were cut back. Lack of resources can limit services' ability to engage intensely with the

people using them and to tailor supports for people who need them. It can also result in inconsistent availability of services or lack of intensity in the provision of services. For example, most literacy training is available for only two hours per week, but other services are more intensive, such as special needs assistants in schools, and have played a strong role in increasing literacy and English language ability among vulnerable groups. Other programmes, such as SICAP 2015-2017, have placed more emphasis on throughput than on the depth or intensity of engagement, and found this to be less effective than hoped.³⁴

Services should be available when people need them, and at an intensity where they can make a difference. For those who are furthest from the labour market and who face a number of obstacles, the intensity and quality of engagement is important.

4.6 Model of Activation

In general, we found Ireland to have a supportive social welfare and employment support system, but with some shortcomings. In the previous sections, we identified the need to incorporate a household focus, to have better co-ordination and greater intensity in the delivery of some policies and programmes. This section highlights the need to pay particular attention to vulnerable groups, and how the role of the case officer is central to this.

4.6.1 Helping Vulnerable Groups Overcome Barriers

The study identified a number of vulnerable groups who find it difficult to get jobs and who may be further from the labour market. These groups faced a number of barriers to overcome before they were in a position to take up a job, such as limited literacy, limited English language proficiency, lack of work experience and contacts, illness in the family, discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, age or neighbourhood, a history of addiction and/or time in prison.

People facing such barriers often need considerable supports and tailored interventions before they are in a position to take up paid employment, but a mutually agreed personal progression plan setting out a journey towards a desired end goal is a useful starting point. Figure 4.2 outlines these issues.

³⁴ See, for example, SICAP, 2015. The new SICAP programme being rolled out is addressing this problem through allowing more tailoring to local needs. See <http://drcd.gov.ie/community/sicap>, downloaded 16 April 2018.

Figure 4.2: Supports required for Vulnerable Groups

- Vulnerable groups include lone parents; people with a disability; those with literacy difficulties, poor English, no work experience or contacts, a history of addiction or time in prison.
- Vulnerable groups need tailored supports, e.g.
 - activation into part-time work
 - childcare, literacy supports
 - actions to tackle discrimination
 - particular supports for people with a disability.

Recent research by the ESRI found that lone parents and working-age adults with disabilities stood out as having high poverty risks across a range of EU countries, but particularly in Ireland (Watson *et al.*, 2018). Research on discrimination in Ireland has found that people with disabilities, people of black ethnicity, Travellers, women and people in the 45 to 64 year-old age group are more likely to experience discrimination in recruitment and at work than others (McGinnity *et al.*, 2017). **These vulnerable groups were identified as needing specific tailored interventions to reduce their risk of poverty and, where possible, support to enter into paid work, maybe on a part-time basis.** Many studies, including this qualitative study, also have found that **for lone parents childcare services are key, as is the ability to work and train part-time.** People with a disability are over-represented among low work intensity households. The *Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities* (Government of Ireland, 2015) aims to address the low employment rates of people with disabilities, but **much work remains to be done to support disabled people into employment.**

For the other vulnerable groups, a range of tailored supports are required. These include equivalent recognition of the qualifications of migrants, and English language supports. **More intensive literacy and numeracy education is required for those with low literacy levels, as well as vocational literacy supports to ensure better access to employment and training. Particular initiatives are needed for those facing discrimination in the labour market, involving a number of agencies working together.** The specifics of tailored interventions are discussed more fully in Section 4.7.

4.6.2 The Critical Role of the Case Officer

A notable finding is the critical role of the case officer, particularly in Intreo (Government of Ireland, 2015).³⁵ **The main points made in relation to case officers are: the need for adequate time to listen to the person and understand their interests, skills, circumstances, motivations, barriers to employment, and so on. The ability to demonstrate empathy seems to be important, as well as building a relationship of trust.** See Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: The role of the Case Officer

- Case officers need adequate time to engage with clients
- Trust between clients and case officers needs to be fostered
- The most disadvantaged clients are likely to benefit from working with the most experienced & qualified case officers
- Case officers need good training to ensure they are aware of all options for clients in a complex system
- Managers have a key role in influencing the culture of activation

For Intreo case officers, being able to refer people in receipt of social welfare and Jobseeker's payments (often referred to as clients) on to appropriate services is important. While they themselves may not have the information or knowledge to deal with the particular concerns of their client, case officers should be in a position to know who can do so, and refer their client on to them as seamlessly as possible.

While personal progression plans (PPPs) seem like a good idea to record decisions made jointly between the case officer and the client, many jobseekers interviewed were not aware of them or their significance. Some also referred to the **power imbalance between themselves and the case officer**, and indicated that the case officers had the power to threaten their household resources by reducing their benefit if they did not agree to the officer's recommended action. **The challenge is to reach agreement in a mutually supportive way, through building trust, and making the PPP a working document, so that people can see the long-term possibilities and the steps required to get there.**

³⁵ The term used here is case officer, but they can also be referred to as job facilitators, key workers, personal advisers. They are the frontline workers who directly interface with people seeking services—employment supports, in particular.

For the role of the Intreo case officer to be effective, good-quality training and support is required. Following the establishment of Intreo in 2012, staff were reassigned from FÁS, and other parts of the public service, to be Intreo case officers. While these officers received training, there was much change going on in the provision of the service at the time, plus large numbers of people unemployed and few available jobs. Circumstances have changed now; the Intreo service has become more embedded, there is greater experience available in delivering the service, the number of unemployed people has fallen (though many of those now unemployed are further from the labour market), and more job opportunities are available. Nevertheless, **the system is complex, and new initiatives are introduced from time to time, so there is a need for ongoing training and supports for Intreo case officers to continue. It may also be more effective to allocate the most qualified and experienced case officers to the most disadvantaged jobseekers.**

Office managers in Intreo, and in other employment support offices, have a critical role in informing and training their staff. Managers often influence the culture of the office, and can encourage staff to foster supportive engagement with clients, and to have good communication within the office, e.g. briefing on new initiatives and debriefing based on the case officers' experiences.

4.7 Need for Tailored Supports

The research shows the need for tailored services. NESC's report on the *Developmental Welfare State* (NESC, 2005) promotes a 'tailored universalism' approach where services for vulnerable groups are accessed through mainstream services, but are tailored to meet the needs of those who are disadvantaged.

To some extent, **several services are already tailored, for example personal progression plans, and initiatives such as the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS), both of which provide tapered financial support on the basis of household means.** The system of payments and supports can look complex (as outlined in Figure 1.3), yet this reflects a tailoring and targeting of payments, services and supports to meet the needs of particular subgroups of the population. There may, however, be a need to improve the intensity of support in some areas, as more intensive supports are necessary to tackle some issues, such as long-standing literacy difficulties.

In addition, because of the rules and conditions attaching to many of these schemes, people can 'fall through the gaps' or become confused or frustrated by the range of requirements to access services, courses or programmes. Greater flexibility at local level to tailor services to meet people's needs, within a framework of guiding principles, would be useful. Such provision is already being developed in some programmes, such as the Affordable Childcare Scheme, and could be adopted more widely.

Information is a key support to connect those who are not working to the services they need. **It is important to ensure that up-to date, clear and easily understandable information is provided on what is available, and the conditions attaching to them.** Government departments and agencies need to continue work to ensure that information on services is provided in accessible and user-friendly ways. The Citizen's Information service was considered a good resource in this regard, as it can provide confidential information on how supports apply to an individual, taking into account their circumstances and those of their household. The Citizen's Information service should continue to be supported to do such work.

Also important are services that link and bridge, as is emphasised throughout this report. Services need to ensure that they link users adequately to the supports that they need to progress, and that, where linkages are not strong, these are improved. For example, there need to be stronger links between work experience programmes and the labour market, and between employers and both employment support services and training providers. **Greater data-sharing and collaborative work planning between service providers can help to ensure good connections between services**, and ensure that similar information is not collected multiple times by different organisations. **This can reduce costs in the long run, and free up people's time** for more direct service delivery.

Sub-sections 4.7.1 to 4.7.4 highlight the main findings and implications in relation to care, housing, health, transport and information technology; and figure 4.4 summarises all of these issues.

Figure 4.4: Tailored Services

Some tailored services are already available, e.g. HAP, Affordable Childcare Scheme. However,

- The intensity of services could be increased.
- More flexibility, with accountability, is needed at local level, to tailor services to people's needs.
 - Services need to bridge gaps which are problematic for vulnerable groups.

Care

- The Affordable Childcare Scheme is positive, but there is limited after-school care, and few childminders can avail of it. Work needs to continue to address these shortcomings.
- Greater flexibility is needed to support carers to take part in training and part-time work.

Housing

- More public, and additional affordable private sector accommodation, is needed

Health

- The fact that the medical card can be kept for 3 years after leaving welfare needs to be promoted more widely.
- It would be useful for those with an on-going illness to retain the medical card for the duration of the illness, to reduce the disincentive to take up work.
- Timely access to mental health supports is important.

Transport & IT

- Support with public transport costs could help people move from welfare to work.
- Transport allowances for trainees need to be increased to cover the actual costs of transport.
- IT is expensive for those on welfare. Services need to be accessible for those without internet access, and/or IT support needs to be made available to them.

4.7.1 Providing Care Supports

As outlined earlier, **one of the main barriers faced by people who want to get back to work, particularly women and especially lone parents, is childcare—both its availability and affordability.** While some childcare schemes are in operation for low-income families, these are quite limited in terms of coverage. **The Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) has the potential to make a difference and enable people to access childcare to take up education, training or a job, so long as there are places available and the scheme is adequately resourced.** It is a good example of tailored universalism; there is a universal subsidy available to everyone with children who wants to avail of registered childcare, with a targeted means-tested payment for low-income families. With the introduction of quality standards, access to childcare, including afterschool care, should also contribute to children's development, which particularly benefits children from disadvantaged backgrounds and can give them a good start in life. Childminders, however, are not covered by the ACS unless they are formally registered, and few are. The most used type of non-parental childcare for both pre-school and primary school children is a childminder/au pair/nanny (CSO, 2017b). Work needs to continue to ensure that as many childminders can avail of the ACS as possible.

The ACS will also fund after-school provision for parents who require it and who meet the relevant criteria. However, currently there is limited after-school childcare provision, and more will need to be available to assist with this problem. Overall, though, the ACS is a significant development in affording people with children, and young children in particular, the opportunity to engage in education, training or paid work.

A number of the household interviewees were providing care for other family members or relatives. This is a complex and emotional activity ('labour of love'), and can be demanding. Family caring also reduces the extent to which the State needs to provide care supports. Yet, people may require respite care to be available, or to be able to participate in education, training or employment, albeit to a limited extent. It is an area where tailored supports, and some flexibility in their application, would be beneficial. **More funding for buying in carers and/or extending home care should be considered.**

4.7.2 Ensuring Access to Affordable and Secure Accommodation

A striking finding from this study of low work intensity households was the number of multi-family, intergenerational households interviewed. The lack of affordable or available accommodation for renting, along with family breakup, accounted for a substantial proportion of the households living with other family members, often parents or siblings. **A key concern is the difficulty that low-income households face accessing accommodation in a very competitive environment. The availability of public and affordable private rented accommodation (the latter with HAP), is a key issue to be addressed, to assist people in taking up available jobs.**

A number of household interviewees with mortgages were assisted by the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), but often people had to call on family to help them pay bills. Living with debt was very stressful, and affected people's mental health. **The support of a service, such as MABS, is invaluable.**

4.7.3 Meeting Health Needs

As all of the households interviewed in the study were in receipt of a social welfare benefit, they would be eligible for a medical card, but some families where a person has an illness or a disability were worried about losing it if they moved into employment (as outlined in Section 3.4). **People who have been unemployed for over a year can keep their medical card for three years after taking up employment, but not all household interviewees seemed to be aware of this.** However, it is a good support mechanism to enable people to take up paid employment without the immediate fear of losing their medical card. **It may be useful for a family member with an ongoing illness to be able to retain their medical card throughout this illness period, to reduce any disincentive for household members to take up employment.**

Mental health issues were mentioned by a number of the household interviewees, both in relation to the benefits of working for good mental health or the negative impact of job loss or not working on mental health. **The provision of work opportunities and access to employment support programmes can support good mental health among the long-term unemployed, especially men. Timely access to mental health supports is also required for schoolchildren and adults experiencing such difficulties.**

4.7.4 Ensuring Access to Transport and Information Technology

The expense of transport was raised by a number of households as an inhibiting factor in seeking work. **It may be useful to consider providing jobseekers about to take up a job with a public transport ticket (e.g. a LEAP card) for a transitional period.³⁶ The travel allowances available to some unemployed trainees also do not cover the cost of transport, and consideration could be given to increasing these.**

In relation to information technology, a lot of services assume that people have access to IT but this study showed that this is not necessarily the case. Lack of access to IT has implications for people's ability to apply for jobs online, to do online training courses and to connect to other services which are accessed online. **Service providers should ensure that services and information are available to those who**

³⁶ Bearing in mind that the research was carried out in a disadvantaged urban area - alternative supports would be required in rural areas.

do not have online access, and/or that supports are provided to enable people to obtain IT equipment or other forms of IT access.

4.8 Transitioning from Welfare to Work

A number of issues were raised by household interviewees when they were either considering moving from welfare to work, were offered a job, or were taking up paid employment. Service providers, employers, decision-makers and national stakeholders also raised issues concerning people making the transition from welfare to work, including: tapering payment withdrawal, the availability of career guidance, experience of the education system, training pathways and progression, the expansion of apprenticeships, and the value of employment programmes and social enterprise.

4.8.1 Tapering Payment Withdrawal

As outlined above, **the State supports families to transition from welfare to paid employment through the Family Income Supplement (FIS) (now the Working Family Payment), the Back to Work Family Dividend, retention of the medical card for three years, and, more recently, the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and the Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS).** The first two specifically support families where the income earners are in low-paid employment. However, high replacement rates are still an issue for some families with a number of children. Low earnings potential, the upward adjustment of unemployment payments for family size and the loss of this adjustment on entering employment, taken together, can deter parents of some large families from moving into low-wage employment. This highlights **the need to ensure that tapering is aligned appropriately with replacement rates.**³⁷ Some employers reported that employees do not want to take extra hours of work where this will negatively affect their primary and secondary benefits, which is a difficulty associated with targeted supports. Gradual tapering would also help to smooth these withdrawal impacts. Some similar issues arise for those working part-time while claiming JA, or FIS. **Consideration could be given to awarding FIS (now the Working Family Payment) automatically** when moving from a social welfare payment into paid work, to increase take-up rates and address any delays in assessment and review.

The certainty of payments and other supports are very important for jobseekers. They value the certainty of unemployment payments, of local authority owned housing, and of the medical card. Uncertainty can reduce the motivation for some to move into the open labour market. **Timely assessment for access to in-work supports, along with supports to help with the costs of moving into a new job** (as

³⁷ Replacement rates are the amount of income from paid work required to replace social welfare benefits.

highlighted in Section 4.7.4), **could help families to make this transition.** It is also important that those on disability and caring payments feel sure that these payments can be re-accessed if employment which they gain proves unsustainable. These issues are summarised in figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5: Welfare to work supports, secondary benefits and income supports

Supports exist to help people move from welfare to work, e.g. Working Family Payment, HAP, Affordable Childcare Scheme, etc. However:

- For people with children, and/or in precarious employment, these supports may not provide enough certainty to take the risk of moving into work.
- To facilitate more parents to move into employment, it would be useful to taper benefit withdrawals so that there is better alignment between these and the income that can be gained from paid work.
- Timely assessment and payment of income supports and secondary benefits is crucial for those on low incomes with no savings.
- It would be helpful to award the Working Family Payment automatically to eligible families moving from welfare to work.

4.8.2 Expanding the Availability and Quality of Career Guidance

Career guidance is crucial to ensure people are aware of career options, and that they work and train in an area that suits their aptitudes and abilities. It can also promote a better match between the aspirations and aptitudes of unemployed people, and the courses/career direction to which they are referred by Intreo. Good career guidance is also particularly useful for disadvantaged groups, who do not always have a good grasp of career opportunities available. Currently, the provision of career guidance in the public employment and training services is patchy.

Investing more resources in career guidance in schools, training facilities and Intreo could help to address these problems. **More targeted use of career guidance expertise in the public employment services could also help, including matching the most disadvantaged with the most experienced and qualified career guidance staff.** The review of guidance being undertaken by the Department of Education and Skills should help to highlight some of these issues and set out how best they can be addressed.

These issues, and others in relation to Training pathways and progress, are summarised in figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6: Training pathways and progression

Ensure disadvantaged groups can access training and education

- Financial support needs to cover the costs of attending training, including childcare and transport
- The new apprenticeships being developed need to be accessible to disadvantaged groups

Strengthen links between further education and training, and the labour market

- Continue to link training resources to skills needs
- Involve employers more in curriculum development, work placement, recruitment and upskilling
- Promote the value of further education & training

Improve career guidance provision

- Career guidance is particularly important for disadvantaged groups, who are less likely to be aware of the full range of career opportunities
- Current career guidance provision is patchy, but needs to be consistently available
- The most experienced & qualified career guidance professionals should be matched with the most disadvantaged clients

Focus on low skilled adults

- Upskill the low skilled who are in employment. The National Training Fund and Skillnets can support this.
- As many disadvantaged adults had a poor experience of school, ensure adult education uses a different approach

Ensure investment in education is effective

- Reduce early school leaving further
- Provide more alternatives to school-based education
- Some disadvantaged people with degrees face other barriers accessing appropriate employment, e.g. recognition of qualifications, childcare. Supports are needed to address this
- Investigate why some people are not progressing, despite undertaking multiple training courses
- Investigate where large waiting lists for ETB courses do not translate into high numbers on courses

4.8.3 Improving the Experience of the Education System

The majority of household interviewees had lower than average levels of education, and some early school leaving is still apparent. This raises questions about how attractive school is as an option for some young people, and whether or not there are enough alternatives to school-based education. A number of household, service provider and national policy-maker interviewees argued that more needs to be done on these issues, such as more forms of alternative education, the ability to gain QQI qualifications in school, etc. This is an issue whose feasibility could be explored further. It is also worth noting that special educational needs support for Travellers shows that tailoring services to meet varying educational needs has had positive outcomes. Such benefits are also apparent in evidence from Finland which shows that tailored support reduces unequal educational outcomes (OECD, 2013).

Several household interviewees also had literacy difficulties, particularly older people and middle-aged Travellers,³⁸ suggesting **the need for more intensive supports for each individual accessing literacy services**, as highlighted previously.

A number of interviewees had third-level degrees, some in areas in which there were skills shortages, but they had not been able to progress into employment (recent studies of Back to Work Education Allowance recipients and of PLC programme provision showed some similar findings: Kelly *et al.*, 2015; McGuinness *et al.*, 2018). The reasons why they had not progressed include lack of equivalent recognition for foreign qualifications, poor English language ability, lack of childcare, lack of relevant work experience and gaps in a person's CV, the rules of some welfare payments, and lack of jobs in some sectors. Several of these issues can be tackled effectively through supportive services, highlighting their importance in allowing individuals and society to capitalise on investment in an individual's qualifications.

4.8.4 Training Pathways and Progression

International comparisons show that Ireland does not invest heavily in skills training for the low-skilled (O'Connell *et al.*, 2010; Hughes *et al.*, 2004).³⁹ **Upskilling and reskilling can help the low-skilled to progress into better jobs, and put them in a better position to avoid future unemployment.** Given the likelihood of increased automation of low-skill employment and the potential impact of Brexit on some sectors, this is an issue of growing importance. The implications of these future

³⁸ The literacy of younger Travellers was reported by their parents to be much better. The support of special education and resource teachers was important here.

³⁹ People who are unemployed are more likely than those who are employed (7 per cent compared to 5 per cent) to be involved in life-long learning in Ireland, but Ireland's rates of life-long learning for both the employed (5 per cent in Ireland compared to 12 per cent in the EU28) and the unemployed (7 per cent in Ireland compared to 10 per cent in the EU28) are still below the EU average (SOLAS, 2017).

developments for occupations and sectors in the medium to long term needs to be considered, especially in relation to the type of courses being provided. The Action Plan on Education (DES, 2017) does contain steps to increase rates of life-long learning, and the National Skills Strategy 2025 (DES, undated) aims to deliver an education and training system which provides the right mix of skills needed now and in the future. In general, access to supports for reskilling and upskilling low-skilled employees need to be increased. The **National Training Fund and Skillnets could be used as vehicles to incentivise employers to upskill staff, particularly with accredited qualifications, as well as reskilling and upskilling those out of the labour force.** Care needs to be taken to **ensure that the education experience for adult learners is not like that which they had in school.**

Greater value also needs to be placed on further education and training (FET), which is often viewed as inferior to higher education, but can qualify trainees with useful work-related skills. This is particularly the case when higher levels of qualification in FET are available.

FET places need to be linked to skills needs in the economy. Further issues that arise here are whether or not there are adequate numbers of places on courses that will provide these types of qualifications. Sometimes these courses are more expensive to provide, but, if they lead to good employment and are targeted at those with the right aptitude, they are useful to provide. **There also seems to be a disparity between waiting lists for courses, which can be large, and the numbers who start courses, which can be small. More work is needed to assess the extent to which this is the case, and why, and how to address it.**

Access to training for those from disadvantaged communities is important, as is financial support which covers the full cost of attending courses, so that they can take part in them. Key issues here are an increase in the travel allowance paid, and ensuring that childcare provision is affordable and accessible. The rollout of the ACS should help the latter.

The link between FET and employers is key, but this link is not consistent across all providers. Among some providers, there seems to be **room for greater employer involvement in curriculum development, work placement, recruitment and upskilling of low-skilled employees. Employers highlighted the importance of soft skills; not all training incorporated this, but it should do so.** Job placement services in training colleges could also be useful, or referral of those who have completed their training to employment support services which have strong links with employers.

The interviews showed that **some people do several courses without progressing into employment.** This is sometimes because adequate levels of supportive services are not available, such as English language training, literacy, childcare, or because of the inadequacy of services linking trainees to employment opportunities. It is important to identify and address the reasons why people do not progress.

4.8.5 The Expansion of Apprenticeships

As the new apprenticeships are rolled out, **those from disadvantaged backgrounds need to be able to access these opportunities. In addition, older jobseekers who would like to undertake apprentice training may face difficulties in supporting a family on an apprenticeship wage.** Support for this group, to help them meet the cost of family living while undertaking an apprenticeship, could be useful. SOLAS (the Further Education and Training Authority), is currently reviewing pathways to participation in apprenticeship, and this should highlight some of these issues and propose how they can best be addressed.

4.8.6 The Value of Employment Programmes and Social Enterprise

As outlined earlier, **the interviews showed that employment programmes have a number of benefits.** However, **greater links between employment programmes, training on these programmes, and the open labour market could help increase progression into employment.** Some employment programmes are based in community or voluntary organisations which have few links to the open labour market, and, as those on the programmes are usually particularly disadvantaged, they can struggle to access employment following completion of an employment programme. Those who have just completed an employment programme could be given enhanced activation support to help them find employment in the open labour market. Meanwhile, training is an important part of some employment programmes, yet is absent from others. In general, training adds value to employment programmes.

Some of those who have completed employment programmes may be able to progress to employment in social enterprises.⁴⁰ **Self-sustaining social enterprises have the potential to address long-term unemployment, and more supports to allow this would be helpful, especially in areas where there are fewer job opportunities.** Employment in social enterprises can be particularly beneficial for vulnerable jobseekers who may find it more difficult to get jobs in the open labour market. In addition, jobs in self-sustaining social enterprises pay a wage, do not have a programme time limit and provide useful local services. The role of these social enterprises in addressing long-term unemployment and supporting local communities could be promoted more proactively to give them greater visibility.

⁴⁰ The European Commission defines a social business as one: whose primary objective is to achieve social impact rather than generating profit for owners and shareholders; which operates in the market through the production of goods and services in an entrepreneurial and innovative way; which uses surpluses mainly to achieve these social goals, and which is managed by social entrepreneurs in an accountable and transparent way, in particular by involving workers, customers and stakeholders affected by its business activity.

Figure 4.7: Employment schemes

Employment schemes provide a range of benefits, including work experience, and an increase in confidence. However,

- All employment schemes should incorporate training, to upskill the disadvantaged groups taking part
- Better links are needed between employment schemes and the labour market. Participants could be given enhanced activation support, e.g. through JobPath, as their time on a scheme draws to a close
- The potential of self-sustaining social enterprises to address long-term unemployment should be promoted

4.9 The Role of Employers

Several of the employers interviewed noted that **the recruitment and retention of employees is a key concern, particularly in a growing economy**. Some of these positions could be filled by people from the Live Register or from people not currently in the labour force; that is, some of those in low work intensity households. However, there is a need for greater engagement with employers by employment support services and education and training agencies, to support such a development.

4.9.1 Need for Greater Engagement with Employers

There is a challenge for employment support services, and education and training providers, to engage more with employers and their representative organisations.

A number of mechanisms were identified to better match jobseekers with employers. Public employment services need to support jobseekers to be 'job-ready', and to find out how employers recruit their staff and prepare potential candidates accordingly. The services need to be more able to share relevant data on potential employees with employers, such as the skill level of those on the Live Register. It would also be useful for Intreo to be able to more easily share relevant details on jobs between employers and those on the Live Register. More co-ordination between the range of state-funded organisations in the activation area (Intreo, LES, JobPath and SICAP) would also assist engagement with employers. Promotion of incentives such as JobsPlus and the Family Income Supplement (**now Working Family Payment**) as well as retention of the medical card need to continue. For trainers, the skills that employers are looking for need to be identified (the

Regional Skills Fora have begun work on this), and employers need to be more involved in curriculum development, work placements and trainee programmes.

While preparation of a CV is necessary to set out a person's education, skills and experience, **the 'dropping-off' of CVs to employers does not seem to be a fruitful exercise in most cases, as employers prefer a more targeted approach, seeking specific skills or attributes for specific roles.** For people with atypical CVs, containing gaps or qualifications gained at older ages or abroad, it can be challenging to engage employers' interest. **Reasons should be given to explain any absences, plus highlighting any volunteering experience.** If employers are open to employing people with atypical CVs, it can often help to fill skill gaps.

A number of employers spoke of wanting to connect with the local community, through supporting initiatives in schools and local community centres. Such collaboration can be encouraged and opportunities found to develop innovative interactions with mutual benefits for local employers and the local community. **Ways to encourage such collaboration include tapping into a company's Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives and through the use of social clauses, particularly for public-sector contracts.** Such social clauses can include the requirement to employ a proportion of the workforce from the Live Register, from the local area or from vulnerable groups.

4.9.2 Attention to be Paid to the Quality of Work

The quality of work was raised by household interviewees, service providers, decision-makers and national stakeholders, particularly the issue of precarious work. Legislative changes to protect vulnerable workers on 'zero hour' and 'if and when' contracts, or those who have to declare themselves self-employed to secure work (i.e. the so-called bogus self-employed) are welcomed. Action could also be taken to penalise exploitative employers who use precarious work contracts; for example, by making changes to the social insurance or income-tax systems. Furthermore, employment support services should be careful not to compel people to take precarious employment, but should continue to support people into sustainable jobs.

4.9.3 Supports for Self-employment

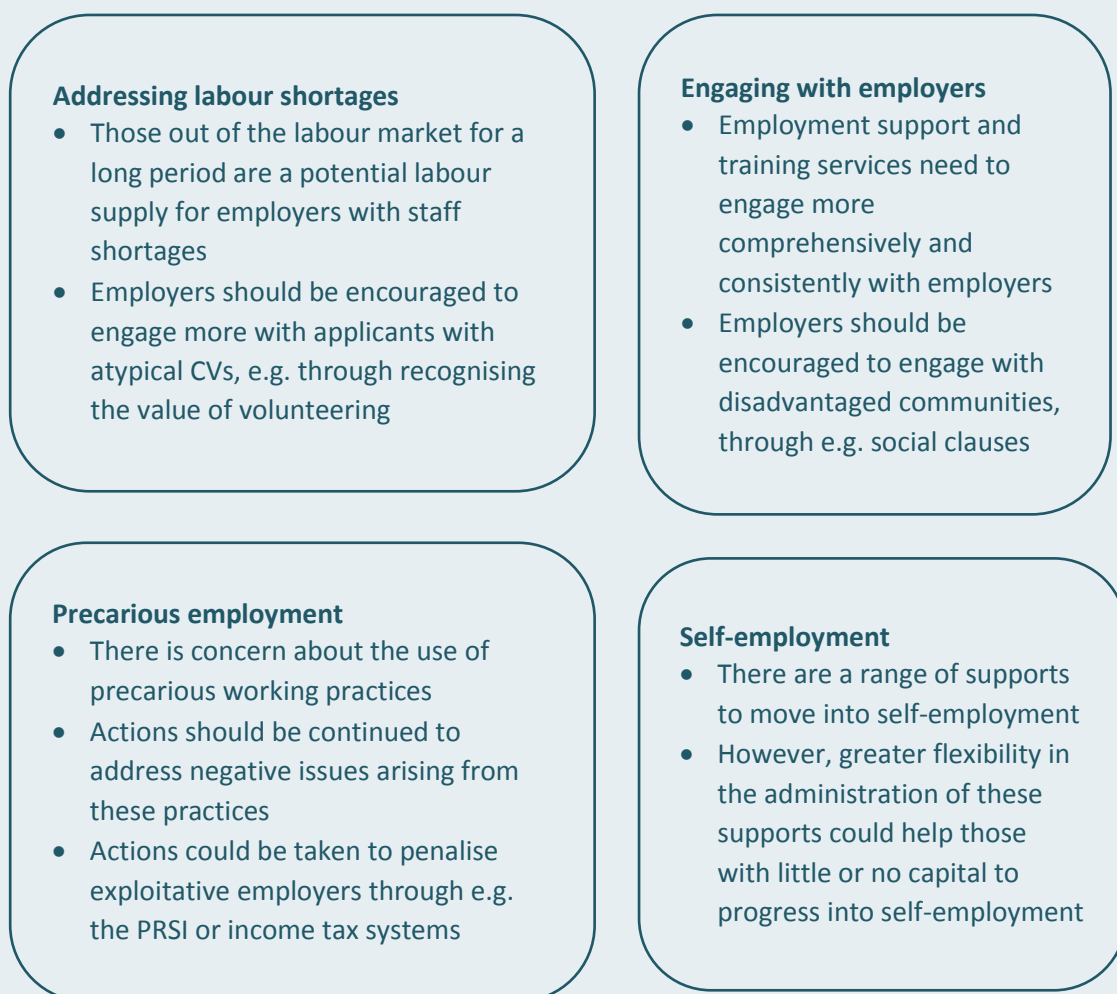
While there are supports available to help the long-term unemployed move into self-employment, such as the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, **greater flexibility in the allocation and spending of grants for self-employment may help more long-term unemployed people move into self-employment.** Current supports to help with funding the purchase of equipment and hiring premises are not always accessible to a long-term unemployed person who has no savings left to provide matching funding.

Some of the household interviewees had tried to set up their own business, but it had failed. This underlines the importance of ensuring that jobseeking supports are available to the previously self-employed, and that people are aware of this. **Not**

many people are aware that self-employed people whose businesses have failed may be entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance on a means-tested basis. In addition, social insurance supports for the self-employed are being improved; this should encourage more people to consider the possibility of self-employment if they have the skills and support, and can meet an identified niche in the market.

These findings in relation to the role of employers are summarised in figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8: Role of Employers

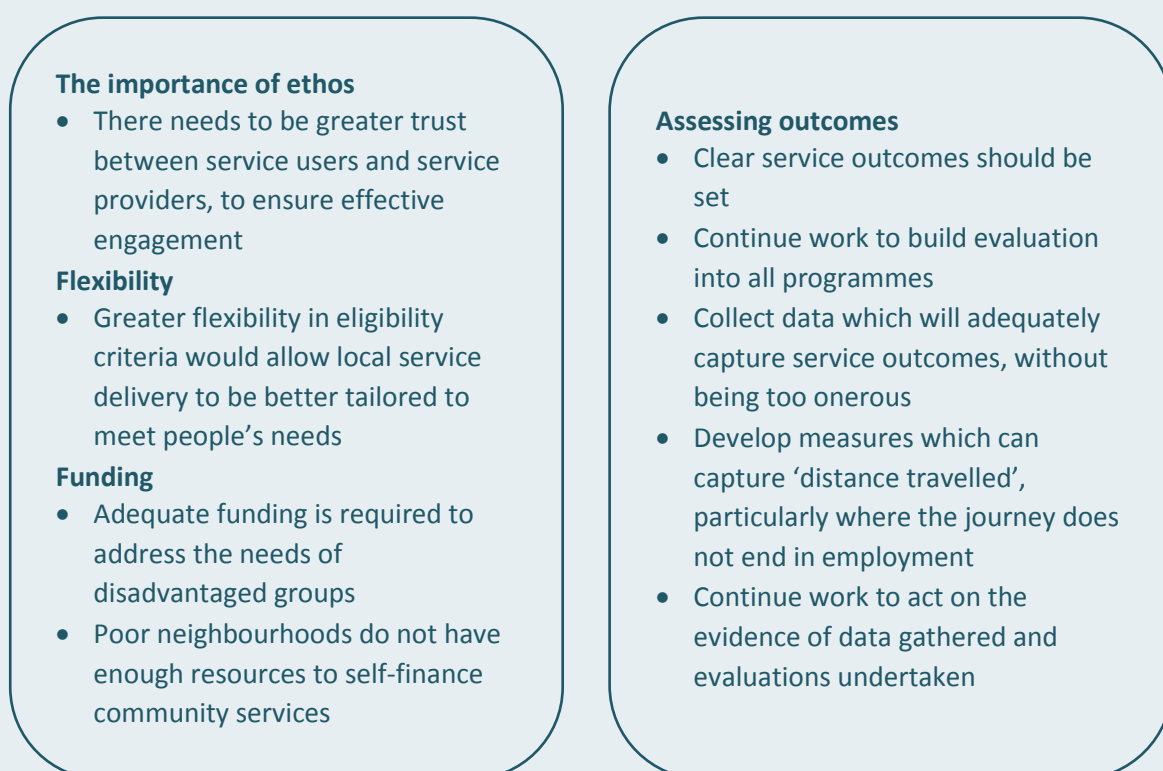


4.10 The important role of institutions in service provision

The role of institutions in supporting people into employment has been highlighted throughout the report. Particular dimensions to the discussion include the diverse

range of institutions involved and the extent of change which has taken place over the last 10 years. This section presents conclusions in relation to the importance of institutional ethos, the significance of resources, mechanisms of policy delivery and the need to assess and act on outcomes. These are summarised in figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9: Institutions and service provision



4.10.1 Importance of a Service Ethos

The ethos, values and culture of an organisation are important in terms of how it operates and how it is perceived by its staff, service users, other institutions it engages with, and the general public. With a huge amount of organisational change in recent years, it takes time for new institutional cultures to develop and become embedded. However, in terms of supporting people into work, **the building of trust emerges as very important.** Work to challenge prejudice is necessary as well. Service providers also need to be clear about what they can and cannot provide and where to refer people for the services they require. Regular engagement with service users by decision-makers, managers and front-line staff is also important, to gain feedback about service provision.

4.10.2 Significance of Resources

Resources, by way of funding and staff, are necessary for policy implementation, and to support co-ordination. Many tailored supportive services, especially at community level, were cut back at the time of the economic crisis, but they can make a real difference in the lives of people experiencing disadvantage. Some of these supports have since been restored, but **where gaps and need remain, consideration should be given to providing additional supports, if and where they add value to mainstream services.** Consideration also needs to be given to the extent to which community services can be self-financing in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, as a requirement to be self-financing can mean that the local community cannot afford to benefit from the service.

4.10.3 Mechanisms of Policy Delivery

Sometimes, well-intentioned policies fail to be adequately implemented for a variety of reasons including lack of leadership, resistance to change, lack of clarity and lack of resources. A number of interviewees talked about action plans and working groups as useful mechanisms for policy implementation. Restructuring of services, along with training and use of IT systems, can also help. **Greater flexibility at local level to tailor services to meet people's needs would be useful, if operationalised under a framework of guiding principles and with accountability for actions taken.**

An issue raised by a number of interviewees at all levels (household, service providers, employers, managers, decision-makers and national stakeholders) was **the impact of competitive tendering and the contracting of services previously provided by the State to private providers. It is suggested that all services, including those provided through competitive tendering, be kept under review to ensure they are providing a quality, value-for-money service.**

4.10.4 The Need to Assess and Act on Outcomes

It is good practice to ensure that services are provided as efficiently as possible, while at the same time meeting certain quality standards and achieving quality outcomes. This requires being clear about what outcomes are being sought and what actions are being taken to achieve this. Assessing outcomes requires good data from a baseline position to track progress, outputs and impact. However, **there needs to be clarity about what data is required, by whom and for what purpose, so that it is most useful for funders, service providers and service users. Depth or quality of engagement may be as important as number of interventions, so it is important that such data be collected in a way that is useful, and not too onerous.** Depending on people's starting points, and circumstances, progress may be at variable rates; this should be captured, where possible, and addressed where necessary. For example, a jobseeker with literacy difficulties may make much slower progress towards employment than someone with a Leaving Certificate. Nonetheless, this is still progress. So **'direction of travel' and 'distance travelled'**

can be important indicators of progress. Good measures of 'distance from employment' need to be developed to measure this progress.

Finally, it is important to carry out timely evaluation of policies and programmes, publish the outcomes from these evaluations, and take into consideration the evidence provided. Most of the recent policies and programmes being delivered by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection are part of evaluation programmes and a range of revisions have taken place. This is good practice, makes processes transparent and engages service users and service providers in consultative exercises where their contributions are acknowledged. Continuation of this work, and its extension to all programmes that support those in low work intensity households, is important. Ideally, a plan for evaluation would be built into all new programmes as they are designed.

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