Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centre
Programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science

Value For Money Review
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Executive Summary

Chapter 1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the background to the Value for Money review, the terms of reference of the review, the methodology and the structure of the report. The Programme Logic Model with its emphasis on inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes was used to discuss, analyse and evaluate the findings.

Chapter 2. The Programmes in context

The programmes in the Senior Travelling Training Centres (STTCs) and the Youthreach Centres have their origins in the 1970s and 1980s respectively. At that time the Irish economy was characterised by high unemployment, especially amongst young people and the Traveller community.

In the meantime, legislation has been enacted that impacts on education. NEPS (National Educational Psychological Services) and agencies such as the NEWB (National Educational Welfare Board), NCSE (National Council for Special Education), and FETAC (Further Education Training and Awards Council) have been established and curricular reform has been introduced. Completion rates to end of senior cycle of post-primary have improved significantly. The economy has thrived. However, despite all these developments there is still a significant minority of young people who leave school early and a certain cohort of Travellers whose educational attainment is low. Literacy and numeracy levels of the two groups are poor and for these two groups their social and educational disadvantage is increasing. With low educational attainment they are being further marginalised from society.

A number of international models that cater for comparable groups are described. Notwithstanding the exceptional economic success that Ireland has enjoyed over the last decade, national and international policies continue to stress the importance of full participation in society with a range of policies in place to promote human capital development, employment and social inclusion for disadvantaged groups within society, including early school leavers and Travellers. Youthreach and STTCs provide
young early school leavers and adult Travellers with a second chance education and an alternative mode of participation, consistent with international models of effective practice.

Chapter 3. Recasting the objectives of the Programmes

This chapter, as required by the terms of reference, sets out the original aims and objectives of the two programmes and determines if the aims and objectives are still valid and relevant in 2007 and if they are compatible with the overall strategy of the Department. Separate and renewed objectives are presented for Youthreach and for STTCs as follows:

➢ The Youthreach programme seeks to provide early school leavers (16 - 20 years) with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society and progress to further education, training and employment.

➢ The Senior Traveller Training Programme is a positive action by the Department of Education and Science which seeks to provide an opportunity for members of the Traveller community and other learners (18 years and over) to:
  • Engage in a programme of learning that acknowledges and respects their cultural identity
  • Acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence to:
    o participate fully in society (Traveller community and settled community)
    o enhance their employability
  • Progress to further education, training, employment or other life choices.

These are compatible with the overall strategy of the Department and reflect more accurately the actual breadth of work currently being undertaken in both programmes.

Chapter 4. Management and delivery systems for the Youthreach and STTC programmes

This chapter describes the management and delivery systems used in Youthreach and STTCs. It outlines the role of the Department of Education and Science, the Vocational Education Committees and the Boards of Management. The recruitment and induction of learners are described as are the programmes on offer. The varied teaching methodologies and certification available for learners are set out. The
Staffing (core pay), learner supports, CPD (Continuous Professional Development) for staff, the Quality Framework Initiative, allowances available to learners and core non-pay are summarised. The lack of capital funding to improve the quality of available accommodation is highlighted. Reporting and monitoring arrangements are outlined.

Chapter 5. Efficiency

This chapter examines the efficiency of the two programmes. It describes the inputs and, as per the terms of reference, it defines the outputs associated with the programmes. It identifies the level and trend of these outputs and evaluates the level and trend of costs and staffing resources associated with each programme and it also comments on the efficiency with which each programme has achieved its objectives.

The efficiency of the programmes is considered under eight headings: core tuition, learner supports, allowances and grants, core non-pay, accommodation, national co-ordination and support, programme support and development and centre/VEC administration. Levels and trends from 2001-2005 are examined. To determine efficiency comparison is made, where possible, between the two programmes and the post-primary sector, Youth Encounter Project schools and Community Training Centres. While such comparisons are not perfect, they offer an indicative insight into relative efficiency. A series of key recommendations are provided which would improve the efficiency of the two programmes.

Levels and trends of expenditure increased between 2001 and 2005. However allowances for meals, transport and learner accommodation have not been increased since 2002 whilst childcare support has not increased since the late 1990s. Guidance, counselling and psychological support when compared to post-primary appears to be significantly better, but when the needs of the learners in the two programmes are considered, such support and more, particularly for guidance, is required.

Services and supports that are automatically available in mainstream are not available in Youthreach and STTCs, and for those learners aged under 18 years of age in these programmes this has to be examined in the context of existing or similar supports in each programme. Youthreach and STTCs do not have access to NCSE, NEPS, NEWB, capital funding, ICT (Information and Communications Technology) and some post-primary supports. Additional support is, since 2006, being provided to cater for special educational needs. The funding provided for National Co-ordination of the two programmes does not compare favourably with similar post-primary supports. There is a difference in the method of provision in centre administration between the two programmes and this should be reviewed.
At a high level, the analysis shows a total cost per student for each programme. When this is compared to other sectors the cost per student for Youthreach and STTCs is seen to be greater than that in mainstream post-primary schools and less than that in YEP schools - given the cohorts involved and the level of support provided, this is as to be expected. In general, this analysis of the trends in the main inputs and outputs and of relevant comparisons provides evidence which reflects favourably on the efficiency of the programmes, although some areas for concern are highlighted.

Chapter 6. An evaluation of the educational provision in Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science undertook an evaluation of 6 centres to examine the quality of management, planning and education provision. This was done to comply with the term of reference which required the review to evaluate the appropriateness of the educational provision in the programmes.

In the case of all the centres evaluated, centres appear to have been set up in response to perceived needs – i.e. the presence of a significant number of educationally disadvantaged early school leavers experiencing social and economic exclusion. Centres were also found to have well-qualified staff from a variety of backgrounds. In addressing the needs of the learners, staff members in the centres visited were found to devote significant amounts of time to ensuring that learners received individualised support and attention. In addition, a range of programmes was found to be in existence across centres which focussed on the development of a number of learners’ skills in areas such as personal and social development, literacy, numeracy and IT and other practical skills. The actual programmes offered to learners across the 6 centres varied, and this is due to centres developing programmes to meet the identified needs of their own cohort of learners. In some cases, however, it was found that programmes were not adequately meeting the needs of the target group as they did not sufficiently challenge learners.

In developing their programmes, centres have established good relationships with relevant local service providers and agencies. However, there has been limited engagement by national services and agencies such as NEPS, NCSE, and NEWB with the programmes. This represents a serious gap in the services available to the programmes and should be addressed.

One particular issue which arose in the course of the evaluations is that of
accommodation. Youthreach centres and STTCs are housed in a range of building types. While some of these buildings were workable, others were found to be unsuitable for the effective delivery of the programme and in a number of cases there were serious health and safety implications. These findings have been further reinforced by subsequent evaluations of other centres.

Chapter 7. Effectiveness: An examination of the outcomes of the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centre programmes

Given that the programmes have separate objectives, chapter 7 approaches the effectiveness of each programme in turn, to address the term of reference which seeks to determine if the programmes objectives have been achieved in an efficient and effective manner. Youthreach is shown to be particularly effective in attracting the target cohort of learners into the programme. Evidence is also presented to highlight the success of Youthreach in developing learners’ soft skills in areas such as self-confidence, personal awareness, and inter-personal skills. Youthreach is seen to be less effective in terms of learner certification and progression. However, in assessing the effectiveness of the programme in this area a number of limiting factors should frame any judgements made. Such factors include the high level of learner needs and the diverse learner cohort. Finally, the data in relation to the number of learners leaving Youthreach early are highlighted as a concern.

A similar approach is taken to examining the effectiveness of STTCs. The STTCs are found to be effective in recruiting adult learners in the target group to the programme, although the low number of men on the programme remains a concern. Similarly, the programme is seen to be effective in relation to less quantifiable areas such as the development of soft skills and the acknowledgement and respect of Traveller culture. As with Youthreach, STTCs are seen to be less effective in terms of learner certification and progression, although in assessing the effectiveness of the programme in this area similar limiting factors to those outlined for Youthreach should frame any judgements made.

Chapter 8. Performance Indicators

This chapter identifies potential future performance indicators for Youthreach and STTCs. This is in line with the term of reference which states that the review shall provide potential future performance indicators that might better monitor the performance of the programmes for the learners, for the staff, for Department of Education and Science, for Department of Finance and for future reviews. Potential efficiency and effectiveness indicators are identified for both programmes.
Chapter 9. Key findings and recommendations

This chapter draws together the key findings and recommendations which emerge from the analysis in the preceding chapters.

Key Findings

The key findings in the report are summarised below taking a generic approach.

1. Notwithstanding the exceptional economic success that Ireland has enjoyed over the last decade, a number of disadvantaged groups remain (including early school leavers and Travellers) and their needs are recognised in the national policy context.

2. While there are a substantial range of preventative measures in place in post-primary, significant problems remain regarding student behaviour and motivation, special education needs and early school leaving.

3. The international experience supports the provision of an out-of-school mode by which both young people and adults may return to and/or complete their education in a non threatening learner centred environment. Youthreach and the Senior Traveller Training programmes are currently providing such an alternative mode of participation and completion.

4. Core tuition costs have increased sharply in recent years. Some unique factors relevant to the two programmes were highlighted as causing this increase to be greater on these two programmes relative to comparative programmes.

5. The two programmes are more costly in terms of core tuition on a per student (learner) basis than post-primary and CTCs, and less costly than YEP schools. However, when output was included, Youthreach in particular compares favourably to post-primary.

6. Guidance, counselling and psychological services available to learners on the two programmes are better on a per learner basis than post-primary. However, the needs for counselling and psychological supports are greater in the Youthreach and the STTC programmes.
7. Allowances available to programme learners have increased in line with general social welfare payments. However, meal, travel and accommodation allowances have not increased. Neither has the weekly childcare support increased.

8. Inflationary increases are putting pressure on the non-pay budget available to centres in the two programmes.

9. There is no dedicated ICT fund for either programme, unlike the post-primary sector.

10. Rental costs will continue to increase in future years. The capital budget for post-primary is significant. There is no capital fund for the two programmes.

11. The level of national co-ordination and support is relatively small on the two programmes, particularly compared to supports available in post-primary.

12. Staff on both programmes should have access to CPD support programmes available to the post-primary sector where the centres provide the same programmes.

13. A new basis for funding VEC / centre administration needs to be developed.

14. It would appear that both programmes are relatively efficient and are for the most part maximising output from the input available. This would appear particularly true in relation to the following input areas – learner supports, core non-pay, accommodation, national co-ordination and support, and programme support and development.

15. The mission and focus of activity in centres is generally on the holistic development of the individual learner. The time and effort devoted by staff members in practically all of the centres evaluated at getting to know the individual learners, their background, their parents and families, play a key role in the support offered to learners.

16. Some centres successfully implemented targeted strategies to promote learners’ attendance and punctuality.

17. The centres had very limited links or communications with national agencies. There were limited contacts also with relevant post-primary curricular support services.
18. There was also a distinct lack of evidence of relationships or communication between some of the centres evaluated and their local post-primary schools and businesses.

19. The quality of the work of the co-ordinator or director in centres was singled out for praise by Inspectors in nearly all of the evaluation reports completed to date.

20. Inspectors found that engagement with the QFI had fostered a culture of planning in centres, which was a collaborative and inclusive one.

21. Literacy and numeracy need to be a central focus of every lesson.

22. There is a need for centres to develop tracking systems to monitor progression of learners after they leave the centres.

23. It was found that those learners who engaged fully with the programme that was on offer to them in their centres had positive learning experiences, improved self-esteem and self-worth and enhanced personal and social development.

24. The potential customer base for Youthreach, even after adjustments pertaining to the availability of learners for participation on the programme (and the availability of places in STTCs and CTCs for early school leavers), significantly outstrips the current level of places available nationally.

25. Youthreach would appear to be:

   • Effective in recruiting its target group. However, work needs to be done to retain more of the learners to the end of the progression phase. In addition, more places are needed to cater for all early school leavers aged 16 to 20 (over and above the additional places secured in Towards 2016).

   • Effective in addressing learners needs for personal and social development.

   • Effective, to an extent, in terms of certification achieved particularly when the differing contextual variables and limitations are taken into account. However, there is room for improvement in terms of the number of learners who obtain certification, as well as the levels at which they obtain
certification so that they can successfully progress from the centres to appropriate further education, training or employment.

26. STTCs would appear at present to be:

- Effective in recruiting their target group. The focus in the future needs to be on adults (age 18+). However, work needs to be done to retain more of the learners to the end of the progression phase.
- Effective in addressing learners’ needs for personal and social development.
- Effective, to an extent, in terms of certification achieved particularly when the differing contextual variables and limitations are taken into account. However, there is room for improvement in terms of the number of learners who obtain certification so that they can progress from the centres to appropriate further education, training or employment. Two years should be the general length of participation with a third year for learners taking the Leaving Certificate Applied. However, a lot of work needs to be done to motivate Travellers to continue on into mainstream further education and training programmes and to enable Travellers to access employment in the mainstream economy. Commitment of employers to employ Travellers with qualifications is needed.

However, as participation rates for Travellers increase at post-primary and as the programme in the future concentrates on adults (age 18+) the need for this positive action should diminish and over the next 10-15 years the programmes should have merged into mainstream Further Education provision. In the long term (15 years) there should be no segregated provision for adults.

27. On the basis of the analysis carried out, the Working Group is in agreement that there exists a strong argument for the continued allocation of public funding for Youthreach. For STTCs funding should continue for the next 10-15 years.
List of Key Recommendations

The main recommendations in the report are summarised below taking a generic approach. The appropriate chapter(s) to which the recommendation refers is provided in brackets.

*Programme specifications*

1. All Youthreach centres should apply the new objectives for their programme. All STTCs should apply the new objectives for their programme. The importance of education for all should be promoted as a key component within the Traveller culture. (Chapter 3)

2. The programmes offered in Youthreach centres and STTCs should be organised into four distinct phases: (i) engagement, (ii) foundation, (iii) progression and (iv) transition. Each phase in each centre should be planned so as to meet the needs of its particular cohort of learners. (Chapter 3)

3. Youthreach should cater for early school leavers aged 16 to 20 years. Provision for learners aged 15 years and younger should be addressed separately by the Department of Education and Science. In this regard the Working Group notes the recommendation of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools (School Matters) about alternative educational provision in Youth Encounter Project schools and Junior Youthreach. This recommendation should be taken into account in the context of determining an appropriate model, or models, of response. (Chapters 2, 3 and 7)

4. STTCs should cater for adults aged 18 years and older. This will free up places in the centres for Travellers aged 18 years and older. Travellers under 18 years should be enrolled in mainstream inclusive settings with their peers. This transition of centres from their current make-up (age 15
+) to centres that cater for adults only (age 18 +) should be effected over a 3 year period. (Chapter 3)

5. Greater emphasis should be placed on guidance, on transfer and progression and on throughput. STTCs should not be seen as ends in themselves, as places of work. They are educational centres, available to learners for a finite time period (2 years or in exceptional circumstances 3 years). As more Travellers engage in mainstream primary and post-primary education the need for this positive action for adult Travellers has to be questioned. In the longer term (10 – 15 years) STTCs should be phased out as a segregated provision and have merged into mainstream further education. (Chapter 7)

6. Future programme guidelines for Youthreach should omit the ‘six month guideline’. (Chapter 4)

7. Summer provision for learners on both programmes should be reviewed. (Chapter 5)

8. In future a clear distinction should be made between the Youthreach and STTC programmes. Youthreach should be equated more with Post-Primary. STTCs should be equated with Further and Adult Education. (Chapter 7)

9. Operators’ Guidelines for each programme should be developed and circulated and should deal with such areas as recruitment and referral, induction, early leavers, leavers after foundation, and follow up of learners. All official documents relating to the programmes should be collated within these Guidelines. (Chapter 7)

10. In addition to the designation in Circular F49/04 of Youthreach settings as centres for education, the programme should also be “prescribed” under the Education Welfare Act, clarifying its status relative to post-primary schools. (Chapter 2 and Appendix 2)

Centre management

11. All centres should have a board of management in place. Boards of management should engage in programme development in their centres
and, where relevant, board members should be provided with appropriate opportunities to attend relevant professional development courses. (Chapter 6)

12. Members of staff in centres should endeavour to work in a collaborative and cooperative manner and should be provided by management with real opportunities to contribute to the work of their centre. (Chapter 6)

13. Centres should encourage and support learners in setting up a learners’ council where one does not already exist. (Chapter 6)

14. A mix of professional experience and backgrounds should continue to be a feature of the staff in centres. (Chapter 6)

Centre planning

15. All centres should continue to engage with the QFI and FETAC quality assurance processes. (Chapter 6)

16. Senior VEC management personnel should engage as fully as possible with the QFI process in their centre(s). (Chapter 6)

17. All centres should develop a whole centre approach, strategy or policy to the development of learners’ literacy and numeracy skills. (Chapter 6)

18. All centres should implement the procedures pertaining to centres for education as laid down by the Vocational Services Support Unit. (Chapter 6)

19. STTCs need to address ways of breaking down the culture of gender segregation that permeates their centres. (Chapter 6)

Curriculum and teaching and learning

20. Programmes should include an element of work experience for learners. (Chapter 6)

21. Youthreach centres should have access to the JCSP and its support service. (Chapter 6)
Learner attendance and retention

22. Centres should ensure that they have strategies in place aimed at promoting, encouraging and improving learners’ attendance and retention in the programmes. (Chapter 6)

Learner assessment

23. All centres should have appropriate procedures in place for assessing learners and progress records pertaining to learners should be maintained by all staff members. (Chapter 6)

24. The attainment of soft skills by learners should be evaluated using the appropriate instruments e.g. QFI questionnaires and the web wheel. (Chapter 7)

25. Certification outcomes should show a greater spread of achievement, particularly for learners in the progression levels. (Chapters 6 and 7)

Links with other services and the community

26. Links between Youthreach and the services offered by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), the School Completion Programme (SCP), the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) service and relevant post-primary curricular support services should be formalised. (Chapter 6)

27. Greater cooperation and sharing of information between centres and post-primary schools in their locality and with various local groups and agencies should be established and maintained. (Chapter 6)

28. Formal links should be established between STTCs and the local offices of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. (Chapter 7)

Accommodation
29. Both programmes should be included in the capital programme of the Department of Education and Science. (Chapter 5)

30. Accommodation issues pertaining to centres for education need to be addressed strategically at both a system and local level. (Chapter 6)

31. All centres should have an up-to-date health and safety statement in place, as required by legislation. (Chapter 6)

Data collection and tracking learners

32. Appropriate procedures for tracking the progression of learners once they have left a centre should be developed and implemented. The data should be available centrally and their implications incorporated into policy and programme development. The DES should initiate discussion with FÁS regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the Evaluation of the Advocacy Service for tracking and supports for learners leaving the programmes early and on completion. (Chapter 7)

33. Learners, on leaving the two programmes, should be tracked in a manner similar to the ESRI School Leavers Survey Reports. (Chapter 7)

34. Learners who complete the Progression Phase in Youthreach should be included in the statistics database which specifies those who complete senior cycle post-primary education or its equivalent. (Chapter 7)

35. More detailed data should be collected from centres on an annual basis regarding learners’ certification outcomes, particularly in the case of FETAC certification. For example, the data collected should include information on whether learners receive certification at module or full award levels. (Chapter 7)

36. Learner profile descriptors should be developed to provide more accurate and comparable responses for returns from centres / VECs to the Department of Education and Science. (Chapter 7)

37. Review the suitability of the data provided in the annual returns made by centres. Such a review should seek to ensure that data are closely tailored
to the needs of the Department and the centres themselves in monitoring ongoing performance. (Chapter 7)

38. The need for a management information system for the programmes should be addressed in the context of the Departments’ feasibility study on the development of a Learner Database. (Chapter 8)

Allocation of resources to the programmes

39. Review the disparity in the allocation of teaching hours on both programmes, 4,200 in Youthreach and 5,250 in the STTC programme, mindful of the recommendations in the evaluation of the pilot special needs initiative currently underway in 20 Youthreach centres. (Chapter 5)

40. As the Schools ICT Strategy is being implemented and rolled out in schools it should incorporate the Youthreach programme. Dedicated funding should be provided for ICT in STTCs. (Chapter 5)

41. Review the level of national co-ordination and support for both programmes. (Chapter 5)

42. Develop a new basis for the allocation of funding for VEC/Centre administration support on both programmes. (Chapter 5)

43. There should be an analysis of up-to-date data and regular observation of centre attendance, drop-out patterns and demographic trends to further focus policymaking regarding the numbers and distribution of places on programmes. (Chapter 7)

Learner supports and allowances

44. Where supports are available to students in mainstream post-primary schools they should be eligible for similar supports as they transfer to Youthreach and, for the moment for the young learners in STTCs, if no comparable supports are available. (Chapter 5)

45. Provide additional programme support for guidance services to learners, possibly through the expansion of the FÁS Advocacy service. (Chapter 5)
46. Increase the rate of childcare support to reflect current costs. (Chapter 5)

47. Increase the meal, accommodation and travel allowances. (Chapter 5)

48. The evaluation of the current pilot SEN initiative in 20 centres should determine whether this initiative, if extended to all Youthreach centres, would cater for the special needs of learners or whether, in addition, the supports available to post-primary schools should be extended to Youthreach to address the special needs of young people (from a learner centred perspective). (Chapter 7)

**Continuous professional development (CPD)**

49. Staff working on both programmes should have access to appropriate continuous professional development, particularly where they are delivering post-primary programmes (Chapter 5)

50. A formal programme of continuous professional development should be developed for STTC staff to ensure that they remain up-skilled to work within an intercultural framework with an adult focus. (Chapter 7)

**Performance indicators**

51. A dedicated working group representative of the key stakeholders should be established in order to:
   - fully explore the complexities involved in developing the performance indicators proposed,
   - ensure that the data needs of all potential users are addressed
   - ensure that the piloting, monitoring and ongoing refinement necessary for a set of performance indicators to be fully effective are undertaken. (Chapter 8)

**Promotion of the Programmes**

52. The Youthreach and the STTC programmes should be promoted and affirmed by the DES, VECs and other stakeholders as key programmes catering for the needs of socially and educationally disadvantaged learners. (Chapter 9)
Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Background to the Value for Money Review Initiative

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

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

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

1.2 Structure of the Review Programme

In the Department of Education and Science (DES), value for money reviews are generally undertaken by Working Groups which are chaired at Principal level and are comprised of officials from the relevant policy and executive sections, the Department of Finance, other relevant Departments and representatives from external stakeholder bodies.

The Working Groups report to the Management Advisory Committee of the Department of Education and Science. At the central level, a Steering Committee has been established to coordinate these activities and oversee the wide ranging programme of reviews undertaken within the civil service. This Steering Committee is
administered from the Department of Finance.

1.3 Working Group

The Working Group (WG) to review value for money as it relates to the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centre programmes was established in December 2005. The members of the Working Group are set out in Appendix 1.

1.4 Background of this Review

Youthreach is an integrated programme of education, training and work experience, introduced jointly with FÁS in 1988, for young people:
- aged between 15 - 18 and
- at least six months in the labour market and who have left school early.

The programme has expanded progressively since its introduction and the Department’s provision is now offered at over 90 VEC centres funded by the DES and in 42 CTCs funded by FÁS. In 2005 there are approximately 3,300 learner places in the VEC sector with a total funding of approximately €46.9m.

A culturally supportive programme is operated for Travellers in a network of Senior Traveller Training Centres. There is no upper age limit in the Senior Traveller Training Centres in order to encourage parents to participate, given the influence this exerts on their children’s participation in school. There are currently 33 Traveller Training Centres catering for just over 1,000 learner places. The total funding in this area in 2005 was approximately €21.6m.

This review deals specifically with the Youthreach and STTC programme funded by the Department of Education and Science.

1.5 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the review are based on guidelines from the Department of Finance. They have been approved by the Secretary General. The terms of reference are to:
- Set out the original aims and objectives of the two programmes.
- Determine if the aims and objectives are still valid and relevant in 2007 and if
they are compatible with the overall strategy of the Department.
• Define the outputs associated with the programmes and identify the level and trend of those outputs.
• Evaluate the level and trend of costs and staffing resources associated with each programme and comment on the efficiency with which each programme has achieved its objectives.
• Evaluate if the programmes are providing for the needs of the targeted groups and if the programmes’ objectives have been achieved in an efficient and effective manner.
• Evaluate the appropriateness of the educational provision in the programmes.
• Identify gaps in provision – identify where improvements can be made – Are there alternatives that would be more efficient and effective and cater for the needs of the target groups?
• Provide potential future performance indicators that might better monitor the performance of the programmes for the learners, for the staff, for Department of Education and Science, for Department of Finance and for future reviews.
• Provide recommendations for the future and in particular recommend if the programmes – current or adapted – warrant the continued allocation of public funding on a current and ongoing basis.

1.6 Methodology

To achieve these objectives and fulfil the stipulated requirements, a range of approaches were employed:
• An historical analysis of the two programmes based on Department’s files, was undertaken. The major changes in the programmes were charted and the original objectives were examined and their development over time has been charted.
• A consultation process was undertaken to determine the opinions and attitudes of the different key stakeholders that have a relationship with the two programmes. The views expressed in the consultation process are incorporated throughout the report. A summary of the findings of the consultation process is included in Appendix 2.
• Submissions were sought and received from parties that were involved in the consultation process. The views expressed by these groups influenced the findings of the review.
• The Inspectorate piloted evaluations of educational provision in a number of the Centres and their findings are incorporated into the review.
• Statistics were used from data compiled by the National Co-ordinators of the two programmes.
• The data collected in the survey of programme participants that has been undertaken annually (each December) by the Further Education Section since 2001 were used.
• A review of relevant literature was undertaken. Key findings in relation to specific issues such as income, employment, education and poverty were considered.
• The findings of the above were discussed, analysed and evaluated by the Working Group using the Programme Logic Model with its emphasis on inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. See Appendix 3 for a diagram of the model.
• Throughout the report comparisons are made regarding the programme learners and financial data to establish trends over time and allow comment in relation to other programmes. In the majority of cases the figures for 2001 and 2005 are used. This reflects the fact that comparable data in its present format was first gathered in 2001 and also that the financial data for 2006 was the subject of audit at the time of completing this report, therefore resulting in the 2005 data being the most recent available.
• There was an independent assessment of the review. The review was subsequently finalised after consideration of the recommendations made in the independent assessment.
• Based on all of the above components, this report was prepared.

1.7 Structure of Review

Chapter 2 provides an historical analysis of the two programmes, in that it sets out the original context for their establishment and shows how, in particular, the social, legislative, economic and educational environments have evolved for early school leavers and Travellers since the late 1980s. International benchmarks of similar programmes are also described. Chapter 3 examines the original aims and objectives, and based on the findings of the review, provides renewed objectives for each of the programmes that reflect the reality of what are two very different programmes in 2007.

Chapter 4 provides a description of the management and delivery systems and the learner supports through which both programmes are provided. Chapter 5 addresses the efficiency (inputs, activities and outputs) of the two programmes focusing on eight
main areas. Chapter 6 provides a summary of the findings of the Inspectorate’s evaluation of a number of the centres which sought to determine the appropriateness of the education provision of the programmes. Chapter 7 examines the effectiveness (outcomes) of the two programmes based on the overall findings. Chapter 8 proposes a number of performance indicators that could be used in the future.

The final chapter discusses and reflects on the review and reiterates the main recommendations which are identified throughout the report. For ease of reference Table 1.1 below outlines the chapter in which each term of reference for this report is dealt with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term of Reference</th>
<th>Relevant chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set out the original aims and objectives of the two programmes</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine if the aims and objectives are still valid and relevant in 2007 and if they are compatible with the overall strategy of the Department</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define the outputs associated with the programmes and identify the level and trend of those outputs</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate the level and trend of costs and staffing resources associated with each programme and comment on the efficiency with which each programme has achieved its objectives</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate if the programmes are providing for the needs of the targeted groups and if the programmes’ objectives have been achieved in an efficient and effective manner</td>
<td>Chapters 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate the appropriateness of the educational provision in the programmes</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify gaps in provision – identify where improvements can be made – Are there alternatives that would be more efficient and effective and cater for the needs of the target groups?</td>
<td>Throughout the report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide potential future performance indicators that might better monitor the performance of the programmes for the learners, for the staff, for Department of Education and Science, for Department of Finance and for future reviews</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide recommendations for the future and in particular recommend if the programmes – current or adapted – warrant the continued allocation of public funding on a current and ongoing basis.</td>
<td>Chapter 9 and throughout the report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2 - The Programmes in context

2.1 Introduction

Ireland is in the process of transformation. Fifteen years ago it was amongst the poorest countries in the European Union. Currently it is among the richest. Where once its economy was based on farming and low-cost manufacturing, it is changing fundamentally to a knowledge society in which skills and human resources are central to sustaining competitiveness. In parallel, Irish society is becoming increasingly multicultural and urban. It is a central concern at national and European levels that participation in this society should be as full as possible and a range of policies has been set in place to promote human capital development, employment and social inclusion.


The establishment and subsequent development of both the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training programmes have also been guided by statements of national policy and evaluations, including the Report of the inter-Departmental Committee on the Problems of Early School Leaving (Department of Labour, Department of Education, 1988), the ESF Programme Evaluation Unit’s Evaluation report: Early
Specific commitments regarding early school leavers and ‘vulnerable groups and those in disadvantaged communities’ are set out in *Towards 2016* in which the importance of ‘flexible responses to meeting the needs of those young people who leave the formal education system early through second chance education measures such as Youthreach’ (page 43) are highlighted. Under *Towards 2016* and the *NDP* (2007-2013) an additional 1,000 Youthreach places will be provided by 2009. In like vein, under *The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-16*, the majority of the recommendations of the *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy* will be implemented between 2007 and 2011. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs sets out an agenda in *Tomorrow’s Skills: Towards a National Skills Strategy* (2007) (NSS). Of central importance to the present review, the group recommends that by 2020, 48% of the labour force should have qualifications at National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Levels 6 to 10; 45% of the labour force should have qualifications at NFQ Levels 4 and 5 with the remaining 7% having qualifications at Levels 1-3. The NSS envisages that the proportion of those aged 20-24 with NFQ level 4 or 5 will increase to 94% ‘either through completion of the Leaving Certificate or through equivalent, more vocationally oriented programmes’. The latter programmes are taken to include Youthreach and the STTCs and certification through FETAC.

This chapter considers the broad policy environment within which the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training programmes funded by DES operate and sets the context in which their future must be considered.

### 2.2 The social and economic environment

Youthreach was launched in 1988/9. The network of Traveller Training Centres was already in existence – the first centre was established in 1974. At the time, the Irish economy was characterised by high unemployment, especially among young people, and poor performance. However, strong economic growth began in 1993 and has continued to date, including a relative slowdown between 2000 and 2002. The economic boom brought many beneficial changes to Irish society, of which two are
especially relevant to the present review, the decline in unemployment and the reduction of general poverty.

As regards the first of these, unemployment decreased from 15.9% (222,500) in 1993 to 4.33% (91,400) in 2006. The number of long-term unemployed (i.e. out of work for a year or more) also declined substantially, from 125,400 or 8.9% of the labour force in 1993 to 27,400 or 1.4% of the labour force in 2005. Youth unemployment has also declined, from 27.3% in 1993 to 7.9% in 2005. In summary, there are now significantly lower levels of unemployment than when the two programmes were initiated.

However, within these positive trends, certain groups are at particular risk. Of these, early school leavers and Travellers are pertinent to the present enquiry. Without intervention their isolation is likely to increase in the future as the European Union and Ireland embrace the ‘knowledge economy’. Current forecasts of occupational trends in the Irish labour market predict that the shift to higher skill levels in the economy will continue (Expert Group on Future Skill Needs, 2007). The Enterprise Strategy Group (2004) argues that policy interventions will be required to ensure that persons with low-skills are not left behind in the move towards a knowledge economy. This view is endorsed by the OECD (2005:15):

An equitable distribution of skills across populations also has a strong impact on overall economic performance. Coulombe et al. (2004) demonstrate that “raising the basic skills of all individuals can have a larger impact on economic growth than investing in improving the skills of a select group of high - skilled individuals. …..” (this) helps justify policies to upgrade the skills of disadvantaged groups. It also implies that the distribution of skills is important over the long term for living standards and productivity: more equitable investments in skills can foster growth by making the overall labour force more productive.

Children and Travellers were among the vulnerable groups identified in the NAPS 2003-05. Research conducted by the ESRI (Layte et al, 2006) has found that around half of the State's 1,000,000 children are affected by income poverty at some stage during their childhood and just under a fifth (182,000) remained "locked" in poverty for between five and eight years. While Travellers are at particular risk in this regard,

poverty is ‘spatially pervasive’, that is, it is found throughout the country (Nolan et al, 1998). In addition, there is a significant association between childhood poverty and early school leaving.

2.3 The policy context

2.3.1 Education policy

The Minister for Education and Science is responsible for provision of education (initial and continuing) in schools and colleges at first, second, further and higher levels. A range of statutory bodies and executive agencies operate under the remit of the Department of Education and Science. The Department’s mission as per its Statement of Strategy (2005) is “to provide for high-quality education” which will:

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

In its Statement of Strategy 2005-2007 (DES, 2005) the Department sets out five high level goals:

1. To deliver an education that is relevant to individuals’ personal, social, cultural and economic needs.
2. To support, through education, a socially inclusive society with equal opportunity for all.
3. To contribute to Ireland’s economic prosperity, development and international competitiveness.
4. To seek to improve the standard and quality of education and promote best practice in classrooms, schools, colleges and other centres for education.
5. To support the delivery of education by quality planning, policy formulation and customer service

While each of these goals is relevant to the Youthreach and STTC programmes, the programmes themselves are addressed under the second high level goal. Goal 2 has a number of objectives and Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres come under the remit of objective 2.2:

We will promote the development of a high quality inclusive further education and vocational training system for young people and adults, which is relevant to social and economic needs.
Several of the strategies and outputs listed under Objective 2.2 are relevant to this report. See table 2.1 below.

**Table 2.1. Strategies, Outputs and Performance Indicators in Objective 2.2.**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop policy to support a framework for lifelong learning</td>
<td>Enhanced mechanisms for liaison with key departments and agencies on cross-cutting issues relating to lifelong learning policies</td>
<td>Agreed policies and strategies at National Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Level of clarity and complementarity in the structural, operational and accountability frameworks within which the various elements of lifelong learning policies are delivered to learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and promote the implementation of the National Adult Literacy Strategy</td>
<td>Delivery of Adult Literacy service by VECs</td>
<td>Participation rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funding agreement with the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) for an agreed programme of support in such areas as promotion, development of materials, training and research</td>
<td>Quality of delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Programmes that are relevant and effective in meeting the needs of the target groups (e.g. Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training, VTOS, Post Leaving Certificate)</td>
<td>Increase in the number of places provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Level of awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support VECs in the development and delivery of vocational education and training (i) to meet the needs of young early school leavers and adults requiring second chance education and (ii) to address the skills needs of entrants and re-entrants to the labour market</td>
<td>Implementation of Education Equality Initiative, Phase 2 (2004–2006)</td>
<td>Outcomes from EEI by 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funds to VECs for Community Education</td>
<td>Number of community groups supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) community strand</td>
<td>Number of participants in BTEI Community Strand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support community education</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prior educational levels, target goals, indicators and placement/progression outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote access, quality and relevance in Further and Adult Education</td>
<td>Adult Educational Guidance Service</td>
<td>Expanded service in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Childcare supports for participants on Youthreach, VTOS and Traveller Training Programmes</td>
<td>Supports in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrated model for Further Education Support Services</td>
<td>Integrated structures in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support for VECs to develop policies to meet BETAC quality assurance and validation requirements</td>
<td>Relevant training provided for staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other relevant strategies listed in the Department’s Statement of Strategy (2005) include:

- the provision of pre-service and in-service teacher education and development programmes;
- the development of ‘a continuum of special support services across the spectrum of special needs in line with best international practice’,
- the completion of ‘the rollout of the National Educational Psychological Service’ and
- provision ‘for the National Educational Welfare Board to deliver the range of services set out in the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000’.

The Department will also “operate a programme of evaluations in schools and centres for education”. While the Department commits itself to plan for and provide suitable cost-effective accommodation to underpin the delivery of quality education in Objective 4.6, no mention is made of centres for education in the strategies listed.

Of the functions and services provided by the Department and listed in the Statement of Strategy 2005 - 2007, the following are pertinent to the present review:

- Providing a wide range of programmes and services for students at every level, particularly those with special educational needs and those experiencing educational disadvantage.
- Funding adult literacy and community education, vocational education and training programmes for early school leavers, the unemployed, Travellers and participants on Post Leaving Certificate courses.

### 2.3.2 Lifelong learning

The Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training programmes are two key elements of the Government's contribution to the achievement of a lifelong learning society. The publication of *Learning For Life: White Paper on Adult Education* in 2000 marked the adoption of Lifelong Learning and interculturalism as key principles of adult educational policy in Ireland. The policies outlined in the White Paper were complemented by the report of the *Task Force on Lifelong Learning* (2002) which focused on labour market needs. The need to continuously upgrade knowledge, skills and competencies across all occupations and workplaces is now generally accepted
and this lifelong learning agenda is also regarded as key to delivering on employability and social inclusion since it enables individuals to access more and higher quality jobs (Ireland 2002: *Towards 2016* (2006)). In addition, the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs (2003, 2007) recommends that if Ireland is to attract and sustain a knowledge intensive industrial sector then formal education must be underpinned and enhanced by a commitment to lifelong learning which is complemented by a formal framework that encourages both a return to education and the constant up-skilling of the workforce.

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment has primary responsibility for training and employment services and through FAS supports training in three broad categories, employment training schemes (e.g. apprenticeship), labour market/social inclusion measures (e.g. community employment, Community Training Centres) and training for unemployed people. Other Ministers have responsibility for aspects of sectoral training, such as agriculture, fisheries and tourism.

### 2.3.3 Further education

Further education is one of the four broad sectors in education, along with primary, post-primary and higher education. It comprises a suite of programmes and measures, including:

**Full time**
- Youthreach for early school leavers in the 15-20 year age group
- Training provided in Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs) for persons aged 15 years and upwards
- The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for unemployed adults, over 21 years of age, wishing to return to learning with a view to enhancing their employability
- Post-Leaving Certificate Courses for school leavers wishing to enter the labour market and adults returning to learning who have completed senior cycle education or equivalent and who need further education and training to enhance their chances of gaining employment and/or gaining access to higher education.

**Part time**
- The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) providing flexible part-time learning opportunities for those in employment and people who are unemployed or not
in the labour market.

- Adult Literacy and Community Education for adults wishing to re-engage in education.

2.3.4 Key legislative developments

Over the last fifteen years there has been a significant growth in legislation relevant to the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training programmes. Key legislative developments and their effect relevant to this review are set out in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Key legislative developments 1998-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Effect relevant to this review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Education Act, 1998</td>
<td>To give a statutory basis to existing arrangements governing the running of schools and centres for education, including making provision, in the interests of the common good, for the education of every person in the State, including those who have a disability or who have other special educational needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Equality Act, 1998</td>
<td>To promote equality between employed persons; to counteract discrimination in, and in connection with, employment, vocational training and membership of certain bodies; to establish the Equality Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999</td>
<td>To establish the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education Training and Awards Council (HETAC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (Welfare) Act, 2000</td>
<td>To establish the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) on a statutory basis as the single national body with responsibility for school attendance and provide a comprehensive framework promoting regular school attendance and tackling the problems of absenteeism and early school-leaving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Status Acts, 2000 and 2004</td>
<td>To provide protection against direct and indirect discrimination outside of employment on 9 grounds - gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Children Act, 2001</td>
<td>To revise existing legislation governing the treatment of children in conflict with the law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and non-offending children in need of special care or protection and introduce a comprehensive preventive and restorative service response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001</td>
<td>To state the functions of VECs and their officers, including the submission of a service plan to the Minister and of an education plan to the VEC every five years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Council Act, 2001</td>
<td>To provide for the registration and regulation of teachers and to establish the Teaching Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Work Act, 2001</td>
<td>To extend the functions of VECs in relation to youth work, to provide for the development and co-ordination of organisations and persons engaged in youth work and in the provision of youth work programmes and youth work services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004</td>
<td>To provide for the education of people with special educational needs; to establish the National Council for Special Education (NCSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Act, 2005</td>
<td>To provide for the assessment of health and education needs of persons with disabilities and in turn for the delivery of appropriate responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken together the legislation has significant implications and has, according to the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools (2006);

altered the dynamic between the education stakeholders in some fundamental ways. There is now an increased awareness of rights and responsibilities accompanied by an increased sense of accountability and transparency. Its impact has certainly increased the paper work for school staff and has led to increased reliance on legal opinion regarding school policies (School Matters, p.42).

### 2.3.5 Key structural developments

Consequent on the above legislation and also on parallel policy developments, a range of services, statutory bodies and executive agencies of the Department of Education and Science has been established. Of these, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC, [www.fetac.ie](http://www.fetac.ie)) has had the most visible impact on the Youthreach and STTC programmes, offering qualifications at levels 1-6 as set out in the National Framework of Qualifications ([www.nqai.ie](http://www.nqai.ie)). While participants and staff
in the programmes are within the remit of other bodies, as set out in the above legislation, the operational relationships through which such obligations might be discharged have not been established with Youthreach and STTCs at the time of writing. These include:

- The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) (www.education.ie)
- The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) (www.newb.ie)
- The National Council for Special Education (www.ncse.ie)
- The Teaching Council (www.teachingcouncil.ie)
- A number of other bodies outside the education system also fulfil roles that directly or indirectly involve them with the programmes and/or their participants. These include FÁS (www.fas.ie), the Health Service Executive (www.hse.ie), the Youth Justice Service and local Area-based Partnerships (www.pobal.ie).

2.4 Educational participation and completion

Given the emphasis on preventative measures, why might it be necessary to have programmes targeting early school leavers and Travellers in 2007? A number of patterns of educational participation may be identified. Of these, early school leaving and educational disadvantage among Travellers and some young people are highlighted. There is a consequent need for additional out-of-school education and training options for young people and Travellers who have left school early and with poor qualifications.

2.4.1 Early school leaving

Early school leaving is one of the key indicators of educational disadvantage and has been the subject of a range of measures both in and out of school since the late 1980s. Data from the annual School Leavers’ Survey² suggest that having reduced through the 1980s and early 1990s early school leaving has stabilised. 83% of an age cohort remains in State schools to Leaving Certificate. However, such calculations are subject to reservations. The first is that there is, as the Department of Education and Science notes (2005:2), no ‘comprehensive tracking system encompassing all providers of education’. The second is that the above figure does not include those participating in further education or training after leaving school. That said, the rates have remained consistent over the last decade (Gorby et al, 2005).

Early school leaving is closely associated with social and economic disadvantage. Family, neighbourhood and school structures and processes are widely accepted as risk factors. Traditionally, males were twice as likely to leave school early as females. However, recent years have seen the male:female ratio for early school leavers even out from 66:33 in 1990 to 56:44 in 2004 (Gorby et al, 2005). Lone parents are also at risk (Mahon et al, 1998, Mayock & Byrne, 2004). McCashin (1997:32) maintains that ‘about 60%’ (of young lone parents) ‘have a level of education which would bring them to the minimum school leaving age, but not beyond’ which, he speculates, would ‘lend support to the well-established link between early school leaving and lone parenthood’.

Two broad thrusts are evident in policy on alleviating educational disadvantage in general and early school leaving in particular, prevention and second-chance education and training. Preventive actions have been refocused under DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) - An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion (2005). Its frame of reference is based on the definition of “educational disadvantage” in the Education Act (1998) as:

the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools.

The aim of the DEIS Action Plan is to ensure that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are prioritised and effectively addressed. DEIS is seen as part of a continuum of interventions to address disadvantage. Also part of the continuum is the ongoing development of provision for pupils with special educational needs following the enactment of the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act (2004) and the formal establishment of the National Council for Special Education in 2005.

2.4.2 Travellers and education

That educational disadvantage is concentrated among Travellers in Ireland has been well documented (Ireland, 1995; DES 2005, etc). Education policy towards Travellers has altered course significantly over four decades. Three major phases can be identified, assimilation, integration and, since 1995, inclusiveness and interculturalism. The last-mentioned phase was introduced with the publication by the DES of the Guidelines on the Education of Traveller Children in National Schools in
In 1995 two documents were published that had a significant impact on Traveller education at primary and post-primary level: the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community and the White Paper *Charting Our Education Future*. In the latter document, the Department of Education accepted that Travellers were a minority group with a separate culture and traditions but stated that integration in mainstream education remained the overarching policy objective. It was asserted that Traveller children have full access to education and that they (like all children) should be enabled to reach their full potential.

Participation by young Travellers in post-primary education has increased significantly in the last ten years. In the school year 1997/98 there were 600 Travellers enrolled in second-level schools. In 2005/6 this figure had increased to 2,229. However, retention in second level is poor. According to the *STEP* report (DES, 2005), only 56% of Travellers who enrolled in post-primary school in 2002 remained in school to Junior Certificate level; the comparable retention rate for the general population was 94%. In general, Traveller girls appear to settle more readily into post-primary school than their male counterparts and the majority of Travellers who complete the Junior Certificate are female. A small number of Traveller students progress to the senior cycle of post-primary education and this number is steadily increasing (see table 2.3). Each year a small minority of Traveller students progress to further and higher education. The Visiting Teachers Service for Travellers estimates that fifty four Travellers were in PLC or third-level education in October 2005.

Table 2.3: Participation of Travellers in post-primary education, 1999/00 – 2005/06

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School year</th>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>Second Year</th>
<th>Third Year</th>
<th>Transition Year</th>
<th>Fifth Year</th>
<th>Sixth year</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999/00</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/01</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/02</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/3</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/4</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/5</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>2229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DES

As regards literacy and numeracy, data from standardised tests conducted for the *STEP* survey (30 primary schools and 6 post-primary schools) indicate that over 60%
of Traveller pupils are below the 20th percentile in English reading and mathematics whilst 2% are in the top 80 - 100 quintile. The Report also notes a high proportion of Traveller pupils perform in the bottom quintile on standardised tests of literacy and numeracy in each of the primary schools surveyed. Assessment data were not available for almost 25% of pupils in reading and 30% of pupils in mathematics. Many were reported to be unable to undertake the test, or were absent during testing. Similar results were noted at post-primary level.

The present DES policy is that Traveller students should receive their education in mainstream schools and in an integrated way. This policy reflects the recommendation of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995), which state that

all Travellers do not share the same educational needs and, while special provisions may be required to meet the varied educational needs, access to mainstream provision must be regarded as the norm for Travellers

In 2002 the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science published new Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools and Guidelines on Traveller Education in Second-Level Schools. These state that the central aim of DES policy on Traveller education is

the meaningful participation and highest attainment of the Traveller child so that, in common with all the children of the nation, he or she may live a full life as a child and realise his or her full potential as a unique individual, proud of and affirmed in his or her identity as a Traveller and a citizen of Ireland (p.5).

The total number of persons in the Traveller Community nationally according to CSO (source www.cso.ie) 2002 statistics is 24,000. Nationally, 50% of Travellers are under 15 years of age. This compares to slightly less than 25% for the general population. The median age is 14 years in the Travelling Community compared to the national median age of 31. Travellers over the age of 65 account for only 1% of the total Traveller population compared to 11% of the general population (Bunyan, 2001).

Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education (2000) acknowledged the participation of almost 900 Travellers on Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centre programmes, but recognised the lack of data on the participation of Travellers within further education and third level systems. Catering for cultural diversity is
stressed and is a concern in all spheres of provision. The White Paper recommends a review of the barriers to participation of Travellers in education, to include the removal of anomalies in regard to secondary benefits and the treatment of income.

The Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy was published in November, 2006 and discusses Traveller education from preschool through to adult and Higher Education taking a lifelong perspective, accommodation, health, and other challenges. It will be referred to in subsequent chapters of this report.

2.4.3 School attendance

School attendance is seen to be predictive of school completion. Until the establishment of the National Educational Welfare Board in 2002 there was no mechanism for aggregating national data on school attendance. The STEP Report (DES 2006) identifies attendance at school by Traveller children as a matter of concern. Their average attendance rate at primary level is approximately 80%. This average rate varies from 35% to 100%, being lowest for those who live in unofficial halting sites. Absenteeism increased in post-primary schools, where students were absent, on average, for 50% of the school year. While many Traveller parents are anxious to ensure that their children progress at school, it appears that many do not fully value schooling and are not aware that good educational achievement requires regular attendance at school.

NEWB statistics for the first full year of the service (2004) show that over 80,000 children missed over 20 days of school in either primary or post-primary school. The Education (Welfare) Act allows for a child pursuing education in a place other than a school and, under Section 14(19), in a programme of education, training, instruction or work experience prescribed by the Minister. The Board’s view is that such programmes need to be formally prescribed by the Minister. At the time of writing neither Youthreach nor STTC programmes have been so prescribed.

2.4.4 Student behaviour

The question of student behaviour is a key issue in education. In February 2005 the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin T.D., established the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools (www.education.ie). The Task Force issued an Interim Report in June 2005 and its final report School Matters was
published in March 2006. In its recommendations regarding responses to the question of student behaviour the Task Force envisages a continuum linking ‘on-site and off-site’ provision. As regards the latter, it recommends (2006: 146):

- The extension of the Youth Encounter Project (YEP) model, where numbers of potential referrals in the 12-15 age range from a cluster of schools are substantial enough to warrant this development.
- The extension of the Youthreach programme to provide a Junior Youthreach, linked to existing Youthreach programmes, where numbers of potential referrals in the 12-15 age range are not sufficient to warrant the establishment of a YEP, and
- The extension of the existing Youthreach provision to accommodate the volume of referrals in the 16+ age range.

In March 2006, the Minister for Education and Science announced the establishment of new Behaviour Support Teams to work directly with post-primary schools experiencing serious behaviour problems.

2.4.5 Other aspects influencing early school leaving

A number of other aspects of the general social and economic environment are also relevant of which patterns of consumption of alcohol and drugs and patterns of youth offending are of particular significance.

Alcohol and drug abuse

The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs 2003 (ESPAD) (Hibell et al, 2004) reveals that Ireland ranks highest among 35 European countries in terms of the numbers of young people who regularly binge drink and the second highest in reported regular drunkenness. More girls (39%) than boys (31%) reported regular use of alcohol. Girls in Ireland ranked first in the prevalence of regular alcohol use, followed by girls in Denmark and Austria.

Problematic drug use, particularly involving heroin, is associated with social and economic disadvantage and poor educational outcomes (Morgan, 1999; Mayock, 2000). The Eastern Health Board (1997:49) commented that ‘of the young people
presenting for treatment, thirty percent had left school before the official school leaving age of 15, while another thirty percent had left school at the age of 15’. Mayock (2000) conducted a study of young people’s choices about drugs in inner-city Dublin. She divided her sample into abstainers, drug takers and problem drug takers. She found that 77% of the problem drug takers had left school without any formal qualification. The reverse was true of the abstainers, only one of whom had not completed a public examination.

The importance of this association between early school leaving and problematic drug use has been acknowledged in the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008. Under Action 98 the National Advisory Committee on Drugs (NACD) is given the task of carrying out a study on drug use among early school leavers and other at-risk groups. NACD was established in July 2000 to advise the Government in relation to the prevalence, prevention, treatment/rehabilitation and consequences of problem drug use in Ireland, based on the analysis of research findings and information. This study was initiated in 2007.

Youth offending

In addition to alcohol and drug abuse, there is also a strong correlation between early school leaving and youth offending (O’Mahony, 1998). Education and training programmes targeting early school leavers are seen to form part of a spectrum of prevention and response measures addressing youth offending. While it is not suggested that a given early school leaver is by definition at increased risk of offending, the association is clear. In her study of young offenders, Bates (1996) found that 80-100% had regularly been absentees from school. Bond (1999) studied young offenders in Ireland and found school expulsion and early drop-out in their backgrounds, as well as a range of other factors. O’Mahony (1993) found that 57% of a sample of prisoners had left school by 14 years of age. He also found that only 11% had stayed on after 16 years of age and only 17% had obtained educational certificates at public examinations. Likewise, in their study of the Children Court, Carroll and Meehan (2007) found that over 70% of those before the court had left school before their 16th birthday or with less than three years of post-primary schooling.

This strong association has prompted a range of preventative actions targeting young people perceived to be at risk of offending or who have committed a first offence. According to the Youth Justice Review (DJELR, 2005) the majority of offenders are dealt with under the Garda Diversion Programme by being cautioned; also, the majority of court determinations are non-custody court orders. The authors of this
review also found that, in as much as it is possible to identify direct spending, the State commits in excess of €56m annually to providing services for young offenders. The major part of this spending is on residential places which can be up to €0.5m per child per annum.

**Literacy**

Turning to indicators of educational disadvantage and barriers to social and economic participation, there is a strong association between early school leaving and poor levels of literacy (Morgan et al, 1997).

The Irish education system compares favourably with others as regards literacy and numeracy outcomes. The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is designed to embrace a broad literacy-based approach to achievement which measures the knowledge and skills considered to be important for students’ future lives. The PISA 2003 assessment was undertaken by 15 year olds across 30 OECD countries and 11 partner countries. Achievement was measured in four key domains – mathematics (the major domain), reading, science and cross curricular problem solving (minor domains). The results for Ireland indicate that, in general, the education system here is successful in attaining equity in learning outcomes, while simultaneously achieving comparatively good standards among lower achievers. Strong performance is observed in two aspects of mathematics, in reading and in science (OECD, 2004; Cosgrove et al, 2005).

However, these findings contrast sharply with those presented in the evaluation of literacy and numeracy conducted in 2004 in disadvantaged schools (DES, 2005). While acknowledging the challenging context in which these schools work and the many external factors that impact in a negative way on children’s learning, the report’s authors comment (2005:9) that ‘Nearly half the children in the schools evaluated had very low scores in reading, while almost two-thirds of children were extremely weak in mathematics’. In half the schools, for example, more than 50% of pupils performed in the bottom quintile. In two schools approximately 60% of pupils tested from first to sixth classes performed in the lowest quintile. Of the 1,477 pupils tested, only 91 pupils (6%) were reported by schools to have scored within the top band. As regards mathematics, 64% had scores that fell below the 20th percentile. In half the schools more than 60% of pupils performed in the bottom quintile. In two schools approximately 80% of pupils tested from first to sixth classes performed in the lowest quintile in mathematics and only 29 pupils (2.7%) were reported by schools to have scored within the top band. The authors of the report conclude that
'Many pupils are transferring to second-level schools with a very limited range of skills and core competencies and, as a result, their potential to benefit from second-level education is very limited' (DES, 2005:30). These results are reinforced by findings in the STEP report 2005 (see section 2.4.2 above).

Poor literacy and numeracy levels persist into adulthood and are closely associated with early school leaving. Morgan et al (1997) conducted the Irish research for the International Adult Literacy Survey which found that 500,000 (25%) Irish adults had the lowest level of literacy. They found that three fifths of those who left school without qualifications were at the lowest level of literacy performance. The study also found a strong association between experiencing these problems and early school leaving. Almost all (93%) of those who report having problems in basic skills had left school at the earliest opportunity. The publication of the Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education (DES, 2000) placed adult literacy in the foreground of education policy and participation in adult literacy classes increased seven-fold between 1997 and 2006. One of the high-level outcomes to be achieved in education under Towards 2016 is to ‘substantially reduce literacy/numeracy problems among children...and the adult population’. This is again reinforced in the NDP 2007 – 2013 where “top priorities will be to address the low literacy levels of the Irish adult population and the large numbers of Irish adults who have not completed upper second level education” (p.247). Therefore any programme targeting early school leavers and Travellers must address their literacy and numeracy needs.

2.4.6 The ‘inclusive classroom’

In line with legislation noted at 2.3.4 above and the general commitment to equality and social inclusion, it is now policy that where practicable all children should be catered for in mainstream settings. As a result, a range of separate education provision has been closed and children formerly catered for in such settings, including Travellers and children with SENs and other disabilities, are now entering mainstream schools. This is not without difficulties. Concern is frequently expressed, as in School Matters, that the move to an inclusive classroom “has occurred quickly and without adequate preparation in some cases”. The Task Force on Student Behaviour acknowledges that:

The challenge associated with this evolving and sensitive situation is considerable for all concerned - the children and their families, the Department of Education and Science, the allied agencies and statutory...
bodies linked to provision for children with disabilities, and the schools in the system.

The Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools (DES, 2002) affirm that the policy of the Department of Education and Science is that Traveller children should receive their education in a mainstream school and in an integrated way. The Guidelines emphasise the importance of educating children through an intercultural approach, so that pupils are able to recognise inequality, injustice, racism, prejudice and bias and at the same time are able to appreciate the richness of a diversity of cultures and other differences. At the request of the Department of Education and Science, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) developed Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools (2005) and also for post-primary schools (2006). The guidelines aim to support teachers, school management and other members of the school community in enabling children to participate in a multicultural society.

2.4.7 Supports

Three broad strands of support exist for Irish schools tackling educational disadvantage.

Firstly there are initiatives to alleviate educational disadvantage. Under this heading a range of separate schemes to tackle educational disadvantage was put in place in mainstream schools, for example the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, Breaking the Cycle and the School Completion Programme, improved staffing levels and the Home School Community Liaison scheme. Under the realignment introduced under the DEIS initiative, these are now being streamlined and integrated into the Schools Support Programme (SSP).

Secondly, students who have been diagnosed as having a disability have access to a range of additional resources and supports. These include resource teachers, special needs assistants, visiting teacher services and grants for purchasing special equipment. Finally, schools also have access to a number of support services\(^3\). These include learning support teachers, guidance counsellors, the National Educational Psychological Service and the curriculum support services provided through the

\(^3\) The Education Act [2. (1)] defines “support services” as the services which the Minister provides to students or their parents, schools or centres for education in accordance with Section 7. Section 7 obliges the Minister to ensure that there is made available to each person in the State support services and a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of that person.
There is a strong association between educational disadvantage, special education needs and early school leaving (McKernan, 1998). It follows that programmes targeting Early School Leaving should provide a continuation of supports to their learners which are available in post-primary schools. However, currently there is no provision whereby any support available to a young person in a post-primary school might transfer to a Youthreach or Senior Traveller Training setting and the measures noted above are not available in either programme.

In November 2006 Ministers Hanafin and de Valera announced that a new Special Educational Needs initiative for the Youthreach programme would be piloted in 20 Youthreach centres in 2007, with a view to extending it to all Youthreach centres following an evaluation.

2.5 International benchmarks

2.5.1 Rates of early school leaving

The OECD estimates that across its membership between 15% and 20% of young people leave school “without worthwhile qualifications” with a “slightly higher proportion” being classed as “at risk of failing school” (Budge et al, 2000). In the United States, Barton (2005) analysed the data on school completion in the US and found that 69.6% of an age cohort received diplomas in 2000 (i.e. completed upper secondary school). This represents a decline from 1990 of 2.4%. Significant variations were observed between states. For example in 2000 completion in Vermont was 88.2% and in Washington DC 48%. Minorities have lower completion rates than white students (Barton 2006:15). The OECD figures lend support to the view of Rourke (1994) and Hannan (1998) that the Irish figures are ‘around the average’ in terms of north-west Europe.

2.5.2 Out-of-school responses to early school leaving

Early school leaving and its consequences are universal and responses focus on both prevention and catering for those who left school early with poor or no qualifications. As in Ireland, the first of these is prevention and the second focuses on those who have already left school early and with poor qualifications or none. In their regard, a vast body of international experience in Europe, America and elsewhere has accrued, comprehending structural arrangements and experimental project actions at local,
national and transnational level. For example the Employment/Youthstart Community Initiative funded a range of projects across Europe testing approaches to the integration of disadvantaged young people between 1994 and 1999. The total ESF allocation to Youthstart over its lifetime was €425 million (plus national co-financing, giving a total of approximately €800 million). In IR£20 million was expended on 44 projects funded under this mechanism (Youthstart NSS, 1996, 1998).

Many models are found. They include Escuelas Taller y Casas de Oficio in Spain, the European network of Second Chance Schools (of which CDVEC Youthreach is a member, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home_en.html)) and the ‘Second Chance’ programme in Romania. In Iceland, Fjölsmiðjan is a non-profit institution operating a centre for training and production for young people aged 16-24 who have dropped out of education and are unemployed. It is ‘intended to be a suitable place for young people who have been in difficulties and are finding their feet once more’ (www.fjolsmidjan.is). In Denmark there are Production Schools, Municipal Youth Schools and small "Grundtvigian" independent schools in rural districts, and so on. Evidence for the effectiveness of these models is not confined to Europe. For example, Miller (2006) reviewed a number of alternative programmes in New England to identify their success factors. They included the Network in Attleboro High School, an alternative for at-risk youth, and the Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School in Lowell Massachusetts, a school established in 1995 to serve high school dropouts between 15 and 21. One hundred students are enrolled in the latter programme. The programme they follow has much in common with European and Irish models, being described as ‘an unconventional schedule and a skills-based curriculum that includes individualised learning plans, one-on-one tutoring and advising, and counselling to address students’ psychosocial needs’. With few exceptions these responses are delivered in out-of-school settings using a methodology that combines aspects of education, training and youthwork. Insofar as different emphases can be seen they are to do with national education/training environments and institutional backgrounds in education, training, employment services and youth social work rather than with what they actually do.

There is no direct comparator for Youthreach in either Northern Ireland (NI) or the United Kingdom (UK). In NI the term EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) is in use but the provision so described is generally closer to YEP schools than Youthreach. In Northern Ireland and the UK the three areas of education, training and

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4 The term refers to the 19th century Danish clergyman and philosopher N.F.S. Grundtvig, who argued that a prerequisite for active participation in a democratic society is education for all citizens on a lifelong basis.
youth are generally seen as separate domains. In the *Review of Public Administration in NI* (2005) it is emphasised that:

> Within the Department of Education’s vision for education, youth services play a key role in connecting formal and informal learning and contributing to the development of coherent pathways to learning for all young people (p89)

However, in 2006 DENI commissioned researchers based in the University of Ulster to examine how greater integration could be brought to education provision for marginalised young people. One of the research conclusions was that there were lessons to be learned in the NI context from the Youthreach model (Morgan et al, 2007)

**Production schools in Denmark (CIRIUS, 2006)**

Production schools are centres/workshops for young people under the age of 25 who have not completed a youth education programme. The purposes of the production schools are to enhance the student’s personal development and to improve their future possibilities in the education system and on the labour market.

Production schools are based on practical work in workshops, ranging from carpentry or metalwork to media or theatre workshops. Teaching is aimed at providing the young people with qualifications that will enable them to complete a vocationally qualifying education programme after leaving the production school. Students are offered individual guidance on a day-to-day basis to support their efforts to clarify their future choice of education, training and job. There are no examinations at production schools. Production schools have continuous intake. Pupils typically stay for an average of 5 months; about 30% for more than 6 months.

**Features of successful out-of-school interventions**

A number of broad analyses of successful interventions have been conducted. *School Matters* (2006) notes the characteristics which distinguish such centres are:

- The presence of caring, knowledgeable adults who understand and care deeply about young people, and who provide significant care and attention while establishing a climate of listening, trust and mutual respect.
- A sense of community where the young person has a sense of belonging, attachment and of “family”.

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• A focus on problem-solving rather than problem identification.
• An approach that is oriented on an asset rather than a deficit model whereby the young person feels valued, connected and purposeful.
• Programmes provide both safety and structure. High expectations for success are communicated and the young person agrees an individual learning plan that is attainable and monitored at regular intervals, and supported by a variety of resources.
• More freedom of choice given to the students, and a regime that is more informal and more adult than might be the case in mainstream settings.
• A curriculum that is holistic, learner-centred and experiential. It is matched to the student’s needs, interests and learning styles, with success experiences built in.
• Many programmes integrate academic and vocational education, with career development and work-based learning as features.
• Students in alternative programmes may be able to access other services with the help of staff from the Centre e.g. medical, dental, counselling etc.

These findings are echoed in an extensive survey of the literature and a report on key informants’ experiences in Alternative Education which was conducted in 2001 on behalf of the Ministry of Education, New Zealand by researchers in Auckland College of Education (O’Brien et al, 2001). The objective was to determine the indicators of successful alternative education programmes/providers, consider the hallmarks of quality, and successful outcomes, as well as to investigate the experiences of principals/schools with different providers. The researchers found that four areas are associated with effective provision:

1. **The place where the programme operates**

   Quality programmes need to be in compact settings that are unlike school. They may be conducted indoors or out, and students feel a sense of programme ownership because in the small group their voice is heard. A sense of emotional security is engendered, and their personal interests are reflected in the programme and the room décor. These features encourage improved attendance and socially acceptable behaviour that are at the basis of effective alternative education programmes.

2. **The students**

   The students are supported to make a commitment to the programme, and an
attempt is made in quality provision to value students’ achievements and recognise the difficulties of the adolescent life-stage, by encouraging peer support, and conditions to promote self esteem.

3. **The students' families**

   Students’ families are perceived as very important in terms of reinforcing the programme at home and partnership with programme providers. Whilst family disruption may also be contributory to student failure, the importance of trying to build a relationship with the family for the benefits which can accrue is a first priority for alternative educators.

4. **The programme curriculum**

   Effective alternative programmes offer more individualised curriculum support than the mainstream. They deliver literacy, numeracy and other areas of content knowledge, as information required by students in real life situations in order to maximise learning opportunities rather than presentation in “subject packages.” Diagnostic assessment is important to provide guidance in planning individualised programmes.

   The researchers summarise that quality education programmes need to be entirely attuned to the individual student by an immediate assessment of needs, and a supportive environment that will re-engage the student with learning. They add that while ‘alternative education programmes should be accountable and afford the very highest level of professionalism… they cannot be standardised’ as this would run ‘counter to meeting the criteria laid down by the quality indicators’.

   The findings are also consistent with European experience, for example as identified in *It’s magic – A broader approach to guidance with the active involvement of young people* (European Commission, 2000). According to this report, the common features of out of school programmes may be summarised as follows.

   - **Settings**
     The programmes are delivered in ‘informal’ or ‘non-formal’ out-of-school locations. They develop and maintain strong links with other actors in the participants’ lives, in particular with families and communities and with prospective employers. In an increasingly multi-cultural environment, they must also demonstrate cultural sensitivity and be proactive in addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups.
• Methodology
Staff working on these programmes are generally multi-skilled and combine formal and informal methodologies deriving from education, training and youth work. The learner is placed at the centre of the process and programmes are allowed considerable flexibility in responding to particular needs and situations. There is a strong relational basis, with a particular emphasis on adult-to-adult relationships. There is a strong emphasis on experiential or practical learning and learners are actively involved in the programme’s activities and direction. Increasingly there is also an emphasis on quality, that is, on giving learners a high quality and high status learning or training experience. In a similar vein, it is also understood that learners should achieve appropriate qualifications and where possible the same as from school or vocational training.

• A pathways approach
In this pathway approach (European Commission, 1998, 2000), an individual learning/education plan includes personal and sometimes vocational goals. Given the circumstances and expectations of early school leavers, these may be short-term and modest in ambition. Youthstart pathways identified four stages:

1. Engagement
2. Empowerment
3. Learning and
4. Integration

Guidance recurs in the literature as being important at all stages of the individual’s participation. In Denmark there are 46 Youth Guidance Centres (Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning) focusing on the transition from compulsory to youth education. Particular emphasis is placed on the blend of formal and informal approaches known as MAGIC (mentoring, advocacy, guidance, information and counselling) (European Commission, 2000). Watts (2002:9), in reflecting on the experience of European YOUTHSTART projects, notes the importance of young people ‘having access to a trusted adult who understands their needs and demonstrates genuine care and concern’. This person, he adds, might be a guidance counsellor, a teacher or someone working in the community. Watts also argues ‘the need for some space where their needs and hopes can be articulated and addressed’ and in
turn for training and support for teaching staff to deal with new roles and ‘the complex and stressful situations with which they are confronted’.

- Appropriate supports
  Successful responses to the needs of early school leavers also incorporate appropriate supports, for example for learners with special education needs or disabilities, drug or alcohol dependency or housing needs. In general this involves significant levels of inter-agency collaboration and networking.

**Germany – a case study**

Recent years have seen considerable revision of German provision for unemployed early school leavers. The scope of the Vocational Training Act was expanded in 2003 to include training preparation as a separate part of vocational training. Various measures operate, e.g. “training preparation is offered by vocational schools” and the Federal Employment Agency offers training preparation programmes’ outside school… in specialised education institutions’ (Block-Meyer, 2006). Many of these are comprehended under the general heading of assistance programmes. The aim of assistance programmes is “to help those living, learning and training against particularly problematic backdrops to acquire vocational qualifications and thus improve their chances of getting a job and leading an independent life”. Since vocational training plays an important role in securing opportunities for social participation, assistance programmes are regarded as a key area in which education policy must fulfil its social responsibility. Assistance programmes come into play at an early stage and are thus seen to be particularly effective in preventing unemployment and loss of social status.

They form part of a social model founded on solidarity and social cohesion. Political support has increased for such programmes in Germany and “leading politicians have explicitly acknowledged the value of this area of educational policy”. Assisting the disadvantaged is regarded as an ongoing task and an integral part of vocational education and training. The basis for this argument is the fact that there will always be young people who cannot integrate into the worlds of training and work without outside support. Assistance programmes are the logical conclusion of decades of experience with young people who perform poorly at school. Such schemes should no longer be seen merely as emergency or stopgap solutions during periods of shortfall in the number of training positions; they have taken on a significance of their own within the field of vocational training. This means that educational and vocational training
2.6 The Youthreach and STTC programmes in context

A number of conclusions can be reached from this chapter.

- Firstly, notwithstanding the exceptional economic success that Ireland has enjoyed over the last decade a number of disadvantaged groups remain (including early school leavers and Travellers) and their needs are recognised in the national policy context.
- Secondly, notwithstanding a substantial range of preventive measures being in place, significant problems remain regarding student behaviour and motivation, special education needs and early school leaving.
- Thirdly, the international experience supports the provision of an out-of-school mode by which both young people and adults may return to and/or complete their education in a non threatening learner centred environment.
- Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training are two programmes providing just such an alternative mode of participation and completion.
Chapter 3 - Recasting the Objectives of the Programmes

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the objectives of the programmes provided in Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs). The chapter addresses two of the terms of reference for this review i.e. i) to set out the original aims and objectives of the two programmes and ii) to determine if the aims and objectives are still valid and relevant in 2007 and if they are compatible with the overall strategy of the Department. It begins by looking at the original and individual objectives for both programmes and describes how, from 2001 onwards, they both came to share a common objective. This chapter traces the development of both programmes, with a particular emphasis on their individual target groups, with a view to highlighting important stages in the evolution of the programmes. It will be highlighted how, amidst all of this change and development, the current common objective for the programmes is no longer seen as valid in the face of changed societal, economic, cultural and educational circumstances. Reference is made to the findings of the consultation process carried out as part of this review to support the need for change in the direction and objectives of the programmes. The chapter concludes by proposing new objectives for both programmes, along with renewed programme structures.

3.2 Programme origins and development

STTCs were established in the 1970s with the aid of European funding to address the educational and employability needs of members of the Traveller community. Youthreach centres on the other hand were established in the late 1980s with the aid of EU funding to address the education, training and pre-employment needs of early school leavers. The written objectives for both Youthreach and STTCs upon their establishment clearly highlighted the important role they were to play in preparing learners for entry to the labour market. The original objective of Youthreach was stated as follows:

\[ \text{to provide participants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to successfully make the transition to work and adult life} \]
The original objective/aim for STTCs was set out in the original code of practice (1974) when the first STTC was established as:

\textit{The aim of the programme is to provide members of the Traveller community with the necessary skills that will allow them to access employment}

In their initial years, the STTCs primarily followed a prescribed course whereas, from their outset, there was much greater flexibility in the course content that could be offered in Youthreach centres. A common feature in the development of the programmes from the late 1980s onwards was the notion that centres should develop a flexible approach to education and training programmes in response to the needs of the client group in a particular area as opposed to implementing a programme prescribed at national level. While both programmes were established with their own distinct objective/aim they have shared the same core objective since 2001 under the terms of the Department of Education and Science (DES) document \textit{Framework of Objectives for Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres}. The common objective of both programmes, according to this framework, is:

\textit{to provide participants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to successfully make the transition to work and adult life, and to participate fully in their communities}

While the Youthreach programme always had two distinct phases (i.e., foundation and progression phases) this framework introduced these two phases into the programmes offered in the STTCs for the first time. Each phase has its own individual objective. The objective of the foundation phase is stated in the framework document as being:

\textit{to enable participants to recognise and respond positively to their learning difficulties, to help overcome them, and develop self-confidence and the skills and competencies essential for further learning, for employment and adult life.}

The objective of the progression phase is seen as providing:

\textit{for more specific development through a range of education, training and work experience options which will complement and build on the Foundation Year, and promote their access to mainstream education, training and employment opportunities}
While the normal duration of each of these phases is estimated as being one year it is acknowledged that the length of each phase is specific to a learner and is dependent on his/her own individual needs. The movement by learners to the progression phase in STTCs has proved more challenging. Therefore, centres generally group learners into either year one or year two but will allow a learner a longer or shorter time, depending on their individual needs.

By tracing the development of the programmes it can be seen how they, and in particular their focus, evolved.

3.2.1 Youthreach – Target Group and Development

The first Youthreach centres were established in 1989. At that time the centres were aimed at young people aged 15-18 years who had dropped out of school and were unable to access mainstream education or training programmes or were unemployed. Such early school leavers generally had left school with less than five D grades in their Intermediate Certificate (the precursor to the Junior Certificate), or had other learning difficulties. Since 1989 the development of the Youthreach programme can be divided into five distinct phases:

1. **Introduction and initial development (1989-1993)**
   The programme was launched by eleven Vocational Education Committees (VECs) each of which served areas of high youth unemployment. The number of centres was progressively extended as needs were identified. Considerable energy was expended on skill and programme exchanges with a view to developing and embedding a distinct and effective approach to working with early school leavers.

2. **Consolidation and expansion (1993-1997)**
   From 1993 to 1997 workshops and centres reported waiting lists. Certification mechanisms were developed and a range of new delivery and support needs were identified, both by staff and by evaluation reports. Moreover, questions were raised concerning the simplicity of the early definition of early school leaving and the adequacy of the scale of response.

   From 1997 new early school leaving preventive measures were introduced into schools and there was increased labour market activity. Early school leaving increased nationally while youth unemployment fell. Waiting lists decreased
and in many cases disappeared and providers explored more innovative ways of working with young people to take account of the dynamism and volatility of the labour market. Further advances in qualifications mechanisms were made through the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) (the precursor to the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)) and progression options, such as the Leaving Certificate Applied, were introduced into centres. The Youthreach 2000 consultation process was launched by the National Co-ordinators of both Youthreach and the STTCs.


Arising from the Youthreach 2000 consultation process, the Quality Framework Initiative (QFI) (section 4.14) was established and piloted. Thereafter, a general process of engagement with the mainstream education system was set in motion.

In September 2001 the target group for Youthreach was reconsidered by the DES and two priority groups were identified. The revised information stated that a priority group 1 learner must:

- be aged between 15 and 20 years of age at the commencement of their engagement with Youthreach
- have left school
- be unemployed
- have no or incomplete qualifications from Junior Cycle, i.e., less than five D grades at ordinary level in the Junior Certificate or otherwise lack competencies or skills in the area of inter-personal communications, enterprise or motivation

The revised information went on to state that these age and qualification criteria could be extended in the case of the following groups, to be known as priority group 2:

- Lone parents
- Referrals from former NRB (National Rehabilitation Board) funded courses
- Trainees who have been released from detention
- Trainees whose personal circumstances are such that a foundation education and training programme is the most appropriate option for them
to pursue, qualifications notwithstanding

- Travellers
- Drug Court participants.

Further, the revised information emphasised that due care needed to be exercised regarding the recruitment of persons under 15 years or over 20 years. The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was established in 2002 and this generated additional demands for access to the programmes. Many centres again reported waiting lists, but they also identified an increase in learners reporting special educational needs (SENs) and emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBDs).

In this period diverse qualification options, guidance services, childcare and information technology became increasingly characteristic of the programmes for learners and continuous professional development became a key component of staff support through the offices of the national coordinators of both programmes. In September 2004 Youthreach centres and STTCs were designated as “Centres for Education” under the Education Act (1998) (Circular 49/04).

In summation, the Youthreach programme grew throughout the 1990s and it focused increasingly on both individualised personal and educational objectives. *Learning for Life, the White Paper on Adult Education* (Ireland, 2000) proposed that the upper age limit for Youthreach be extended from 18–20 years. The intention of this age extension was to allow for seamless progression by learners to VTOS (lower age limit of 21 years) and other courses. Guidelines to give effect to this improvement were issued to centres by DES in 2001.

5. **2007 onwards**

Currently, the Youthreach programme is generally viewed as an alternative to mainstream second level education and therefore as a key element of the continuum promoting education and training completion. It is also seen as a portal programme for young adults on the lifelong learning spectrum and, most importantly, as part of the DES response to early school leaving and educational disadvantage in Ireland.
3.2.2 STTCs – Target Group and Development

The first STTC was established in 1974 and, as stated previously, was set up to address the educational and employability needs of members of the Traveller community in a particular region. Since 1974 the growth and development of the Senior Traveller Training Centres can be divided into three distinct phases:

1. 1970s – 1980s

Upon their establishment the target group for these centres was mainly young Travellers who had left school with either minimal or no qualifications. The centres were developed as a means of providing compensatory education and training so that Travellers might benefit from a better quality of life and be better placed to access formal employment. The initiative in setting up centres was taken up by local voluntary groups working for Travellers. The Industrial Training Authority (AnCo/FÁS) became involved in their development with substantial financial investment from the European Social Fund. Some 10 years after the first STTC was established there were fifteen centres providing places for 350 young male and female Travellers.

2. 1990s

Towards the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s the increased linkage of employment to educational qualifications posed particular dangers of social and economic exclusion for Travellers who were not engaging with the formal education system. Therefore, the STTCs began to place growing emphasis on access for Travellers to mainstream education and training, as well as employment opportunities. In 1996 a total of 529 learners attended the centres of which 201 were male (38%) and 328 were female (62%); the highest number at that time since centres were established. This number rose to 550 the following year. In 1998 a changeover of responsibility for the network of STTCs from FÁS to the education sector took place and centres began to focus even more on providing learners with a holistic education programme; one that would encourage them to move onto further education programmes, as well as into employment. Further, the limit on the number of adult Travellers that could be enrolled in a particular centre was removed.

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5 The largest number of adult Travellers that could be enrolled in a centre prior to 1998 was five.
3. **2000 onwards**
Currently, there is no upper age limit to those who can enrol at a centre. This relaxing of the upper age limit of attendees was intended to encourage parents to attend centres, given the impact this can have on their children’s subsequent participation in schooling. This resulted in a marked increase in the number of adult Travellers (over 18 years) attending centres. In 1997 55% of learners enrolled in STTCs were under 18 years of age. This has decreased to 21% in 2005. Age profiles are presented and discussed in Chapter 7.

The core principles underlying the delivery of a programme in a centre are:
- Focussing on a holistic curriculum catering to the learners’ educational and personal needs within their cultural and community context and experience
- Seeing the learner as the centre of the learning process being supported by teachers and other learners. Learning is seen as construction rather than instruction
- Placing a focus on support for learners at key transition points, from school to work or further education/training

Today, STTCs are generally viewed as having a dual purpose. Firstly, to provide an alternative to post-primary school for young Travellers experiencing difficulties with mainstream education, and secondly as a second chance education provision for adults who wish to return to education. The latter is now the dominant purpose.

### 3.2.3 Quality Framework Initiative

Both Youthreach and STTC programmes now operate within the Quality Framework Initiative (QFI). The objective of this initiative is to ensure continuous improvement in the educational service offered by centres and in a manner that meets the needs of learners, staff and management (see section 4.14)

### 3.3 Renewed objectives for the programmes

As can be seen both programmes have developed significantly since their establishment, as have the contextual factors in which they operate. The objectives of
the programmes were refocused in 2001 but even since then there has been even further significant change - change in societal, economic, cultural and educational circumstances, change in how the programmes operate, changes in age profile in STTCs and change in the range of learners they now serve. In more recent times, for example, there has been recognition of the divergence of the target groups associated with both programmes and a subsequent disquiet with regard to the stated objective that exists for centres. This disquiet with regard to the objective for the programmes came into sharp focus during the consultation process embarked upon as part of this review.

3.3.1 Voices from the consultation process on the objective for the programmes

While consultations found some differences in the conclusions drawn about whether or not the 2001 objective for the programmes was still relevant it can be said that, on the whole, there was universal agreement concerning the need to establish separate and distinct objectives for Youthreach and STTCs. Those consulted felt that the current objective was no longer appropriate. It needed to be broadened to take account of the diverse range of specific needs of the learners. It was generally felt that the current objective did not accurately represent the diverse work being carried out in centres and, in some respects, actually under-represented the nature of the work currently being undertaken. References were made to changes that had occurred since the programmes were established. The curriculum in centres, for example, was now partly similar to that in second level schools and centres were now designated “Centres for Education” under the Education Act (1998). The social context, it was mentioned, had also changed primarily as a result of legislation, staffing increases at second level, behaviour difficulties and the role of Youthreach and STTCs in relation to these behavioural difficulties (viz. School Matters, Chapter 9, 2006).

The difference in age profiles between and within the two programmes was cited as a major reason for redeveloping separate objectives for the programmes. While Youthreach catered for learners aged between 15 and 20 years, for example, there is no upper age limit to those who could enrol at a STTC. The age range in STTCs is very diverse and they cater for two very different groups; (i) the majority - older

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6 This was particularly true during consultations with representatives of strategic organisations (e.g. IVEA, AEOA, TUI, NEWB, NAYC, FAS, ADSTTC, NATC), agencies, services or professional groups whose work might be considered to relate to the programmes (e.g. VTST, NCSE, NEPS, SCP, SIU of DES, ILO, NTWF, Pavee Point, ITM, NEOTE) and with representatives of operational personnel from a sample of centres.
people who left school early or maybe never went to school (for whom the centre might represent a first chance to education) and (ii) the minority - young early school leavers.

During the consultation process several references were made to changes that had occurred in the category of learners now being catered for by Youthreach. The profile of participants and societal expectations had, it was reported, changed significantly. The increasing numbers of participants with special educational needs and the emphasis on certification resulted in new challenges for staffing provision, programme content and support services. There were differences in terms of age (younger), in the increased level of difficulties presented by learners in the social, emotional, educational and health-related fields. A number of factors, it was highlighted, had resulted in these young people now attending Youthreach. Reasons were offered which included improvements in the quality of interagency relationships in local areas, the increase in the number and variety of agencies referring young people to Youthreach and the gradual increase in school completion rates, allied to the introduction of the NEWB service and the pressure now being put on schools to retain students. (The NEWB pointed out that it does not deliver a service to centres at present as the programmes have yet to be prescribed under the Education Welfare Act, 2000).

Those consulted were of the view that the principal objective of Youthreach should be on providing an individualised, flexible and balanced programme which facilitates the young person to move towards positive participation in society. Learners, it was stated, were no longer preparing just for the work force in the centres, but also for further study, apprenticeships and worthwhile employment. The personal and social development of participants, it was suggested, also needed to be recognised as an explicit objective. A standardised objective, it was claimed, was now needed for Youthreach which incorporates personal, social and health development, positive learning experiences, experiential learning, positive relationships, teamwork and individual learning plans.

With regard to STTCs those consulted expressed the view that the current objective did not reflect the historical context of Traveller education and the role that STTCs played in acknowledging and respecting Traveller culture. The current objective, it was suggested, did not reflect the legislative and structural bias with regard to housing, employment and general discrimination towards the Travelling community. It was further suggested that it did not reflect the fact that for many learners it was their first time in an education setting where they experienced a positive interaction. It
was mentioned repeatedly that the objectives laid out in the two phased approach were not being met mainly due to time constraints. The reference to “adult life” in the current objective was seen as being inappropriate for STTC learners because more and more of the learners are adults. The idea that adult Travellers needed “skills and attitudes to successfully make the transition to work and adult life”, as portrayed in the current objective for the programmes, was described by some as derogatory. The consultation process found that the term “adult life” was generally not viewed as referring to a better quality of life but some of those consulted suggested that the term should be viewed in exactly these terms. It was also suggested during the consultation process that a reference to “life in the home” should be included in the objective in the case of STTCs, while the reference to “work” should be to “external work” as STTCs were often seen as a place of work by the learners themselves.

The question of the desirability of including a reference to “access to mainstream education” or “employment” in any revised objective was discussed during the consultation process. Some differences emerged between those who thought any renewed objective(s) should include outcomes such as engagement in employment or mainstream education, as these were desirable goals, and those who thought they should not refer to outcomes that might not be realistic in the short term or desired by the learners themselves. It was suggested that “employability” rather than “employment” might be a more appropriate term since factors such as discrimination by employers and a tradition of self-employment meant that employment in the mainstream economy may not be achieved as an outcome for many of the Traveller learners.

Those consulted felt that the different needs of Travellers must be addressed within any renewed objective(s) for the STTC programme, and employment as an objective needed to be of lesser importance to the personal, social and educational development of participants. Given that 80% of enrolment in STTCs is adult, the view was expressed by a number of participants that social inclusion, community development, personal empowerment and personal advancement should all be included in any renewed objective(s).

3.4 The renewed objectives

The changes and developments in the programmes and further afield, along with the findings of the consultation process, warranted that the current common objective, pertaining to both be reviewed. In tandem, the current programme structures also needed to be reviewed. The Working Group is of the view that the following
statements more accurately reflect the objectives of the respective programmes taking into account the findings of the consultation process.

3.4.1 Renewed objective for the Youthreach programme

*The Youthreach programme seeks to provide early school leavers (16-20 years) with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society and progress to further education, training and employment.*

There are two significant differences between this renewed objective and the programme’s original objective.

The first concerns the reference to the lower age limit of learners that can be accepted onto the programme (i.e., 16 years). The raising of this age limit from fifteen to sixteen years is reflective of the fact that the current school leaving age is sixteen years. The Working Group acknowledges the views expressed by the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools that it is necessary to provide out-of-school options for those young people under 16 who will not, or can not be permitted to, remain in school. In many areas the Youthreach centre offers the only option for these young people to continue in education and to have their rights to minimum education vindicated. While these young people may attend at a Youthreach centre if appropriate, it is the view of the Working Group that first and foremost arrangements for their tuition and support should be the responsibility of the second level system. Only in exceptional circumstances should enrolled learners be over 20 years old.

The second difference between both objectives concerns the reference to “confidence” in the renewed objective. This is included by way of encouraging learners to become fully participative members of society, as envisaged by the Task Force on Active Citizenship (2006).

3.4.2 Renewed objective for the STTC programme

*The Senior Traveller Training programme is a positive action by the Department of Education and Science which seeks to provide an opportunity for members of the*
Traveller community and other learners (18 years and over) to:

- engage in a programme of learning that acknowledges and respects their cultural identity
- acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence to:
  - participate fully in society (Traveller community and settled community)
  - enhance their employability
- progress to further education, training, employment or other life choices.

This renewed objective, while maintaining the focus of the original objective on providing participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate fully in society and to access employment, also introduces a number of new elements. Specifically, the objective now:

- makes references to the fact that a programme offered in an STTC is a “positive action” by the Department of Education and Science that acknowledges and respects the cultural identity of Travellers.
- places an emphasis on increased confidence, along with an emphasis on knowledge and skills. These traits are essential ingredients to allow a person to participate fully in their society (whether that society is the Traveller community or the settled community) and to successfully access employment.
- makes reference to the term “employability”. A critical success factor is whether a programme has succeeded in enhancing a learners’ employability. It is recognised that specific difficulties exist for members of the Traveller community with regard to the issue of finding and securing employment.
- promotes a wider range of progression routes for learners to include not only employment, but further education and training and other life choices also. Life choices here can be taken to mean a wide range of personal choices that might include areas such as family commitments or the Traveller economy.
- introduces an increase to the entry age (i.e., to 18 years and over). While the age profile of participants has been increasingly moving to over 18 year olds in recent times there is no doubt that this formal proposal for an increase in the entry age will create some challenges across the network of centres.
3.5 Programme phases – a common structure

As mentioned in section 3.2, the current programmes have two distinct phases; a foundation and a progression phase. Given the trends in practice in centres it was decided by the Working Group that the structure of the respective programmes also required examination. The consultation process highlighted that the two existing phases were no longer relevant and that their objectives were no longer appropriate. Those consulted were of the view, for example, that it was not possible to assess the progress made by learners in terms of discrete units of learning as suggested by reference to foundation and progression phases. These phases, it was suggested, were not discrete stages and didn’t always occur because of the rolling nature of learners’ entrance and the different educational attainment of learners on entry.

The Working Group concluded that a reorganisation of the programme into four phases would better serve the needs of learners. This is in line with best European practice, as referred to in Chapter 2. Such programme reorganisation was also recognised in the report entitled Youthreach 2000: A Consultative Process (Stokes, 2000). The four phases are outlined below.

1. Engagement Phase
   An engagement/gateway phase in which the learners needs are identified and an individual learner plan is negotiated, within the framework of the centre’s capacity.

2. Foundation Phase
   A foundation phase in which learners are supported in overcoming personal, social and learning difficulties, developing self-confidence to enable them to participate in society and in gaining a range of competencies essential for further learning.

3. Progression Phase
   A progression phase providing for more specific development that continues the learner’s social and personal development but also provides a range of educational, training and work experience options to enable the learners to have the knowledge, skills, confidence and competence to enhance their employability so as to progress to further education (e.g., VTOS, PLCs), training, employment or other life choices and to participate fully in society (Traveller community and settled community).
4. Transition Phase

This phase would be very much focussed on supporting the learner in his/her progression from the programmes to further education (e.g., VTOS, PLCs), training, employment or other life choices.

The normal duration of each of the first two phases, as per the current arrangement in centres pertaining to the existing foundation phase, would continue to be one year or the length of time needed by an individual to attain the required level based on their individual learning needs. The progression phase could be extended from one to two years for those pursuing the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Applied or FETAC awards at levels 1 – 4/5. The proposed new transition phase would be of the length of time needed by an individual to manage the successful transition from the programme onto the next phase of their life. This could involve, for example, youth advocates who would work with young learners from Youthreach during their transition phase or staff from a Youthreach or STTC visiting the learners’ transition place to ensure as effective a transition as possible from their centre. Figure 3.1 represents these four phases in graphical form.

Figure 3.1 The proposed four distinct phases of programmes offered in Youthreach and STTCs
3.6 Recommendations

Following extensive literature review, consultation with relevant agencies, bodies and appropriate centre personnel, learners, centre evaluations and discussion by the Working Group the following recommendations are made:

1. The separate and renewed objectives, as stated in section 3.4, should be adopted and applied in the case of the programmes provided in Youthreach centres and STTCs. These renewed objectives are compatible with the overall strategy of the Department of Education and Science (which was addressed in some detail in chapter 2). The importance of education for all should be promoted as a key component within the Traveller culture.

2. The programmes offered in Youthreach centres and STTCs should be organised so as to operate four distinct phases: (i) engagement, (ii) foundation, (iii) progression and (iv) transition. Each phase in each centre should be planned so as to meet the needs of its particular cohort of learners.

3. Youthreach should cater for early school leavers aged 16 to 20 years. Provision for learners aged 15 years and younger should be addressed separately by the Department of Education and Science. In this regard, the Working Group notes the recommendation of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools (School Matters) about alternative educational provision in Youth Encounter Project Schools and Junior Youthreach. This recommendation should be taken into account in the context of determining an appropriate model, or models, of response.

4. STTCs should cater for adults aged 18 years and older. This will free up places in the centres for Travellers aged 18 years and older. Travellers under 18 years should be enrolled in mainstream inclusive settings with their peers. This transition of centres from their current make-up (age 15+) to centres that cater for adults only (age 18+) should be effected over a 3 year period.
Chapter 4 - Management and delivery systems for the Youthreach and STTC programmes

4.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have outlined the policy context in which the Youthreach and STTC programmes are delivered and the general objectives of both programmes. This Chapter outlines the management and delivery systems through which both programmes are provided. The programmes are managed at national level by the Department of Education and Science and at local level by Vocational Education Committees. Both are delivered in centres for education (as defined in the Education Act (1998) Section 10(4)) in out-of-school settings. In the case of Youthreach, these are operational for 226 days per annum and are closed for one month in summer and for public holidays. STTCs are operational for 209 days per annum. They are closed for 6 weeks during the summer and for public holidays.

4.2 The Department of Education and Science

The Department of Education and Science (DES) funds both programmes with the aid of EU co funding (see section 5.1.6). It is responsible for developing national policy, procedures and practices, programme guidelines, monitoring and external evaluation of the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training programmes. The DES was responsible for the delivery of 3,292 Youthreach places and 1,084 STTC places in 2006. These places are allocated to Vocational Education Committees (VECs). An additional 400 Youthreach places were allocated in March 2007.

In the Department, the Further Education Section has responsibility for delivering both programmes. It allocates financial resources to VECs to directly manage the two programmes. These financial arrangements will be examined in greater detail below. In addition, since January 2006 the Centres delivering the programme have been subject to evaluation by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science (see Chapter 6).

The DES collects and analyses financial and other data furnished by the VECs (see 4.15.1). In the Department there is an Executive Officer working full time on the two programmes. In addition, the two programmes are part of the work remit of a Higher
Executive Officer (50%), an Assistant Principal (30%) and a Principal Officer (15%). An estimate of the cost of this work is discussed in section 5.1.5.

4.3 Vocational Education Committees (VECs)

VECs receive a pay and non-pay allocation for both programmes and from this they employ the staff and arrange the premises. In each VEC the CEO has ultimate responsibility for delivery and management of the programmes. Line management is usually devolved to an Education Officer or to an Adult Education Officer (AEO). In general, VECs incorporate the two programmes within their quality assurance procedures for FETAC purposes. The Vocational Service Support Unit (VSSU) has circulated general guidelines pertaining to the management of centres. These are intended to standardise procedures across the country as regards expenditure and accountability. (The Vocational Support Services Unit was set up by the Department of Education and Science to provide support services to all VECs. In particular it carries out internal audits of VECs and examines systems in place and advises on same. The Unit has a staff of 4 and is operated through Co. Cavan VEC)

The DES’ Youthreach programme is also delivered by five non-Governmental organisations (NGOs) – Kerry Diocesan Youth Services (75 places), the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA, 42 places), Limerick Youth Services (25 places), Mullingar Community Training Centre (15 places) and the Súbla Project in Waterford (5 places). In all cases the resources are channelled through VECs which maintain close liaison arrangements with the providers. Finally, 25 and 18 places respectively are allocated under Youthreach to the Pathways and Bridge projects operated by CDVEC’s Prison Education service. These last two projects are not otherwise associated with Youthreach.

4.4 Boards of Management (BOMs)

An additional layer of management operates for centres delivering the STTC programme. STTCs are managed by community based Boards of Management (BOMs). When the centres were funded by FÁS, such BOMs were mandatory. When the DES assumed responsibility for STTCs and allocated responsibility for the Centres to VECs, the BOMs were established as statutory sub-committees of the VECs under the 1930 Vocational Education Act. These Boards comprise members of the VECs, local representative organisations, including Traveller organisations and members of the Traveller community. They are intended to play a particular role in ensuring that the views of Travellers are central to the decision-making process that
impacts on the day-to-day activities of centres and that Traveller culture is fostered and appreciated. Many Board members are volunteers. Members are reimbursed for expenses. Boards of Management have also been established for Youthreach in a small number of VECs.

Figure 4.1   Macro organisational structure of programmes

4.5   What do the programmes do and how do they do it?

From the outset both programmes offered early school leavers an appropriate learning experience. In line with international best practice as noted in Chapter 2 above, this was delivered in small, out-of-school settings, appropriate to the learners educational and other needs, in line with their aptitudes and consistent with community and cultural values and requirements. The following are the key elements involved:

4.5.1   Recruitment

Participants of both programmes come through a variety of channels. Younger participants are referred by their existing school, for example by personnel involved in School Completion or Home-School Community Liaison, guidance counsellor, Visiting Teacher for Travellers or principal. Others self-refer. Increasingly Education Welfare Officers are involved, although officially they only provide a service to schools. Other referring agents include, for example, health service personnel (social
workers and district nurses in particular), youth workers, Gardaí and the Probation Service.

When Youthreach was established there was a general guideline that a participant should have been out of school for six months. This was a legacy of the Social Guarantee system of the 1980s and was introduced for two general reasons:

- (as part of a labour market measure) to ensure that those recruited were indeed unemployed i.e. had not been able to secure a foothold in the labour market, thereby keeping the focus on Priority Group 1 early school leavers and
- (at the request of schools) to ensure that those recruited were not 'pulled' out of school into training programmes.

Various legal, institutional and social changes have rendered these concerns obsolete as do fears regarding the risk of young people being drawn into offending and risk-taking behaviours. Being out of a learning environment for too long may impact negatively on their interests in education. As regards the first reason above, at this stage of the evolution of the Irish labour market it is generally the case that a young person in the age range who is not in school and not working is by definition an eligible candidate. As regards the second, while young Travellers remain a concern in this regard7, the introduction of a very extensive range of preventive measures in schools (now gathered under DEIS, e.g. SCP, HSCL), the establishment of the NEWB and the range of entitlements comprehended in the Education Act, the Education Welfare Act, the EPSEN Act and the Children’s Acts means that the emphasis has switched to child wellbeing, continuity of provision and retention within education where not in school.

Normal practice for Youthreach is now as follows:

- **for those who self-refer**, centres confirm with the last school attended that the young person has left school and/or confirm with EWO
- **for those referred by external agencies** such as schools (e.g. SCP or HSCL), NEWB, DES, FÁS, youth service, HSE, Gardaí, Probation Service and NGOs (e.g. Barnardo’s, St Vincent de Paul, etc): while centre staff will check status, normally these agencies only introduce those young persons who have definitively left school.

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7 This view was expressed in the consultation by members of the Visiting Teachers for Travellers service
Accordingly, a young person can go straight from school to Youthreach. As there are sufficient checks and balances in the new systems and institutions to protect the various interests involved, the Working Group recommends that:

- future programme guidelines omit the ‘six month guideline’

In the case of the STTC programme, the Visiting Teacher for Travellers advocates on behalf of the individual in consultation with the other agencies. A case conference is called with all the agencies present to ensure that the STTC programme is the most suitable location to meet the needs of the young person and that returning to school is no longer an option.

4.5.2 Induction, profiling and individual planning

Induction

The induction phase of the programme is primarily about engagement. The young person is introduced to the other learners and staff, to the way the centre organises itself and to the nature of the work that is done in it. The cultural ethos of the centre is meant to be friendly and welcoming where the learner should feel accepted. For learners who have had negative experiences of school or who come from chaotic and marginalised home situations the quality of the induction is particularly important. Poor or unstable attachment patterns have a very significant impact on a learner’s personal and social development, their ability to learn and their sense of personal empowerment. For such learners, the induction process will be critical in achieving engagement with the programme, social interaction with staff and other learners and a commitment to attendance at the centre.

Profiling

The profile Web Wheel (see Appendix 4) approach being introduced to centres places the learner at the centre of the process and takes the form of a series of interviews between the learner and their key worker (a member of the centres staff). The factors explored have an educational, personal and social focus and include factors that may be acting as barriers to attendance and participation in the centre. It is the learner’s own evaluation of their situation that is recorded and through this process the learner comes to identify their own goals.
Individual planning

Each learner is meant to develop their own action plan out of the profiling process with their key worker. This plan is based on their expressed personal, educational and vocational goals and identifies a) the learning activities that will take place, b) the supports that will be provided by the centre to the learner and c) any services or agencies that will be engaged with to address areas of difficulty that the learner has identified.

Staff training

The main elements of mentoring, profiling, individual planning and inter-agency working were introduced to all members of staff in centres through a two-day course in 2006. A one-day follow-up course is currently being undertaken in 2007 to offer staff a chance to reflect on their experiences of using these interventions and to become more confident in their skills in these areas.

Key principles of effective support provision

- Integration of support provision into core work of centre
- A developmental approach over time
- Attention to social ethos and context
- Individualisation through mentoring, profiling and development of plans
- Flexibility and responsiveness by staff
- Training and support for staff

4.5.3 Programme/curriculum

Both Youthreach and STTCs deliver flexible and dynamic programmes of integrated general education, vocational training and work experience. The Framework of Objectives document (DES: 2001) states that the programme delivered in a centre should be constructed on the basis of a curricular mix which integrates core skills into all aspects of learners’ experiences. The “precise configuration of the programme in each location” is “a matter to be decided locally” and determined “very much by individual and community needs and potential”. Considerable flexibility is afforded to providers. Providing a range of vocational options allied with a work experience
programme is regarded as essential. Literacy/numeracy skills should be integrated into all aspects of programme delivery.

Three priorities for both programmes may be inferred from the Framework of Objectives circulated by the Department in 2001:

- Focussing on a holistic curriculum catering to the learners’ educational and personal needs within their cultural and community context and experience.
- Seeing the learner as the centre of the learning process and as being supported by staff and other learners.
- Placing a focus on support for learners at key transition points, from school to the centre, from centre to work or further education/training or, in the STTC, a better quality of home life for the older Traveller women.

As the DES (2001) states,

*Basic skills training, practical work training and general education are features of the programme, and the application of new technology is integrated into all aspects of programme content. The programme provides a strong emphasis on personal development, on the core skills of literacy/numeracy, communications and IT, along with a choice of vocational options such as Catering, Hairdressing, Computers, Woodwork, Photography, Video, Sports, Art and Craft, and a work experience programme.*

The annual surveys outline the principal disciplines delivered; as noted in Tables 4.1 to 4.3 below for the year 2005.
Table 4.1 Youthreach – disciplines provided at Foundation level in 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disciplines provided</th>
<th>Of centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>94.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Development/Lifeskills</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport and Leisure</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Crafts</td>
<td>94.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare/Community Care</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Skills</td>
<td>94.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Studies/Mechanics</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering/Tourism</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdressing</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Prevention Programmes e.g. Copping On</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Education</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalwork</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Youthreach - disciplines provided at Progression level in 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disciplines provided</th>
<th>Of centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Development/Lifeskills</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport and Leisure</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Crafts</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare/Community Care</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Skills</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Studies/Mechanics</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering/Tourism</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdressing</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Leadership</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Prevention Programmes e.g. Copping On</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Education</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalwork</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3: STTCs - disciplines provided in 2005*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disciplines provided</th>
<th>Of centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Development/Lifeskills</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport and Leisure</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Crafts</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare/Community Care</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Skills</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Studies/Mechanics</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering/Tourism</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdressing</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horticulture</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Orientation Programme</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama/Art</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalwork</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Development</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Prevention Programs e.g. Copping on</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Education</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Studies</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A breakdown of disciplines provided by Foundation and Progression levels is not available on the STTC programme

4.5.4 Methodology

When STTCs were first established in the 1970s, they were seen as training workshops with a strong focus on gaining employment for Travellers. Hence the location of some of the centres on industrial estates. In contrast, from the outset it was envisaged that Youthreach would be delivered by multi-disciplinary teams and that the methodology would incorporate best practice from formal and informal methodologies in education, training and youth-work. Since STTCs moved fully to the vocational education system the focus has shifted towards a similar inter-disciplinary, learner-centred and experiential methodology. An empowering model of
education has been encouraged for the STTC programme to develop leadership and confidence within the Traveller community. A range of innovations, such as the Quality Framework Initiative and the profiling web apply to both programmes and are helping to align practice.

In this inter-disciplinary approach, practitioners combine education, training, youth-work and adult education methodologies. Staff come from a variety of backgrounds including teaching, adult education and training (FE/VET), youth-work and welfare and health. This mix is regarded as essential, yielding a cross fertilisation of expertise from the different disciplines.

Interactions are less formal and relationships with staff are “warmer” than in schools and this also is regarded as an important component in the programmes’ success (School Matters, 2006). Learners are not approached on the basis of perceived deficits. Rather, they are regarded as equals (as adults). Cultural diversity is acknowledged. The learning environment is secure, structured and challenging and there is an emphasis on recognising and rewarding achievement rather than reinforcing failure. Accordingly, participants perceive themselves to be listened to and respected and as being partners in the learning process. This was reinforced by the learners in the consultation process. Both progress and progression are also important.

Given the complexity of many of the learner’s backgrounds and presenting situations, flexibility is imperative at all levels - management, staffing and delivery. Learners work at their own pace and enter for certification when they and programme staff agree they are ready. This approach is facilitated by the modular structure of FETAC certification.

While the effectiveness of programme methodology in recruiting and working with the respective target groups is affirmed by evaluations, including those conducted in 2006 by the Inspectorate, the need for training in teaching methodologies has been identified (see 4.12.1 below).

4.5.5 Progression

Participants in both Youthreach and STTCs are encouraged firstly to identify personal, educational and vocational goals and secondly to progress towards achieving them. Progression policy in both programmes is focussed on:
• **Educational pathways** through opportunities to pursue programmes such as the Leaving Certificate Applied, with extension of the duration of the Progression Phase as needed for this. Participants on leaving the centres after the LCA can progress to PLC courses.

• **Training pathways** through access to a range of options established by FÁS and the Education sector through Linked Work Experience, Specific Skills Training, Community Employment, Bridging Measures. Entry to Apprenticeship is also possible, with support where needed from Bridging Measures. Progression to other training paths, for example in Tourism, Hospitality, Agriculture and hairdressing is also promoted and supported at all levels.

• **Employment pathways** – while employment is readily available in many areas, progression to employment still poses a major challenge for three sets of participants:
  - those living in areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage;
  - those with significant special education needs, emotional/behavioural disorders or disabilities
  - Travellers

Where FÁS-funded advocates are in service (see 4.7.1 below), they support progression. Where resources permit, many Centres also support former participants in the early stages of employment.

### 4.5.6 Certification

A broad range of certification is available to Youthreach and STTC participants. The majority have their achievements certified by FETAC. Participants are also entered as appropriate in the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied and to a lesser extent in individual subjects of the Leaving Certificate. Other certification options are also offered from time to time, such as the European Computer Driving Licence.

Recognition of their achievement at whatever level is facilitated by the development of the flexible, standards-based national framework of qualifications (FETAC Levels 1 – 5) and by access to other national certification as external or “mature” candidates. This facility allows learners to sit single subjects where appropriate, for example to complete a portfolio of subjects required for progression such as apprenticeship.
Tables 4.4 and 4.5 detail the levels of achievement of the learners on both programmes at the different certification levels in 2005.

### Table 4.4: STTCs - certifying bodies and levels of achievements in 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification</th>
<th>Awarding body</th>
<th>Number of learners who received certification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 3</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 4</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 5</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 6</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records of achievement (various levels)</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Cert (less than 5 subjects)</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Cert (more than 5 subjects)</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate Applied</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.5 Youthreach: certifying bodies and levels of achievement in 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification</th>
<th>Awarding body</th>
<th>Number of learners who received certification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 3</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 4</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 5</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records of achievement (various levels)</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>1303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Cert (less than 5 subjects)</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Cert (more than 5 subjects)</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Cert Applied</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECDL</td>
<td>ECDL</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

8 Since the establishment of the NCVA and subsequently FETAC the general policy has been for Youthreach participants to present for these awards. The Junior Certificate and similar examinations are therefore taken by comparatively few participants.
4.5.7 Partnerships and networks

Considerable emphasis is placed on local planning and inter-agency networking and VECs and centres are encouraged to apply a “district approach”. Centres operate within a strong community base and maintain good contact with local agencies. Acknowledgement of the cultural context of learners and their communities is emphasised. Inter-agency liaison and partnership is of particular significance throughout the programmes.

“Liaising with the local community and other appropriate agencies” is one of the tasks of a Youthreach Coordinator and the Director of the STTC programme. In the case of the STTC network, strong links are forged with the local Traveller organisations so that the views of Travellers are heard at all levels across the programme. However, no additional resources are available comparable to, for example, Home School Community Liaison nor are Youthreach or the STTCs included in the latter programme’s remit. It is widely acknowledged that, despite the broad thrust of policy and legislation, there are major variations in the availability and quality of services at local level and coherent inter-agency action is as yet far from universal and is overly reliant on informal relationships.

4.6 Core tuition: how the programmes are staffed

4.6.1 Youthreach

Youthreach should operate on a full-time, year-round basis and deliver 35 hours education and training per week to learners for 45 weeks. To deliver the programme, VECs are allocated 4,200 tuition hours per group of 25 learners. Youthreach centre staffing generally comprises:

- A full time coordinator/director who manages the programme
- One or more resource staff
- Part-time teachers (various contracts, as per post-primary, VTOS, STTCs, etc)

Staff teams vary according to needs identified at local level and in order to deliver a programme consistent with the programme’s objective. Full-time staff are asked to work their 35 hours per week ‘in a flexible manner that may include evenings and other times, in accordance with service needs’.
Other professionals also work in the programme on an incidental or occasional basis. In some centres there are other staff such as administration staff (usually part-time), caretakers, and bus drivers (often providing a service on contract). These are not available in all centres. There is a strong emphasis on a team approach.

The number of qualified teachers working in Youthreach has grown over the past ten years and most staff now hold a third level qualification (CHL Consultants 1996, 2006). However, no qualifications are specified for staff working in the programme. This is intended to give VECs maximum flexibility to recruit applicants with the combination of personal qualities and professional skills most likely to meet the needs of learners. As the original Youthreach Operators’ Guidelines stated,

*The programme requires staff who are flexible, multi-disciplined and experienced. A high degree of motivation and commitment to the student-centred model of training is essential, as is a commitment to working with the target group.*

This multi-disciplinary team approach enables centres to respond to the diverse needs of the learners.

In December 2005 there were 301 full-time and 636 part-time staff working on the programme with 2,739 trainees.

4.6.2 The Senior Traveller Training Programme

The STTC programme is full-time and year-round, and delivers 35 hours training per week for 41.8 weeks. Centres are operational for 209 days per annum. To deliver the programme, VECs are allocated 5,250 tuition hours per group of 24 learners. Within this staff resource VECs deploy a full-time Director, with the balance of hours used for the employment of full time and part-time staff on various contracts, as in post-primary education and VTOS, in accordance with needs identified locally. There now exists a core staff who are permanent members of each VEC. At different times of the year part-time staff are recruited onto the programme to provide different elements to the overall programme, such as delivering the summer programme.

A key requirement is that staff appointed to such centres have relevant experience in out-of-school programmes for the disadvantaged and an understanding and empathy with the needs of the Traveller community. In recent years only candidates with a
third level qualification are appointed to the post of Director and those who were appointed prior to 1998 were facilitated in achieving a degree where possible. All staff appointed are expected to have an awareness of Traveller culture and are provided with CPD to ensure that they are providing intercultural approaches to education in their classrooms. In December 2005 there were 106 full-time staff and 311 part-time staff working on the programme with 1,098 learners.

4.7 Learner Supports

There are a number of supports provided to the learners on the two programmes. The most significant are additional resources for Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services and supports for learners with Special Education Needs;

4.7.1 Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services

In addition to the National Co-ordinator for Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services, a sum of €910,550 was allocated to the Youthreach and STTCs in 2006 to enable them to provide guidance, counselling and psychological services to their learners and to learners in FÁS-funded Community Training Centres (CTCs). VECs and CTCs use this budget to prioritise from a spectrum of needs ranging from initial orientation and guidance and vocational information to psychological services. The vast majority prioritise counselling and psychological services. On average these funds allow for a visiting service where each centre receives support of the order of 5 hours per fortnight. Other guidance and counselling functions are delivered by staff within centres. In some cases the service is supplemented by advocates funded by FÁS or by mentors and youth workers provided by local Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), \textit{where such resources exist}. Under this budget support may also be allocated to staff on the programmes. A number of centres also have the service (on a full-time or part-time basis) of an advocate funded by FÁS. This service is not part of the DES programme. An external evaluation report was presented to FÁS in 2006 (Martin and Associates, 2006). Inconsistencies were identified regarding delivery. It was recommended that the service be mainstreamed.

No service is provided to either Youthreach or STTC programmes by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), apart from the assignment of a Senior Psychologist to the position of National Co-ordinator for Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services in Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres.
4.7.2 Supports for learners with Special Educational Needs (SENs)

In recognition of the need to address the question of provision for Special Educational Needs in Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres, in Dec 2005, the DES distributed €0.4 million once off to VECs to fund the implementation of a national training programme for staff to enable them to cater for learners with special educational needs. At the same time a further €1.6 million was allocated once off to VECs as a general grant to provide for the special needs of learners attending any further education programme.

A new initiative to address Special Education Needs was announced in December 2006 which is currently being piloted in twenty Youthreach centres. This initiative provides for additional funding to the selected VECs to allow for greater flexibility in staffing provision in the centres and to introduce specific staff training and support measures. The objective is to increase the capacity of the centres to address the special educational needs of all their learners by introducing profiling, individual planning, mentoring and inter-agency work practices. This initiative, following evaluation and amendment if appropriate, will be extended for implementation in all Youthreach Centres as finances allow.

No support is provided to either programme by the National Council for Special Education and SENOs do not provide a service to learners in the centres with SENs.

4.7.3 Traveller Youth Workers (STTCs)

The National Association of Travellers’ Centres (see 4.11.2) receives funding for the employment of youth workers. Currently youth services are provided in 24 different areas and some 18 youth workers are employed. While these are not STTC staff or part of the present review, there are strong links between youth services to the Traveller community and STTCs.

4.8 Allowances and Grants

4.8.1 Learner Allowances

Learners participating in the Youthreach and STTC programmes are entitled to allowances. Allowance rates are set by FÁS which has statutory responsibility in this area. Table 4.6 sets out the allowances available for learners in January 2007.
Table 4.6 Allowances payable to learners as of 1 January 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allowance</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meal</td>
<td>€4.00 per week (or 0.80 per day) (w.e.f. 01/01/02)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>€69.90 per week (or €13.98 per day) (w.e.f. 01.01.02)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Aged 15 &amp; 16</td>
<td>€75.70 (w.e.f. 01.01.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aged 17</td>
<td>€94.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aged 18 years and over</td>
<td>€185.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>€0.00 per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>€4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>€11.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>€17.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>€21.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>€27.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>€32.60 (w.e.f. 01.01.02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An extra training allowance of €31.80 is payable to learners who were long-term unemployed (i.e. in receipt of jobseekers allowance or jobseekers benefit for at least one year) prior to starting the programme. This extra allowance is provided as an incentive to attract long term unemployed learners to training / education. Periods spent on Community Employment or the Job Initiative may be combined with periods of unemployment benefit or assistance for the purpose of meeting the qualifying period (Department of Social and Family Affairs).

A number of unofficial local arrangements have come into play, particularly in STTCs, such as part-time attendance, with learners receiving a pro-rata allowance. This is also reflected in the participation of learners on a part time basis under the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) and the Back to Education Allowance. Such options are chosen to safeguard secondary benefits and to maximise social welfare benefits, particularly if a husband and wife are both participants. The profile of learner attendance in STTCs is changing as a result. It is hoped that such flexibility will also encourage male Travellers onto the programme. It can also lead to some learners at 18 years of age leaving STTCs since they see no financial advantage to staying on. Also, it can lead to some learners remaining on to maximise receipt of state allowances e.g. basic training allowance, extra training allowance and retention of other allowances such as the one parent family payment, disability allowance etc.
4.8.2 Childcare support

Commencing in 1998, funding in the form of grants has been made available to Vocational Education Committees (VECs) towards the cost of childcare support for learners in the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centre Programmes and from 2007 for BTEI learners. These funds are made available to VECs to assist with the childcare expenses of people for whom these programmes, which aim to enhance employment prospects, were designed but who were unable to enrol on them because of childcare responsibilities. The grant provides for:

- direct provision of crèche facilities in centres, or in rented premises, including staff, equipment/refurbishment, rental, insurance and other overheads;
- the purchase of places on existing community or commercial crèches, (with priority support to the former in all cases where this is feasible). This will be subject to a maximum of €63.50 per week per child for a full day session, with pro-rata adjustments for sessions of lesser duration;
- the payment of childminders, subject to a maximum of €63.50 per week per child for a full session, with pro-rata adjustments for part-time sessions. This is subject to (a) registration as required under the Child Care Act, (b) presentation of invoices on headed paper, (c) a rolling sample check for tax clearance certificates.

In no case may funds be paid directly to learners.

The Department's grant is intended as a contribution to costs. VECs are responsible for the local expenditure of childcare funds. They determine the level of provision to be made for childcare and have discretion to bridge the gap between the Department's grant and the actual costs they approve. How they do it is a matter for each VEC. Among the options open to them are levying charges where they had not previously done so, or increasing existing charges, or drawing on the non-pay grants given annually for VTOS and Youthreach and STTCs.

The rate of grant was set when the scheme was sanctioned in 1998 and there has been no increase in this rate since.

4.9 Core non-pay

At its inception, funding for Youthreach was allocated on the basis of pay and non-pay costs. It was intended that the latter would be used to pay for all non-tuition costs
associated with delivery of the programme, including classroom and workshop materials, rental and maintenance of accommodation, caretaking and transport. When the STTC network transferred to the responsibility of the DES the same regime was applied.

In 1988 the non-pay allocation for a group of 25 learners was £36,000 (€45,710). Some minor adjustments took place in the following years but the allocation then remained static from 1992 to 2005. The annual core non-pay allocation for the programmes in 2006 was as follows:

- **Youthreach**: €52,000 per group of 25, with pro-rata adjustments for centres of greater or lesser size.
- **STTCs**: €51,850 per group of 24, with pro-rata adjustment for centres of greater of lesser size.

In addition, it has been the practice by the Further Education Section firstly to supplement non-pay funding where VECs rent premises (see 4.10 below) and secondly to provide some assistance for essential repairs where resources are available.

### 4.10 Accommodation

Both programmes are delivered in out-of-school centres. The locations of these centres are decided by VECs. They are generally situated in urban and rural areas of high disadvantage. In the case of a number of STTCs, they are located on industrial estates in order to maximise the opportunity of gaining employment or work experience for learners. These settings comprise a diverse range of buildings such as former schools, factories, refurbished shops and community buildings. Some centres have been purpose-built but the majority have not. In some cases staff and learners have themselves refurbished and improved the buildings so as to create a more appropriate working environment.

No capital budget exists for any Further Education programmes and the programmes are therefore accommodated in buildings owned or rented by VECs. Those owned by VECs (such as former vocational schools) are frequently in need of refurbishment, often on a considerable scale. Some assistance is provided for essential repairs by the Further Education Section, where resources are available. When VECs are renting they must compete in the market with other prospective occupiers. The very large increases in rental costs have been acknowledged by the Department in its institution
of a rent supplement mechanism whereby rental costs are met in full. In one Youthreach centre the rental costs rose from €6,000 in 2005 to €90,000 in 2006 since the centre moved to a new premises.

These difficulties with accommodation have long been identified. Most recently, according to evaluations conducted by the Inspectorate the centres (2006 and ongoing) are often of low quality and are in need of immediate refurbishment.

4.11 National coordination and support

4.11.1 The National Coordinators

In the Department of Education and Science, three National Coordinators are assigned to the programmes, one for Youthreach, another for the STTCs and one for Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services – the last caters for both programmes and is on assignment from NEPS. There is also a co-ordinator for the Quality Framework Initiative who has responsibility in relation to development of a quality assurance process across both programmes (see 4.14 below). The Coordinators meet on a regular basis and other administrative and professional staff also attend their meetings, as appropriate. There is ongoing liaison between the National Co-ordinators and all the other stakeholders within both programmes.

4.11.2 Representative/professional organisations

In addition, a number of representative organisations contribute to the operation of the Youthreach and STTC programmes:

The National Association of Youthreach Co-ordinators (NAYC)
The National Association of Youthreach Coordinators (NAYC) is the professional organisation for the coordinators of Youthreach Centres in Ireland. It was established to provide a forum for coordinators and to promote networking, discussion of the programme, the promotion of best practice and a mechanism for identifying and feeding back emergent issues. The association is managed by an executive including a group of officers with the support of regional representatives. These are elected each year at the Annual General Meeting and meet regularly throughout the year. The NAYC publishes the Youthreach Newsletter with news from centres around the country. NAYC is funded by the DES and through membership fees. In 2006 the organisation received grant aid of €25,000 from the DES.
NATC (National Association of Travellers’ Centres)
The National Association of Traveller Centres (NATC) develops, administers and co-ordinates the provision of youth services for Travellers nationally. The NATC also works strategically with the network of STTCs at national level. There are strong links between the provision of youth services to the Traveller community and the STTC educational and training programmes. Currently youth services are provided in 24 different areas and some 18 youth workers are employed. In 2006 the organisation received grant aid of €20,000 from the Further Education Section to assist it in its work with STTCs.

The Association of Directors of Senior Traveller Centres
The Association of Directors of Senior Traveller Training Centres represents the interests of Directors of STTCs and negotiates and lobbies on their behalf, informs members of change, development and innovation, promotes and shares best practice and acts as an advocate for the greater good of the network of Centres. This association enables the National Co-ordinator for STTCs to develop strong links in relation to the sharing of good practice across the network (The grant paid to the NATC enables this association to hold biannual conferences).

4.11.3 Programme websites
The Youthreach and STTC programmes both have programme websites. These provide detailed information on the programmes and act as a resource for those wishing to understand the programmes’ purpose and activities. The Youthreach website www.youthreach.ie is hosted by National Centre for Technology in Education. It provides information on the programme and acts as a forum and resource base for stakeholders. A Youthreach coordinator with expertise in this area is paid an honorarium to maintain the site. The STTC programme website www.sttc.ie is hosted by an independent provider and acts a resource base for all the stakeholders; specifically targeting staff and agencies that work closely with Travellers. The National Co-ordinator for STTCs uses it as a conduit for the dissemination of information within the STTC network. This website is widely used by individuals, agencies and researchers in relation to accessing information on the Traveller community. An honorarium is paid to an IT teacher to update the website. The National Co-ordinator for STTCs decides on the data that need to be put on the website on a weekly basis. The Quality Framework resources are hosted by the websites.
4.12 Programme support and development

4.12.1 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Until 2005 there were separate Continuous Professional Development support programmes for Youthreach and STTCs. These were managed by the respective National Coordinators. In 2005 these were merged with the VTOS CPD support programme to establish a global Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme covering staff in all three programmes and devolving decision-making regarding staff training to the VECs as key providers and employers. The three National Co-ordinators and DES staff provide national guidelines and support to VECs to implement the programmes at local level.

VECs were advised of this development in August 2005 and €200,000 was made available for the reminder of the year. Amounts granted to VECs reflected both staff numbers and previous commitment to staff development. €300,000 was provided in 2006 for a full year (for the 3 programmes). This was to enable VECs for the three programmes to:

- Plan an annual CPD programme
- Standardise the approach to the provision of CPD at national and local levels
- Maximise the effectiveness, coherence and reach of CPD activities and increase efficiency in the management and delivery of CPD in VECs
- Facilitate decision-making at the point of delivery of CPD activities and enable VECs to respond more flexibly to diverse local CPD needs
- Encourage provision of generic CPD programmes which cross programme divides
- Encourage a number of VECs to consider providing joint CPD programmes where similar needs are identified
- Stimulate and support the three FE programmes and develop a coherent and integrated service at local level.

Personnel working in these programmes have access to LCA and SPHE training. However, they do not have access to other training funded by the DES Teacher Education Section, that organised by the NCTE training and similar. For example, Youthreach staff have been excluded from in-service for new developments in the Junior Certificate School programme.
As regards enhancement of qualifications, the DES Teacher Education Section has in the past grant-aided the Certificate and Diploma in Education and Training in DCU. The FE Section has grant-aided this programme at degree level (the BSc in Education and Training) at a cost of approximately €80,000 per annum. This is regarded by many Youthreach staff as an important mechanism to raise their qualifications profile. A number of similar programmes exist in other higher education institutions but do not generate grant-aid from the DES.

4.12.2 Programme/curriculum development

As noted at 4.5.3 the “precise configuration of the programme in each location” is “a matter to be decided locally” and determined “very much by individual and community needs and potential”. Programmes and curricula are also influenced by the requirements of certification and assessment. Broadly speaking, the developmental agenda has concentrated on operational areas such as quality assurance, health promotion and child protection. However, the QFI process (see 4.14 below) and evaluations conducted by the Inspectorate have generated an awareness of the need for more sustained emphasis on programme planning and teaching methodologies. Guidelines on programme planning and associated training were made available in 2006 and a training programme in teaching methodologies is being developed. In addition a Working Group has been created to examine the provision of cross-curricular literacy.

4.12.3 Child Protection Training

To ensure the area of Child Protection was addressed a Steering Committee was established in October 2006 which included the IVEA, the National Coordinators, representatives of the CEOs and the Department of Education and Science.

A programme of training on Child Protection Issues for Designated Liaison Persons and Deputy Designated Liaison Persons in all Youthreach and STTC centres operated by VECs was put in place. The training was completed in November and December 2006. In addition, the Department funded a telephone advisory support service provided by the Child Protection trainer (by way of follow up to training). Guidelines on Child Protection will be prepared in 2007 for the centres. They will be based on existing Guidelines on Child Protection prepared for Post-primary Schools. This initiative was activated by Further Education Section in response to the need for a child protection training programme as identified by the Inspectorate after their initial evaluation phase.
4.12.4 “Copping On” Crime Awareness Programme

“Copping On” (www.coppingon.ie) is a crime awareness initiative. Its target group comprises professionals and volunteers working with at-risk young people. Participants on the training courses come from a wide variety of backgrounds and service environments including education (schools, centres for education and youth services), training, social work, youth justice and community development. It trains them in skills and the use of materials aimed at:

- Helping young people to identify the factors which influence their decision-making (assertiveness, dealing with peer pressure, attitudes to crime, relationships, solving conflict, alcohol and drug abuse etc)
- Understanding the justice system

4.12.5 Other initiatives

A number of other initiatives have been initiated on a local basis from time to time. Training in the web profile was provided in 2006 and 2007 (see section 4.5.2). For example a course in health promotion was organised for staff in 2006 in conjunction with the Midlands Region of the HSE. Such initiatives are generally cost-neutral for the DES.

4.13 Centre/VEC administration

Towards the administration of the programmes and the provision of administration staffing VECs are allocated the following resources:

- Youthreach - an outlay as part of the non-pay budget, which does not exceed 15% of the non-pay budget
- STTCs - an outlay as part of the pay budget, which does not exceed 15% of the core pay budget.

The DES has not issued any guideline as regards the deployment of these resources and they are used in a variety of ways. VECs generally retain a portion of the resource at head office level. Some centres are allocated in-centre part-time administrative assistance. Others are not.
4.14 Quality Standards: The Quality Framework

The Quality Framework Initiative provides a comprehensive planning, evaluation and validation framework for the Youthreach and STTC programmes similar to the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI).

The Quality Framework Initiative was initiated by the National Coordinators in November 2000 in response to the recommendation made in the YOUTHREACH 2000 consultative report for the development of a quality assurance system for the programmes. The QFI was developed in three phases, Exploration, Consultation and Pilot. The latter phase concluded in 2005 and national roll-out began in 2006.

The Quality Framework consists of four key building blocks:

1. Quality Standards
2. Internal Centre Evaluation
3. Centre Development Planning
4. External Centre Evaluation – this aspect is conducted by the Inspectorate of the DES

Quality assurance in this model focuses on continuous improvement. It encourages a collaborative approach to problem solving and assists stakeholders to identify practical solutions.

Guidelines for Internal Centre Evaluation and Centre Development Planning have been developed and the Quality Framework is being rolled out to all Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres. A five-year rolling cycle is envisaged, comprising a one year Centre Development Plan followed by a four year Internal Centre Evaluation plan. External evaluation by the Inspectorate of the DES began in 2006.

The QFI is managed by a full-time Coordinator, with the support of the National Coordinators, who has led the development through each stage. A team of 24 facilitators has been trained to facilitate the centre based quality assurance processes, namely Internal Centre Evaluation and Centre Development Planning. The team meets on an ongoing basis to review and further improve the process. Centres are free to select a QFI facilitator from a list provided. Rates of payment for facilitators are in line with rates set for in-service training by the DES Teacher Education Section. VECs receive an annual allowance of €1,100, for each Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centre under its management, to cover costs associated with the QFI.
Documentation associated with the QFI is available on both the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training websites. This includes reports outlining the various phases of the Initiative, detailed guidelines relating to the QFI processes as well as numerous templates and questionnaires that can be used by centre staff.

The QFI processes inform the programmes’ operation at two levels:

- **At centre level**: the processes help centres to identify what they are doing well and also the areas where further development is required. Arising from such processes centres develop both short-term and long term plans.

- **At national (programme) level**: In addition, through feedback from the facilitation team it has been possible to identify issues of concern across the programme and recommend a developmental agenda at national level. Areas such as programme planning and teaching methodologies are areas that were identified in this way. During 2006 the QFI was in a position to develop guidelines and provide training to centres in programme planning. These are available on the websites.

Where issues are identified and where a response is outside the capacity of the QFI, such issues are referred to the National Co-ordinators.

### 4.15 Reporting and Monitoring

There are five broad strands in the arrangements for reporting on and monitoring of the two programmes, reports to the Department of Education and Science, surveys by the National Coordinators, evaluation by the Inspectorate of the Department, auditing by the Comptroller and Auditor General and auditing by the European Social Fund.

#### 4.15.1 Reports to the Department of Education and Science

Firstly, VECs report three times a year to the Department of Education and Science on the financial expenditure. These financial data are analysed on a regular basis. Secondly, the Department conducts an annual survey of centres delivering both programmes every December. This yields considerable and useful quantitative data regarding participation and outputs much of which are used in this report. However, certain limitations also attach to this exercise, for example as regards the quantification of learners’ presenting with difficulties. It is also the case that centres
do not have information management systems nor a database system that would feed into the reports sent to the DES. In the context of the NFQ it will be important to determine how many learners gain minor and major FETAC awards.

4.15.2 Surveys by the National Co-ordinators

The National Coordinators annually survey centres on certification outcomes. Their reports are published on the programme websites and are used in the compilation of the annual monitoring reports to the ESF (European Social Fund). They also conduct other surveys as appropriate on particular aspects of the programmes’ operation, for example on the participation of lone parents, the availability of broadband, literacy development in centres etc. These reports provide qualitative and quantitative data that shape policy developments in both programmes.

4.15.3 Evaluation by the Inspectorate

The Department’s Inspectorate in January 2006 begun evaluations of Youthreach and STTC centres as “centres of education” under the following headings: Centre Context and Ethos, Quality of Centre Management, Quality of Centre Planning and Quality of teaching and learning. Their reports, having been commented on by the Centres, are published on the Department’s website. These reports provide information on all aspects of the centres. See Chapter 6 for further details.

4.15.4 Auditing by the Comptroller and Auditor General

Expenditure by the Department of Education and Science is subject to an annual audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C & AG). The C & AG also carries out specific audits of government funded programmes from time to time.

4.15.5 Auditing by the European Social Fund

Both the Youthreach and STTC programmes are part funded by the European Social Fund. Twice yearly returns are submitted to the ESF on programme performance. Programmes funded under the ESF are subjected to EU Audit on a regular basis. In 2005 an audit of the two programmes was carried out. The main focus of ESF audits relate to the process of allocating funding, vouching for expenditure and subsequently claiming European co-funding. Further audits were carried out in 2006.
4.16 Recommendations

While this chapter is mainly descriptive i.e. detailing the management and delivery systems for both programmes, the Working Group agrees that one important recommendation needs to be made in relation to recruitment to Youthreach. When Youthreach was established there was a general guideline that a participant should have been out of school for six months before joining the programme. The Working Group recommends that:

- future programme guidelines omit the “six month guideline” (which was referred to section 1.4).
Chapter 5 – Efficiency

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter examines the efficiency of the Youthreach programme and the STTC programme. As specified in the Terms of Reference for this review, this Chapter sets out to both, (i) evaluate the level and trend of costs and staffing resources associated with each programme and comment on the efficiency with which each programme has achieved its objectives and, (ii) to define the outputs associated with the programmes and identify the level and trend of those outputs. Efficiency can be defined as the relationship between input and output of an activity and the extent to which it is possible to maximise output from the input available or to minimise the levels of input for the given level of output. The Working Group considered the efficiency of the programmes under eight headings:

1. Core tuition
2. Learner supports
3. Allowances and grants
4. Core non-pay
5. Accommodation
6. National co-ordination and support
7. Programme support and development
8. Centre / VEC administration

These correspond to the descriptions of management and delivery systems outlined in the foregoing chapter from 4.6 to 4.13. This Chapter examines each of those eight distinctive inputs for the two programmes in detail. This will involve:

- examining the cost of each input and any trends in those costs from 2001 to 2005
- analysing outputs and any trends in those outputs from 2001 to 2005
- comparing and contrasting inputs and outputs on the Youthreach and STTC programmes with other programmes
- highlighting relevant efficiency issues arising from the consultation process
- commenting on the general efficiency of each input
After examining the eight areas outlined above key recommendations are set out in section 5.14 below.

5.1.1 Programmes/sectors used as comparators

Having considered education programmes or sectors to compare with the Youthreach and STTC programmes in terms of efficiency and the analysis of inputs, outputs and associated trends, it was decided the most relevant comparative programmes or sectors were schools in the post-primary sector, Youth Encounter Project (YEP) schools and Community Training Centres (CTCs) (funded by DETE through FÁS). A brief summary is now given of these programmes or sectors.

(i) Post-Primary schools

The post-primary sector encompasses all Voluntary Secondary, Community & Comprehensive and Vocational schools. In the academic year 2004/2005 there were 335,162 students enrolled in 742 post-primary schools. There were 21,034 full time teachers and 3,956 full time equivalents (made up of part – time teachers) working in the sector in the same year (DES, 2007).

As the cohort for Youthreach and approximately 20% of the STTC programme come as early school leavers from post-primary schools, this sector is a relevant comparator. The Youthreach and post-primary sector both cater for young people aged 15 – 19. There are however significant differences between the Youthreach and STTC programmes and the post-primary sector. These differences will be highlighted when discussing the various inputs and outputs throughout this chapter.

The most significant of these differences includes the profile of the student cohort and the size of the education centre in question e.g. Youthreach caters for a more disadvantaged cohort generally and a Youthreach centre on average provides for 25 learners against a possible 500 students or more in a post-primary school. Reference will also be made to post-primary schools involved in the *DEIS Action Plan for Educational Inclusion*, (2005) where additional resources are provided. Reference is also made to the maintenance grants available to learners attending Post Leaving Certificate courses or Third Level.

It is expected that the expenditure on the Youthreach and STTC programmes on a per learner basis is higher than in the post-primary sector. This reflects the greater need for support for the cohort in Youthreach and STTCs. This
cohort is more socially and educationally disadvantaged and requires greater support in a smaller group setting than in a post-primary school. There are also economies of scale in relation to costs to be achieved for a large post-primary school with over 500 students compared to a centre with 25 – 30 learners.

(ii) Youth Encounter Project (YEP) schools (source High Support Special Schools Unit, DES)

The YEP schools were first established in the 1970s to provide educational facilities for children who had become alienated from the conventional school system, had high levels of absenteeism or had become involved in or were at risk of becoming involved in, minor crime and delinquency. There are five YEP schools, three in Dublin, one in Limerick and one in Cork. They are set up as special primary schools, each catering for an enrolment of approximately 20 - 24 students aged generally between 12 and 15 years. Students are referred to the school by a number of agencies, including the courts. A comprehensive life-skills programme is provided, in addition to the standard curriculum.

YEP schools are a relevant comparator as the programme deals with very disadvantaged students that leave the formal education sector. The centre size at 20 – 25 students would also be similar to that in Youthreach and the STTC programmes.

From the outset, it is expected that the expenditure on the YEP schools programme on a per student basis is higher than the Youthreach or STTC programme. This reflects the greater need for supports for the younger cohort in YEP schools. The objectives of the YEP schools, are (a) to provide personalised holistic education for young people at risk; (b) to retain these young people in the education system; and (c) to provide support for these young people towards progression. The original objective of returning students to mainstream education, while desirable, is not now realistic.

(iii) Community Training Centres (CTCs) (source www.fas.ie)

CTCs are independent community-based organisations funded by FÁS. The CTCs are the FÁS response similar to the Youthreach measure. FÁS provides a training allowance to participants at the Community Training Centres and the training is certified leading to recognised awards on the National Framework of Qualifications. There are 42 CTCs located around the country. The numbers of participants attending CTCs in 2005 was 2,196.
Participants at the CTCs are primarily young men and women between 16 and 21 years of age, who have left school without completing formal examinations (the Junior Certificate); who are experiencing difficulties finding a job; and who are keen to gain a qualification.

While this is the priority group for CTCs, they can however provide for other young people under the age of 25 who are disadvantaged and unemployed, with agreement from FÁS.

CTCs are probably the most relevant comparator to Youthreach and the STTC programmes. CTCs cater for early school leavers and the size of a centre is similar. However several distinct features of the CTCs need to be recognised when comparing costs and these again will be highlighted throughout this chapter.

Table 5.1 below summarises the main characteristics of the Youthreach and STTC programmes and the programmes they will be compared with throughout this chapter.

Table 5.1 Summary of main characteristics of programmes being compared throughout this chapter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Youthreach</th>
<th>STTCs</th>
<th>Post-primary</th>
<th>YEP schools</th>
<th>CTCs*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of cohort</td>
<td>15 – 20</td>
<td>15 +</td>
<td>12 - 19</td>
<td>12 - 15</td>
<td>16 – 21 and some under 25s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of centres/schools</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated length of academic year</td>
<td>45 weeks (225 days)</td>
<td>41.8 weeks (209 days)</td>
<td>33.4 weeks (167 days)</td>
<td>36.6 weeks (183 days)</td>
<td>52 weeks (staff and learners would have holidays etc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.2 Issues to consider before examining efficiency

Before beginning to look at the efficiency of both programmes in detail, some specific factors need to be clarified and highlighted to give the context in which efficiency can

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* Analysis of information provided by FÁS
be examined on both programmes.

5.1.3 Approved numbers and attendance

There are a defined number of approved places under the Youthreach and STTC programmes. These places are allocated to individual VECs each year. To gauge attendance on these approved places the Department conducts a survey of the learners on both programmes as at 31st December each year. This survey gives an attendance figure for learners in both programmes on that particular date. Throughout this chapter as efficiency is examined, reference will be made to both approved places and attendance. It is therefore necessary from the outset to be cognisant of the difference between approved places and attendance. The first annual survey was conducted in 2001. For the majority of the Chapter approved places will be used when making calculations and comparisons.

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 outline the approved places and attendance figures for both programmes for the period 2001 – 2005.

Table 5.2 Approved places and attendance on the Youthreach programme for the period 2001 – 2005*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved places</td>
<td>2,947</td>
<td>3,031</td>
<td>3,258</td>
<td>3,258</td>
<td>3,258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>2,641</td>
<td>2,859</td>
<td>2,653</td>
<td>2,752</td>
<td>2,739</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the nature of the annual survey exercise, attendance figures are lower than expected due to the fact that the approved places allocated to the Prison Service Workshops which come under the remit of City of Dublin VEC and the programmes delivered by the five NGOs as outlined in 4.3 were not surveyed, which in 2005 accounted for 208 places.
Figure 5.1 Approved places and attendance on the Youthreach programme for the period 2001 - 2005

![Bar chart showing approved places and attendance for Youthreach programme from 2001 to 2005.]

Table 5.3 Approved places and attendance on the STTC programme for the period 2001 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved numbers</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>1,076</td>
<td>1,084</td>
<td>1,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>811*</td>
<td>955*</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>1,003</td>
<td>1,098*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In 2001, 2002 and 2005, the actual attendance on the date of the annual survey was higher than the approved places on the programme. This may have arisen due to a number of factors, but most likely reflects a period of overlap between existing learners leaving the programme and new learners joining the programme.

Figure 5.2 Approved places and attendance on the STTC programme for the period 2001 – 2005

![Bar chart showing approved places and attendance for STTC programme from 2001 to 2005.]

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5.1.4 Scope and limitations of comparing financial data on different programmes

When attempting to compare the inputs and outputs of various programmes it is often difficult to find exact matches. In most cases the precise make up of a particular input and the resultant output is contingent on the nature of the individual programme. It can be a factor of the needs of the learners on that programme, the structure and setting of a programme and the staffing situation. Across programmes, resources may be grouped in financial reports under different headings and resources may be available on one programme but not on another. Trends in a particular programme across a period of years may not correspond with other programmes. Some programmes have been established more recently than others and are therefore less formalised and structured.

However, even allowing for all of the above, comparators used in the remainder of the chapter reflect areas where inputs and outputs across programmes can be matched and compared with a good degree of relativity. Any differences in the makeup of the amounts being compared between programmes is referred to when that comparison is made.

As the 2006 expenditure figures for the programmes are the subject of audit at the time of compiling this report, the 2005 figures are the latest ones available for use in this Chapter. In most cases when examining trends a comparison is made between 2001 and 2005, to comply with the Terms of Reference which require that trends be identified. 2001 was the first year in which the annual surveys of attendance were carried out on each programme and it is therefore the most relevant year to commence an analysis of level and trends.

5.1.5 Department pay and other overheads

As described in section 4.2, a small number of staff in the Further Education Section, Department of Education and Science work on the two programmes. The main administrative work involved is carried out at VEC level and the cost of this work is examined in section 5.9 below. In total, at Departmental level, one Executive Officer (full-time), a Higher Executive Officer (50%), an Assistant Principal (30%) and a Principal Officer (15%) work on the programmes. The total cost of Department pay for those working on the two programmes would be estimated at circa €90,000.
Associated overheads may be approximately €10,000. The Working Group felt this sum did not warrant detailed analysis as a key input for the programmes. Therefore Department pay and other overheads is not analysed in the remainder of this chapter when examining the efficiency of the two programmes. It is however included in the summary of financial cost tables at the end of the chapter – Tables 5.22 and 5.23. The cost of Department pay and overheads is split in a 3:1 ratio between Youthreach and the STTC programme.

5.1.6 EU Co-funding of the programmes

Both programmes attract funding from the European Social Fund. Approximately €400 million has been expended on the two programmes from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2006 at national level. On this expenditure figure some €159.6m has been claimed in EU co-funding up to the end of December 2005 and it is estimated that a further €45.6m will be claimed in co-funding for 2006 expenditure. This would result in total co-funding of €205.2m against national spending of €400m for the period 2000-2006. The net cost to the exchequer therefore has been €194.8m for both programmes over the same period.

5.2 Core Tuition

As noted at 4.6.1, the Youthreach programme delivers 35 hours training per week for 45 weeks. Centres are staffed on the basis of 4,200 tuition hours per annum per group of 25 learners. The STTC programme delivers 35 hours training per week for 41.8 weeks. Centres are operational for 209 days per annum. Centres are staffed on the basis of 5,250 tuition hours per annum per group of 24 learners. The average size of the 90 Youthreach centres based on learner numbers was 36.2 learners in 2005. The equivalent figure for STTCs is 32.8 learners. The size of a centre on the programmes can range from 20 to over 80 learners.

5.2.1 Costs and trends

The overall spend on core tuition (pay) on the two programmes in 2005 was €25,545,630 for Youthreach and €10,564,854 for the STTC programme. No accurate information is available on the amount of superannuation paid in respect of former employees who worked on the Youthreach and STTC programmes. These programmes are relatively new in relation to other education sectors and may not have joined established superannuation schemes until recently.
To examine trends in relation to the cost of core tuition one can compare expenditure figures for 2001 against those for 2005. The comparative cost of pay or core tuition for both programmes for 2001 and 2005 is outlined in the following Table 5.4;

Table 5.4 Comparison of the cost of core tuition on the Youthreach and STTC programmes in 2001 and 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youthreach</td>
<td>€15,484,116</td>
<td>€25,545,630</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STTC</td>
<td>€5,526,840</td>
<td>€10,564,854</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.2 Outputs and trends

The direct output of the core tuition provision is the delivery of tuition hours. The amount of tuition hours delivered under each programme can be calculated by taking the hours allocated on a group basis and working out the total hours allocated for the total cohort on each programme. For Youthreach, 4,200 tuition hours are allocated per group of 25 learners. In 2005, using the approved numbers places of 3,258, this amounts to a total of 547,344 tuition hours provided in the programme.

For the STTC programme, 5,250 tuition hours are allocated per group of 24 learners. In 2005, using the approved numbers places of 1,084, this amounts to a total of 237,125 tuition hours provided in the programme.

5.2.3 Comparators

The cost of core tuition on a per learner basis and on a per hour per learner basis is now examined. To arrive at the cost of core tuition per learner the overall core tuition cost is simply divided by the number of learners. Drilling down further, the cost per tuition hour received by each learner can also be calculated. Firstly, the approximate amount of tuition hours received by each learner on a particular programme over the course of one academic year is calculated. Then the cost of tuition per learner is simply divided by the number of tuition hours they receive to arrive at a cost of tuition per hour per learner. The main usefulness of this calculation is that it takes the output into consideration i.e. the number of tuition hours received by a single learner under their particular programme.
Table 5.5. Comparison of the cost of core tuition in 2005 in post-primary, Youthreach, STTCs, YEP schools and CTCs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Post-primary</th>
<th>Youthreach</th>
<th>STTC</th>
<th>YEP schools</th>
<th>CTCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total cost</td>
<td>€1,655,713,172</td>
<td>€25,545,630</td>
<td>€10,564,854</td>
<td>€1,927,138</td>
<td>€16,095,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total enrolment / approved numbers</td>
<td>335,162(^{10})</td>
<td>3,258</td>
<td>1,084</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>2,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost per student / learner</td>
<td>€4,940</td>
<td>€7,841</td>
<td>€9,746</td>
<td>€15,417</td>
<td>€7,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated tuition hours received per learner</td>
<td>935.2 (28hrs x 33.4 weeks)</td>
<td>1,575 (35 hrs x 45 weeks)</td>
<td>1,463 (35 hrs x 41.8 weeks)</td>
<td>915 (estimated 25hrs x 36.6 weeks)</td>
<td>1,750 (35 hrs x 50 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of tuition per learner per hour</td>
<td>€5.28</td>
<td>€4.98</td>
<td>€6.66</td>
<td>€16.85</td>
<td>€4.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes to Table 5.5

1. The total cost figure for post-primary is calculated after separating the 2005 salary and superannuation costs.
2. Enrolment is used for post-primary and CTCs. Approved places is used for YEP schools, Youthreach and STTCs. This reflects concerns regarding the Annual census of enrolment on 31 December carried out on the Youthreach and STTC programmes as highlighted in section 5.1.3.
3. The YEP schools total cost figure does not include SNA pay; this is referred to in section 5.3.3. It does however include salary costs for non teaching staff, such as community worker, secretary, domestic staff etc.
4. The co-operation hours VECs allocate to CTCs are not included – this is estimated to cost circa €4million.

Looking now at the trend in core tuition costs it is possible to compare the increase in the post-primary sector; YEP schools, Youthreach and STTC core tuition spend from 2001 to 2005.

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\(^{10}\) Department of Education and Science 2004/2005 Statistical Report, page 40
Table 5.6 Comparison of the expenditure on core tuition in 2001 and 2005 in post-primary, YEP schools, Youthreach and STTCs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>% increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-primary*</td>
<td>€1,152,800,000</td>
<td>€2,023,700,000</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEP schools</td>
<td>€1,214,271</td>
<td>€1,927,138</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youthreach</td>
<td>€15,484,116</td>
<td>€25,545,630</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STTC</td>
<td>€5,526,840</td>
<td>€10,564,854</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The post-primary figures include teachers pay and superannuation. However the Working Group believes the increase over the period 2001 – 2005 should still be a good comparator

5.2.4 Comment on efficiency

Some of the issues that were highlighted and views expressed in the Consultation process that are directly relevant to core tuition include;

- The disparity in the teaching hours allocated to both programmes – 4,200 for Youthreach per group of 25 and 5,250 for STTCs per group of 24
- The different length of the academic year for learners in the two programmes, 225 days in Youthreach and 209 days in the STTC programme
- Staffing levels are not based on any analysis of learner need and are inadequate to achieve the programmes’ objectives

Core tuition cost on both programmes is a function of pay rates and staffing numbers. Staffing numbers are a function of approved learner places. Learner places have increased in the period 2001 – 2005. The number of approved places on the Youthreach programme has increased as shown in Table 5.2 by 311 or 11% over the period 2001 to 2005. The equivalent increase on the STTC programme as shown in Table 5.3 is 298 places or 38%. These are significant increases and due to the direct relationship between pay (core tuition) and approved learner numbers they are a significant factor in the increase in core tuition costs between 2001 and 2005. The larger percentage increase in approved places on the STTC programme compared to Youthreach, contributes to the larger increase in core tuition costs for the STTC programme between 2001 and 2005 (91%) against the Youthreach increase (65%) over the same period.
The second significant factor behind the increase in core tuition costs on both
programmes is the increase in pay rates over the period. This is a result of many
developments including:

- social partnership pay increases and a once-off increase from the
  benchmarking process.
- a large proportion of the staff on both programmes progressing up various pay
  scales over the 5 year period leads to higher core tuition costs. In larger
  programmes the number of staff would be sufficient to achieve a ‘levelling
  off’ effect in terms of pay increments, i.e. that roughly in any one year the
  number retiring / leaving the programme on higher points on a particular scale
  would match those replacements starting to work on the programme at the
  bottom of or lower down the pay scale. The fact that both programmes are
  relatively new in education terms and the numbers working in them are
  relatively small, this leads to increased expenditure in terms of annual pay
  increments.
- a significant proportion of those working in the two programmes are doing so
  on a part-time basis (see Table 5.7). Some VECs have highlighted that a
  combination of part time workers employed in a particular centre working the
  same hours as a full time post holder may be more costly in terms of pay. In
  December 2005 the part-time to full-time staff ratio numbers on Youthreach
  was 2:1 and 3:1 on the STTC programme.
- pay agreements for specific posts and the implementation of employment
  legislation.

The spend on core tuition has increased by 65% in Youthreach and 91% in the STTC
programme between 2001 and 2005. This compares to a 76% increase in pay and
superannuation costs at post-primary level, and a 59% increase in pay costs under the
YEP schools programme.

The total number of staff working on the Youthreach and STTC programmes in 2005
is given in Table 5.7
Table 5.7 Number of staff working on the Youthreach and STTC programmes in 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Youthreach</th>
<th>STTC</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>937</strong></td>
<td><strong>417</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,354</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at the cost of core tuition per learner in table 5.5 the two programmes do not compare favourably with the post-primary sector, showing a cost of tuition per learner almost 2 times the level in post-primary schools. This may be a reflection of the more disadvantaged cohort attending Youthreach and the STTC programmes compared to mainstream post-primary schools and the lower learner to staff ratio found in Youthreach and STTCs.

When bringing output into the equation, the Youthreach programme compares favourably to the post-primary sector. This is a direct result of the longer academic year relating to the Youthreach programme. The unit cost per hour per learner of tuition is estimated at €5.28 in the post-primary sector, compared to €4.98 in Youthreach and €6.66 in the STTC programme.

When comparing the programmes with YEP schools the cost of tuition per student is much higher in YEP schools. Again this may be a reflection of the younger age of those attending YEP schools. They may require greater tuition on a one to one or smaller group basis.

Compared to CTCs, the cost of the core tuition input per learner is slightly higher in Youthreach and the STTC programme. This may reflect the slightly more academic and wider curriculum available in these programmes compared to CTCs. It should be noted that rather than an allocation of staff hours, each CTC is allocated staff members – 1 Manager, 1 Instructor for every 12 trainees and 1 Clerical Officer.

Trying to arrive at a conclusion in terms of the efficiency of the core tuition provision in both programmes is not easy, nor is it an exact science. It is acknowledged that core tuition costs have increased significantly across all education areas over the period 2001 – 2005. Unique factors which have made this increase more significant in the Youthreach and STTC programmes have been identified. The longer academic year in
the Youthreach programme results in the cost of each tuition hour per learner under this programme comparing favourably with the post-primary sector. The two programmes compare favourably with YEP schools in terms of the cost of core tuition. This however is not the case when compared to CTCs, where both programmes are slightly more costly on a per learner basis. It must be understood that there are undoubtedly unique factors pertaining to each programme, which give rise to differing cost levels.

In relation to core tuition, the Working Group recommends:

- **The disparity in the allocation of teaching hours on both programmes should be reviewed.** Any review should be mindful of the recommendations in the evaluation of the pilot special educational needs initiative currently underway in 20 Youthreach centres.
- **Summer provision for learners on both programmes should be reviewed.**

5.3 Learner Supports

The primary supports provided to learners on the Youthreach programme are guidance, counselling and psychological services and more recently a Special Educational Needs support initiative. The guidance, counselling and psychological service is also available to learners on the STTC programme. Some centres also have access to the FÁS advocacy service. The availability of this service varies depending on where the centre is located. The service delivers approximately to one centre in five between the two programmes (Martin & Associates, 2006). There is no accurate costing of this service in Youthreach and STTCs available at present.

5.3.1 Costs and trends

An overall sum of €910,551 was expended on the Youthreach and STTC programmes in 2005 to provide guidance, counselling and psychological services to their cohorts. €682,913 of this was spent on the Youthreach programme and the remaining €227,638 on the STTC programme. As the overall budget for this service has not changed over the last few years this expenditure level has remained consistent for the period 2001 – 2005. This Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Service is also provided to learners in CTCs. An estimated €127,449 of this overall budget was expended on this service in CTCs during 2005.
In late 2005, a once-off total of €2,000,000 was allocated to VECs to support the special educational needs of all learners on their Further and Adult Education programmes. €1,600,000 of this was earmarked for refurbishment and upgrading works and €400,000 for staff training in the area of Special Educational Needs. It is estimated that the share of the total €2,000,000 allocation that can be attributed to the Youthreach and STTC programmes, is approximately €750,000.

As referred to in Chapter 4.7.2 a new pilot initiative to support the special educational needs of students attending Youthreach is being implemented in 2007 across 20 centres. As this is a new initiative and the fact that the funds provided in 2005 for Special Educational Needs were a once-off, it is not possible to analyse this learner support in any detail or use it as a comparator.

5.3.2 Outputs

Notionally the guidance, counselling and psychological services resource yields approximately 5 hours of service per group of 25 per fortnight. Allocated on an approved numbers basis, for Youthreachs' approved number of 3,258 places in 2005, this aggregates into 14,335 service hours in the programme in that year. For the 3,258 approved learner places, this amounts to 4.4 hours per learner in 2005.

For the STTC programme, on an approved places figure of 1,084 in 2005 this aggregates into 4,336 service hours in the programme in that year. Working on the 2005 approved numbers figure of 1,084 this equates to approximately 4 hours guidance, counselling and psychological services per learner in 2005.

The only significant output up to the end of 2006 in terms of Special Educational Needs support was a two-day programme for staff in supporting students with SEN which was delivered in 2006. The programme was designed by the Further Education Section and a team of facilitators was trained to deliver it. All teaching and resource staff have had introductory training in relation to assessment, individual planning and support provision for learners with special needs. These methodologies are being introduced on a phased basis in centres. Follow up Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for all centres will be available in 2007.

5.3.3 Comparators

In comparison, guidance and counselling services are provided for in the post-primary sector through the allocation of Guidance Counsellor hours based on enrolment
figures. For example, at present, on reaching an enrolment of 500 a post-primary school is entitled to 24 hours of guidance counselling per week (DES letter of 31 January 2007 to Voluntary Secondary Schools re Approved Allocation of Teaching Posts 2007/08 School Year). Assuming a 33.4 week academic year, this aggregates to 801.6 guidance counselling hours available to those 500 students over the course of the year. Working on the enrolment figure of 500 this equates to 1.6 hours guidance and counselling per student per annum.

A post-primary school under the DEIS programme with an enrolment of 500 would be allocated 27.5 hours per week (DES letter of 31 January 2007 to Voluntary Secondary Schools re Approved Allocation of Teaching Posts 2007/08 School Year). This works out at 1.8 hours guidance and counselling per student per annum.

Table 5.8 Comparison of the provision of guidance counselling services in Youthreach, STTCs, post-primary and a post-primary school in DEIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Guidance and counselling service hours provided per student per annum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youthreach</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STTC</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-primary</td>
<td>1.6*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-primary under DEIS</td>
<td>1.8*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This does not include services provided by NEPS

As set out previously the total spend on guidance, counselling and psychological services in Youthreach and the STTC programme in 2005 was €682,913 and €227,638 respectively. This compares to an estimated spend of €127,449 under the same support measure in CTCs.

Looking at the area of Special Educational Needs, a total of €13,038,000\(^{11}\) was spent on providing SNAs (Special Needs Assistants) in the post-primary sector in 2005. Also in 2005, 3 YEP schools received a total of €271,494 to provide SNA support to students.

5.3.4 Comment on efficiency

Arising from the consultation process four key areas in terms of student supports were highlighted:

\(^{11}\) Department of Education and Science, Audited Appropriation Accounts 2005
• Special Educational Needs: There was a large consensus regarding the need to make provision for learners on the programmes with special educational needs.

• Guidance, counselling and psychological services: There was a general consensus that such services are of the utmost importance. Learners require not only counselling and psychological services, but also guidance services to enable them to make informed subject choices and to assist as learners progress on from the programmes. The very limited budget means that centres concentrate on counselling and psychological services. The services are insufficient particularly with regard to guidance and, as a result, are at best inconsistent.

• Literacy supports: It was acknowledged that development is needed in centre practice to improve literacy tuition for learners, taking a cross-curricular approach.

• Inter-agency support: The importance at centre level of inter-agency work with local services in support of learners and in order to integrate, as far as possible, actions intended for their benefit, was highlighted.

The guidance, counselling and psychological service provided in both programmes compares favourably with the equivalent provision in post-primary schools. The comparison of guidance and counselling services between the two programmes and post-primary needs to be viewed in the context of a number of factors:

• a student in post-primary can avail of this service over a period of 5/6 years while learners on the Youthreach and STTC programme can avail of their equivalent service over a shorter two year period.

• the cohort attending Youthreach and STTCs present with a higher degree of personal, emotional and psychological problems and therefore require more counselling and psychological services.

• the lack of a special educational needs support measure in Youthreach and STTCs up to the end of 2006 when compared to the post-primary sector.

• mainstream post-primary students are more ‘clued’ into the options available to them on completion of senior cycle. Progression pathways are more complex for Youthreach and STTC learners and therefore they require additional guidance support.

• apart from the assignment of a Senior Psychologist, almost no other service is offered by NEPS to Youtheach or STTC learners.
The level of SNA support in post-primary and YEP schools is quite significant. The introduction of a pilot initiative in 2007 to support the special educational needs of students in Youthreach will go some way to balancing the provision across the various sectors. This pilot initiative will be evaluated by the end of 2007, before, subject to the availability of funding, it is extended to all Youthreach centres.

It must also be noted that any supports available to a student in post-primary do not transfer with them to Youthreach/STTCs. Young people under 18 years of age, whether in Youthreach/STTCs or post-primary should be eligible for similar supports. On the whole, the support for guidance, counselling and psychological services of just under €1 million for both programmes appears to be an important support service for learners. This funding is being utilised by centres in an efficient manner, primarily focusing on counselling and psychological services, to maximise the level of support available to their students. The consultation process highlighted the need for additional funding for guidance support. The recently introduced service supporting the special educational needs of learners on the two programmes will help bring centres in line, to some degree, with the special educational needs supports available in post-primary schools. The possibility of expanding the existing FÁS Advocacy service can also be addressed to meet the needs of learners in relation to guidance.

In relation to learner supports, the Working Group recommend:

- Where supports are available to students in mainstream post-primary, they should be eligible for similar supports as they transfer to Youthreach and in the short term for the young learners in STTCs, if no comparable supports are available.
- Additional support for guidance services to learners should be provided, possibly through the expansion of the FÁS Advocacy service.

5.4 Allowances and grants

5.4.1 Cost and trends
The cost of the allowances (excluding childcare grants) paid to learners over the period 2001 – 2005 on both programmes is set out in tables 5.9 and 5.10 below. The average allowance rate per learner is also calculated based on the annual survey attendance figure applicable.
Table 5.9 Total expenditure on learner allowances on the Youthreach programme 2001 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total outlay on</td>
<td>€6,378,407</td>
<td>€10,385,599</td>
<td>€9,778,206</td>
<td>€10,525,909</td>
<td>€10,847,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allowances per</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>annum</td>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>2,641</td>
<td>2,859</td>
<td>2,653</td>
<td>2,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>€2,415</td>
<td>€3,633</td>
<td>€3,686</td>
<td>€3,824</td>
<td>€3,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allowance per</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learner per</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>annum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.10 Total expenditure on learner allowances on the STTC programme 2001 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total outlay on</td>
<td>€2,873,142</td>
<td>€3,906,053</td>
<td>€4,287,276</td>
<td>€4,533,729</td>
<td>€5,036,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allowances per</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>annum</td>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>1,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>€3,543</td>
<td>€4,090</td>
<td>€4,370</td>
<td>€4,520</td>
<td>€4,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allowance per</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student per</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>annum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2005 the total outlay on allowances was €10,847,726 for Youthreach and €5,036,411 for the STTC programme. The average allowance per learner attending Youthreach was €3,960 and in STTCs was €4,587 in 2005.

Training allowances are set in the budget each year in line with general social welfare payments. The training allowance payable to learners has increased on an annual basis in recent years. The table below compares the training allowances available dependent on age in 2001 and 2005.
Table 5.11 Comparison of Learner allowances in 2001 and 2005 on the Youthreach and STTC programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training allowance per week</th>
<th>2001 (01/01/’01)</th>
<th>2005 (01/01/’05)</th>
<th>% increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aged 15 &amp; 16</td>
<td>€40.12</td>
<td>€60.60</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 17</td>
<td>€50.15</td>
<td>€75.75</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 18 and over</td>
<td>€98.40</td>
<td>€148.80</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The allowance for meals (€4 per week), accommodation (€69.90 per week) and travel (€4.60 for 3 – 5 miles to €32.60 for 40 – 50 miles) paid to learners has remained unchanged since 1st January 2002.

The expenditure on Childcare support in each year from 2001 to 2005 on both programmes is outlined below in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12 Total expenditure on childcare on the Youthreach and STTC programmes for the period 2001 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Youthreach</th>
<th>STTC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>€541,060</td>
<td>€557,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>€673,577</td>
<td>€694,419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>€685,680</td>
<td>€706,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>€632,033</td>
<td>€651,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>€775,744</td>
<td>€799,747</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of Youthreach learners and their children availing of the childcare support service from 2001 to 2005 is outlined now in table 5.13

Table 5.13 Number of learners in Youthreach and their children availing of childcare support during the period 2001 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learners</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of learners on the STTC programme and their children availing of the
childcare support service from 2001 to 2005 is outlined now in table 5.14

Table 5.14 Number of Learners in STTC programme and their children availing of childcare support during the period 2001 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learners</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The unit cost of childcare per child in 2005 was €2,905 on Youthreach and €2,298 on the STTC programme. Even though the actual grant provided per child, at €63.50, has been static the childcare budget is rising each year from 2001 to 2005. Relatively, the total childcare costs on the STTC programme are higher than in Youthreach when total learner numbers attending the two programmes are compared. This is due to the fact that the STTC programme is now oriented towards adult Travellers with a higher need for childcare funding. The childcare rate has not been increased since the late 1990s.

5.4.2 Outputs and trends

The only direct output of learner allowances is numbers attending as the allowance is based on attendance. The number of approved places and attendance figures for both programmes are set out in Tables 5.2 and 5.3 above. The numbers attending both programmes have increased in recent years. The outputs in relation to accommodation, travel and meal allowances are not measured at present. However, if all other allowances and costs in general have risen over the 5 years, except these particular allowances, then there is inequity. A number of VECs use travel allowances available to learners to fund or part fund the provision of a transport service – e.g. a bus in rural areas.

5.4.3 Comparators

The average allowance in 2005 per student in Youthreach was €3,960 and in STTC was €4,587. This differential is predominantly due to age as the amount of allowances increase with age. Also there are more STTC trainees entitled to the extra training allowance of €31.80 per week, because they are long-term unemployed and are aged 21 and over.

Training allowances are for the most part not available in other areas of education. Under the CTC programme the estimated cost of trainee allowances in 2005
The total cost of learner allowances (excluding childcare support) was €13,080,694. Based on an attendance figure of 2,196 this works out as an average allowance cost of €5,956.

A maintenance grant is available to learners who are means tested and attending full-time PLC or third level. The maximum normal non-adjacent grant available for the academic year 2006/2007 is €3,110. The maximum “special” non-adjacent grant payable to certain Social Welfare categories for the academic year 2006/2007 is €5,970 (source www.education.ie). This maintenance grant is not available to Youthreach and STTC learners since they are not following a PLC or third level course.

5.4.4 Comment on efficiency

Some of the issues highlighted and views expressed during the consultation process in relation to learner allowances included:

- difficulties in relation to various Social Welfare entitlements experienced by STTCs when adult male Travellers reach 18 years of age, when they receive the same allowances whether they attend a centre or not. This is seen as a disincentive to remaining in the centre.
- a view amongst some that the training allowances available in further education can have the unintended consequence of creating an incentive for some young Travellers, particularly those under 16 years of age, to leave mainstream education, even though they would have the capacity to succeed in mainstream.
- strong views that under 16s in either programme should not be paid an allowance, particularly in the context that mainstream education is compulsory to 16 years of age.
- on the other hand, the allowance was seen to be a useful incentive to encourage disadvantaged young early school leavers to return to education and training.
- the present meal allowance of €4 per week is inadequate.
- while the travel allowance was not raised as an issue, the difficulties faced by many learners in getting to and from their centres were raised, especially by the learners.
- childcare supports are fundamental to making both programmes accessible; however the support rate (€63.50) has not been increased since the late 1990s.
Training allowances payable to learners under both programmes are set by FÁS which has statutory responsibility in this area. Allowances have increased in line with general social welfare increases over the period 2001 – 2005. The increase in the main training allowances between 2001 and 2005 is 51%. This compares favourably with the compounded inflation rate in real terms for that period of 32%. In the same period the average industrial wage increased by 19% for males and 24% for females (analysis of CSO data, www.cso.ie). The childcare grant has been paid at €63.50 per child since the late 1990s yet the cost of childcare has increased significantly in recent years.

The Working Group agreed that the payment of an allowance to those under 16 in Youthreach should be discontinued as it could act as an incentive to leave mainstream education during the compulsory cycle. For those aged 18 and over the training allowance equates to normal Social Welfare Allowances to which they are entitled. In relation to those aged 16 and 17 in centres the Working Group felt that the payment of an allowance should continue as the allowance was part of an overall positive activation measure to get early school leavers to re-engage in education. When examining where those early school leavers aged 16 and 17 might otherwise be if they were not in a centre (e.g. low paid employment, unemployment with possible deleterious consequences etc.) it was considered the payment of an allowance was justified. Re-engaging in education at that age should enable learners to improve their literacy, numeracy, personal and social skills and their life chances and obviate the necessity for possibly much more expensive interventions at a later stage.

Overall, the training allowance available on both programmes would appear adequate and is in line with general social welfare payments. The allowances for meals, travel and accommodation have not been increased since 2002 and are therefore not sufficient given the level of inflation in that same period. VECs are utilising the childcare support as efficiently as is possible at local level. Many VECs have developed their own crèches to cater for the children of learners on Further Education programmes, including Youthreach and the STTC programmes. The unit cost of childcare per child on both programmes at under €3,000 would appear to be efficient when considering the sharp increase in childcare costs in recent years. However, as noted above, the level of childcare support available is deemed to be inadequate.

In respect of allowances and grants, the Working Group recommend:

- The rate of childcare support should be increased to reflect current costs.
- The meal, accommodation and travel allowances should be increased.
5.5 Core non-pay

5.5.1 Costs and trends

The total expenditure on core non-pay for the period 2001 to 2005 on both programmes is outlined now in Table 5.15. It does not include accommodation costs which are outlined separately in section 5.6 below.

**Table 5.15 Expenditure on core non-pay for the Youthreach and STTC programmes during the period 2001 – 2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youthreach</td>
<td>€4,633,687</td>
<td>€4,824,364</td>
<td>€5,949,503</td>
<td>€5,457,491</td>
<td>€5,757,356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STTC</td>
<td>€1,658,305</td>
<td>€2,091,680</td>
<td>€1,970,410</td>
<td>€2,309,012</td>
<td>€2,358,007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The increase in spend on core non-pay for Youthreach and the STTC programme between 2001 and 2005 is 24% and 42% respectively. The increase in spending on this input is a result of once-off appeal funding being granted to VECs in recent years to meet certain non-pay liabilities.

The unitary cost of core non-pay for each learner for the years 2001-2005 is set out now in Table 5.16.

**Table 5.16 Unit cost per learner of core non-pay on the Youthreach and STTC programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youthreach</td>
<td>€1,572</td>
<td>€1,592</td>
<td>€1,826</td>
<td>€1,675</td>
<td>€1,767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STTC</td>
<td>€2,110</td>
<td>€2,322</td>
<td>€1,831</td>
<td>€2,130</td>
<td>€2,175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The allocation per group for non-pay did not increase in the period 2001 to 2005 for both programmes. It was however increased in 2006 by approximately 8%.

5.5.2 Outputs and trends

The Department does not collect data on the specific outputs from core non-pay allocations to VECs. Core non-pay budgets cover expenditure on course materials, light and heat, stationary, equipment, lease / hire of equipment, examination fees, travel and renovation and refurbishment costs.
Looking at Information Communications Technology (ICT), an area of growing importance in the education spectrum, there is no dedicated ICT fund available to either programme, unlike the post-primary sector and the YEP schools. As the Schools ICT Strategy, is being implemented and rolled out in schools it should incorporate the Youthreach programme. Dedicated funding should be provided for ICT in STTCs also.

5.5.3 Comparators

In 2005, the Department spent a total of €359,400,000 on “grants and services” in the post-primary sector. A further €48,976,870 (including receipts) was spent on School Transport at post-primary level in 2005. On a per student basis this equates to a spend of €1,072 on “grants and services” and €146 on transport, amounting to €1,218 in total. This compares with non-pay spend per learner in 2005 of €1,767 and €2,175 for Youthreach and the STTC programme respectively.

The total spend on non-pay (non-pay, youth affairs and grants) in 2001 and 2005 on the YEP schools programme was €482,845 and €581,979 respectively. This represents a 21% increase. Taking the 2005 spend and calculating a unit cost per student for non-pay gives a figure of €4,656 which is significantly higher than the same figure for Youthreach and the STTC programme. The 5 YEP schools received a total of €39,821 in the period 2001 – 2004 by way of ICT grants. In 2005 a total of €20,441 was expended under the Departments Planning and Building Unit (PBU) Minor Works Grant in the 5 YEP schools.

Under the CTC programme in 2005, the total spend on running costs, consumables and other costs amounted to €9,672,062. Based on an attendance figure of 2,196 this equates to a €4,404 spend per trainee on running costs, consumables and other costs. Due to the different structure of the CTC programme this is not a direct like for like comparator.
5.5.4 Comment on efficiency

The issues highlighted and views expressed during the Consultation process relating to non-pay included:

- strong views that the core non-pay budget was inadequate having remained almost static from 1998 until it was increased in 2006
- transport, insurance, light and heat costs are all increasing annually

Significant sums are provided to the post-primary sector in relation to grants and services and school transport. However these amounts are lower on a per student basis when compared to the non-pay spend on the Youthreach and STTC programmes. It should be noted that economy of scale is a factor when comparing the small centres in the Youthreach and STTC programmes with the significantly larger post-primary schools.

The unit cost of non-pay for both programmes is significantly lower than the YEP schools programme. This suggests the programmes are utilising available non-pay resources efficiently when compared to a programme operating with a similar scale – e.g. 20 – 25 students per centre.

There is no dedicated ICT provision for Youthreach or the STTC programme, unlike other programmes and this leads to difficulties for centres in the provision of a multiple approach to teaching and engaging the students. Proficiency in ICT is now a core competence that all learners require and it is a means of engaging with them on a variety of topics.

The non-pay allocation to Youthreach and STTCs did not increase for many years until 2006, when an increase of 8% approximately was introduced. The increase in inflation in that same period has more than outstripped this once-off 8% increase, particularly when looking at light and heat and consumables. In real terms therefore, the value of the non-pay grant has decreased over the period 2001 – 2005 and even more significantly relative to 1990. Some of the pressure on non-pay expenses is being met by the Department by way of providing additional ‘appeal’ funding at the end of each year.

Both programmes are using their non-pay allocation as efficiently as it would seem possible given the inflationary pressure on non-pay areas in recent years and the lack
of economies of scale for centres catering for an average cohort of 36 per centre in Youthreach and 33 per centre in the STTC programme.

In relation to non-pay funding, the Working Group recommend:

- As the Schools ICT Strategy, is being implemented and rolled out in schools it should incorporate the Youthreach programme. Dedicated funding for ICT should be provided to STTCs.

5.6 Accommodation

5.6.1 Costs and trends

The Department funds the accommodation costs on both programmes through the provision of a basic pro-rata allocation based on approved places and through a supplementary rental grant.

Calculating the total outlay on accommodation, there is a basic outlay of €4,500 per group of 25 on each programme. This amounts to a total basic rental cost of €586,440 for Youthreach and €195,120 for the STTC programme in 2005. On top of this basic rent the Department meets the supplementary cost of accommodation in centres where the basic allocation of €4,500 per group of 25 learners is insufficient.

The total outlay on accommodation costs on the two programmes is outlined in Tables 5.17 and 5.18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>€</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic rent</td>
<td>530,460</td>
<td>545,580</td>
<td>586,440</td>
<td>586,440</td>
<td>586,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary rent</td>
<td>620,747</td>
<td>695,139</td>
<td>779,787</td>
<td>674,981</td>
<td>936,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,151,207</td>
<td>1,240,719</td>
<td>1,366,227</td>
<td>1,261,421</td>
<td>1,522,852</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.18 Expenditure on accommodation on STTCs for the period 2001 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic rent</td>
<td>€141,480</td>
<td>€162,180</td>
<td>€193,680</td>
<td>€195,120</td>
<td>€195,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary rent</td>
<td>€172,277</td>
<td>€178,773</td>
<td>€261,801</td>
<td>€247,353</td>
<td>€193,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>€313,757</td>
<td>€340,953</td>
<td>€455,481</td>
<td>€442,473</td>
<td>€388,749</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at this cost on a per centre basis, the unit cost for accommodation per Youthreach centre in 2005 was €16,921 based on 90 centres. The equivalent cost per centre for accommodation in the STTC programme in 2005 was €11,780 based on 33 centres. The total outlay on accommodation costs for Youthreach has increased by 32% from €1,151,207 in 2001 to €1,522,852 in 2005. The equivalent outlay on the STTC programme has increased by 24% from €313,757 in 2001 to €388,749 in 2005.

5.6.2 Outputs and trends

The maximum number of centres operational in 2005 and for which rental costs are being met is 90 Youthreach centres and 33 STTCs. It should be noted however that some centres do not pay rental costs. This may be a result of the VEC being allowed use of a publicly owned building or a former school for the programme.

5.6.3 Comparators

At present there is no dedicated capital fund available for either programme. In comparison, an analysis of Department of Education and Science expenditure figures shows just over €238million was spent on the School Building Programme in the post-primary sector during 2005. This included spending on new schools, extensions and refurbishments, the Summer Works Scheme, science grants, remediation programmes, sites, furniture and equipment, temporary accommodation, health and safety technology grants and miscellaneous. For comparison, the average capital spend per each of the 742 post-primary schools in 2005 is calculated at €321,429 per school. This compares with the average accommodation cost per centre, although on a much smaller enrolment figure, in 2005 of €16,921 and €11,780 for Youthreach and STTCs respectively. Comparable rental costs for CTCs and YEP schools are not available.
5.6.4 Comment on efficiency

The issues highlighted and views expressed in the consultation process relating to accommodation included:

- criticism of the lack of a capital budget for the Further Education sector as a whole.
- criticism that in some cases the programmes are being delivered in sub-standard accommodation.

The majority of centres across the two programmes are being leased by VECs on a long term basis. The increase in commercial rents, particularly in urban areas, in recent years has meant leases that are being renewed or commenced in the last five years are significantly more costly.

To expect centres to continue to meet their rent liability through a provision of €4,500 per group of 25 students is unrealistic. Many VECs have survived on this allocation through the availability of old schools where amalgamations have occurred or through the goodwill and generosity of property owners in certain areas. It is becoming more evident that rental costs are increasing sharply for centres entering into new leases and that this issue needs to be addressed. For example, one centre’s rental cost increased from €6,000 to €90,000 per annum on moving to a modern new premises in 2006. Some of the evaluation reports completed by the Department’s Inspectorate also refer to the sub-standard accommodation and facilities in Youthreach centres and STTCs.

The continued provision of funding to cover rental costs may prove inefficient in the long run. At present however, the average rental cost per centre in both programmes would appear to be quite low compared to commercial urban rental rates generally. However, evidence is growing that centres entering into new lease agreements or renewing existing ones are being asked for significantly increased annual rents. This situation is not sustainable in the longer term, and the feasibility of providing a capital budget for both programmes should be examined.

In relation to capital funding the Working Group recommends that:

- Both programmes should be included in the capital programme of the Department of Education and Science.
5.7 National Co-ordination and support

5.7.1 Costs and trends

The total cost of national co-ordination and support across both programmes is outlined below in Table 5.19

Table 5.19 Expenditure on national co-ordination and support for the Youthreach and STTC programmes for the period 2001 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youthreach*</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>220,000</td>
<td>275,150</td>
<td>303,500</td>
<td>337,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STTC**</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>184,025</td>
<td>202,250</td>
<td>222,500</td>
<td>245,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>360,000</td>
<td>404,025</td>
<td>477,400</td>
<td>526,000</td>
<td>582,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The estimated costs for Youthreach include the cost of the National Co-ordinators Office, the salary of the Senior Psychologist, a 75% share of the cost of the QFI Office and the expenditure in grants to the NAYC

**The estimated costs for STTC include the cost of the National Co-ordinators Office, a 25% share of the cost of the QFI Office and the expenditure in grants to the NATC.

5.7.2 Outputs and trends

This input supports the cost of the national co-ordination offices and provides grant aid to representative organisations.

Office of the National Co-ordinator for Youthreach
The Office of the National Co-ordinator for Youthreach is based in the Curriculum Development Unit, CDVEC. The office accommodates the National Co-ordinator for Youthreach and 0.75 admin post.

Office of the National Co-ordinator for Senior Traveller Training Centres
The Office of the National Co-ordinator for Senior Traveller Training Centres is
based in Ennis, Co. Clare. The office accommodates the National Co-ordinator and 1 admin post.

**Senior Psychologist, Further Education**
A Senior Psychologist from NEPS has been assigned to the Further Education Sector. Her work primarily involves the Youthreach programme and to a lesser extent the STTC programme and CTCs.

**QFI National Co-ordinator**
A Co-ordinator oversees the rollout and implementation of the Quality Framework Initiative across the Youthreach and STTC programme. The Co-ordinator is based in Co. Louth VEC. The Quality Framework Initiative (QFI) is currently been implemented in all Youthreach and STTCs. Each centre received €1,100 per annum for carry out either a Centre Development Plan or an Internal Centre Evaluation.

**Representative organisations**
National Association for Traveller Centres and the National Association for Youthreach Co-ordinators.

The roles and responsibilities of these Co-ordinators and representative bodies are outlined in section 4.11.1 and 4.11.2

**5.7.3 Comparators**

There are a number of national co-ordination and support bodies and measures operating at post-primary level. These include the HSCL, JCSP, SCP, SLSS, NCTE and DEIS. Their services are not available to Youthreach centre and STTCs. The support provided for in relation to the Youthreach and STTC programmes is small in comparison.

The QFI is similar to the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI). Under the SDPI schools can apply for funding to cover the cost of SDP in any one year. A centre in the Youthreach and STTC programme currently receives €1,100 per annum to complete planning and evaluation work under the QFI. This reflects the fact that the QFI is a new initiative being implemented in centres. For comparison when SDP was being implemented in YEP schools, each school received a total of €646 over a three year period to implement the initiative. When introducing the SDP initiative on a phased basis in post-primary schools a grant of €1,270 was provided for two
successive years in schools with fewer than 400 pupils and €1,905 in schools with 400 pupils or more (source www.sdpi.ie).

5.7.4 Comment on efficiency

The national co-ordination and supports available at post-primary level is far in excess of those pertaining to the Youthreach and STTC programmes.
The cost of programme support for both programmes has increased over time due to:
- salary increases of National Co-ordinators and support admin staff
- introduction of the QFI programme and
- an assignment of a Senior Psychologist to Further Education

When considering the number of national co-ordination and support services available in mainstream education, it must be concluded that the national co-ordination and support available for these two programmes is being utilised fully. The provision of additional support in terms of a Senior Psychologist and a Co-ordinator for the QFI programme have greatly helped programme providers in recent years.

In respect of national coordination and support, the Working Group recommend:

- The level of national coordination and support for both programmes should be reviewed.

5.8 Programme support and development

5.8.1 Costs and trends

The total spend on programme support across the two programmes in the period 2001 – 2005 is outlined in Table 5.20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youthreach</td>
<td>€87,000</td>
<td>€94,000</td>
<td>€104,000</td>
<td>€115,000</td>
<td>€115,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STTC</td>
<td>€79,000</td>
<td>€86,000</td>
<td>€96,000</td>
<td>€107,000</td>
<td>€108,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>€166,000</td>
<td>€180,000</td>
<td>€200,000</td>
<td>€222,000</td>
<td>€223,759</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These figures include spending on two programmes: Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and the ‘Copping On’ programme.

In 2006 approximately €200,000 was spent on CPD for Youthreach and STTC staff. The number of staff in Youthreach per 2005 figures was 937 (301 full-time and 636 part-time), while there were 417 (106 full-time and 311 part-time) working in the STTC programme. Assuming a total staff compliment on both programmes of 1,354 this equates to a spend on CPD per staff member of €147 in one year.

5.8.2 Outputs and trends

Reports on how VECs spent their 2005 CPD allocations show that the primary areas focused on in training terms were:

- learning topics such as – how people learn, managing learning, group work and building self esteem etc.
- human resource topics such as – building co-operation, teamwork and service enhancement.
- quality assurance topics such as – critical reflection, evaluation and FETAC assessment.
- health and safety topics and
- specific educational programme (diploma / degree) for staff member.

The ‘Copping On’ programme’s principal support comes from the Department of Education and Science. It is also supported by FÁS and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Copping On is networked on a European level with researchers, policy makers, programme providers, police, youth workers, educationalists, probation, welfare, care services and the prison service. Two full-time staff are employed on the programme, a Project Manager and a Training Officer, with part-time administrative support. The Department of Education and Science contributed €85,000 towards the costs of this initiative in 2005. During 2005 a total of 262 individuals participated in Copping On training. Evaluations of the training show an overall approval rating of 93% in 2005.

Training on the new Child Protection Guidelines was provided to the staff of Youthreach and STTCs at the end of 2006. It is proposed to develop a specific document on the Child Protection Guidelines for staff on both programmes during the latter half of 2007.
5.8.3 Comparators

In the post-primary sector a total of €11,600,000 (source Teacher Education Section, DES) was spent on teacher in-service in 2005. This equates to a spend per full time equivalent teacher working in the sector of €464 in 2005.

The 5 YEP schools each received funding of €1,781 in the period 2000 – 2002 by way of curriculum grants. The YEP schools centres have also received some PE and Visual Arts grants over the period 2001 – 2005.

5.8.4 Comment on efficiency

Programme support and development is an emerging priority in the area of Further Education, and indeed in relation to these two programmes also. This is particularly the case in the context of the provision of programmes leading to FETAC awards. The spending on programme support and development in the two programmes is very small compared to the resources provided in this area in respect of post-primary schools.

Resources supplied by way of continuous professional development to staff on both programmes have many long term benefits. They will improve professional competencies within the programmes, allow for the development and sharing of best practice and should improve the quality of the learner’s experience.

Youthreach and STTCs should have access to SLSS (Second Level Support Service) and other existing staff supports if learners in their centres are following mainstream programmes such as JCSP (Junior Certificate School Programme for Youthreach), LCA (Leaving Certificate Applied for Youthreach and the STTC programme) etc.

On the whole, the relatively small level of programme support and CPD funding available on both programmes is being fully utilised in an efficient manner to upskill programme staff.

In relation to programme support and development, the Working Group recommend:

- Staff working on both programmes should have access to appropriate continuous professional development, particularly where they are delivering post-primary programmes.
5.9 Centre / VEC administration

5.9.1 Costs and trends

For Youthreach, the total cost of VEC/Centre administration is based on 15% of the non-pay budget. In 2005 this would have equated to not more than €1,284,743. For the STTC programme the total cost of VEC/Centre administration is based on 15% of the core pay budget. In 2005 this would have equated to not more than €1,864,386.

The total spend on Centre and VEC administration using the above formulae for both programmes for the period 2001-2005 is outlined now in Table 5.21

Table 5.21 Expenditure on VEC / centre administration on the Youthreach and STTC programmes for the period 2001 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youthreach</td>
<td>€1,020,864</td>
<td>€1,070,309</td>
<td>€1,291,011</td>
<td>€1,185,690</td>
<td>€1,284,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STTC programme</td>
<td>€975,325</td>
<td>€1,209,677</td>
<td>€1,496,082</td>
<td>€1,750,208</td>
<td>€1,864,386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>€1,996,189</td>
<td>€2,279,986</td>
<td>€2,787,093</td>
<td>€2,935,898</td>
<td>€3,149,129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The unit cost per learner of Centre / VEC administrative support in 2005 is €394 for Youthreach and €1,720 for the STTC programme. As the Centre / VEC administrative support budget for the Youthreach programme is directly linked to the core non-pay budget it has remained relatively stable in real terms over the period 2001 to 2005. As the Centre / VEC administrative support budget for the STTC programme is directly linked to the pay budget it has increased significantly over the period 2001 to 2005. It has increased by 109%, the same increase as core tuition costs in that period.

5.9.2 Outputs and trends

The Department does not gather data on the use of the Centre / VEC administration budget. The funding can be used in two separate ways, to:

- cover the costs of administration support at centre level or
- cover the costs of an administration post(s) at VEC level.
5.9.3 Comparators
It is difficult to calculate the total spend on the provision of clerical support in the post-primary sector in 2005. Clerical support is funded through the capitation grants and additional specific funding. No clear figures exist for CTCs and YEP schools in relation to clerical support. The cost per centre in 2005 for VEC/Centre administration support for Youthreach and the STTC programme is €14,274 and €56,496 respectively.

5.9.4 Comment on efficiency
The linking of the VEC/Centre administration budgets to a percentage of the non-pay and pay budgets makes any debate on the efficiency of this input redundant, especially in the case of resources spent on the STTC programme for VEC/Centre administration. Linking the resource available under this programme to the pay budget for that same programme has meant that any increase in the pay budget (which has seen a significant increase as outlined in 5.2.1 above) results in the same incremental percentage increase in the VEC/Centre administration budget. This increase is not a result of an assessment of need but rather a result of an outdated formula which needs to be amended.

By the same token, linking the budget on the Youthreach programme for VEC/Centre administration costs to the non-pay budget for the same programme is also unrealistic. The fact that the non-pay budget for Youthreach has not increased in recent years until 2006, has meant that there has been little or no increase in the funding available on VEC/Centre administration also.

The question of VECs working to these specifications must also be called into question. No data exist on how each VEC works within these allocations for VEC/Centre administration. It may be a case in certain VECs that a post(s) carries out the administration work for both programmes and is funded from a combination of the allocations available under both programmes.

The difference in calculating the administrative support to the two programmes needs to be addressed since the support available to STTCs is significantly higher than Youthreach. A new formula perhaps based on learner numbers needs to be developed to allocate VEC/Centre administration support funding.

The high cost of VEC/Centre administration on a per centre basis in the STTC
programme appears to be an inefficient use of resources. A new method of allocating funding in this area should be developed to improve efficiency.

In respect of VEC / Centre administration, the Working Group recommend:

- A new basis for the allocation of funding for VEC/Centre administration support should be developed.

### 5.10 Summary of financial inputs in Youthreach

The financial inputs specific to Youthreach and the STTC programmes for 2001 – 2005 are summarised in Tables 5.22 and 5.23. In 2005 the total spend of €46.9m on the Youthreach programme represented 0.65% of the total gross spend by the Department of Education and Science, which was €7.2 billion in 2005. See 5.1.6 re ESF co-funding for Youthreach.

#### Table 5.22 Summary of financial inputs in Youthreach for 2001 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pay (Core tuition)</td>
<td>15,484,116</td>
<td>19,421,114</td>
<td>19,387,776</td>
<td>25,111,971</td>
<td>25,545,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner support</td>
<td>682,913</td>
<td>682,913</td>
<td>682,913</td>
<td>682,913</td>
<td>682,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowances and grants</td>
<td>6,919,467</td>
<td>11,059,176</td>
<td>10,463,886</td>
<td>11,157,942</td>
<td>11,623,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core non-pay</td>
<td>4,633,687</td>
<td>4,824,364</td>
<td>5,949,503</td>
<td>5,457,491</td>
<td>5,757,356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>1,151,207</td>
<td>1,240,719</td>
<td>1,366,227</td>
<td>1,261,421</td>
<td>1,522,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Co-ordination and support</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>220,000</td>
<td>275,150</td>
<td>303,500</td>
<td>337,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme support and development</td>
<td>87,000</td>
<td>94,000</td>
<td>104,000</td>
<td>115,000</td>
<td>115,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre / VEC administration</td>
<td>1,020,864</td>
<td>1,070,309</td>
<td>1,291,011</td>
<td>1,185,690</td>
<td>1,284,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department pay and overheads</td>
<td>54,000</td>
<td>57,000</td>
<td>63,000</td>
<td>69,000</td>
<td>75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>30,233,254</strong></td>
<td><strong>38,669,595</strong></td>
<td><strong>39,583,466</strong></td>
<td><strong>45,344,928</strong></td>
<td><strong>46,945,223</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.11 Summary of financial inputs in STTC programme:

In 2005 the total spend of €21.62m on the STTC programme represented 0.3% of the total gross spend by the Department of Education and Science, which was €7.2 billion in 2005. See 5.1.6 re ESF co-funding for the STTC programme.

Table 5.23 Summary of financial inputs in the STTC programme for 2001 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pay (Core tuition)</td>
<td>5,526,840</td>
<td>6,854,833</td>
<td>8,477,801</td>
<td>9,917,848</td>
<td>10,564,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner support</td>
<td>227,638</td>
<td>227,638</td>
<td>227,638</td>
<td>671,356</td>
<td>227,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowances and grants</td>
<td>3,430,944</td>
<td>4,600,472</td>
<td>4,994,172</td>
<td>5,185,319</td>
<td>5,836,158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core non-pay</td>
<td>1,658,305</td>
<td>2,091,680</td>
<td>1,970,410</td>
<td>2,309,012</td>
<td>2,358,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>313,757</td>
<td>340,953</td>
<td>455,481</td>
<td>442,473</td>
<td>388,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Co-ordination and support</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>184,025</td>
<td>202,250</td>
<td>222,500</td>
<td>245,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme support and development</td>
<td>79,000</td>
<td>86,000</td>
<td>96,000</td>
<td>107,000</td>
<td>108,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre / VEC administration</td>
<td>975,325</td>
<td>1,209,677</td>
<td>1,496,082</td>
<td>1,750,208</td>
<td>1,864,386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department pay and overheads</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12,389,809</td>
<td>15,614,278</td>
<td>17,940,834</td>
<td>20,628,716</td>
<td>21,617,792</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.12 Summary of financial inputs in 2005 on the programmes used as comparators in this chapter

5.12.1 Post-primary financial inputs for the academic year 2004 / 2005

Table 5.24 below outlines the financial inputs in the post-primary sector during the academic year 2004 / 2005.
Table 5.24 Summary of financial inputs for the post-primary sector for the academic year 2004 / 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>€</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department pay and other overheads</td>
<td>30,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and superannuation</td>
<td>2,023,700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants and services</td>
<td>359,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Transport</td>
<td>49,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital expenditure</td>
<td>238,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,701,000,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.12.2 YEP schools financial inputs in 2005

Table 5.25 below outlines the financial inputs in the YEP schools during 2005.

Table 5.25 Summary of financial inputs for YEP schools in 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>€</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>1,927,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs Assessment</td>
<td>271,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non – pay</td>
<td>581,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,780,612</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.12.3 CTCs financial inputs in 2005

Table 5.26 below outlines the financial inputs in the CTC programme during 2005. It is shown on a cost per trainee per day basis and then annualised for total spend for the year.
Table 5.26 Summary of financial inputs for CTCs in 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cost per trainee per day</th>
<th>Annual cost*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>€</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff costs</td>
<td>28.19</td>
<td>16,095,362**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowances</td>
<td>22.91</td>
<td>13,080,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running costs</td>
<td>11.95</td>
<td>6,822,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other costs</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>1,975,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumables</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>873,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building repairs /</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>51,386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>68.13</strong></td>
<td><strong>38,899,505</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Annual cost is calculated by multiplying the cost per trainee per day by the number of trainees and then by the length of the centre year.

**This does not include the cost of teaching staff allocated to CTCs by VECs under the Department of Education and Science's cooperation hours' scheme. This is estimated to cost approximately €4million.

5.13 Overall comment on the efficiency of the Youthreach and STTC programmes

To arrive at a definitive conclusion on the efficiency of the two programmes, a summary of the main findings in this chapter is now given:

- Core tuition costs have increased sharply in recent years. Some unique factors relevant to the two programmes were highlighted as causing this increase to be greater on these two programmes relative to comparative programmes.
- The two programmes are more costly in terms of core tuition on a per student (learner) basis than post-primary and CTCs, and less costly than YEP schools. However when output was included, Youthreach in particular compares favourably to post-primary.
- Guidance, counselling and psychological services available to learners on the two programmes are better on a per learner basis than post- – primary. However the needs for counselling and psychological supports are greater in the Youthreach and the STTC programmes. Available resources are therefore concentrated on counselling and psychological supports with little available for guidance. The level of support from NEPS and SNAs are significant in post-primary and YEP schools but are not available to Youthreach and STTCs.
• Allowances available to programme learners have increased in line with general social welfare payments. However, meal, travel and accommodation allowances have not increased. Neither has the weekly childcare support increased.
• Inflationary increases are putting pressure on the non-pay budget available to centres in the two programmes.
• There is no dedicated ICT fund for either programme, unlike the post-primary sector.
• Rental costs will continue to increase in future years. The capital budget for post-primary is significant. There is no capital fund for the two programmes.
• The level of national co-ordination and support is relatively small on the two programmes, particularly compared to supports available in post-primary.
• Staff on both programmes should have access to appropriate continuous professional development, particularly where they are delivering post-primary programmes.
• A new basis for funding VEC / centre administration needs to be developed.

Table 5.27 now compares the cost per participant in 2005 on each of the programmes referred to in this chapter.

Table 5.27 Comparison of the unit cost per participant in STTCs, Youthreach, CTCs, post-primary and YEP schools in 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Financial Input €</th>
<th>No. of learners*</th>
<th>Unit cost €</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STTC</td>
<td>21,617,792</td>
<td>1,084</td>
<td>19,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youthreach</td>
<td>46,945,223</td>
<td>3,258</td>
<td>14,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTC</td>
<td>38,899,505</td>
<td>2,196</td>
<td>17,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-primary school</td>
<td>2,701,000,000</td>
<td>335,162</td>
<td>8,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEP schools</td>
<td>2,780,612</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>22,245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Approved numbers are used for STTCs, Youthreach and YEP schools, while actual enrolment is used for CTCs and post-primary. This reflects concerns regarding the annual census of enrolment on 31 December carried out on the Youthreach and STTC programmes as highlighted in section 5.1.3
After examining all the information as presented above, it would appear that both programmes are relatively efficient. Given the apparent inadequacy of some of the inputs as outlined above, it would appear that both programmes are for the most part maximising output from the input available. This would appear particularly true in relation to the following input areas - learner supports, core non-pay, accommodation, national co-ordination and support, and programme support and development.

Core tuition costs have risen sharply on both programmes in recent years, however this was accounted for by various factors. The basis of allocating funding for Centre / VEC administration must be re-examined.

On the whole, therefore, the Working Group concludes that both programmes are operating efficiently. This is particularly true given the needs of the disadvantaged learners attending both programmes. The range of resources available to the post-primary sector are greater e.g. NEPS, HSCL, SLSS, Capital funding and ICT.

5.14 Key recommendations

Based on an examination of the efficiency of both programmes throughout this chapter, the Working Group agrees that the following key recommendations should be made:
• Review the disparity in the allocation of teaching hours on both programmes, 4,200 in Youthreach and 5,250 in the STTC programme, mindful of the recommendations in the evaluation of the pilot special needs initiative currently underway in 20 Youthreach centres.

• Summer provision for learners on both programmes should be reviewed.

• Where supports are available to students in mainstream post-primary schools they should be eligible for similar supports as they transfer to Youthreach and, for the moment for the young learners in STTCs, if no comparable supports are available.

• Provide additional programme support for guidance services to learners, possibly through the expansion of the FÁS Advocacy service.

• Increase the rate of childcare support to reflect current costs.

• Increase the meal, accommodation and travel allowances.

• As the Schools ICT Strategy, is being implemented and rolled out in schools it should incorporate the Youthreach programme. Provide dedicated funding for ICT in STTCs.

• Both programmes should be included in the capital programme of the Department of Education and Science.

• Review the level of national co-ordination and support for both programmes.

• Staff working on both programmes should have access to appropriate continuous professional development, particularly where they are providing post-primary programmes.

• Develop a new basis for the allocation of funding for VEC/Centre administration support on both programmes.
Chapter 6 - An evaluation of the educational provision in Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres

6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses one of the terms of reference for this review i.e. to evaluate the appropriateness of the educational provision in the programmes. During the period January to June 2006 the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science undertook an evaluation of the quality of management, planning and education provision in six centres for education (four Youthreach centres and two Senior Traveller Training Centres) and reported in each case on the centre context and ethos. Prior to the evaluation of these centres the inspectors involved participated in an extensive research and training exercise the aim of which was to familiarise them with the centres and the nature of their work. This involved, among other things, meetings with relevant personnel in the Further Education section of the Department of Education and Science, meetings with senior centre management personnel and those involved in the Quality Framework Initiative (QFI), as well as preliminary visits to a selected number of centres to observe practices and interact with centre management, staff and learners. Following this preliminary phase evaluation procedures, along with evaluation instruments, were developed for use by inspectors during evaluations. These included a range of evaluation instruments as well as guidelines on practice and procedure. The relevant education partners were consulted and informed about the planned evaluation of centres and the procedures to be used. The evaluation of these six centres formed the initial phase of a planned programme of evaluation of centres for education by the Inspectorate. It was also intended that these initial evaluations would help fulfil one of the terms of reference of this value for money review of Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres – “to evaluate the appropriateness of the educational provision in the programmes”.

Each of the six evaluations involved the inspector(s) holding a pre-evaluation meeting with the director or coordinator of a centre together with his or her staff. This pre-evaluation meeting usually took place some four to five days prior to the in-centre phase of the evaluation. The in-centre phase itself was conducted over a number of days (usually two or three days) during which the inspectors visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning. During these evaluation days the inspector also interacted with staff and learners in the centre, examined learners’ work and conducted an interview with a representative group of learners. The inspector also reviewed relevant centre planning documentation, including the written lesson
preparation of staff, and met with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and sometimes
the Adult Education Officer (AEO) of the relevant Vocational Education Committee
(VEC), along with a centre’s board of management where one existed. Following the
evaluation visit, the inspector(s) provided oral feedback on the outcomes of the
evaluation to the director or co-ordinator together with his or her staff, and to the
board of management, where relevant. The draft findings and recommendations of the
evaluation were presented and discussed at this meeting. Each centre was
subsequently issued with its own written evaluation report. Each report presented the
findings of the evaluation of the work of the centre and made recommendations for its
further development. Management of each centre was given the opportunity to
comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of their report and their
response was published as an appendix to the report. The final report for each centre
is published on the website of the Department of Education and Science
(www.education.ie).

6.2 Context and ethos of centres

6.2.1 Context

The six centres visited were located in counties Cork, Kildare, Leitrim, Longford,
Tipperary and Wexford. The earliest that one of these centres opened was in 1994,
when it then operated under the auspices of FÁS. The most recent opened in 2004.
Each of the Youthreach evaluation reports highlighted how particular centres had
been established to meet the perceived needs of a significant number of educationally
disadvantaged early school leavers who previously attended mainstream schools. In
the case of the two Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs) evaluated it was
mentioned that one was established to “provide education and training for adult
Traveller learners”, while the other “focussed primarily on the provision of relevant
courses for young mothers in the Traveller community” at the time of its
establishment. It is interesting to note that, on the whole, efforts to establish these
centres, both Youthreach and STTCs, gained significant support from local groups. In
the case of one of the STTCs, for example, its report stated that support for its
establishment came not only from the national coordinator of STTCs and its local
VEC, but “the impetus for the creation of this centre came initially from the [local]
Traveller Forum, with support from the [local] development group, [local] Family
Resource Centre and the Health Services Executive”. In the case of one centre,
however, mention was made of the anxieties that local groups felt at the idea of a
centre opening up in their locality, but that these anxieties soon dissipated once the
centre opened and efforts were made on the part of both the centre and its community to engage with each other.

While the centres visited were located in an urban setting they served a wide catchment area, including neighbouring towns and villages. The majority of learners enrolled in the centres evaluated lived in disadvantaged areas and many experienced social and economic exclusion, along with the type of factors normally associated with early school leaving. The number of learners enrolled in the six centres visited ranged from forty-six in one centre to only twelve learners in another. One centre had thirty-five learners enrolled while the remaining three had enrolments in the twenties. It was reported by management of the centre with twelve learners enrolled that they had a waiting list in place even though the centre was in a position to enrol a greater number of learners.

Learners in the Youthreach centres visited were generally aged between fifteen and twenty years old (mostly seventeen-eighteen years), while learners in STTCs ranged in age including both young and more mature adults. The literacy and numeracy levels of most learners enrolled in the six centres were described by centre personnel as being “below average”, “low” or “very low”. During interviews many learners spoke of the benefit they derived from receiving an allowance to attend their centre. Many claimed that they would not be able to attend their centre without the support that this allowance provided.

There was generally a good mix of male and female learners enrolled in the Youthreach centres visited, but in the STTCs the learners were predominantly female. One of the STTC evaluation reports, for example, spoke of there being “forty-six learners enrolled, forty-one of whom are Travellers, but only two of whom are male”. These centres repeatedly reported experiencing significant difficulties in their endeavours to enrol male adult Travellers. In essence, they found that the Traveller culture generally militated against male adult Travellers attending centres. While there was evidence of some Traveller learners attending Youthreach centres, there was less evidence of non-Traveller learners attending STTCs. Some Youthreach centres reported experiencing increases in recent times in the enrolment of “newcomer” learners. Learners generally used a range of transport modes to get to their respective centres including walking, bus, parent transport and DES grant aided transport. In one centre its evaluation report mentioned that the majority of learners were transported to the centre on a private bus provided by the relevant VEC.

**Recommendations:**
• Centres should adopt proactive approaches to enrolment, particularly those centres with enrolments short of the number of places available to learners

• Young Travellers should be encouraged to remain in post-primary school or attend other non-segregated provision which are already being attended by young adults of a similar age

• Strategies should be developed and implemented aimed at encouraging adult male Travellers to attend STTCs

6.2.2 Distinctive character and atmosphere

All of the centres visited had a mission statement in place and it was found that most were operating in accordance with the principles of their statement. The mission statement of one of the STTCs stated that it was “to provide trainees with the necessary skills in literacy, numeracy, social and practical subjects to participate in the community in which they live”, while the statement for one of the Youthreach centres stated that its centre was “about helping young people to become more self-aware, increase their self-esteem and their sense of responsibility”. The focus of each of the mission statements reviewed by inspectors was very much on the learner. This was considered good practice. The focus of activity in centres themselves was generally on the holistic development of the individual learner.

With one exception, the atmosphere of the centres was described as being friendly, welcoming and purposeful. Morale among staff in these five centres was described as being “positive” or “high” and relationships between all parties – management, staff and learners – were described as being warm, friendly, respectful and that they contributed towards providing “a sound basis for the personal and social development of the learners”. Even though there were significant challenges facing one of the centres visited, which were predominantly concerned with staff relations, as well as accommodation difficulties, its evaluation report mentioned that the learners still felt “comfortable with each other and the staff, they get on well together, they feel they learn how to work as a team and they feel able to take on new responsibilities”.

Each of the STTC evaluation reports spoke of how the centres themselves celebrated Traveller culture, values and life-style. In one case it was reported that the centre had been a key influential factor in the development of Travellers in the area, especially in areas related to health and well-being, as well as in areas such as social skills, self-confidence, interest in education and progress from temporary living accommodation.
It was generally noted in reports however that greater efforts could be made by centres to integrate learners more with people in the settled community.

**Recommendation:**
- STTCs should ensure that learners are provided with opportunities to work and integrate with their local community, including the settled community

### 6.2.3 Supports for learners

On the whole it was found that staff members in centres devote significant amounts of time and effort at getting to know learners individually - their background, their parents, their family circumstances. This plays a key role in the support offered to learners by centres. During interviews, for example, learners repeatedly reported that they found this type of individual support and attention very helpful and they appreciated the relaxed and informal atmospheres they experienced in centres, especially when compared to those that they experienced during their time at school. It was common for learners in centres to be provided with a cooked meal at lunchtime, which they themselves were generally involved in preparing, and they would sit together with staff and visitors at break and lunch times. It was found that this activity was of considerable benefit to learners in that it helped them to integrate and interact better with their peers and centre staff. It also contributed to their dietary improvement and it helped them to further develop their social skills.

A number of evaluation reports mentioned the benefits to be gained by learners from having a well defined induction programme in place. Many programmes prioritised the development of learners’ personal, social, literacy, numeracy and IT skills. Centres also generally provided learners with counselling facilities and this usually took the form of a counsellor spending a small number of hours (e.g., 2-6) a week in a centre conducting one-to-one counselling sessions with learners. While most learners welcomed and clearly benefited from this type of service some expressed a desire for more group counselling sessions as distinct from continuous one-to-one support, as well as seeking a greater focus on career opportunities. One centre had a dedicated counselling or “chill-out” room for counselling purposes, while another had a FÁS advocacy support person who visited one day each week. In another, each learner on admission was assigned a staff member as a “key-worker”. This staff member met with the learner on a regular basis to assess, discuss and review the learners’ personal, educational and training needs. Through this process individual learner plans (ILP) were drawn up. In centres where ILP’s did not exist inspectors usually recommended
that efforts be made to develop them. In this context the majority of evaluation reports recommended that centres should introduce, or improve, initial assessment of learners. One report, for example, mentioned that “no systems to assess learners’ needs on entry to the centre are in place”.

Some centres successfully implemented targeted strategies to promote learners’ attendance and punctuality. Regular contact with parents was one such strategy and this was maintained mostly by phone or sms (text). A number of centres also held parent-staff meetings but it was commonly reported that attendance at these events was poor. One evaluation report described its centre’s communications with parents in the following terms: “Engaging parents is a constant challenge for the centre. Communication with parents is mainly by telephone. Parents occasionally visit the centre usually at the request of the director in relation to disciplinary matters. A number of learners are parents themselves and have to balance attendance at the centre with caring for their children”. Attendance and punctuality was also promoted through ‘clocking-in’ systems for learners, or through the operation of ‘signing-in’ systems, while one had a ‘checking-in’ system whereby the learners actually conversed with staff in the morning for a short period when they arrived at the centre. The benefit of this latter arrangement, as observed by inspectors, was that staff swiftly became “aware of any problems or issues the individual learners may be bringing [to the centre] with them”.

Attendance was reported by all centres as being particularly poor during the summer period each year when mainstream schools were on holidays. As a result, particular efforts were made by some centres during these periods to maintain their attendance levels which sometimes meant having to significantly refocus the programme on offer. However, these kinds of strategies were not evident in all centres and consequently some faced “an up-hill battle regarding attendance and punctuality”. One centre reported an attendance rate ranging from 46% to 70%, with its average being 60%. The mode of transport used by learners sometimes contributed to their poor attendance but also, as mentioned in one evaluation report, the fact that “entitlements to ‘leave days’ for sick leave or personal leave are now regarded as rights by the [learners] and are fully exploited in that spirit”.

Two of the centres visited had a learners’ council in place. These councils provided learners with a formal channel to communicate their views to management and staff, particularly with regard to issues of importance to the learners. Inspectors generally recommended that learners would be supported in setting up their own learners’ council in those centres where one did not exist. One centre had an on-site crèche
facility in place which made it possible for young mothers to attend the centre on a part-time basis. One learner told the inspector, “it makes a big difference, without it, it would be practically impossible for me to attend the centre”. Learners in other centres reported using and benefiting from a crèche allowance.

Recommendations:

- Centres should continually monitor their deployment of counselling services for learners with a view to ensuring they are meeting the needs of learners as effectively as possible. Strategies including one-to-one and group counselling should be explored. There should also be a focus on career opportunities.
- Centres should develop ILPs for learners, with the aid of the recently developed ‘profiling web’ system, as a means of ensuring that they are meeting, to the best extent possible, the individual needs of their learners.
- Centres should implement effective systems for the initial assessment of learners, as well as introduce appropriate induction programmes for learners.
- Centres should be proactive at promoting learner attendance and punctuality. Some centres have successfully introduced crèche facilities as an attendance promotion strategy, while others operate dedicated transport facilities for learners. Guidelines should be developed nationally to assist centres in adopting a standardised approach to issues of attendance and punctuality.
- The programme provided at Youthreach centres for learners during the summer period, particularly the month of July, should be reviewed.
- Centres should support learners in setting up a ‘learner council’, similar to student councils in post-primary schools.

6.2.4 Links with the community

Most of the centres reported having good relationships with relevant local, and sometimes national, service providers and agencies and some reports mentioned that these links were well managed on behalf of the learners. It was found that quality links with the community generally resulted from the efforts of a proactive board of management or particular member(s) of staff such as the director or coordinator. It was generally found that a representative board of management helped in the integration of a centre within the community. It was reported that the board of management in one centre, for example, was particularly instrumental in changing
Surprisingly, centres had very limited links or communications with national services and agencies such as the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE), the School Completion Programme (SCP) and the Home-School Community Liaison (HSCL). There were limited contacts also with relevant second-level curricular support services. Centre personnel felt that these agencies and providers would have a specific and important contribution to make in terms of the learners in their care and this lack of communication was viewed as being a serious gap in the service offered to learners. This gap is particularly acute in the case of Youthreach learners who, if they remained in post-primary school, would have an entitlement of these services. One evaluation report suggested that these, and other agencies, “should establish clear protocols for developing linkages with [centres for education]. Services from these agencies …. appear to be inconsistent and erratic”. Notwithstanding, one centre reported having three learners who were enrolled with the active cooperation of the local education welfare officer (EWO). It was found that learners were generally referred to centres through schools or by parents, or through services and agencies including the juvenile liaison officer of the Gardaí and social workers.

There was a distinct lack of evidence of relationships or communication between some of the centres evaluated and their local post-primary schools and businesses. Referrals to centres from post-primary schools commonly resulted from the outcome of the Education Act (1988), Section 29 appeal process in which a student had usually been excluded from a school. This arrangement is not particularly conducive to the maintenance of good relationships between schools and centres. While a small number of the centres evaluated had links in place with local businesses this was not the case for all. The majority of centres did not provide work experience opportunities for learners and this contributed to the lack of communication evidenced between centres and the local business community.

One of the centres evaluated held an annual ‘open day’ while another held an annual ‘sale of work day’. These events were commended by inspectors as they fostered local awareness of the centres and provided an opportunity for parents, service providers and agencies to be kept informed of the work and achievements of the centres. Some centres organised guest speakers (e.g., artists, musicians, storytellers, poets and heritage specialists) to visit their centre to talk with learners, while others organised educational and social trips for learners. All of these were seen to contribute to the
development of learners’ social and personal skills.

The two STTCs evaluated reported having regular contact with their local Visiting Teacher for Travellers (VTT), particularly with regard to enrolment issues. They also reported having good communications with local and national Traveller organisations and groups. However, in the case of one of these centres it was stated that the staff needed to promote a positive image of the centre and its learners within the local and wider community. In particular, it was suggested that it would help “if members of the community were provided with appropriate opportunities to work with learners and staff. It would also benefit learners to be made aware of the needs and resources of the local and wider community and to have opportunities to mix with people from a variety of social and cultural groups”.

**Recommendations:**

- **Learners in Youthreach centres should be able to avail of the services provided by national services and agencies such as NEPS, NEWB, NCSE and NCTE, as well as relevant curricular support services provided by DES, the same as their counterparts in mainstream schools. Where supports are available to students in mainstream post-primary schools, they should be eligible for similar supports as they transfer to Youthreach and in the short term for the young learners in STTCs, if no comparable supports are available.**

- **Youthreach centres and post-primary schools should establish links so that they can share information with each other. Strong links between schools and centres can only support centres and schools in fulfilling the educational needs of individual learners.**

- **Both Youthreach centres and STTCs should be proactive at developing links with local businesses and their wider community, particularly in the context of providing work experience opportunities for learners and in increasing their employment prospects.**

6.3 Quality of centre management

6.3.1 Role of VEC/Board of Management

Each of the six centres evaluated operated under the auspices of their local VEC. Both of the STTCs visited had boards of management in place while two of the four Youthreach centres had such boards. While each of the four boards interviewed were
appropriately constituted it was found that the meetings of two boards were sporadic, and attendance on the part of certain board members was poor. This was particularly true of parent representatives. Interviews with the four boards of management revealed that members were generally aware of the challenges facing their respective centre, but some members were unclear about the legislative environment in which they operated. Issues regularly discussed at meetings included community relations and disciplinary matters as well as transport, building and curricular issues. Budgetary matters were generally left for discussion at VEC meetings. The evaluation also found, with some exceptions, that boards were generally not involved in the development of policy for their centre but viewed their function instead as being one of policy ratification. A number of evaluation reports recommended that boards would benefit from appropriate in-service training.

One of the two centres that did not have a board of management had plans in place for the setting up of a board. In this particular case the board planned was one that would “have a remit for all further and adult education services provided by the VEC, including Youthreach (others include VTOS, PLC and adult literacy)”. The board proposed in this instance will be quite a new departure with regard to management structures in this area in that its remit extends beyond the centre itself. While there is merit in convening a board of this formation, for example, it would help support in-centre management decision making processes, it would facilitate communications between the different sections operating in the area of further and adult education in its VEC region and it would help the centre to foster links with the local community. However, it is important that centres be cognisant of the fact that the various branches of further and adult education serve people of varying and different circumstances and so such a board could find itself being stretched in terms of the level of work that it can do. It is wholly appropriate, however, that the various management personnel involved in adult and further education within any VEC scheme should liaise regularly, including Youthreach and STTC directors and coordinators, adult education officers (AEO), community education organisers, back to education initiative (BTEI) coordinators and other relevant personnel.

VECs generally learned of the progress of their centres mainly through reports from the relevant CEO or through the circulation of the minutes of board of management meetings at VEC meetings. In turn, the CEOs of the VECs kept themselves informed about their centre usually through the AEO, who was generally the person designated to act as liaison person between VEC head office and in-centre management. The approach to the management of centres by senior management personnel within the VEC varied significantly from centre to centre. In one evaluation report, for example,
it was mentioned that senior management was very familiar with the origins, organisation and operation of their centre, while in another it was suggested that “a closer working relationship” needed to be developed. In a separate centre it was suggested that “support for the role [of coordinator] needed to be strengthened both by the VEC and the staff”. While all senior management personnel were familiar with the Vocational Services Support Unit (VSSU) procedures pertaining to centres for education (2004) not all could vouch for their full implementation.

The level of engagement of senior management and board of management personnel with the Quality Framework Initiative (QFI) varied from centre to centre. In one centre the CEO and AEO had actively participated in relevant activities while in another it was mentioned that the VEC and the board of management had adopted a “hands-off” approach to the implementation of the QFI in their centre. Where the latter was the case, inspectors generally made a recommendation that senior management personnel should engage more actively with the initiative.

Recommendations:

- All centres should have a board of management, members of which should avail, as appropriate, of relevant in-service training.
- Senior management within VECs should ensure to keep themselves informed of the progress and development of centres for education within their scheme and engage, as appropriate, with the QFI process as it affects centres.
- Centre should be cognisant of the procedures in respect of Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres as provided by the VSSU and follow them (2004).

6.3.2 Internal centre management and administration

Most of the centres visited were found to be operating the required number of days per year. One centre, however, was found to be operating 25 days less per year than that required. On the whole all centres were found to be open for the required 35 hours per week. Again, however, it was the case in some centres that the learners’ weekly timetable did not actually reflect what took place in the centre. In one case, for example, while the learners’ timetable showed that their weekly class contact time amounted to 35 hours, this was not actually the case because the learners in this particular instance finished their day earlier than that indicated on their weekly timetable.
The quality of the work of the coordinator or director was singled out for praise in nearly all of the evaluation reports. In such cases their work was usually described as being “efficient and effective” or “competent and comprehensive” and that they provided “clear leadership”. Inspectors felt that most of the coordinators or directors visited had the confidence of their staff and learners and were keen to move their centre forward. In one Youthreach centre it was reported that the “director was ably assisted by a resource person who acted as a deputy director”. Best practice was observed when the coordinator or director worked in a collaborative and inclusive way with their staff. The duties associated with the post of coordinator or director were found to be wide ranging and, for most directors and coordinators, their duties had evolved with the passing of time. In the majority of cases duties were not made available to inspectors in written form. In one evaluation report it was suggested that “a written role profile for the post would prove beneficial”.

The director/coordinator in five of the six centres visited was supported in their administrative duties by an on-site part-time clerical officer. In all cases, however, the relevant VEC head office supplied a level of administrative support to their centre. In the case of one centre, it was reported that “one clerical officer in head office deals with issues pertaining to the further education sector operating within Co. XXX VEC on a full-time basis, and this includes Youthreach”. While all centres were of the view that they would benefit from the services of a full-time clerical officer it was clear from the majority of evaluations that the combination of on and off-site administrative support worked well. A significant extra administrative burden was noticeable however in the case of those directors or coordinators that had no on-site clerical assistance.

Recommendations:

- In the absence of a review of circular letter 14/98 (and letter dated 08 December 1998) regarding the length of the centre working year and week, all centres should comply with the requirements specified in this letter.

- The duties attached to posts of responsibility in centres should be clearly defined between management and staff and should be reviewed at regular intervals in a collaborative manner.

- Management should consider a combination of on and off-site administrative support to centres.
6.3.3 Organisation of the curriculum

The *Framework of Objectives* document (DES: 2001) for Youthreach and STTCs states that the programme delivered in a centre should be inclusive of a foundation and progression phase and constructed on the basis of a curricular mix which integrates core skills into all aspects of learners’ experiences. The programme, it states, should place a key emphasis on the core skills of literacy, numeracy, communications and new technology, while providing a range of vocational options allied with a work experience programme. For STTCs there is an additional need to ensure that the cultural context of the programme has direct relevance to the needs of the Travelling community. The evaluation highlighted that centres were achieving this to varying degrees.

While having certain core similarities, it can be said that the programmes offered to learners were different in each of the six centres evaluated. This can be explained by the fact that individual centres endeavoured to develop a programme that would meet the needs of their own particular cohort of learners. It was found that parts of the programmes offered in each of the centres succeeded in meeting this need. Most of the programmes observed, for example, placed an emphasis on developing the learners’ personal, social and emotional well-being, as well as their self-confidence and self-esteem. Subjects and modules such as “personal care and presentation”, “personal and interpersonal skills”, “health-related fitness” and “personal effectiveness” contributed to the development of these particular skills in learners. There was, however, a deficit in the provision of an appropriate health education programme in one centre visited. There was also an emphasis on the development of learners’ practical skills in all of the programmes evaluated, such as ICT skills as well as woodworking, metalworking, home economics, craft and dress-making skills. These practical skills were generally viewed as contributing towards supporting learners to integrate into the workplace or further education and training. It was found, however, that some programmes, or parts of some programmes, were not adequately meeting the needs of the target group. In general, this was because the programme offered did not sufficiently challenge learners, or because the programme developed was not participant focussed or participant-led.
FETAC modules\(^\text{12}\) (leading to FETAC awards) were the main programmes offered to learners in the centres visited. Five of the centres offered these modules while one centre offered the Junior Certificate and the LCA only. One of the centres arranged their programme into two distinct phases – foundation and progression – while another recognised three phases in its programme – engagement, foundation and progression. The Junior Certificate programme and FETAC level 3 modules were generally associated with the foundation phase of the programme offered in centres. The subjects or modules offered at this level were mostly practical in nature, but subjects such as English, Communications and Mathematics did feature quite strongly at this level also. The JCSP was provided in one Youthreach centre and this programme was considered to cater well for the needs of the learners at this level. However, staff in the centre are not entitled to relevant JCSP professional development provided by the JCSP support service. The LCA was associated with the progression phase of the programme in the centre that offered it. Four of the centres visited did not arrange their programmes to have an engagement, foundation or progression phase. These centres generally viewed themselves as providing a general programme of education and training which was tailored to the needs of the individual learners and did not see a need for curricular differentiation. In these centres, however, it was found that there was generally little possibility of curricular progression for students. As one report mentioned, “it is possible for a learner to attend the centre for two years or more and to complete modules and achieve certification at foundation level only. However, the learner may not accomplish any certification in subsequent years. Thus, there are limited opportunities for progression and certification for learners”.

Most of the centres visited had arrangements in place to promote the development of learners’ literacy and numeracy skills. This was predominantly done by means of providing learners with an increased number of lessons in these areas or by withdrawing learners on an individual basis for one-to-one tuition. One evaluation report stated that “learners who have the most severe literacy difficulties are offered a wide range of practical activities, along with tuition in basic communications and numeracy”. However, the arrangements in place in most centres lacked a professional underpinning. The development of these skills, for example, was seen by members of staff in the majority of centres to be the sole remit of one or two particular staff members. The development of a whole-centre approach towards learners’ literacy and numeracy development, to be inclusive of all staff in a centre, was recommended in

\(^{12}\) Most centres offered FETAC level 3 (Foundation) modules for learners. To study these modules no previous qualifications are required. Two centres offered some level 4 modules to a number of learners. These modules require National Foundation Certificate, junior cycle or equivalent qualifications and/or relevant life and work experiences for entry.
practically all evaluation reports. It was also recommended that staff in centres should engage with appropriate professional development courses in the area of literacy and numeracy to ensure that they were incorporating appropriate strategies in their teaching to address the issues in their particular subject areas.

Work experience formed part of the curricular experience for learners in only a small number of centres. Directors and coordinators generally reported that they experienced difficulties in identifying and sourcing local businesses that were willing to engage with centres for this purpose. This was particularly acute in the case of STTCs.

Recommendations:

- Curricular programmes offered in centres should be participant focused and participant-led; they should sufficiently challenge all of the learners and should allow for curricular progression (e.g., engagement, foundation, progression, transition phases). Certification outcomes should show a greater spread of achievement, particularly for learners in the progression phase.
- Centres should include a programme in health education on their curriculum.
- Centres should develop a whole-centre approach towards learners' literacy and numeracy development, to be inclusive of all staff members in a centre. Literacy should be a central focus of lessons in centres. Relevant professional development courses in the area of literacy and numeracy should be attended as appropriate.
- Centres should include an element of work experience on the programme they offer learners. Links with local businesses, and the commitment of businesses, should be developed as fully as possible in this regard.
- Youthreach centres should have access to the JCSP, particularly in the case of foundation phase learners, and staff should have access to relevant professional development provided by the JCSP support service.

6.3.4 Staff deployment

Each centre visited employed well-qualified staff from a variety of professional backgrounds to deliver the programme they had on offer to learners. Most centres had members of staff that were shared with other schools or centres for education. Each also had staff with varying lengths of service and experience in their centre. The
director or coordinator in each of the centres was acutely aware of how important it was for his or her staff to have that continuity and experience so as to ensure successful engagement with learners.

Members of staff were generally assigned to particular subject areas on the basis of their qualifications, but in some centres experience, personal preference and the needs of the centre were also considered. The differing conditions of employment for different members of staff in one centre, however, had led to fragmentation of the staff team which in turn resulted in difficulties that hindered the effective management of the centre, contributed to learner attendance difficulties and affected staff morale. In this particular case the different conditions of employment meant that there were inequalities in the allocation of work across staff members. Indeed, it was clear in a number of centres that work outside of class contact time seemed to be undertaken in an unequal manner by staff members, with some shouldering very significant workloads and responsibilities. It was recommended in these centres that appropriate involvement in policy development and in the activities of the centre be undertaken in an equitable manner by staff members so as to ensure balanced development of centres, as well as staff equity and harmony.

Overall, members of staff in the different centres reported having attended appropriate professional development courses. While the QFI was frequently mentioned in this respect there was evidence that staff had attended courses in first aid, drug use, ECDL and sex education, as well as other programmes concerning such topics as interculturalism, counselling and learner profiling.

Recommendation:
- **Staff in centres should work in a collaborative and cooperative manner and should be provided by their management with real opportunities to contribute to the work of their centre.**
- **Consideration should be given to the rationalisation of the differing conditions of employment in centres for education.**

6.3.5 Accommodation and resources

The evaluations found that Youthreach centres and STTCs are housed in a range of building types. While it was found that some of these buildings were workable others were deemed to be unsuited to the effective delivery of the programme and in a number of cases there were serious health and safety implications. These health and
safety risks were not always reflected in a centre’s health and safety statement.

The building types encountered ranged from those that once operated as car garages or business premises in town centres to recently constructed industrial units on industrial estates or former factories in the suburbs of towns. The condition of these premises varied significantly from centre to centre. In one centre, for example, both staff and learners “agreed that accommodation is excellent” while another was described as not being “an appropriate building or educational facility for a Youthreach programme. It is not conducive to delivering high quality education to marginalised young people. The building is over 150 years old; it suffers from dampness and decay”. In the case of this centre the inspector concluded that “an appropriate facility should be provided for the learners and this centre closed as soon as possible”. As a testament to the work being done by centres it was noteworthy that, in the main, staff and learners did not allow unsuitable premises to curtail or hinder the quality of their work in the centres.

Each of the centres visited had a number of general classrooms, a dedicated computer room, a kitchen/dining area, an office, a woodworking room and toilet facilities, with the latter generally being shared between staff and learners. Some centres had a metalworking room, a counselling room, an art and crafts room and a staffroom while one had a fully equipped crèche. The classrooms in the majority of centres were small and cramped and should not be confused with the average sized classrooms found in mainstream schools. Despite this the classrooms in most of the centres were attractively presented by the staff and displays of learners’ work were regular features. Equipment found in workshop areas was usually outdated and in some cases unsafe. Access was poor to almost all centres for persons with physical disabilities.

During interviews with learners in the different centres it was found that their most common grievance was that of the poor accommodation and lack of appropriate facilities that was made available to them. No centre had any outdoor education or recreation facilities on site and while a number of centres used local community facilities this generally had cost implications.

Recommendations:

- Accommodation issues pertaining to centres for education need to be addressed strategically at both a system and local level. Centre management personnel should be proactive at endeavouring to ensure the appropriateness of the buildings in which their centre(s) is housed, including appropriate provision for recreation facilities.
• All centres should have an up-to-date health and safety statement in place, as required by legislation, which is reviewed regularly. The statement should give appropriate attention to the health and safety risks associated with any items of machinery or equipment in a centre.
• Appropriate consideration should be given to access and egress routes in buildings with regard to persons with physical disabilities.

6.4 Quality of centre planning

6.4.1 Centre plan and policies

Four of the six centres visited had a written centre plan in place while the remaining two were in the process of developing their plan. While all six centres had a suite of policies in place, some had more policies in place than others. The four centre plans were reviewed by inspectors. These plans were generally time bound, usually lasting for a 3-5 year period, and commonly included information on the origins and history of the centre along with information on staff, enrolment details and the programmes and subjects offered to learners. A centre’s vision was usually included in its centre plan.

The centre plans reviewed contained a range of written policies. The more common policies found in centres were those pertaining to learner induction and behaviour, anti-bullying, sick leave, trips, referrals, substance abuse, internet usage and health and safety. There was a distinct lack, however, of curricular and assessment policies having been developed. Relevant legislation, such as equality, educational welfare and special needs legislation, was a factor in determining the nature of the policies that centres had put in place. That said, however, the issue of child protection was discussed with management personnel in all centres and evidence was provided in only two centres to confirm that appropriate steps had been taken to develop policies in line with the provisions in Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Health and Children, 2004). Evidence was also provided in these two centres to confirm that a designated liaison person had been appointed in line with the requirements of these Department of Health and Children guidelines and that management of the centres had adopted and implemented the policies. Inspectors recommended that these guidelines be adhered to as a matter of priority in all centres that were found not to be in compliance. In late 2006 the IVEA provided professional development courses, funded by DES, for representatives of staff in all Youthreach centres and STTCs regarding the provisions and requirements of Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of
Inspectors regularly recommended to centres that they put procedures in place for monitoring and reviewing their centre plans and policies, as well as any future plans and policies that they might develop. This work, it was recommended, could be undertaken in the context of a centre’s involvement in the QFI and FETAC quality assurance processes. Further, it was recommended to a number of centres that cognisance be given to the VSSU procedures pertaining to centres for education and that all planning meetings held in centres be appropriately documented.

**Recommendations:**

- **All centres should develop their own centre plan and should put procedures in place for the regular monitoring and review of that plan and associated policies.** Further, priority should be given to the development of curricular and assessment policies in those centres that do not already have such policies in place.
- **Steps should be taken in centres to develop policies and procedures in line with the provisions in Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Health and Children, 2004).** Such policies and procedures should be implemented and reviewed regularly.

**6.4.2 Planning process**

Although centres were found to be engaging with the QFI process at varying levels, overall it was found that the process had contributed to the adoption of a culture of planning in centres. One centre, for example, was involved in the QFI pilot process and so was well advanced in terms of its planning work. At the time of the evaluation some centres were in the process of either ‘centre development planning’ (CDP) or ‘internal centre evaluation’ (ICE) and were being appropriately guided in this work by a QFI facilitator. In one case management and staff had already “engaged in four days of facilitation under the initiative” while “a fifth day was planned and a date set for completion of the draft plan”. Two centres visited had yet to engage with the QFI process but this had not curtailed them from engaging in a certain level of planning. In both cases the centres had, however, made initial contact with the appropriate QFI personnel and, in the case of these two centres in particular, it was reported that their involvement in the QFI process would build upon and further develop their own planning practices.
Planning in most of the centres was found to be a collaborative and inclusive process and it was the view of inspectors that engagement with the QFI had contributed to the adoption by centres of this approach to planning. In one evaluation report it was mentioned that “management, staff, learners, and Traveller organisations have participated with the QFI facilitator in the planning process”. In another it was reported that the planning process involved a “comprehensive consultation ….. with the learners and with the other stakeholders including centre staff, the CEO, AEO, visiting teacher for Travellers, the Health Board, the local Juvenile Liaison Officer, the local Probation Officer and [local] Youth Services”. Particular care was taken during planning in some centres to ensure that the learners’ welfare was prioritised. Centres that had learner councils in place usually involved the council in centre planning. Learner involvement in centre planning was usually offered as a reason for setting up a council in those centres that did not have one in place. This collaborative approach to planning was viewed by centres as being of paramount importance to achieving successful implementation of plans. In the one centre where this approach was not evident it was recommended that “a whole-centre agreement on a centre plan is undertaken in collaboration with key stakeholders”. It was found in most cases that boards of management did not get involved in policy formulation and, where this was the case, it was usually recommended that they review their approach.

**Recommendations:**

- All centres should actively engage in planning through the QFI and FETAC quality assurance processes.
- Boards of management should engage in the policy formulation process in centres.

### 6.4.3 Implementation of plan

The director or coordinator and the full time teachers or resource persons in a centre were central to “driving the implementation of so many identified and prioritised strands of the centre plan”. Where planning was a collaborative and inclusive process it was generally found that staff members were familiar with the contents of their centre plan and aware of the implications of stated policies. One centre was “praised for its diligence in promoting [its] policies”. However, this was not always the case and in another centre it was mentioned “that there is an understating of various policies and that staff and learners have a vague awareness of current policies”. The same principle applied at the learner level, where they had been consulted they were aware of how polices affected them, but in centres where there was little consultation
there was consequently little awareness or understanding. Again, in those centres that had a tradition or culture of collaborative planning members of staff usually had ready access to plans and policies. At the time of the evaluations, one centre was developing an induction booklet for learners that would make reference to the important policies relating to that centre. This was considered good practice and it was suggested that the centre consider developing the booklet into a centre handbook for both staff and learners.

The four centre plans reviewed generally contained details of the actions to be taken in pursuit of identified goals. Inspectors considered the inclusion of such action plans to be good practice, as their inclusion followed guidelines offered by the QFI. Few centres, however, had a monitoring team in place and it was suggested in some reports that such a team be convened as a way of determining or measuring the progress of the implementation of a plan. Staff meetings provide an important opportunity for communication among staff and while both general staff meetings and planning meetings were regular features in centres, it was reported by some centres that they experienced difficulties in ensuring that all staff attended such meetings. This was essentially due to the prevalence of part-time staff in centres who were contracted only for class contact work. In one evaluation report it was noted that staff meetings with full-time staff were held on a weekly basis, minutes were kept and these were subsequently circulated to part-time staff for their information, while in another it was suggested that “implementation of the centre plan should be itemised on all future agendas for staff meetings”. In some centres staff held short daily meetings at which they were given opportunities to discuss pertinent issues concerning the learners. This was considered good practice.

Recommendations:

- Staff should be familiar with the plan and policies pertaining to their centre. Learners should be familiar with how plans and policies affect them. Consideration should be given to developing handbooks or booklets, as appropriate, for staff and learners.
- Centres should hold regular staff meetings and these should be organised with a view to having as many staff attend as possible, if not all. Further, the planning process in centres would benefit from regular staff planning meetings also to address issues of implementation of plans, as well as their monitoring and evaluation.
6.5 Quality of teaching and learning

6.5.1 Planning and preparation

A range of lesson planning and preparation styles was observed across the six centres visited with some excellent practice being reported on while there was considerable scope for development in others. Overall, there was obvious evidence across centres that considerably more thought and effort had been devoted to short-term more so than long-term planning. Also, while there were some exceptions, there was generally a lack of cross-curricular and internal collaborative planning and preparation for lessons. There was also a lack of collaboration with external agencies to enrich the teaching and learning process.

Some members of staff in a number of the centres visited made good quality written schemes of work available for inspection. One evaluation report, for example, stated that “well constructed and planned schemes of work were evident in most curricular areas”. Many of these schemes, which were reviewed by inspectors, were based on the content of relevant FETAC modules or on the syllabus content of relevant junior cycle, JCSP or LCA subjects. In such cases the planning was considered to be in line with curricular requirements. In one centre, however, staff members teaching FETAC modules were unfamiliar with the content of the modules being taught. Further, but to a much lesser extent, some staff members in a number of centres made written lesson plans available for inspection. These lesson plans usually pertained to the actual lessons being observed by inspectors and there was little evidence in centres to show that there was consistent practice in relation to their preparation. When quality lesson planning was observed in centres in certain curricular areas, to the extent that schemes of work and lesson plans were developed, it was generally recommended that such planning practices would be extended to other curricular areas in a centre.

Staff planning for the delivery of standard programmes (e.g., junior cycle, LCA and FETAC) to whole class groups did not generally take the wide range of individual learner needs into account, particularly at the higher levels in these programmes. It was felt that many of the lessons observed would, therefore, have benefited from individual learner planning on the part of staff, as well as adjustments of expectations in line with the learners’ abilities. Critical to this is an appropriate policy of early assessment and profiling.
The time allocated to certain subjects on the timetable in some centres was appropriate while in others it was considered by inspectors to be wholly inappropriate. In the case of the latter, for example, it was not uncommon to find learners being timetabled for certain subjects for up to two or three hours at a time. A balance needs to be struck here between appropriate subject provision and learners’ attention span levels. Planning for specific literacy and numeracy development was generally not sufficient in any of the centres evaluated. In certain instances the teaching materials prepared were not particularly attractive or stimulating for the learners. More targeted interventions were recommended right across the curriculum in practically all of the centres evaluated. Literacy needs to be a central focus of every lesson.

The use of ICT in lesson planning and preparation was mixed across centres but was frequently dependent on the level of ICT that centres made available to staff to support them in their planning and preparation work. Handouts, demonstration sheets, photocopied sheets and work cards were generally preferred in centres to textbooks as many of the textbooks reviewed by staff members were inappropriate for use with learners.

Recommendations:

- All lessons should be appropriately planned and prepared in advance. In their planning and preparation work staff should give due consideration to the following areas: long-term planning, cross-curricular and internal collaborative planning, collaboration with external agencies; individual learner needs; learner friendly, attractive and stimulating lesson materials.

- A balance needs to be struck between appropriate subject provision and learners’ attention span levels when devising learner timetables in centres. Timetabling certain subjects in two or three hour spans may be inappropriate.

- Literacy and numeracy need to be central foci of every lesson.

- Staff should exploit the benefits to be gained from using ICT in their lesson planning and preparation work, and in their teaching.

6.5.2 Classroom management and teaching methodologies

Lessons in a range of different programme (e.g., JC, LCA and FETAC programmes) and subject areas were observed during the various evaluations conducted. Effective classroom management and leadership were seen in most of the lessons observed with
the learners’ efforts and achievements in these lessons being encouraged and supported throughout. In general, the small class sizes in centres allowed for much individual attention and tuition and this contributed to good rapport between staff and learners. One of the centres visited had a learner-teacher ratio of approximately 5:1. For the most part interactions in classrooms were warm and relaxed and the positive relationships between the staff and learners contributed to the creation of an atmosphere of respect where discipline was well maintained. However, a minority of learners in some centres exhibited challenging behaviour, while others were very reluctant learners. Focussed concentration seemed to be a problem for the younger and very challenging learners especially when faced with lengthy lesson periods and with subjects that did not interest them. In order to ensure that lessons engage the learners it is important that staff would ensure, as much as possible, that the lesson materials used are appropriately challenging and stimulating and that overly didactic teaching methods are avoided. It is also important to ensure that the pace of lessons is in keeping with the ability levels of the learners. Moving too slowly or too quickly through material often created passive learner participation and little real engagement and this sometimes led to discipline issues. It is important that a consistent approach to discipline be maintained throughout all classrooms in a centre and that consideration be given to how to manage and engage those learners who are disaffected.

While a wide range of teaching styles was observed in lessons in the different centres visited there was a certain lack of variety of teaching styles observed in any one centre. Examples of the teaching styles observed across centres included explanation and demonstration, individual tuition, pair work, group work and some team-teaching. However, some staff members’ lessons, or indeed lessons throughout a centre, tended to concentrate on one or other of these strategies alone. The predominant teaching style observed in practical lessons, for example, was that of individual tuition. In such instances inspectors generally recommended that teaching strategies should be varied. On the whole, however, it was found that learners engaged more in those lessons associated with practical subjects, or where there was a significant practical content, than where the traditional didactic method of teaching was used. Direct and continuous guidance by staff members in some lessons denied opportunities for learners to take initiatives, to be proactive in their own learning and to make progress at their own work. In some lessons it was also observed that learners were asked to repeat tasks that they had already completed either in the centre, or elsewhere. In such circumstances it was clear that the lack of new targets disengaged the learners. It is important that centre staff appropriately challenge learners in their lessons and hold
realistically high expectations for them in terms of their capacity to acquire new skills and knowledge and to achieve appropriate levels of certification.

Varied teaching resources and materials were used effectively during the course of some of the lessons observed. These included black and white boards, flip charts, worksheets, handouts, textbooks and computers. On numerous occasions the resources used had been tailored to suit the needs of the learners. The further development and expansion of teaching materials and equipment was recommended in one centre as a way of enhancing the teaching and learning process. It was suggested, for example, that consideration be given to using photographs and videos, appropriate software, stories and television programmes that reflect the subject areas being taught. Another report suggested that “the availability and use of modern educational resources for all subject areas should be reviewed”, adding that some “learners respond more appropriately if appropriate tactile and visual materials are employed”.

Question and answer sessions, structured discussion and brainstorming were observed in some lessons across the centres visited. Some staff members were also quite skilled at using the learners’ own ideas, interests and environment as starting points for learning activities. These practices promoted understanding and learning among the learners and inspectors generally recommended their application across other curricular areas in the centres. Learners tended to store the work they undertook in their classrooms which meant that it was safe, secure and available whenever needed.

It was found that staff members called or checked their class register in only some of the lessons visited across all centres. VSSU procedures on this issue recommend that “a class register/record should be independently maintained and signed by each [staff member] to record the attendance of trainees in class”. It is recommended that this procedure should be implemented in full by all staff members.

Considerable attention was given to the literacy needs of individual learners in one or two centres. In one centre, for example, an adult literacy tutor was present in several lessons to provide support to individual learners. As well as providing an integrated support to the learner, this arrangement also provided an excellent opportunity for team teaching. Literacy and numeracy were not generally well addressed in lessons across centres that were not specifically dedicated to literacy or numeracy development. While there was some evidence of support for functional literacy in some lessons, this lacked the professional underpinning which is necessary if the goal
of improving literacy skills is to be an outcome of a learners’ time spent in a centre. Evaluation reports normally recommended a need for whole centre literacy and numeracy programmes to be developed. It was also recommended that staff training in the area of literacy be prioritised in centres to ensure that all staff incorporates appropriate strategies to address literacy in their particular curriculum areas.

Recommendations:

- **Staff should employ a variety of teaching methods and resources in their classrooms. The use of overly didactic teaching methods should be avoided.**
- **The centre discipline policy should be applied consistently across all classrooms in a centre. Such policies should be monitored and reviewed regularly and strategies to manage and engage disaffected learners should be developed.**
- **Staff should appropriately challenge learners in their lessons and hold realistically high expectations for them in terms of their capacity to acquire new skills and knowledge and to achieve appropriate levels of certification. The pace of lessons should be in keeping with the ability levels of learners.**
- **Staff personnel should maintain an independent register/record of learners in their own lessons.**
- **Literacy and numeracy should be central foci of lessons in centres.**

### 6.5.3 Assessment of learners’ progress

Educational assessments were carried out for learners on enrolment at two of the centres evaluated and this arrangement was considered good practice. Learners in one of these centres, for example, were “assessed in mathematics, reading, writing and comprehension as part of their induction programme. Their learning needs and interests are identified and an appropriate individual learner plan (ILP) is designed for them. This is reviewed with staff on a regular basis”. In the second centre it was noted that standardised assessment tests in literacy and numeracy were administered, the results of which were used to inform the assignment of learners into particular class groupings. All centres should ensure that they have appropriate procedures in place for assessing learners on enrolment. This would contribute to the development of individual learner plans. One centre’s evaluation report expressed a possible need for the assessment of learners’ personal, social and emotional development to be carried
out “as many of its learners may have experienced trauma, bullying, poverty, exclusion or neglect in their own lives”.

Formative assessment strategies were used by a significant number of staff members in each of the six centres visited. These included the use of questions during lessons, classroom observation, quizzes, checklists, worksheets, written assignments and project work. When used effectively, these strategies allowed for staff self-review, as well as monitoring of individual learning in their classroom. Most of the staff members in the centres evaluated, however, relied more on summative assessment strategies rather than on formative assessment strategies as a way of monitoring or tracking learners’ progress. Examples of the summative assessment strategies observed included tests, worksheets, written assignments, external assessment of learners’ portfolios of work and external examinations. The requirements of the State Examinations Commission (SEC) and FETAC were being adhered to, where relevant. It is important when planning the curriculum, as mentioned in some evaluation reports, that staff ensure that there is an appropriate balance in the type of assessment strategies used. The use of both formative and summative assessment strategies during the preparation of portfolios of work by learners, for example, provides a more informative way of monitoring learners’ progress and achievement. Assessment results should be used to inform planning and teaching. They should be used by centres to identify specific learning strengths and needs so that the nature of the support and the assistance required can be ascertained. Further, assessment is most effective when feedback is given to the learner arising from the assessment activity. Few centres implemented assessment for learning strategies.

The quality of record keeping pertaining to the assessment of learners’ varied quite dramatically from centre to centre. In one centre, for example, “learners’ progress was recorded systematically and [was] acknowledged and recognised” while in another it was the opposite, and here it was recommended that “learners’ progress should be recorded regularly and systematically”. In one centre the learners’ attendance, participation and behaviour in lessons was monitored and recorded by most staff members and an award system was in place to recognise progress in these areas (e.g., learners of the month, learner of the year). This was considered to be excellent practice. Indeed, some staff members in the centres visited kept very detailed records of learners’ progress. Another evaluation report, for example, spoke of there being “a graph of learner progress … that clearly demonstrated completion of various tasks”. In another centre, however, there was little evidence of any of the learners’ work being regularly monitored or corrected in some of the lessons visited. It is important that learners’ progress in all areas of the curriculum, both the formal and non-formal
curriculum, be appropriately monitored and recorded. The learners should be kept informed of their progress, as they are in a small number of centres, and joint decisions should be made between staff and learners as to how they progress through the centre’s programme. A number of evaluation reports also mentioned the importance of dating all assessment records so that progress may be easily tracked.

Recommendations:

- All centres should have appropriate procedures in place for assessing learners upon enrolment. In this context, appropriate consideration should be given to the need for the assessment of learners’ personal, social and emotional needs.
- Formative and summative assessment strategies of learners’ work should be employed in centres; an appropriate balance should be determined between both strategy types. Further, assessment results should be used to inform planning and teaching.
- Staff should record and date all facets of learners’ progress regularly and systematically and learners should be kept informed of their progress.

6.5.4 Outcomes and standards

All of the evaluation reports concluded that those learners who engaged fully with the programme that was on offer to them in their centre experienced improved self-esteem and self-worth and enhanced personal and social development. Inspectors interviewed small groups of learners in each centre and also informally interacted with learners in both classrooms and in the corridors or outside their centres. It was clear to inspectors as a result of these interactions that most learners displayed a sense of enjoyment and achievement arising from their experience in the centre. One learner told an inspector that he “was happy to attend the centre”, while another mentioned that “if you come to this centre in bad form, you’re sure to go home in good form”. On the whole, it was concluded that the centres contributed to the development of acceptable, and sometimes improved, standards of learner behaviour and social interaction. The only exception to this was one small cohort of junior learners found in one centre.

Most of the learners in the centres visited had clear goals which they were pursuing realistically. These learners were able to discuss the various options open to them and to speak confidently about their plans for the future. In some cases however the
expectations and goals expressed by the learners were unclear and unrealistic. In these cases it was felt that these learners just needed more appropriate information, advice and guidance. A recommendation regarding a focus on career opportunities for learners has already been made in section 6.2.3. Learners gained valuable experience from work experience where it was offered as part of their programme and this enabled them to access work opportunities and to clarify their ideas as to what area of work they might pursue on leaving their centre.

It is noteworthy that all of the directors and coordinators met during the course of evaluations stated that the main focus of their centre was not on the achievement of certification by learners. Notwithstanding, it was the case that a number of centres managed to achieve an appropriate balance between providing for the personal and social development of their learners and supporting them in achieving certification and progressing from their centre. On the whole, learners in a number of centres were successful in external examinations and assessment (e.g., FETAC modules\(^\text{13}\), LCA, Junior Certificate). The outcomes for learners in one centre was described as being “impressive, … especially in terms of achievement, engagement and retention of learners within the LCA programme”. Overall, inspectors concluded that learners’ levels of performance in a range of skills had improved, especially across the practical skills areas. There were problems in some centres however. One evaluation report, for example, stated that “it was difficult to determine what advancements had been made by each learner. Some learners had expressed regret during interviews that their literacy levels were not of a higher standard”. A sample of learners’ work was examined in all centres and, in the main, such work was found to be completed effectively and efficiently. The majority of staff members allowed learners to store their work in their classrooms, but it is important that such work be regularly monitored or corrected.

A number of reports mentioned, and even reiterated, the need for centres to develop tracking systems to monitor progression of learners after they leave the centres. A good example of a tracking system for learners was found in one particular centre: “there is a system in place for tracking the progression of learners when they leave the centre and gain employment, access further education, avail of places in FAS Training Centres, remain unemployed or become fulltime parents”.

\(^{13}\) In the case of FETAC modules the trend in centres is for learners to achieve ‘certificates of completion’ in the case of any module studied rather that achievement of full FETAC certificates. To gain a full certificate a learner must successfully complete eight FETAC modules. However, this could be achieved over a period of time (e.g., over a two-year period) as modules can be aggregated towards full certification.
Recommendations:

- Centres need to strike an appropriate balance between providing for the personal and social development of their learners and supporting them in obtaining work opportunities, achieving certification and progressing from their centre.
- Learner’s progress needs to be continually monitored.
- Centres should develop tracking systems to monitor progression of learners after they leave the centres.

6.6 Summary of main findings and recommendations

The main findings and recommendations presented in this section pertain to the evaluation of a small sample (six) of centres for education (i.e., the initial formal evaluations of these centres) carried out by the Inspectorate. It is also true to say that these findings and recommendations are generally reflective of those emanating from later evaluations. The individual evaluation reports for centres that underpin this composite report, plus evaluation reports on other centres, can be found at www.education.ie.

Recommendations made throughout this chapter are based on the findings of the Inspectorates evaluations. The Working Group concurs with these recommendations. Below is a summary of the main strengths and key recommendations

Main Strengths

- The mission and focus of activity in centres is generally on the holistic development of the individual learner. The time and effort devoted by staff members in practically all of the centres evaluated at getting to know the individual learners, their background, their parents and families, plays a key role in the support offered to learners.
- Learners are generally provided with counselling facilities in centres. In one of the centres each learner upon admission was assigned a staff member as a “key-worker” who met with the learner on regular occasions to assess, discuss and review their personal, educational and training needs. In another centre a FÁS Advocate visited one day each week.
- Some centres successfully implement targeted strategies to promote learners’ attendance and punctuality. These include, among others, maintaining regular contact with parents, as well as clocking-in, signing-in or checking-in arrangements.
• Two of the centres visited hold annual open days or sale of work day. These events are commended as good practice as they foster local awareness of centres and provide an opportunity for parents, service providers and agencies to be kept informed of the work and achievements of centres.
• The quality of the work of the coordinator or director in centres was singled out for praise by inspectors in nearly all of the evaluation reports. Further, the coordinator or director, and sometimes board of management personnel, in most centres were instrumental in developing and maintaining effective links with relevant local, and sometimes national, service providers and agencies.
• Centres generally employed a well-qualified staff from a variety of professional backgrounds to deliver the subjects or modules they had on offer to learners.
• It is noteworthy that, in the main, staff and learners do not let poor quality premises curtail or hinder the quality of their work in the centres.
• Although centres were engaging with the QFI process at various levels, overall it was found that the process had contributed to the adoption by centres of a culture of planning. The planning process in most of the centres was found to be a collaborative and inclusive one and it was the view of inspectors that engagement with the QFI had contributed to the adoption by centres of this approach.
• It was found that those learners who engaged fully with the programme on offer to them in their centre experienced positive learning experiences, improved self-esteem and self-worth and enhanced personal and social development. Most of the learners in those centres evaluated had clear goals which they were pursuing realistically.

Key recommendations

Centre management
• The work of an effective board of management was seen to contribute significantly to the management of a centre. An effective board, for example, helped in the integration of a centre into its community and also contributed to decision making at management level. It is recommended that all centres would work towards putting a board of management in place.
• The nature of the education provided in centres necessitates genuine teamwork on the part of members of staff in any centre. Members of staff in centres should endeavour to work in a collaborative and cooperative
manner and should be provided by management with real opportunities to contribute to the work of their centre.

- Centres should encourage and support learners in setting up a learners’ council where one does not already exist. Such a council would facilitate formal communication between centre management, staff and learners, particularly with regard to issues of importance to the learners.
- The mixed professional background of staff works well in centres as it allows a centre to address the needs of its learners from a variety of perspectives. For this reason, this mix of professional experience should continue to be a feature of the staff in a centre.

Centre planning

- All centres should continue to engage with the QFI and FETAC quality assurance processes. The planning process in centres should be an inclusive and collaborative process. Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that necessary policies, particularly those required by legislation, are put in place in centres. Attention, where necessary, needs to be given to developing, adopting and implementing policies in line with the provisions in *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (Department of Health and Children, 2004). The recent national programme of training provided for centre staff in this area will have helped to focus the attention of centres on this requirement.
- Senior VEC management personnel should endeavour to engage as fully as possible with the QFI process in their centre(s). Furthermore, boards of management of centres should engage in policy development in their centres and, where relevant, board members should be provided with appropriate opportunities to attend relevant professional development courses.
- All centres should develop a whole centre approach, strategy or policy to the development of students’ literacy and numeracy skills. The development of such a policy should be inclusive of and apply to all staff in a centre. Furthermore, all staff should engage with appropriate professional development courses where necessary as a way of ensuring that appropriate strategies are incorporated into the teaching and learning process across all subject areas. The deliberations of the working group (recently established in 2007) on literacy should act as a help to centres in developing such a policy.
- All centres should implement the procedures pertaining to centres for
education as laid down by the VSSU.

Curriculum and teaching and learning

- Centres should ensure that the programmes they offer are flexible enough to meet the needs of individual learners. All centres should put a learner induction programme in place and the programmes offered thereafter should be planned so as to comprise foundation and, more importantly, progression phases for the learners. Also, appropriate monitoring, evaluation and review of programmes in centres should take place.
- Staff members should ensure that they are totally familiar with the syllabus to be taught and programmes should include an element of work experience for learners.
- Centres should place an emphasis on quality teaching and learning. Staff should plan and prepare their lessons appropriately and vary the teaching strategies and resources that they use in their classroom. Where possible, team teaching should be considered.
- Youthreach centres should have access to the JCSP, particularly in the case of foundation phase learners, and staff should have access to relevant professional development provided by the JCSP support service.

Learner attendance and progression

- All centres should be proactive in enrolling those persons whose needs would be well served by attending a centre, particularly in cases where places exist. Furthermore, centres should ensure that they have strategies in place aimed at promoting, encouraging and improving learners’ attendance and punctuality.
- All centres should develop appropriate procedures for tracking the progression of learners once they have left a centre. It should be possible to collect this data and make it available centrally.

Learner assessment

- All centres should ensure that they have appropriate procedures in place for assessing learners upon enrolment, e.g., implementation of learner web profiles. This should contribute to the development of individual learner plans. Furthermore, centres should endeavour on a regular basis to use both formative and summative strategies when assessing learners.
as this provides a more informative way of monitoring learners’ progress and achievements. Appropriate assessment and progress records pertaining to learners should be kept by all staff members.

**Links with external agencies and the community**

- Centres for education, in particular Youthreach centres given the age range of learners concerned, would benefit immensely from being able to avail of the services offered by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), the School Completion Programme (SCP), the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) service and relevant second-level curricular support services. These service providers would have a specific and important contribution to make in the case of learners attending these centres. These linkages should be formalised. Their peers in post-primary schools have access to these services.

- STTCs need to address ways of breaking down the culture of segregation that permeates their centres. These centres should, for example, explore ways of linking up more effectively with their own community and with their local settled or business communities. Also, the issue of segregating male learners from female learners within STTCs should be addressed, as should the appropriateness of educating and training young learners (under 18 years) alongside more mature adult learners. Young Traveller learners should be educated in integrated settings along with their peers.

- There is a need for greater cooperation and sharing of information between centres and post-primary schools in their locality and with various local groups and agencies. Such networking would help integrate centres into the community. The learners’ needs and interests would also be better served by this type of networking.

**Accommodation**

- Accommodation issues pertaining to centres for education need to be addressed strategically at both a system and local level. As a first step centre management personnel (i.e., VEC personnel and in-centre management personnel) should take a more proactive role in ensuring the appropriateness of the buildings in which their centre is housed. It is important that all centres have an up-to-date health and safety statement in place, as required by legislation.
Chapter 7 - Effectiveness: An examination of the outcomes of the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centre programmes

7.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the effectiveness of both the Youthreach and STTC programmes to comply with the term of reference to evaluate if the programmes are providing for the needs of the targeted groups and if the programmes’ objectives have been achieved in an efficient and effective manner. Effectiveness, in this context, is concerned with the extent to which the objectives of the programmes are being achieved. In reviewing effectiveness, the Working Group is conscious that a substantive process of change and development has been in train in both programmes since the conclusion of the Youthreach 2000 consultation. This culminated in January 2006 with the rolling out of the Quality Framework Initiative and the initiation of evaluations by the Inspectorate. The Working Group also acknowledges that both programmes have developed significantly since their inception and have generated a capacity to respond to the needs of learners in out-of-school settings that did not exist within the education system previously. Consequent advances, for example, as regards initial appraisal (through the webwheel model, see www.youthreach.ie), individual learning planning and special educational needs provision, are too recent to be manifest in learner outcomes assessment but, along with the Quality Framework Initiative, are intended to promote effectiveness at both programme and centre level.

In order to put the achievement of the programmes’ objectives in context the chapter begins by summarising the principal variables and limitations that impact on the operation of the programmes. Then, the renewed objectives for both programmes are restated. The extent to which these objectives are being achieved is addressed in this chapter. They also serve as a reminder of the individual identity of both programmes and set the scene for the separate treatment of the outcomes of both programmes. The renewed objectives are learner or participant focussed. Therefore, in examining the outcomes of the programmes there is a focus on outcomes as they directly affect learners. In this context three key questions are addressed:

- whether the programmes are effective in recruiting and retaining the target groups
- whether the programmes address learners’ needs for personal and social
development and,
• whether they are effective as regards learners’ qualification levels and progression to further education/training, employment or other purposeful activity.

7.2 Key variables and limitations

A number of factors are prone to change or variation and these can impinge on the operation of the programmes. Similarly, there are certain limitations that can impinge on the programmes’ capacity to achieve their objectives. The principal variables and limitations are highlighted in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Principal variables and limitations impacting on the programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Diverse learner cohorts</th>
<th>Diverse staff cohorts</th>
<th>Diverse management and delivery contexts</th>
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<td>Limitations</td>
<td>Levels of learner need as a limitation on effectiveness</td>
<td>Core tuition resources</td>
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<td>National coordination and support</td>
<td>Programme supports and development</td>
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</table>

A summary of the main points of each of the principal variables and limitations listed in Table 7.1 are given below:

7.2.1 Key Variables

_Diverse learner cohorts:_ the learner cohorts on the programmes have diverse backgrounds and bring a wide range of individual needs to the programmes.

_Diverse staff cohorts:_ staff with a mix of skills, experience and temperament are required for what is a highly pressurised and challenging job to cater for learners with diverse learning needs. The consultation process was told that “staff in STTCs and
Youthreach should be seen not just as teachers but as a multi-disciplinary team able to respond to the varied needs of the particular learner group”. While there is little doubt that a multi-skilled staff cohort is an effective part of a programme, contingent local circumstances and the diversity of the staff cohort may sometimes inhibit the effectiveness of the programmes.

*Diverse management and delivery contexts*: while most centres conform to standard management and delivery arrangements, variations exist. For example, while many centres have in-house administrative assistance, others do not. Centres also operate in greatly differing community and service environments; the supports and interaction evident in one, for example, is not necessarily repeated in the next. Further, and particularly in the context of Youthreach and the young learners in STTCs, on entry to the programmes there is no established and structured continuity between schools and centres for education. The progression options open to learners vary significantly from centre to centre.

### 7.2.2 Key limitations

*Levels of learner need as a limitation on effectiveness*: the target groups present with significant difficulties in the learning and personal arenas. For example, the incidence of teenage pregnancy, alcohol or drug misuse, health (including mental health) problems, emotional and behavioural disorders and experience of death (including suicide) among family members and friends are significantly higher among participants than among their peers in post-primary schools. Centres, therefore, can be volatile and challenging environments.

While the programmes are established to develop skills, knowledge and confidence and to help learners towards progression it is reasonable to ask, bearing in mind the challenges outlined above, whether the resources allocated to the programmes are sufficient to achieve the programme aims? Attention is now turned to resource limitations.

*Core tuition resources*: The Youthreach and STTC programmes have operated on a core tuition allocation that has essentially remained the same for many years. The current allocations for both programmes were not based on any formal analysis of the level of resources required to achieve the programme objectives with the identified target groups.
**Learner supports:** Learners come to Youthreach and STTCs with a variety of needs that impinge on their ability to maximise the value of the education and training opportunities presented by the programmes. Accordingly, a range of learner supports is provided, some from within centres while others are external. The former include learning support, counselling, advocacy, mentoring, skills development and family liaison. During the consultation process it was argued that the resources supplied to provide these supports were limiting. The need for additional supports was identified particularly for guidance, counselling and psychological services, special education needs and literacy development.

**Allowances and grants:** there was broad agreement during the consultation process that certain allowances paid to participants were inadequate and that these tended to act as a disincentive to participation. The inadequacy of meal and travel allowances and childcare support were particularly noted.

**Core non-pay resources:** the non-pay resource allocation remained unchanged for over fifteen years up to 2006 and, as a result, has lost much of its purchasing power. The increase of 8% in 2006 has only helped to a limited extent. Further, it is not based on any formal analysis of what is required for the task in hand.

**Accommodation:** no capital budget exists for any Further Education programmes. The programmes are accommodated in buildings owned or rented by VECs such as former schools, factories, refurbished shops and community buildings. Many are in poor condition and in need of refurbishment, as has been recorded in evaluations conducted by the Inspectorate.

**National coordination and support:** the programmes have the equivalent of four full-time senior staff and administrative support. This is expected to cover all aspects of programme support as well as strategic and expert advice to the Department. By contrast, a single second level curriculum programme such as the Junior Certificate Schools Programme, servicing 175 schools has a team of ten seconded teaching staff, a research and development officer, a library project and three administrative staff. Scarc resources mean that the national coordinators must prioritise activities.
Programme supports and development: there was broad agreement in the consultation process that the current level of CPD funding was inadequate to provide for the extent and continuous nature of training required. It was also argued that arrangements to allow staff participate in CPD are largely ad-hoc and overly reliant on the cooperation of staff and the willingness of VECs to allow staff participate. Further, neither programme has a dedicated expenditure line devoted to programme or curriculum development.

External supports and service context: participants often present with problems that are beyond the capacity of an education or training programme to resolve, such as homelessness, drug or alcohol addiction. Interagency liaison is included in what is expected within the given staff resource. However, this has proven fraught with difficulties. While the last decade has seen significantly increased expenditure both in schools and on services for children and young people, in many areas this has not led to increased service cohesion for learners in Youthreach and STTCs.

7.3 Individual objectives for individual programmes

Historically, both the Youthreach programme and the programme offered in STTCs have been viewed and treated as one and the same by the vast majority, if not all, of the education community. Indeed, since 2001 both programmes have shared the same core objective under the terms of the Department of Education and Science (DES) document *Framework of Objectives for Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres*. It was shown earlier in this report, however, how the 2001 objectives for the programmes were no longer valid (see section 3.2). In future a clear distinction should be made between the Youthreach and STTC programmes. Youthreach should be equated more with Post-Primary. STTCs should be equated with Further and Adult Education. After considering views expressed during the consultation process, the following statements were considered by the Working Group to be more reflective of objectives for the programmes as currently operated in centres.

7.3.1 Renewed objective for the Youthreach programme

The following is the renewed objective for the Youthreach programme:

*The Youthreach programme seeks to provide early school leavers (16-20 years) with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society and progress to further education, training and employment.*
7.3.2 Renewed objective for the STTC programme

The following is the renewed objective for the programme offered in STTCs:

*The Senior Traveller Training programme is a positive action by the Department of Education and Science which seeks to provide an opportunity for members of the Traveller community (18 years and over) and other learners to:*

- engage in a programme of learning that acknowledges and respects their cultural identity
- acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence to:
  - participate fully in society (Traveller community and settled community)
  - enhance their employability
- progress to further education, training, employment or other life choices.

The importance of education for all should be promoted as a key component within the Traveller culture.

7.3.3 Treatment of the programmes

These renewed objectives (supported by the extensive discussion outlined in chapter 3) establish that each programme has its own particular identity and caters for its own specific cohort of learners. The Youthreach programme predominantly targets early school leavers with the renewed objective identifying those in the 16-20 year old bracket, while STTCs increasingly cater for adult learners (i.e., the renewed objective identifies those aged 18 and over as being the target population). Further, STTCs cater predominantly for members of the Traveller community. Therefore, the Working Group recommends that:

- **In future a clear distinction should be made between the Youthreach and STTC programmes. Youthreach should be equated more with post-primary. STTCs should be equated with Further and Adult Education.**

The remainder of this chapter is structured in light of this recommendation. Outcomes of the Youthreach programme are treated separately from those of the programmes offered in STTCs. Effectiveness is primarily concerned with the extent to which objectives have been achieved and the effectiveness of the two programmes is
measured against the renewed objectives. These are very much learner focused and so effectiveness is reviewed in terms of learner outcomes.

7.4 Outcomes of the Youthreach programme
The learner cohort associated with the Youthreach programme is profiled in this section. This profile includes information on the customer base of the programmes, the age and gender of learners enrolled, their educational attainment at entry, and learners’ special educational needs at entry. An examination of these issues will help to ascertain whether the programme is successful in recruiting its target group. The extent of learners leaving the programme early is examined. The contribution that the programme makes to learners’ personal development, including their self-esteem and self-confidence, is also explored. It is recognised that making determinations on these latter issues is very much a subjective process, but a number of tangible evidence bases are used for drawing conclusions. The learners’ progression routes from the programme are also examined.

7.4.1 Is the programme effective in recruiting and retaining the target group? What is the customer base for the programme and is it able to meet the demand?
Taking a longitudinal view, significant progress has been made in limiting the numbers who leave school early. In 1970 the retention rate to Leaving Certificate level was 32%, in 1980 this figure had grown to 53% and by 2004 the figure had risen even further to 76%. Today, it is estimated that the figure stands at over 80% and it appears that retention has now levelled off. The annual School Leavers’ Surveys conducted by the ESRI (on behalf of DES) indicate that there has been little change over the past ten years in the number of unqualified school-leavers\textsuperscript{14}. This figure has stabilised at around 2,500, corresponding to approximately 3.5% of school leavers annually. Figure 7.1 highlights the retention rates for each milestone for the 1996 cohort of entrants to the first year of the Junior Certificate.

\textsuperscript{14} That is those learners with less than 5 D grades in their Junior Certificate or with no Junior Certificate at all.
Those who leave school with less than upper secondary education include those who leave without any formal qualification and who have never sat an examination, those who leave after completing the Junior cycle, those leaving not completing the senior cycle and those leaving without having obtained a Leaving Certificate. It can be seen from Table 7.2, which uses figures for the most recent school year for which they are available (i.e., 2002/2003), that almost 2,500 (i.e., 3.7%) young people left school with no qualification(s), while a further 9,738 left before completion of the senior cycle. The number of pupils who do not transfer from primary to post-primary school is estimated to stand at between 500 and 700.

- **The Working Group recommends that an inter-departmental approach be implemented in order that these young people who leave school early can be properly identified and served.**
Table 7.2: Educational qualifications of school leavers 2002/2003 (Source: ESRI, 2005, Appendix B, p. 52)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Qualifications</td>
<td>2,475</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate</td>
<td>55,167</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67,380</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures from the school leavers’ survey are broadly consistent with the analysis of retention rates that uses the DES post-primary pupil database to track cohorts of pupils throughout the second-level education cycle (DES, 2005). Taking the 1996 cohort of learners as an example, Fig. 7.1 shows a continued significant gender gap with the male Leaving Certificate retention rate lower than the female retention rate by 11.7 percentage points.

If those pupils who left straight from primary education, those who left without a Junior Certificate and those who left after sitting the Junior Certificate are taken to constitute the potential customer base for Youthreach a combined total of approximately 13,000 individuals in each age cohort is reached. Even if the potential target group is strictly limited to those aged 16-20, this draws on five age cohorts and aggregates to a potential annual customer base of 65,000 learners. Not all of these potential customers, however, are available for recruitment. Table 7.3, drawn from the 2004 report of 2002/3 school leavers study (Gorby et al, 2005), shows the economic status of early school leavers who left with no qualifications, or with the Junior Certificate only.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>No qualifications (%)</th>
<th>Junior Certificate only (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed after loss of job</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(of which, on schemes)</td>
<td>(3.6)</td>
<td>(1.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed, seeking first job</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The relative vulnerability in the labour market of those with no qualifications is clear. Youthreach is the principal “scheme” referred to. The groups of most interest to the present discussion are those who are unemployed after loss of first job and those who are unemployed seeking first job. Bearing in mind that the survey does not include those who leave from primary and that Youthreach participants may also categorise themselves as ‘learners’ it is clear from the figures that the Youthreach programme has a potential customer base considerably in excess of the existing 3,250 places currently available\(^{15}\). From the cohort under study, over 650 with no qualifications and 1,700 with Junior Certificate are unemployed either having lost or still seeking their first job. Over five years this aggregates to approximately 11,250. An additional, but currently not quantifiable, demand may also arise from the increased levels of activity of Education Welfare Officers and School Completion programme personnel who emphasise the value of managed direct transfers from schools to Youthreach. In such transactions the young person may not actually leave school but will simply transfer. Finally, additional demand arising from processes associated with learner behaviour and school exclusions are not quantifiable.

The distribution of the potential customer base is also important. Early school leaving is concentrated in disadvantaged areas. It is one of the grounds under which resources are allocated to schools included in the School Support Programme (SSP). These schools are largely found in RAPID or CLÁR areas. But early school leaving can also occur in relatively advantaged areas. This issue raises questions about learner participation, for example, are the centres where they should be? Are the leavers in locations with either no provision or with such poor transport that provision is inaccessible?

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\(^{15}\) This figure does not include the 323 places for young people under 20 years in STTCs or the 2,200 places available in Community Training Workshops (CTCs) which are funded by FÁS. Even if this figure were added the potential customer base would still be in excess of the number of places made available.
In conclusion it can be stated that the potential customer base, even after adjustments pertaining to the availability of learners for participation on the programme (and the availability of places in STTCs and CTCs for early school leavers), significantly outstrips the current level of places available nationally.

- While the extra 1,000 places to be made available to Youthreach over the course of 2007-2009 (400 places have already been distributed) will go some way towards catering for an increased customer base there is a need for analysis of up-to-date data and regular observation of school attendance and drop-out patterns and demographic trends to further focus policymaking regarding the numbers and distribution of places.

Age and gender profile of enrolled learners

Centres for education are required to return data on learners enrolled to the Department of Education and Science on an annual basis. The age and gender profile of learners that follow are based on data recorded from these returns.

- Age profile of Youthreach learners

Youthreach is currently targeted at early school leavers aged 15-20, though exceptions may be made in exceptional circumstances for younger and older learners to enrol. Figure 7.2 shows that the age profile of learners in Youthreach centres has not changed significantly in the period 2001 to 2005. The percentage of participants in the different age ranges has remained relatively stable, with a small drop in the number of participants aged over 18; 40.1% in 2001 to 36.4% in 2005. Also, fewer under 15-year olds are now in attendance. This trend is in keeping with the suggested move to enrol only learners aged 16 years or over in centres and should make its implementation even more possible. Attendance to 16 years generally equates with compulsory education in line with current legislation.
The age profile from the 2005 annual survey of centres is taken to outline the number of learners associated with each age group. Table 7.4 highlights that 20.1% (or 551) learners in that year were aged 15 years or younger.

Table 7.4: Number of learners enrolled on Youthreach programme (December 2005) by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-17 years</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>1190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18+ years</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1321</strong></td>
<td><strong>1418</strong></td>
<td><strong>2739</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While it is clear that Youthreach is successful at enrolling learners in the target age group it is also clear that there is a sizeable proportion of learners enrolled in centres, namely those aged 15 years and younger, whose needs require to be specifically
addressed. The Working Group recommends that:

- **Provision for these learners (aged 15 years and younger), whether in mainstream or the non-mainstream education sectors, must be addressed at a policy level within the Department of Education and Science as a matter of urgency. In this regard, the Working Group notes:**

- **the recommendation of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools (School Matters, 2006, page 146) that the Youth Encounter Project model be extended where numbers of potential referrals warrant such a development and that a Junior Youthreach be provided where numbers do not warrant the establishment of a YEP.**

- **the recommendation in the Programme for Government (2007) “We will increase the number of Youthreach places in line with our Towards 2016 commitments and will support the development of similar services for younger students who discover that the mainstream second level school is not suitable for them.”**

- **Gender profile of Youthreach learners**

More males leave school with no qualifications than females. For the 2002/2003 school year the proportions were 3.9% of an age cohort of males and 3.2% of females (Gorby et al, 2005). Currently, the ratio of male to female learners in Youthreach is almost 50:50. This ratio has changed little since 2001. The ratio of males and females amongst all participants in 2005 is shown in Table 7.5.

**Table 7.5: Gender breakdown of Youthreach learners (2005)**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,321 (48%)</td>
<td>1,418 (52%)</td>
<td>2,739</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of factors are thought to influence participation by males and females in Youthreach with a major one being labour market draw. A greater proportion of males enter work on leaving school (49.9% compared to 39.3% of females) which effectively leaves them unavailable for education/training.

Notwithstanding, these figures would suggest that Youthreach is equally effective at
attracting both female and male learners.

- Educational attainment at entry

Learner qualifications at entry

Table 7.6 indicates that the attainment level upon entry to the programme of over 90% of each of cohort of learners enrolled in centres in both 2001 and 2005 had not reached above the Junior Certificate. In 2001 there were only 60 males entering Youthreach with more than the Junior Certificate and 166 females. In effect educational attainment on entry has remained very low.

Table 7.6: Learners’ educational attainment levels at entry to Youthreach (2001 and 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational attainment level at enrolment</th>
<th>Youthreach learners 2001</th>
<th>Youthreach learners 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than Basic Literacy</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basic Literacy</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than Junior Certificate</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Certificate</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Junior Certificate</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1255</td>
<td>1386</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.6 highlights that the Youthreach programme is efficient at attracting young people with little or no qualifications, or those who would benefit most from the programme.

- Learners’ special educational needs at entry

Levels of special education needs amongst learners were noted briefly at 7.2 above. The annual returns submitted by Youthreach centres to the Department canvass the opinions of centre coordinators regarding learners who present with particular needs. The aggregate numbers for years 2001 and 2005 are set out in Table 7.7.
Table 7.7: Number of Youthreach learners who, in December 2001 and 2005 and in their coordinator’s view, presented with particular special needs (educational or otherwise) at entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of special need</th>
<th>Learners enrolled at December 2001*</th>
<th>Learners enrolled at December 2005*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and Numeracy Problems</td>
<td>1034 39.1%</td>
<td>864 37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysfunctional Family Background</td>
<td>1296 49%</td>
<td>1377 50.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Misuse Problems</td>
<td>665 25.1%</td>
<td>756 27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Sustained Psychological support</td>
<td>715 27%</td>
<td>829 30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific learning needs</td>
<td>378 14.3%</td>
<td>490 17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical disability</td>
<td>32 1.2%</td>
<td>37 1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual disability</td>
<td>213 8%</td>
<td>136 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor physical health e.g., persistent illness</td>
<td>627 23.7%</td>
<td>468 17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautioned by JLO</td>
<td>443 16.7%</td>
<td>483 17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Probation</td>
<td>200 7.5%</td>
<td>145 5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more of any of the above</td>
<td>1158 43.8%</td>
<td>704 25.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The total attendance on the annual census was 2,641 in 2001 and 2,739 in 2005.

Returns from centres for 2001 and 2005 indicate little significant change as regards these figures. Two cautionary notes, however, must be signalled regarding these figures. The first regards technical difficulties with this question in the survey. No definition is offered to coordinators regarding the meaning of the various terms and no objective standard is stated. Responses are purely a matter of opinion and are not based on any form of assessment or screening. The second is that these results are signally at variance from results of scientific and objective tests which show much higher levels of disadvantage than is indicated in the data presented in Table 7.7. For example, in a study of two centres in Dublin in 2001, 45% and 25% respectively of the participants achieved reading scores of less than 9.6 (GAP). 11% and 16% respectively had difficulties with simple addition and subtraction operations, 39% and 58% respectively scored at or below the 10th percentile in numerical reasoning (AH2/3), and 45% and 58% respectively scored below the 5th percentile in a measure of non-verbal reasoning (Ravens), (Smith, 2002).

It is worth noting that an average of 12% of learners enrolled annually in Youthreach programmes are lone parents. It was reported during the consultation process by
learners themselves, and by others, that the provision of childcare support for these learners acts as a critical support for them to be able to continue with their education\textsuperscript{16}. It is clear that Youthreach both attracts and caters, and increasingly more so, for learners with a wide variety of special educational needs, many of which can be associated with early school leaving.

In summary, it is clear, firstly, that Youthreach is effective in targeting and recruiting young people in the target group as noted in priority 1 and priority 2 groups as outlined in chapter 3 (section 3.2.1). Secondly, the Working Group acknowledges the significant educational and personal needs of the Youthreach cohort of learners. Accordingly, a number of recommendations are made:

The evaluation of the current pilot SEN initiative in 20 centres should determine whether this initiative, if extended to all Youthreach centres, would be sufficient to cater for the special needs of learners or whether, in addition, the supports available to post-primary schools should be extended to Youthreach to address the special needs of young people (from a learner centred perspective).

The importance of childcare support for certain categories of learners is recognised and the childcare allowance should be revised upwards from the current €63.50 per week.

Learner profile descriptors, which include details of any special educational needs or disabilities associated with the learners, need to be established in order to enable coordinators to provide more accurate and comparable responses for their returns to the Department of Education and Science.

- **Retention and progression routes of early leavers**

It is important not only to determine if the programme is effective in recruiting the target group but to also determine if the programme is effective in retaining the learners to the end of the programme. Learners enter and leave the Youthreach programme throughout the course of the year. Table 7.8 indicates that there were 4,809 learners in total enrolled in Youthreach during the course of 2005.

\textsuperscript{16} Yet only 234 learners are receiving childcare assistance out of 326 lone parents

188
Table 7.8: Youthreach learner cohort (2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Start Up</th>
<th>Carry-over</th>
<th>Throughput</th>
<th>Early Leaver</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>2358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>2452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,533</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1,032</td>
<td>1,038</td>
<td>4809</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The start-up figure refers to those who commenced in 2005 and were still attending on 31st December 2005. The carryover figures refer to those who commenced before 2005 and were still attending on 31st December 2005. The throughput figure refers to those who left in 2005 having completed at least 75% of the programme. It is important to stress that most learners in Youthreach were, on entering the programme, disillusioned with mainstream education. The fact that over 1,000 were throughputs has to be recognised as a key achievement and one that has to be acknowledged. For these learners the programme is very successful. The early leavers refer to those who left the programme in 2005 without having completed at least 75% of the programme. The total refers to the number of learners who attended the programme during 2005.

- Early Leavers

In 2001 a total of 867 learners left the Youthreach programme early. In 2005 this figure had risen to 1,038 (see Table 7.8). Their destinations are listed in Table 7.9.

Table 7.9: Destination of early leavers from Youthreach (2001 and 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Early leavers 2001</th>
<th>Early leavers 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Destinations include employment and, but to a lesser extent, education and training. It may be assumed that lack of formal qualifications render the latter two destinations
difficult. While those leaving early to education and training increased so too did those leaving to unemployment and “other”. Table 7.10 gives the reasons for leaving for those learners in these two latter categories.

**Table 7.10: Learners’ reasons for leaving Youthreach (2001 and 2005) for those who go to unemployment or other**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for leaving</th>
<th>Youthreach learners 2001</th>
<th>Youthreach learners 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/Personal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to Commit to Programme</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expelled</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity/Pregnancy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation Change</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Known</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>249</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 554 (2001) and 436 (2005) learners left at the end of the foundation phase. To be fully beneficial to the learners the programme needs to incorporate not only the foundation but also the progression phase. It is imperative that more learners are motivated to complete the programme or if they wish to leave to ensure that they are entering other forms of education and training or employment carrying a commitment to education and training.

**Table 7.11: Youthreach learners who left during 2001 and 2005 on completion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Youthreach learners 2001</th>
<th>Youthreach learners 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Level</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progression level</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>499</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.11 shows that more males than females leave at the end of foundation level. Table 7.12 provides information on the destination of these learners. It is clear that the most popular destination for those learners that leave upon completion of the foundation phase only is employment. Fewer continue into other training programmes with fewer still continuing with their education.

**Table 7.12: Destinations of Youthreach learners who complete the foundation phase (2001 and 2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAS/Skills training/Traineeship</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Training (e.g., CERT, Teagasc)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>304</strong></td>
<td><strong>250</strong></td>
<td><strong>554</strong></td>
<td><strong>253</strong></td>
<td><strong>183</strong></td>
<td><strong>436</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of conclusions may be drawn from the data supplied in Tables 7.9 to 7.12. Firstly, the programme’s target group may be viewed as being volatile (especially those in what are now to be known as the engagement and foundation phases) and that a significant number of young people leave early. It is true that almost 50% of these are returning to education or training or leaving to employment. The various reasons why the rest leave early as set out in Table 7.10, suggest that some participants may have difficulties beyond the scope of an education or training programme to resolve. Furthermore, given that the programme currently caters for young people at various ages from 15 to 20+, caution should be exercised when interpreting these data. Nonetheless, the proportion of early leavers is of concern. As regards those who leave having completed Foundation Phase (Table 7.12), it is acknowledged that, excluding
the 16 whose whereabouts are unknown, 32% left to progression outside of Youthreach in education or training and 38% left into employment. However, no information is available on this employment, how sustainable it is or at what skill level. There is also concern regarding the 30% who left to unemployment or ‘other’.

While many learners progress on to employment or further education and training, there is a problem regarding the number of learners who leave the programme early, whether that happens early in the programme or at the end of a foundation phase. It is important that centres support learners in making their transition from a centre. While the tracking of learners will help centres to ascertain learners’ progression routes more accurately the Working Group acknowledges the burden of implementing extensive learner tracking systems. This may be addressed in the context of changes in programme specification consequent on this report and the revitalisation of links at national and local level with FÁS.

Having considered the data on early leaving and progression, the Working Group recommends:

- **Recruitment and referral**: a protocol should be developed at national level to guide the recruitment of participants and to set out the responsibility of referring agents (for example, as regards disclosure of behaviours, conditions and dispositions that might jeopardise a young person’s participation and the provision by those referring agents of longitudinal supports to the learner and to programme staff). This may require action at national level, in particular discussions with the NEWB, the HSE, the Garda Síochána and the Probation Service in the context of the Education Welfare Act and the now fully commenced Children Act. For a significant number of learners the Youthreach programme should be just one strand of a multi-pronged care programme in which each agent’s role should be clear;

- **Induction**: the webwheel model should be adopted as a guiding process for induction and goal-setting for Youthreach learners;

- **Early leavers**: those who leave before completing Foundation Level should be tracked, firstly to record with greater clarity why they left and what they are doing and secondly to ascertain if provisions could be put in place to encourage them to return and complete the programme. Following the outcomes of such tracking centres may need to look at how the programme on offer might be changed so as to encourage early learners to commit. This
tracking process should also reveal whether Youthreach is the most appropriate place for these learners in the first instance which will, in turn, inform discussions with referring agencies. Further, guidelines should also be developed regarding the actions that centres should initiate should learners drop out of their programme early. This will require inter-agency collaboration.

- **Leavers after Foundation**: learners who leave after completing the foundation phase of the programme only should be tracked also by their centres to determine their progression after leaving. Particular emphasis should be placed on those learners who are not engaged in employment, education or training. Such learners should be provided with relevant guidance and/or counselling to determine what can be done to enable them to return to the centres, or to an alternative programme.

- **Follow-up**: a programme leavers’ survey should be carried out by centres 18 months after learners leave, similar to the School Leavers Survey carried out by the ESRI. Also, it is recommended that centres should be available to learners for six months to one year after they leave a Youthreach programme to offer them advice and guidance so as to support them in this transition phase. Participation in a Back to Education Initiative part time programme could, perhaps, be used to fund such support.

- **FÁS-funded Advocate Service**: the potential value of the FAS-funded Advocacy Service for Youthreach in supporting successful transitions for participants into employment, further education or training is acknowledged. This initiative has been recently evaluated (Martin & Associates, 2006). While the evaluation acknowledges the effectiveness of the measure, sufficient advocates are not available to cater for programme demands. The DES should initiate discussion with FÁS regarding the implementation of the recommendations regarding tracking and supports for learners leaving the Youthreach programme, whether early, after Foundation phase or on completion of the progression phase.

7.4.2 Does the programme address learners’ needs for personal and social development?

The second measure of effectiveness to be examined is whether the programme succeeds in addressing the learners need for personal and social development. This
will be evaluated through examining how a learner’s soft skills are developed.

- **Soft skills development**

It is widely understood that Youthreach contributes significantly to the development of learners’ soft skills such as their self-esteem, self-confidence, creativity and personal awareness. It does this, in the main, by placing an emphasis on learners’ personal development both in the curriculum and in the hidden curriculum of centres and through the relationships that exist between staff and learners in centres. Learners are generally empowered through the model of education and training provided in centres. The overall focus of the work in centres is the enhancement of knowledge, attitudes, skills, opinions, aspirations and motivations. This then has an effect on the learners’ behaviour, their work, decision making and social awareness, ultimately affecting their social, civic and economic experience (increased stability and security). Through the QFI learners are asked to evaluate their experience of the programme. They are asked, for example, to respond to such statements as “I am learning and growing in confidence”\(^{17}\). The fact that all centres now ask their learners about their experience of the programme and are gathering data from learner reviews (in the CDP process) and learner evaluations, suggests that centres are becoming much more aware of how effective they are in the development of soft and hard skills. As a result, they are becoming more responsive to the needs of learners. Likewise, this kind of interaction underpins the “Webwheel” model of learner appraisal and individual programme planning that is being introduced in the programme.

But does this work? Are learners’ soft skills enhanced as a result of the programme? The learners and parents who participated in the consultation process were adamant that it did. Their responses echoed those found in a number of reports predating the present exercise (for example Boldt, 1997) and also in the evaluations conducted to date by the Inspectorate. Further endorsement may be found in *School Matters* which comments (Section 9.10) that:

> There is very valuable work being carried out in these centres. This work is challenging and largely uncelebrated. It is emotionally and professionally very demanding on the staff who commit to it. Of more pressing concern to our present enquiry is that it is also very effective. In all instances the learners appeared very happy with their placement there. They told us with some pride that their “new” environment suited them very much better than the

\(^{17}\) 25 questions in all about their experience of being in the programme, see p.50, QFI ICE guidelines
mainstream school in which they were often miserable and in constant trouble with school authorities.

Parents of the children shared with Task Force members their high levels of satisfaction with the alternative placement and they were of the view that gaining a place in the programme had opened up second chance opportunities for their sons or daughters...

The intimacy and lack of perceived pressure in the alternative off-site provision meets the needs of these vulnerable and often troublesome children better (than schools). It was clear to the Task Force that placement in these Centres suited the clientele in a way that mainstream education did not. The good thing was that these marginalised learners were, with help, raising the ceilings of their lives...

In the same vein, Brian McGrath (2002) bases an academic study of enablement of unqualified young people in Youthreach. The overall aim of the study was to analyse the effects of policies on young people (aged 16-25) in seven European Member States with particular focus on rural youth’s integration with or exclusion from labour markets. He notes the participants’ high regard for the learning environment and how they contrasted their experience with school adding that “for many young people participation on the programme was their first experience of being afforded a responsible role in their education and personal development”. Participants praised the motivation and relaxation brought to the learning process by staff. They felt they were treated as adults with a choice as to how they participated in the learning process. The approach itself was seen to encourage the young people to address learning needs. The way in which social relations developed between participants was also noted as was its impact on ‘creative and social skills’ and, in what McGrath describes as “one of the key strengths that can be identified in the Youthreach programme”, the self-confidence and sense of responsibility that comes from real democratic involvement.

A central question is whether these effects last. No longitudinal study has ever been undertaken with a fully representative sample of former Youthreach participants. However, in 2005 the programme’s national coordinator asked centres to follow up on one learner for every year the centre had been open in order to gather a body of stories that would express the experience of the programme through the participants. These were gathered in *Youthreach - The Annals of Achievement: 1989-2005 – Sixteen Years of Working With Young People* (Stokes, 2006). The views expressed are consistent with previous paragraphs. Learners from the earlier years are now in their late 20s and early 30s and in their contributions offer reflections on how their
Youthreach experience proved of long-term value to them.

For example, Julian, who attended Letterfrack Youthreach in 1990 comments that “the programme helped me focus on my life and gave me the confidence to develop into a well-adjusted member of my local community. I am a member of RNLI and I take my job seriously”. Joseph from Ballinrobe tells of how he joined Youthreach in 1991, of how he felt for the first time he was “a young man with a brain and in a hurry to get on” and how as a result he “would lift 2 tonne of potatoes with the self-worth” he felt. In due course Joseph would continue to CERT, work in a bar, move to Ashford Castle, then to New York and finally back home where he married and settled. In his view, “Youthreach gave me my mind back”. Esther, who attended a different Youthreach centre, cited the confidence she gained and how as a result she had “set up residents’ committees, young women’s groups and became a tutor myself”.

- It is recommended that the use of the QFI learner questionnaires and the web profiling of learners, along with the introduction of evaluation by the Inspectorate, continue to be used as tools by which to assess the extent of the attainment of soft skills by learners. Their effectiveness should be continually reviewed and evaluated.

7.4.3 Is the programme effective as regards learner’s qualification levels and progression to further education/ training, or employment?

While the Working Group emphasises the importance of personal development, equally important is achievement of certification by learners reflecting the best of their ability. The number of learners who received certification in 2005 is detailed in Table 7.13. Results are expressed in terms of current National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Levels. Similar figures for 2001 are unavailable.
Table 7.13: Levels of learner achievement in Youthreach 2005 by certifying body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification</th>
<th>Awarding body</th>
<th>Number of learners who received certification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 3</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 4</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 5</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records of achievement (various levels)</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>1303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Cert (less than 5 subjects)(^{18})</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Cert (more than 5 subjects)</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Cert Applied</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECDL</td>
<td>ECDL</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information presented in Table 7.13 does not indicate whether the learners obtain one type of certification or whether they obtain certification from a number of sources. One learner, for example, could achieve certification for a number of FETAC modules and could also achieve certification in a number of subjects in the Junior Certificate and/or the Leaving Certificate. It can be deduced, however, that of the 4,809 who presented on the Youthreach programme during 2005, some 2,914 awards and certification were received. It is not possible to deduce if each of the 2,914 awards went to different learners or whether particular learners may have received more than 1 award during 2005. This issue will be examined when amending the annual survey forms going forward.

A significant number of learners achieved records of achievement in 2005, which acknowledges that they completed a FETAC module. However, relatively few learners in Youthreach centres have achieved a full award at NFQ Levels 3 to 5. Such achievement would make it easier for learners to successfully progress from the programmes into further studies, employment or other life choices that are on par with their peers. The Working Group accepts that this must be viewed in the context of the learners’ low level of educational attainment at entry (as highlighted in Table 7.6)

\(^{18}\) Since the establishment of the NCVa and subsequently FETAC the general policy has been for Youthreach participants to present for these awards. The Junior Certificate and similar examinations are therefore taken by comparatively few participants.
earlier). In some cases the achievement of a single record of achievement is a signal achievement. However, the Working Group is mindful of:

- the ongoing development by FETAC of awards options at NFQ Levels 1 and 2,
- the previously mentioned pilot initiative in Youthreach targeting Special Education Needs,
- the programme of staff training in the “webwheel” approach to learner self-appraisal and
- individual learning programme planning and training offered in programme planning under the QFI.

The data presented in Table 7.14 highlight that progression rates to employment and education are significantly better for those who complete the progression phase. A total of 434 and 599 learners left Youthreach in 2001 and 2005 respectively on completion of the progression phases. Table 7.14 provides a gender breakdown of these figures.

**Table 7.14: Destinations of those Youthreach learners who complete the progression phase (2001 and 2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Youthreach learners 2001</th>
<th>Youthreach learners 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAS/Skills training/Traineeship</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Training (e.g., CERT, Teagasc)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>195</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

198
It is important to note that for those learners who complete the progression phase that 75% of them enter employment, education or training. However, it is the quality of these destinations that is important. To determine whether the programme is effective for learners who complete the programme in the longer term it is recommended that;

- the learners are tracked in a manner similar to the ESRI School Leavers Survey Reports.
- learners who complete the Progression Phase be included in the statistics database which specifies those who complete senior cycle post-primary education or its equivalent.

The Youthreach programme should be capable of delivering more in terms of learner certification. In this regard, three key recommendations are made:

- **Certification outcomes should show a greater spread of achievement**, particularly for learners in the progression levels. Learners who stay in Youthreach for two or more years should leave with certification that will enable them to progress to further studies, training, employment or other life choices. This will require that learners be motivated, encouraged and challenged more in their classrooms and workshops. Further, learners need to have high expectations of their own abilities to achieve higher award outcomes; centre staff needs to prioritise the development in learners of a belief in themselves. Many learners may be the first in their families to achieve State certification.

- **More learners should, where their ability allows, be encouraged to strive for certification in the Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate Schools Programme and/ or FETAC level 3 during the foundation phase and seek certification at FETAC level 4 / 5 and Leaving Certificate Applied by the end of Progression phase.**

- **More detailed data should be collected from centres on an annual basis regarding learners’ certification outcomes, particularly in the case of FETAC certification.** For example, the data collected should include information on whether learners receive certification at module or award levels.
In conclusion, Youthreach would appear to be:

- Effective in recruiting its target group. However, work needs to be done to retain more of the learners to the end of the progression phase. In addition, more places are needed to cater for all early school leavers aged 16 to 20 (over and above the additional places secured in *Towards 2016*). Provision for learners aged 15 years and younger should be addressed separately by the Department of Education and Science. In this regard the Working Group notes the recommendation of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools (School Matters) about alternative educational provision in Youth Encounter Project schools and Junior Youthreach. This recommendation should be taken into account in the context of determining an appropriate model, or models, of response.
- Effective in addressing learners needs for personal and social development.
- Effective, to an extent, in terms of certification achieved particularly when the differing contextual variables and limitations are taken into account. However, there is room for improvement in terms of the number of learners who obtain certification, as well as the levels at which they obtain certification so that they can successfully progress from the centres to appropriate further education, training or employment.

### 7.5 Outcomes of the STTC programme

The learner cohort participating in the STTC programme is profiled in this section. The profile includes information on the potential customer base of the programme, the age and gender of learners enrolled, their educational attainment on entry and learners’ special educational needs at entry. This examination will help to ascertain whether the programme is successful in recruiting its target group. The extent of learners leaving the programme early is examined. The contribution that the programme makes to learners’ personal development, including their self-esteem and self-confidence, is also explored. It is recognised that making determinations on these latter issues is very much a subjective process, but a number of tangible evidence
bases are used for drawing conclusions. The certification achieved by learners’ and progression routes from the programme are also examined.

7.5.1 Is the programme effective in recruiting and retaining the target group?

What is the customer base for the programme and is it able to meet the demand?

While significant progress has been made in limiting the numbers who leave school early, as noted at 7.4.1 above, levels of early school leaving and educational disadvantage amongst Travellers remain a cause for concern. Their transfer rate to post-primary level was 85% in 2004. Table 2.3 (section 2.4.2) gives the estimated number of Traveller students in mainstream post-primary schools by class year of distribution for 1999/2000 to 2005/2006. The number of Travellers in post-primary education is rising and this trend is to be welcomed. However, a particular cause for concern is the high drop out rate of Traveller learners from post-primary education with a majority leaving prior to completing the Junior Cycle. This is despite improvements in the figures staying on to complete their Leaving Certificate. Many reasons have been identified in relation to the phenomenon of early school leaving among Travellers.

The number of STTCs at 31 December 2006 was 33 and the number of learner places at that time was 1,098. The target population for STTCs is currently young Travellers who are experiencing difficulties with mainstream education, as well as adult members of the Traveller community who wish to attend education and training for the first time, or make a return to education. It is difficult to determine with accuracy the potential customer base for STTCs but the census of Travellers conducted by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in 2002 (and published in 2004) provides some data which allows estimates to be made.

The 2002 census revealed that the Traveller population stood at 23,681. Of this number some 10,000 were aged under 15 years, and approximately 1,400 were attending post-primary. The 2002 census found that almost two thirds of the 7,000 Travellers who gave the age at which their full time education ceased had left before the then statutory minimum age of 15 compared to 15% of the population as a whole. Based on these figures, STTCs currently cater for only a small percentage of the eligible Traveller population. While STTCs are open to enrolling members of the settled community this is not widespread practice across centres. Nonetheless, this
would add to the potential customer base.

It is acknowledged, however, that a considerable number of Travellers who are eligible for the programme might not be in a position, or willing, to participate. The reasons for this may include one or a combination of the following, or other, reasons:

- the number of places in any one STTC are limited.
- lack of childcare places.
- some STTCs cater only for those Travellers who live in temporary accommodation.
- family situations can impact on learners taking up places in certain centres.
- the impact on secondary benefits of receipt of a training allowance.
- history of participation in education by the Travelling Community has been very poor with few role models.
- negative experience of first chance education.
- it is not ‘trendy’ for male Travellers to be participants in education due to cultural influences of working in the Traveller economy.

In addition, a number of other training programmes cater for adult Travellers who are unemployed, such as the Primary Health Care Programme for Travellers, local Community Employment Schemes for Travellers, etc. which reduces the customer base. Other factors include mismatches between the availability of STTC places and patterns of Traveller residence, including halting sites and lack of transport. Reliable figures are not currently available on participation in the Traveller economy that would contribute to a finer calibration of demand for education and training provision for adult Travellers.

In conclusion, it can be stated that, even after some adjustments pertaining to the availability of learners for participation on the STTC programme, the number of places available falls short of meeting the potential demand for places for Traveller adults returning to education. The Working Group recommends that:

- **Formal links should be established between STTCs and their local offices of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.** The purpose of this link would be to create an activation programme which would support Travellers in engaging with an appropriate education or training programme that best suits their educational needs. This will require sustained and effective cooperation between all relevant partners including Community Welfare Officers, Visiting Teachers for Travellers (VTT), VECs, FAS, etc.
• The allocation of places across the network of STTCs should be regularly assessed against demographic trends to ensure optimum balance between supply and demand for provision. Places found not to be consistently filled should be reallocated.

Age and gender profile of enrolled learners
Centres for education are required to return data on learners enrolled to the Department of Education and Science on an annual basis. The age and gender profile of learners that follow are based on data gleaned from these returns.

• Age profile of STTC learners

The target group for the STTC programme is adult Travellers and young Travellers who have dropped out of school early without any formal qualifications. Figure 7.3 shows that the number of learners under 18 years of age attending STTCs has dropped from 30.2% to 21% between 2001 and 2005, while those aged over 50 years has risen from 7.8% in 2001 to 17.6% in 2005.

Figure 7.3: Age categories for STTC learners (2001-2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age grouping</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under 15</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 17</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 24</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 44</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45+</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STTCs now cater more for adult Travellers over 18 years than for younger Travellers. This change in the age profile of learners is consistent with policy decisions taken in the DES towards addressing inter-generational educational disadvantage that exists within the Traveller community. Engaging adult Travellers in education encourages
them to support their own children remaining in mainstream education for as long as possible. The age profile from the 2005 annual survey of centres is taken to outline the number of learners associated with each age group. Table 7.15 highlights that only 21% (or 234) learners in that year were aged 17 years or younger.

Table 7.15: Number of learners enrolled on STTC programme (December 2005) by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>186</strong></td>
<td><strong>912</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,098</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking the foregoing into account, in addition to the recommendations of the Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy (2006), the Working Group recommends:

- The lower age limit for entry to STTCs should be 18 years and STTCs should concentrate on providing adult Travellers with a second chance education. This will free up places for Travellers aged 18 years and over.
- Travellers under 18 years should be enrolled in mainstream inclusive settings with their peers. This transition of centres from their current make-up to centres that cater for adults only should be effected over a 3 year period.
- A formal programme of continuous professional development should be developed for STTC staff to ensure that they remain up-skilled to work within an intercultural framework with an adult focus (as most staff are post-primary teachers without formal intercultural training).
• Gender profile of STTC learners

Currently the ratio of male to female learners in STTCs is almost 20:80 (see Table 7.16 which is based on 2005 figures). In 2001 the percentage of males was 24%. There are some exceptions - one STTC consulted during the present review reported having a ratio of 50:50.

Table 7.16: Gender breakdown of STTC learners in 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STTC</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>186</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>1,098</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many Travellers, males in particular, drop out of centres once they reach 18 years of age. In 2005 54% of Traveller males in STTCs were under 18 years while only 21% were female under 18. It was strongly argued during the consultation process that male Travellers leave once they are eligible for social welfare allowances, which are equivalent to the training allowance. The general view in the Traveller community is that adult males should be earning an income. Traditionally, this would have been in the Traveller economy, which provides an opportunity to earn a family income. As a result, many adult male Travellers do not see the relevance of attending an STTC for a training allowance that is equivalent to social welfare allowances. Further, they could earn more in the Traveller economy in a short period of time. In turn, this lowers retention rates and leads to early leaving, compounding the poor level of transfer into further education and training.

On the other hand, the number of adult women attending STTCs has increased. This has influenced the number of female participants under 18 years of age. It was suggested during the consultation process of this VFM review that some young Traveller females are taking up parental roles while their mothers attend the STTC, due to the difficulty associated with finding appropriate childcare. Other young female Travellers are remaining in mainstream education (see Table 2.3, section 2.4.2). The number of young Travellers remaining in post-primary education is increasing each year and this trend is welcomed and should be supported. Having regard to these trends, the Working Group recommends:

• Childcare supports for Further Education programmes should be reviewed in the context of broader national consideration of childcare
provision and enhanced, as appropriate, to ensure that young female Travellers do not have to stay at home to mind their siblings.

- Specific strategies should be developed to attract adult male Travellers to participate in an STTC programme. Exemplars of good practice should be evaluated to determine how they attract males into particular centres and good practice should be disseminated as appropriate.

- Educational attainment at entry

Learners’ qualifications at entry
As with Youthreach, the STTC programme targets educationally disadvantaged individuals. The annual survey of centres showed that over 90% of learners enrolled at 31st December in both 2001 and 2005, as shown in Figure 7.17, left school at or before achieving their Junior Certificate.

Table 7.17: Learners’ educational attainment levels at entry to STTCs (2001 and 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational attainment level at enrolment</th>
<th>STTC learners 2001</th>
<th>STTC learners 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less than Basic Literacy</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basic Literacy</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less than Junior Certificate</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Certificate</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above Junior Certificate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that the pattern of educational attainment levels of learners upon entry has changed little in recent years and remains extremely low. The programme is therefore attracting its target learners with low education attainment.

- Learners’ special educational needs at entry
The annual returns submitted by STTCs to the Department canvass the opinions of
centre directors regarding learners who present with particular needs. The aggregate numbers for years 2001 and 2005 are set out in Table 7.18.

Table 7.18: Number of STTC learners who, in December 2001 and 2005 and in their director’s view, presented with particular special needs (educational or otherwise) at entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of special need</th>
<th>Learners enrolled at December 2001*</th>
<th>Learners enrolled at December 2005*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and Numeracy Problems</td>
<td>649 80%</td>
<td>487 44.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysfunctional Family Background</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>207 18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Misuse Problems</td>
<td>93 11.4%</td>
<td>60 5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Sustained Psychological support</td>
<td>299 36.8%</td>
<td>167 15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific learning needs</td>
<td>298 36.7%</td>
<td>137 12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical disability</td>
<td>55.5 6.8%</td>
<td>29 2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual disability</td>
<td>109 13.4%</td>
<td>41 3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor physical health e.g., persistent illness/poor nutrition</td>
<td>207 25.5%</td>
<td>147 13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautioned by JLO</td>
<td>58 7.1%</td>
<td>30 2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Probation</td>
<td>22 2.7%</td>
<td>14 1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation problems</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>110 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more of any of the above</td>
<td>364 44.9%</td>
<td>226 20.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The total attendance on the annual census was 811 in 2001 and 1,098 in 2005.*

Returns from centres for 2001 and 2005 indicate significant changes regarding these figures in most categories of special need. Overall, it appears that the number of learners presenting with special needs in centres has decreased over the last number of years. This may be a beneficial outcome of greater participation and retention of young Travellers whereby they have a better standard of education when they return to education as adults. However, similar technical difficulties attach to this survey as was noted earlier regarding Youthreach (see 7.4.1). No definition is offered to centre directors regarding the meaning of the various terms and no objective standard is stated or agreed. Responses are a matter of opinion only and are not based on any form of diagnostic assessment or screening. Some of these technical difficulties will
be alleviated using the web profile assessment techniques. Data regarding other social and economic factors affecting STTC learners are shown in Table 7.19.

Table 7.19: STTC learners - other social and economic factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social/economic factor</th>
<th>Of the total no. of learners in December 2001*</th>
<th>Of the total no. of learners in December 2005*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number who receive Lone Parents allowances</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number who are Refugees/Asylum Seekers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number who live in a house</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number who live in a caravan on an official halting site</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number who live in a caravan on the roadside</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number who are homeless</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number who are in care</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number who are repeating programme after 1 year interval</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number who reside in Residential Care</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The total attendance on the annual census was 811 in 2001 and 1,098 in 2005.

- Retention and Progression routes of early leavers

Students enter and leave the STTC programme throughout the year. Table 7.20 indicates that there were 1,564 learners in total enrolled in STTCs during the course of 2005.

Table 7.20: STTC learner cohort (2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Start Up</th>
<th>Carry-Over</th>
<th>Throughput</th>
<th>Early Leaver</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>1230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>1564</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The start-up figures refer to those who commenced in 2005 and were still attending on 31st December 2005. The carryover figures refer to those who commenced before 2005 and were still attending on 31st December 2005. The throughput figures are those who left in 2005 having completed at least 75% of the programme. The early leavers refer to those who left the programme in 2005 without having completed at least 75% of the programme. Almost 20% of learners leave early and this is a concern. The total is the number of learners who attended the programme during 2005. The main concern is the low numbers who complete the full programme (throughput) with less than 12% in this category.

- Early leavers

In 2001 a total of 253 learners left the STTC programme early. In 2005 this figure had risen to 286. The details of the destinations of these learners are given in Table 7.21.

### Table 7.21: Destination of early leavers from STTCs (2001 and 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Early leavers 2001</th>
<th></th>
<th>Early leavers 2005</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opportunities for employment, education and training are given in Table 7.21 as destinations for those who leave early. A significant number of others, however, are unable to commit to the programme and may end up unemployed or have other personal reasons for leaving. Table 7.22 gives details of the reasons for leaving for those learners in the categories of “unemployment” and “other” as given in Table 7.21.
Table 7.22: Learners reasons for leaving STTCs (2001 and 2005) for those who go to unemployment or other places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for leaving</th>
<th>STTC learners 2001</th>
<th>STTC learners 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/Personal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to Commit to Programme</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspended/Expelled</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention/difficulties with law</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity/Pregnancy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveller economy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation Change</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispute between families</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Into care</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>143</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 334 and 180 learners left STTCs (as detailed in Table 7.23) on completion of the two different levels of the programme in 2001 and 2005 respectively. This could be taken to mean that learner retention levels in STTCs have improved in recent years, but it could also be because opportunities for progression by learners are few and difficult to achieve. This is a complex area and the Working Group is conscious that reliable data are lacking. Apart from the difficulties that Travellers encounter in engaging with the labour market, some learners on entry have very low attainment levels from school which also inhibit progression. Indeed, some have never attended post-primary education at all. In the consultation process some of the learners noted that the centre was their workplace. The interplay between programme training allowances and social welfare allowances is also complex and in some instances, according to respondents in the consultation stage of this review, encourage early leaving (by males on reaching 18) and retention of females. The 2005 figures indicate that only 11% (or 180) of learners (out of 1,564 that year) actually completed the foundation and progression phases of the programme.

It will be important to emphasis that STTCs are centres of learning where learners attend for a finite time period – generally two years but in exceptional circumstances three years. Progression routes to mainstream Further Education should be
highlighted. The centres should not be seen by learners as places where they can remain for an indefinite period.

**Table 7.23: STTC learners who left during 2001 and 2005 on completion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>STTC learners 2001</th>
<th>STTC learners 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Level</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progression level</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>245</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proportion of learners that leave STTCs (11%) compared to Youthreach (21%) is lower. Opportunities for employment or confidence to progress to further studies, however, are not as high for Travellers. According to respondents to the consultation process of this review, reasons for this include prejudice and discrimination experienced by Travellers.

Table 7.24 shows the destination of learners at the end of foundation phase.

**Table 7.24: Destinations of those STTC learners who complete the foundation phase (2001 and 2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>STTC learners 2001</th>
<th>STTC learners 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAS/Skills training/Traineeship</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Training (e.g., CERT, Teagasc)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveller Economy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE Schemes/Community Response Programmes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAS Link Work Experience Programme</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>146</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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7.5.2 Does the programme address learners’ needs for personal and social development?

The second measure of effectiveness to be examined is whether the programme succeeds in its objective to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society (Traveller community and settled community) and progress to further education, training and employment or other life choices. In this regard, three broad indicators are discussed - soft skills development, certification outcomes and progression.

Soft skills development

The Report of the Task Force on the Travelling People (1995) commented positively on STTCs and drew attention in particular to the positive role centres played in valuing and celebrating Traveller culture and developing leadership roles within the Traveller community, as well as their role in addressing the educational needs of Travellers. This view is reiterated in evaluations conducted by the Inspectorate of the DES of provision in STTCs (as summarised in Chapter 6). These evaluations showed that STTCs place a strong emphasis on the personal development of participants and, in many instances; this is linked with developing learners’ capacities to play a leadership role in their local communities and society. As noted in the Inspectors’ evaluations, this is supported by Traveller involvement on Boards of Management and by the learner councils that have been established within the network of centres in recent years. Further, the QFI promotes the active participation of learners in designing and managing their own learning programmes and actively participating at all levels.

The consultation phase associated with this review showed that many Traveller parents, who themselves were learners, were well able to effectively articulate issues pertaining to their educational needs.

A review of STTCs in 2000 (Griffin & Harper, 2001) noted that the transfer of responsibility for STTCs to the DES was viewed as having stimulated the development of a more “holistic type of education” and resulted in STTCs becoming “more student centred with a greater involvement of Travellers in the design and implementation of the cultural educational programmes”.

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In conclusion, it can be said that there is little objective evidence as to how effectively the STTC programme develops learners’ soft skills; feedback during the consultation phase suggests that they do. The Working Group recommends that mechanisms be developed to provide more sustainable evidence in this regard.

7.5.3 Is the programme effective as regards learners’ qualification levels and progression to further education and training, or employment or other purposeful activities?

The number of learners in STTCs who received certification in 2005 is detailed in Table 7.25. Similar figures for 2001 are unavailable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification</th>
<th>Awarding body</th>
<th>Number of learners who received certification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 3</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 4</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 5</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full award at NFQ Level 6</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records of achievement (various levels)</td>
<td>FETAC</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Cert (less than 5 subjects)</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Cert (more than 5 subjects)</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate Applied</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information presented in Table 7.25 does not indicate whether the learners obtain one type of certification or whether they obtain certification from a number of sources. One learner, for example, could achieve certification for a number of FETAC modules and could also achieve certification in a number of subjects in the Junior Certificate and/or Leaving Certificate. A total of 1,564 students presented on STTC programmes during 2005 and of this cohort a total of 925 received some form of certification. It is not possible to deduce if each of the 925 awards went to different learners or whether particular learners may have received more than 1 award during 2005. This issue will be examined when amending the annual survey forms going forward.
The level of certification achieved by learners in STTCs in 2005 may seem very low with less than 500 achieving a FETAC record of achievement and only 22 achieving a Leaving Certificate Applied. However, it can also be deduced from Table 7.25 that 237 learners achieved a full FETAC award at NFQ Level 3. This equates to eight or more modules per learner which, considering the level of educational attainment prior to entry to centres, represents a significant achievement for many.

While the Working Group acknowledges the importance of personal development, equally important is achievement of educational awards by learners reflecting the best of their ability. While aware of the learners’ education levels at entry to the programme, the Working Group notes that the levels of certification achieved by learners in STTCs are generally low. For STTCs to be more successful in terms of learner certification learners need to be motivated, encouraged and challenged more in their classroom settings to “ambition more”. Learners need to have higher expectations of their own abilities to achieve higher award outcomes. Staff teams working in centres need to instil in learners a belief in themselves. Further, more learners should strive for major awards at NFQ Levels 3 and/or 4 or full Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied. Such achievement will make it easier for learners to successfully progress from the programmes into further studies, employment or other life choices on a par with their peers. It was also strongly expressed in the consultation phase that adult Travellers should be encouraged to progress from the STTC programme into mainstream further education and training. In particular, there should be a greater spread of achievement for learners in the progression phase. Learners who stay in STTCs for three years should leave with certification that will enable them to progress to further studies, training, employment or other life choices.

- **Progression**

Opportunities for those who complete the STTC programme, although not great, are better on completion of the progression phase in a centre. Table 7.26 provides information on the destinations of those learners who completed the progression phase in centres in 2001 and 2005.
Table 7.26: Destinations of those STTC learners who complete the progression phase (2001 and 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>STTC learners 2001</th>
<th>STTC learners 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAS/Skills training/Traineeship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Training (e.g., CERT, Teagasc)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveller Economy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE Schemes/Community Response Programmes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fás Link Work Experience Programme</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working from home</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ultimately, STTCs, as a positive action of the DES of two to three years duration for adult Travellers, should no longer be required. This may take a decade. More young Travellers should have completed their Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate and should progress to mainstream further or higher education. Adult Travellers should have access to dedicated literacy and numeracy supports and should progress into mainstream adult and further education, training programmes or into an educational setting where an intercultural perspective is the norm.

Having considered the foregoing, the Working Group recommends:

- **STTCs should be presented to learners as a finite programme with four phases and expectations regarding positive outcomes with throughput.** As with other educational programmes, learners should be provided with opportunities to achieve on a personal and certification level.
• Greater emphasis should be placed on guidance, on transfer and progression and on throughput. Centres should not be seen as ends in themselves, as places of work. They are educational centres, available to learners for a finite time period.

• Learners who leave STTCs early should be tracked to determine their progression after leaving. Learners who do gain employment or progress to further studies or training should be located and provided with guidance and counselling support to determine what can be done to enable them to return to the centres or to an alternative programme. Guidelines should be developed in relation to participants dropping out of the programme. This would require an inter-agency approach.

• An STTC programme leavers’ survey should be carried out annually. This survey should be targeted at those who complete the programme and should be circulated to such learners approximately 12-18 months after they have left a centre. The results of such surveys will provide concrete evidence of destinations and enable considered policy decisions to be taken into the future. Such a survey should be carried out in a manner similar to that of the annual school leavers’ survey carried out by the ESRI. A national register could be developed to identify all those Travellers who have left centres early in collaboration with the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

• Advice, guidance and longitudinal support should be available to learners for six months to one year after they leave an STTC so as to support them in their transition phase. Participation in a BTEI type arrangement could be used to fund such support. The Working Group acknowledges the work done by the High Level Group on Traveller Issues to improve access to employment and hopes that progression destinations for Travellers will improve in the future. It also acknowledges that many of ‘those job ready’ Travellers who now participate in the FÁS Special Employment Initiative for Travellers have been identified, in many instances, through STTCs.

In conclusion STTCs would appear to be

• effective in recruiting its target group. However, work needs to be done to retain more of the learners to the end of the progression phase.

• effective in addressing learners’ needs for personal and social development.

• effective, to an extent, in terms of certification achieved particularly when the differing contextual variables and limitations are taken into account. However, there is room for improvement in terms of the number of
learners who obtain certification, as well as the levels at which they obtain certification so that they can progress from the centres to appropriate further education, training or employment. However a lot of work needs to be done to motivate Travellers to continue on into further education and training and to enable Travellers to access employment in the mainstream economy. Commitment of employers to employ Travellers with qualifications is needed.

7.6 Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter would seem to suggest that the programmes, but especially Youthreach, are effective as regards attracting their target cohort of learners and in developing learners’ soft skills. The STTC programme is effective in relation to the empowerment of the Traveller community and provides positive educational outcomes for the learners who attend. As identified earlier, however, it would appear that staff and learners alike need to ‘ambition more’ in order for learners to achieve higher certification outcomes. This is where the challenges and limitations associated with learners are key. Research conducted in Youthreach settings by Smith (2002) indicates that some learners present with SENs that would inhibit attainment higher than NFQ Level 3, so expecting them to attain at a high level would be unrealistic. In turn, this raises the issue of measuring effectiveness (performance indicators) where such progress is not possible. The use of performance indicators will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 8. Achieving NFQ Level 3 would be in line with the National Skills Strategy (NSS) which aims to have 7% of the workforce at Level 3 by 2020. Many of the learners in STTCs would be in this category.

38% of Youthreach trainees present with literacy and numeracy problems and approximately 30% need sustained psychological support. Almost half of STTC trainees are reported as having literacy and numeracy difficulties. The need for sustained psychological support among learners in STTCs is less than Youthreach trainees at 19%. While the ‘drugs problem’ and ‘suicide’ are now a reality within the Traveller community, 28% of students in Youthreach present with substance misuse problems compared to 5% in STTCs. The Working Group accepts the view widely expressed in the consultation phase that there is a need for sustained psychological support within the programmes to combat the behavioural patterns of some of the learners as a result of their life experiences to-date.

Comparing the 2005 learner profiles in Youthreach with those from STTCs,
differences can be identified. About half of Youthreach trainees are reported as coming from dysfunctional family backgrounds compared to less than 20% in STTCs. This is an important point to note as some Traveller families take their young learners out of school because of the behavioural issues of some ‘settled children’. It should be noted here that some young Travellers leave school early as a result of a cultural decision.

As developments signalled in the Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy become a reality, more Travellers should remain on in second level schools and progress onto higher education and further education and training. The Working Group acknowledges the significant educational, cultural, social and personal needs of the STTC cohort of learners and realises that the programme is needed at the moment to address, from a learner centred perspective, the specific needs of these adult learners attending the centres in much greater numbers than in the past.

Both programmes are providing realistic educational opportunities for their learners under certain limitations and are broadly effective in achieving their objectives. However, certification and progression outcomes should be raised. The development of the National Framework of Qualifications has established a general mechanism to facilitate the acquisition of appropriate qualifications. In the Report, Tomorrow’s Skills Towards a National Skills Strategy (2007), it is noted that if Ireland is to realise its vision of a new knowledge economy which can compete effectively in the global market place, it requires enhancing of the skill levels of the resident population, and it requires an additional up-skilling of 70,000 persons from NFQ Levels 1 & 2 to level 3 and 260,000 up to Levels 4 and 5. The Youthreach and STTC programmes have a major role to play if this objective is to be realised, but for them to do so the recommendations outlined in this report would need to be implemented.

To recap, the main recommendations from this Chapter are now set out below:

- In future a clear distinction should be made between the Youthreach and STTC programmes. Youthreach should be equated more with post-primary. STTCs should be equated with Further and Adult Education.
- An inter-departmental approach should be implemented in order that these young people who leave school early can be properly identified and served.
- While the extra 1,000 places to be made available to Youthreach over the course of 2007-2009 (400 places have already been distributed) will go
some way towards catering for an increased customer base there is a need for analysis of up-to-date data and regular observation of school attendance and drop-out patterns and demographic trends to further focus policymaking regarding the numbers and distribution of places.

- **Provision for learners (aged 15 years and younger), whether in mainstream or the non-mainstream education sectors, should be addressed separately by the Department of Education and Science. In this regard the Working Group notes the recommendation of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools (School Matters) about alternative educational provision in Youth Encounter Project schools and Junior Youthreach. This recommendation should be taken into account in the context of determining an appropriate model, or models, of response.**

- **The evaluation of the current pilot SEN initiative in 20 centres should determine whether this initiative, if extended to all Youthreach centres, would be sufficient to cater for the special needs of learners or whether, in addition, the supports available to post-primary schools should be extended to Youthreach to address the special needs of young people (from a learner centred perspective).**

- **The importance of childcare support for certain categories of learners is recognised and the childcare allowance should be revised upwards from the current €63.50 per week.**

- **Learner profile descriptors, which include details of any special educational needs or disabilities associated with the learners, need to be established in order to enable co-ordinators to provide more accurate and comparable responses for their returns to the Department of Education and Science.**

- **Recruitment and referral: a protocol should be developed at national level to guide the recruitment of participants and to set out the responsibility of referring agents (for example, as regards disclosure of behaviours, conditions and dispositions that might jeopardise a young person’s participation and the provision by those referring agents of longitudinal supports to the learner and to programme staff). This may require action at national level, in particular discussions with the NEWB, the HSE, the Garda Síochána and the Probation Service in the context of the Education Welfare Act and the now fully commenced Children Act. For a significant number of learners the Youthreach programme should be just one strand of a multi-pronged care programme in which each agent’s role should be clear.**
• **Induction:** the webwheel model should be adopted as a guiding process for induction and goal-setting for Youthreach learners.

• **Early leavers:** those who leave before completing Foundation Level should be tracked, firstly to record with greater clarity why they left and what they are doing and secondly to ascertain if provisions could be put in place to encourage them to return and complete the programme. Following the outcomes of such tracking centres may need to look at how the programme on offer might be changed so as to encourage early learners to commit. This tracking process should also reveal whether Youthreach is the most appropriate place for these learners in the first instance which will, in turn, inform discussions with referring agencies. Further, guidelines should also be developed regarding the actions that centres should initiate should learners drop out of their programme early. This will require inter-agency collaboration.

• **Leavers after Foundation:** learners who leave after completing the foundation phase of the programme only should be tracked also by their centres to determine their progression after leaving. Particular emphasis should be placed on those learners who are not engaged in employment, education or training. Such learners should be provided with relevant guidance and/or counselling to determine what can be done to enable them to return to the centres, or to an alternative programme.

• **Follow-up:** a programme leavers’ survey should be carried out by centres 18 months after learners leave, similar to the School Leavers Survey carried out by the ESRI. Also, it is recommended that centres should be available to learners for six months to one year after they leave a Youthreach programme to offer them advice and guidance so as to support them in this transition phase. Participation in a Back to Education Initiative part time programme could, perhaps, be used to fund such support.

• **FÁS-funded Advocate Service:** the potential value of the FAS-funded Advocacy Service for Youthreach in supporting successful transitions for participants into employment, further education or training is acknowledged. This initiative has been recently evaluated (Martin & Associates, 2006). While the evaluation acknowledges the effectiveness of the measure, sufficient advocates are not available to cater for programme demands. The DES should initiate discussion with FÁS regarding the implementation of the recommendations regarding tracking and supports for learners leaving the Youthreach programme,
whether early, after Foundation phase or on completion of the progression phase.

- The use of the QFI learner questionnaires and the web profiling of learners, along with the introduction of evaluation by the Inspectorate, should continue to be used as tools by which to assess the extent of the attainment of soft skills by learners. Their effectiveness should be continually reviewed and evaluated.

- The learners should be tracked in a manner similar to the ESRI School Leavers Survey Reports.

- Learners who complete the Progression Phase be included in the statistics database which specifies those who complete senior cycle post-primary education or its equivalent.

- Certification outcomes should show a greater spread of achievement.

- More learners should, where their ability allows, be encouraged to strive for certification in the Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate Schools Programme and/or FETAC level 3 during the foundation phase and seek certification at FETAC level 4/5 and Leaving Certificate Applied by the end of Progression phase.

- More detailed data should be collected from centres on an annual basis regarding learners’ certification outcomes, particularly in the case of FETAC certification.

- Formal links should be established between STTCs and their local offices of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

- The allocation of places across the network of STTCs should be regularly assessed against demographic trends to ensure optimum balance between supply and demand for provision. Places found not to be consistently filled should be reallocated.

- The lower age limit for entry to STTCs should be 18 years. The change in the lower age profile (15 – 18 years) should be effected over a three year period. This will free up places for adult Travellers aged 18 and over. STTCs should concentrate on providing adult Travellers with a second chance education.

- The STTCs should have a finite life span of 10-15 years at which point they should have merged into mainstream Further and Adult Education.

- Travellers under 18 years should be enrolled in mainstream inclusive settings with their peers. This transition of centres from their current make-up to centres that cater for adults only should be effected over a 3 year period.
• A formal programme of continuous professional development should be developed for STTC staff to ensure that they remain up-skilled to work within an intercultural framework with an adult focus (as most staff are post-primary teachers without formal intercultural training).
• Childcare supports for Further Education programmes should be reviewed in the context of broader national consideration of childcare provision and enhanced, as appropriate, to ensure that young female Travellers do not have to stay at home to mind their siblings.
• Specific strategies should be developed to attract adult male Travellers to participate in an STTC programme.
• STTCs should be presented to learners as a finite programme of two or at most three years duration.
• Greater emphasis should be placed on guidance, on transfer and progression and on throughput in STTCs.
• Learners who leave STTCs early should be tracked to determine their progression after leaving.
• An STTC programme leavers’ survey should be carried out annually.
• Advice, guidance and longitudinal support should be available to learners for six months to one year after they leave an STTC so as to support them in their transition phase.
Chapter 8 - Performance indicators

8.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to identify potential future performance indicators for Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres. This is in line with the term of reference which states that the review shall “Provide potential future performance indicators that might better monitor the performance of the programmes for the learners, for the staff, for Department of Education and Science, for Department of Finance and for future reviews.”

Performance measurement and the use of performance indicators have increasingly been highlighted as a vital component of the strategic and operational management of public service organisations with the advent of initiatives such as the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI). As the Department of Finance states,

> the challenge at the heart of the SMI is to establish a clear link between our day-to-day work as Civil Servants and the impact of our work on society. Performance Indicators are the means by which those links can be made. They can tell us what we are contributing as individuals and groups, what benefits we are getting from the resources we use and if those benefits are actually contributing to Ireland’s social and economic progress. (Department of Finance 2002).

8.2 Potential Uses of Performance Indicators

Performance indicators can potentially fulfil a range of functions in relation to informing the policy process, promoting accountability of service providers, measuring progress towards goals and objectives, and comparing performance across levels of service.

Before going on to actually identifying potential performance indicators a number of points should be made. Firstly, it should be kept in mind that performance indicators are not ends in themselves. As the Audit Commission Report (2000, 7) states “all users of indicators should remember that indicators do not provide answers as to why differences exist but raise questions and suggest where problems may exist.” Viewing performance indicators in this way has a number of implications. Firstly, it highlights the fact that performance indicators can be viewed as necessary but not sufficient in that the insights they provide should be used in conjunction with other relevant information and also with managerial
inquiry and judgement. This in itself can lead to problems of what weight to give to each element, particularly if they present divergent pictures. Secondly, it should lead managers to the recognition that performance indicators should be treated as guidance and not results. Therefore interpretation is key, and performance indicators should be developed in such a way as to avoid any possible ambiguity as regards interpretation.

It should also be remembered that the above uses of performance indicators are potential uses – in order for performance indicators to fulfil these roles they must be correctly designed and implemented. The complexity of properly designing and implementing a full set of performance indicators should not be underestimated, and there is no ‘magic formula’ in this regard. The exercise of completing this review has afforded the Working Group the opportunity to engage in some of the thinking and analysis needed to produce performance indicators. This has allowed the group to suggest below the “potential future performance indicators” which might be used to better monitor the performance of the two programmes in question. However, in order for a full system of performance indicators to be introduced, the Working Group recommends that:

- A dedicated Performance Indicator working group representative of the key stakeholders be established in order to:
  - fully explore the complexities involved in developing the indicators proposed below,
  - ensure that the data needs of all potential users are addressed
  - and ensure that the piloting, monitoring and ongoing refinement necessary for a set of performance indicators to be fully effective are undertaken.

8.3 Data for Performance Indicators

Performance indicators have not been chosen on the basis of whether the data necessary for them are currently available or not. In many cases, the necessary data are available from sources such as the annual census of Youthreach and STTCs, the financial records within the Department, information reported by VECs and the National Coordinators etc. However, in other cases the necessary data may not be currently available or may not be available on an ongoing basis. For example, some of the data provided by the inspectorate evaluations are not available on an annual basis and so annual monitoring of certain areas is not currently feasible.
In the context of the selection of performance indicators, it is appropriate to consider data requirements and the current data available in the Department.

- It is recommended that the Performance Indicator working group recommended above review the suitability of the data provided in the annual returns made by centres. Such a review should seek to ensure that these data are closely tailored to the needs of the Department and the centres themselves in monitoring ongoing performance.

The identification and collection of data for performance indicators also highlights the need for a management information system that all centres can use. This is particularly necessary if individual learners are to be tracked over time and trends are to be identified.

- It is recommended that the development of such a management information system be also addressed by the Performance Indicator Working Group.

### 8.4 Choosing a Framework for Performance Indicators

A number of authors highlight the importance of employing a balanced framework in developing performance indicators. Boyle (1996, 25) states that the value of employing such a framework lies in the fact that “explicit attention is focused on the different dimensions of performance, ensuring that performance indicators are developed not only for inputs and processes/activities, but also for outputs and outcomes.” The importance of capturing performance data in relation to inputs, outputs and outcomes lies in the fact that “public sector programmes are instruments for achieving social goals; they are a means to an end. A complete performance measurement system tracks both the ‘instruments’ themselves and provides evidence of their impact (or lack of it!) on society.” (Schacter 1999, 1).

Given that the central questions of this review revolve around the issues of efficiency and effectiveness, it is reasonable to use these two concepts as the framework for identifying potential future performance indicators. In so doing, the identification of the main inputs, outputs and outcomes which was undertaken through the use of the programme logic model for the two programmes serves now to identify the main areas for measurement. In attempting to measure not only the inputs, but also the outputs and the outcomes in this way this review is in line with the concepts
underlying recent modernisation initiatives aimed at moving public sector management away from the traditional focus on inputs to concentrate more on the achievement of results.

8.5 Efficiency Indicators for both programmes

At a high level, the main efficiency performance indicator suggested by this review is:

- the annual total cost per learner on each of the two programmes.

The data for this indicator are discussed in section 5.13 of chapter 5. The annual compilation of this statistic will enable the trend of the total cost per learner to be analysed within and between each programme. In this way, potential changes in efficiency over time can be identified. Also, this performance indicator permits comparison of the cost per learner in Youthreach with that in Senior Travelling Training Centres and other forms of provision as outlined in section 5.13. This permits an analysis of relative efficiency over time.

It is also possible to identify a number of efficiency indicators linking the inputs to outputs on a more detailed level in certain key areas as follows:

- Cost of core tuition per learner enrolled
- Cost of core non-pay per learner
- Unit cost of childcare per child

Further performance information in relation to the main inputs of the programmes can also be monitored at a detailed level. Chapter 5 outlines 8 headings under which efficiency is examined. These are:

- Core tuition.
- Learner supports
- Allowances and grants
- Core non-pay
- Accommodation
- National coordination and support
- Programme support and development
- Centre / VEC administration.

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All the main financial inputs under each heading are identified in chapter 5, and the ongoing monitoring of these inputs on an annual basis enables examination of the ongoing cost of the programmes. Any trends or noticeable anomalies can then be identified and investigated accordingly.

Another approach to examining efficiency is to look at the key activities undertaken by centres. Potential performance indicators here include the following:

- The percentage of centres partaking in the QFI process which involves:
  - engaging in strategic planning
  - engaging in internal evaluation and
  - regularly planning and reviewing programmes

In all cases, the data necessary to construct these indicators for Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres are currently available.

8.6 Effectiveness Indicators

Given that effectiveness relates to the achievement of objectives, the objective of each programme should be kept in mind when identifying potential future performance indicators for the two programmes.

8.6.1 Effectiveness Indicators for Youthreach

The renewed objective for Youthreach is as follows:

_The Youthreach programme seeks to provide early school leavers (16-20 years) with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society and progress to further education, training and employment._

Following on from the structure of the discussion of effectiveness in chapter 7, performance indicators can be identified for each element of the objective.

The Working Group suggests that the first effectiveness indicators should aim to measure whether the correct cohort of learners is being catered for as set out in the objective. Thus effectiveness indicators could be constructed around the age profile and educational attainment upon entry of learners enrolled in Youthreach. Performance indicators in this regard could include:
• Percentage of Youthreach participants in the 16-20 year old age group.
• Percentage of entrants to Youthreach presenting with the following educational attainment levels
  o Less than basic literacy
  o Basic literacy
  o Less than Junior Certificate
  o Junior Certificate or above

The second set of indicators to assess effectiveness could focus on the extent to which Youthreach imparts knowledge, skills and confidence on participants. A quantitative performance indicator here could revolve around the number of participants who received given levels of certification, as follows:

• Percentage of Youthreach learners receiving certification at the following levels
  o FETAC minor awards Level 1-4
  o FETAC major awards level 3-4
  o FETAC module certification
  o Junior Cert (less than 5 subjects)
  o Junior Cert (more than 5 subjects)
  o Leaving Cert Applied
  o Leaving Certificate
  o Other
  o ECDL

It should also be noted that effectiveness in this area entails the measurement of softer skills as referred to in section 7.4.2. Such soft skills include self-esteem, self-confidence, creativity, and personal awareness. These concepts are not as amenable to quantification as certification. However, this does not mean that they should not be measured as they form an integral part of the benefits to be derived by learners from the programme. Examples of qualitative evidence as to progress in this area exist, such as the Annals of Achievement, data from web profiling, the learner feedback which emerges from the QFI, feedback from parents, and the observations of Inspectors. While noting the complex nature of measuring progress in such qualitative areas, performance indicators in this area might be formed as follows.
• Percentage of learners reporting/displaying enhanced levels of
  o Self-esteem
  o Self-confidence
  o Personal awareness
  o Inter personal skills
  o Involvement in the community / society

It is beyond the scope of this review to examine how such complex indicators might be operationalised, but the importance of including such qualitative considerations in any examination of the effectiveness of Youthreach cannot be overlooked. Work in collecting this type of data is already underway as part of the annual Internal Centre Evaluation Process, where learners are asked to agree or disagree with a number of statements relating to soft skills development.

The question of assessment of learners’ needs and the development of individual learner plans is linked to the measurement of attainment. Thus, performance indicators could be introduced here to measure this aspect of effectiveness as follows:

• Percentage of learners who have undergone initial profiling
• Percentage of learners for whom an individual learning (or action) plan has been developed

A final effectiveness indicator could focus on the progression element of the objective set out above. The first distinction to be made here is between those who leave early and those who complete the programme. Thus a performance indicator should be constructed to measure retention as follows:

• Percentage of learners who leave Youthreach
  o During induction
  o Upon completion of the foundation phase
  o Upon completion of the progression phase

Performance indicators should then focus on the destination of those who leave Youthreach early and upon completion of the programme as follows:

• Percentage of learners who leave Youthreach early to enter
  o Employment
• Percentage of learners who leave Youthreach upon completion of the progression phase to enter
  o Employment
  o Education
  o FAS / skills training / traineeship
  o Apprenticeship
  o Other training
  o Unemployment

Similar performance indicators could also be developed to measure the progression of learners to further education, training, employment of other life choices upon completion of the transition phase of the programme.

While data exist in relation to the first destination of learners upon leaving, further information could usefully be collected to construct a performance indicator in relation to the progression of learners 18 months after leaving.

• It is recommended that a tracking system to determine the destination of learners up to 18 months after leaving Youthreach be developed.

8.6.2 Effectiveness Indicators for STTCs

The renewed objective for STTCs to keep to the forefront in discussion of effectiveness indicators is as follows:

The Senior Traveller Training programme is a positive action by the Department of Education and Science which seeks to provide an opportunity for members of the Traveller community (18 years and over) and other learners to:

• Engage in a programme of learning that acknowledges and respects their cultural identity
• Acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence to:
- Participate fully in society (Traveller community and settled community)
- Enhance their employability
- Progress to further education, training, employment or other life choices

As with Youthreach, the first set of effectiveness indicators here should deal with the cohort of learners being catered for in STTCs. Again, this relates specifically back to the objectives of the programme identifying a target group. Thus, performance indicators here should focus on the age and gender profile of the learners and the educational attainment upon entry of learners enrolled in STTCs as follows:

- Percentage of learners in STTCs aged 18 or over
- Percentage of male and female learners in STTCs
- Percentage of entrants to STTCs presenting with the following educational attainment levels
  - Less than basic literacy
  - Basic literacy
  - Less than Junior Certificate
  - Junior Certificate or above

The gender profile of entrants to STTCs should be tracked given the particular under-representation of males in centres.

The second area for effectiveness indicators centres on the acquiring of knowledge, skills and confidence. Again, a quantitative indicator in this regard would centre on the level of certification achieved by learners, as follows:

- Percentage of STTC learners receiving certification at the following levels
  - FETAC minor awards Level 1-4
  - FETAC major awards level 3-4
  - FETAC module certification
  - Junior Cert (less than 5 subjects)
  - Junior Cert (more than 5 subjects)
  - Leaving Cert Applied
  - Leaving Certificate
  - Other
  - ECDL
However, as with Youthreach, sole reliance on this indicator would not adequately measure the range of skills and knowledge which learners acquire in STTCs. STTCs seek to impart a range of soft skills on learners, including increased self-esteem, self-confidence, creativity and self-awareness. They also explicitly seek to acknowledge and respect Travellers’ cultural identity. As noted above, such concepts are not as easily measured or translated into simple quantifiable performance indicators. However, given that they are central to the objectives of the STTCs, they represent an area which must be taken into account in any assessment of the effectiveness of the centres. Some examples of qualitative evidence exist, such as data from web profiling.

While noting the complex nature of measuring progress in such qualitative areas, performance indicators in this area might be formed as follows:

- **Percentage of learners reporting/displaying enhanced levels of**
  - Self-esteem
  - Self-confidence
  - Personal awareness
  - Inter personal skills
  - Cultural awareness

As noted above, it is beyond the scope of this review to examine how such complex indicators might be operationalised, but the importance of including such qualitative considerations in any examination of the effectiveness of STTCs can not be overlooked. Work in collecting this type of data is already underway as part of the annual Internal Centre Evaluation Process, where learners are asked to agree or disagree with a number of statements relating to soft skills development. The question of assessment of learners’ needs and the development of individual learner plans is linked to the measurement of attainment. Thus, performance indicators could be introduced here to measure this aspect of effectiveness as follows:

- **Percentage of learners who have undergone initial assessments**
- **Percentage of learners for whom an individual learner plan has been developed**

The final area for effectiveness indicators would be progression of learners. Again, the distinction should be made here between those who leave early and those who complete the programme. Thus a performance indicator should be constructed to measure retention as follows:
• Percentage of learners who leave STTCs
  o During the induction phase
  o Upon completion of the foundation phase
  o Upon completion of the progression phase

Further indicators should then focus on the destination of those learners who leave STTCs early and upon completion of either the foundation or progression phases as follows:

• Percentage of learners who leave STTCs early to enter
  o Employment
  o Education
  o Training
  o Unemployment
  o Other

• Percentage of learners who leave STTCs upon completion of the progression phase to enter
  o Employment
  o Education
  o FAS / skills training / traineeship
  o Apprenticeship
  o Other training
  o Traveller economy
  o CE schemes / Community response programmes
  o FAS link work experience programme
  o Unemployment
  o Work in the home
  o Other

Similar performance indicators could also be developed to measure the progression of learners to further education, training, employment of other life choices upon completion of the transition phase of the programme.

While data exist in relation to the first destination of learners upon leaving, further information could usefully be collected to construct a performance indicator in relation to the progression of learners 18 months after leaving.
• It is recommended that a tracking system to determine the destination of learners up to 18 months after leaving STTCs be developed.

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter has identified a number of potential future performance indicators (bulleted and in bold in the above text) which may be used to monitor the performance of the two programmes. In keeping with the central concerns of this review, these indicators have been structured around the key concepts of efficiency and effectiveness.

In relation to efficiency, one potential overall efficiency indicator has been identified with the potential for more detailed analysis of costs and efficiency also highlighted under a number of headings. In relation to effectiveness, the potential performance indicators proposed seek to track explicitly back to the objective of each programme and measure each element of those objectives. While in most cases the data to construct these performance indicators currently exist, there are certain areas where further data collection are needed. Such areas include the measurement of the soft skills development which is central to both programmes and also the development of tracking systems to follow up on learners 18 months after they have left the programmes.

The following recommendations are made:

• A dedicated Performance Indicator working group representative of the key stakeholders should be established in order to:
  o fully explore the complexities involved in developing the indicators proposed,
  o ensure that the data needs of all potential users are addressed
  o and ensure that the piloting, monitoring and ongoing refinement necessary for a set of performance indicators to be fully effective are undertaken.

• The Performance Indicator working group should review the suitability of the data provided in the annual returns made by centres. Such a review should seek to ensure that the data are closely tailored to the needs
of the Department and the centres themselves in monitoring ongoing performance.

- The need for a management information system for the programmes should be addressed in the context of the Department’s feasibility study on the development of a Learner Database.

- The development of a tracking system to determine the destination of learners up to 18 months after leaving Youthreach and STTCs.
Chapter 9 - Key findings, recommendations and next steps

9.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to draw together the key findings and recommendations which emerge from the analysis in the preceding chapters. In so doing, the key findings and recommendations are traced back to the central evaluation questions which flow from the terms of reference for the report. A next steps approach is suggested.

The key findings are presented. The recommendations presented in this chapter represent the key recommendations for development of both programmes which the Working Group feels should be prioritised for action. In addition, detailed recommendations arising from the analysis are also presented at the end of each chapter. Recommendations, under generic headings, have also been included in the Executive Summary.

9.2 The Objectives of Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres

Chapter 3 of this review examines the previous objectives for Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres, and highlights how developments within both programmes and changes to the environment in which the programmes operate have led to the need to restate the objectives. These restated objectives reflect more accurately the actual breadth of work currently being undertaken in both programmes, and with this in mind it was these new objectives against which the effectiveness of both programmes was measured. The Working Group also concluded that these objectives can be seen to be in line with the policy context in which they operate, as set out in chapter 2. The importance of education should be promoted as a key component for all and in particular within Traveller culture.

Following on from these conclusions, the following key recommendations are made:

- **Separate and renewed objectives for the two programmes should be established as follows and should be adopted by each centre:**

  The Youthreach programme seeks to provide early school leavers (16-20 years) with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to fully participate in society and progress to further education, training and employment.
The Senior Traveller Training programme is a positive action by the Department of Education and Science which seeks to provide an opportunity for members of the Traveller community and other learners (18 years and over) to:

- Engage in a programme of learning that acknowledges and respects their cultural identity
- Acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence to:
  - participate fully in society (Traveller community and settled community) and
  - enhance their employability.
- Progress to further education, training, employment or other life choices.

- The two programmes should be organised to operate in the following four distinct phases – engagement, foundation, progression and transition, as outlined in section 3.5.

9.3 The Efficiency of the Programmes

Chapter 5 examines the issue of the efficiency of the two programmes. The main inputs and outputs for the two programmes are broken down under specific headings and trends are analysed. In addition, attempts are made to measure the relative efficiency of the two programmes through the use of relevant comparators where possible. Such comparisons are by no means perfect, but they do offer an indicative insight into relative efficiency.

At a high level, the analysis shows a total cost per learner for each programme. When this is compared to other sectors the cost per learner for Youthreach and STTCs is seen to be greater than that in mainstream post-primary schools and less than that in YEP schools. Given the cohorts involved and the level of support provided, this is to be expected, when you consider the level of supports required to ensure that the learner is provided with a quality educational service that meets their educational, social and cultural needs. More detailed analysis of efficiency is then undertaken using 8 separate headings. In general, this analysis of the trends in the main inputs and outputs and of relevant comparisons provides evidence which reflects favourably
on the efficiency of the programmes, although some areas for concern are highlighted.

In light of the analysis in chapter 5, the following key recommendations are made:

- The disparity in teaching hours and summer provision needs to be reviewed.
- The budget available for the provision of guidance, counselling and psychological services should be reviewed.
- Meal, travel and childcare allowances should be increased.
- Capital funding for centres should be reviewed.
- The basis for the provision of VEC/Centre administration funding should be standardised.

9.4 Educational Provision of the Programmes

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science undertook an evaluation of 6 centres to examine the quality of management, planning and education provision.

In the case of all the centres evaluated, centres appear to have been set up in response to perceived needs – i.e. the presence of a significant number of educationally disadvantaged early school leavers and Travellers experiencing social and economic exclusion. Centres were also found to have well-qualified staff from a variety of backgrounds. In addressing the needs of the learners, staff members in the centres visited were found to devote significant amounts of time to ensuring that learners received individualised support and attention. In addition, a range of programmes was found to be in existence across centres which focussed on the development of a number of learner’s skills in areas such as personal and social development, literacy, numeracy and IT and other relevant practical skills. The actual programmes offered to learners across the 6 centres varied, and this is due to centres developing programmes to meet the identified needs of their own cohort of learners. In some cases, however, it was found that programmes were not adequately meeting the needs of the target group as they did not sufficiently challenge the learners.

In developing their programmes, centres have established good relationships with relevant local service providers and agencies. However, there is limited linkage with national services and agencies such as NEPS, NCSE, NEWB etc. This lack of linkage to national agencies was seen as a serious gap in the service offered to learners.
One particular issue which arose in the course of the evaluations is that of accommodation. Youthreach centres and STTCs are housed in a range of building types. While some of these buildings were workable, others were found to be unsuitable for the effective delivery of the programme and in a number of cases there were serious health and safety implications.

Overall, the Inspectorate evaluations found evidence across all 6 centres of successful delivery of appropriate educational programmes to learners. However, a number of key recommendations for development did arise from the evaluations, as follows:

- **Literacy and numeracy should permeate all aspects of the programmes.**
- **Youthreach learners should be able to avail of the supports or similar supports as provided by NEPS, NEWB, NCSE, NCTE etc as is the case with learners in mainstream schools.**
- **Accommodation issues pertaining to centres for education need to be addressed strategically at both a system and local level.**

These findings have been reinforced in subsequent evaluations completed.

**9.5 Effectiveness of the Programmes**

Given that the programmes have separate objectives, chapter 7 approaches the effectiveness of each programme in turn. Youthreach is shown to be particularly effective in attracting the target cohort of learners into the programme. Evidence is also presented to highlight the success of Youthreach in developing learners’ soft skills in areas such as self-confidence, personal awareness, and inter-personal skills. Youthreach is seen to be less effective in terms of learner certification and progression. However, in assessing the effectiveness of the programme in this area a number of limiting factors should frame any judgements made. Such factors include the high level of learner needs and the diverse learner cohort. Finally, the data in relation to the number of learners leaving Youthreach early are highlighted as a concern.

Having considered the effectiveness of Youthreach, the following key recommendations are made:

- **More learners should be encouraged to strive for major awards at FETAC levels 3 and 4 or full Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate**
• Those who leave Youthreach early should be tracked to record why they left and what they are doing after leaving, and to ascertain if provisions could be put in place to encourage them to return to the centre to complete the programme or to an alternative programme.

A similar approach is taken to examining the effectiveness of STTCs. The STTCs are found to be very effective in recruiting adult learners in the target group to the programme, although the number of men on the programme remains a concern. Similarly, the programme is seen to be effective in relation to less quantifiable areas such as the development of soft skills and the acknowledgement and respect of Traveller culture. As with Youthreach, STTCs are seen to be less effective in terms of learner certification and progression, although in assessing the effectiveness of the programme in this area similar limiting factors to those outlined for Youthreach should frame any judgements made.

Having assessed the effectiveness of STTCs, the following key recommendation is made:

• More learners should be encouraged to strive for major awards at FETAC levels 3 and 4 and full Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate

• Learners who leave STTCs early should be tracked to determine their progression after leaving.

• Learners should be motivated to progress from the programme into further education or training.

9.6 Ongoing Allocation of Public Funding

Given the examination of the evidence in the preceding chapters and the analysis of material under the terms of reference for this review, the central question of any Value for Money Review is whether the Youthreach and STTC programmes, with their new objectives warrant the ongoing allocation of public funding.

The Working Group concludes that:

• The target groups for the programmes are early school leavers aged 16 – 20
years in Youthreach and Travellers aged 18 and over in STTCs.

- Both groups are educationally and socially disadvantaged and require second chance education.
- Learners spend a finite time (two years and in exceptional circumstances three years) in the programmes.
- A very strong rationale for the current existence of these programmes is set out in Chapter 2, namely the continued existence of particular disadvantaged groups and the international support for the provision of an out-of-school model for addressing the needs of these groups.
- The STTCs should have a finite life span of 10-15 years at which point they should have merged into mainstream Further and Adult Education.
- Based on the findings of Chapters 5, 6 and 7 the programmes are delivered in an efficient and effective manner. Certain areas of concern and gaps in provision are highlighted and recommendations for action to improve efficiency and effectiveness are offered.
- Potential performance indicators have been proposed.

Given these considerations, the Working Group is in agreement that there exists a strong argument for the continued allocation of public funding to:

- Youthreach for early school leavers aged 16 – 20 and
- For the next 10 – 15 years Senior Traveller Training Centres for adult Travellers aged 18 and over

In this context, and mindful of the consultation process, it is important that the DES publicise and affirm the programmes within the Department itself and its associate national agencies and also within the VECs and service networks. The importance of inter-agency networking to cater for learners in Youthreach and STTCs cannot be overemphasised. Both programmes should have parity of esteem with other mainstream programmes in post primary and further education.

9.7 Next Steps

Following approval of the recommendations in this report by the Secretary General, the Further Education Section should take the lead role in preparing an implementation plan that will realise the recommendations presented. The implementation plan would also examine the cost of implementing the different recommendations and the implications of these for the CTCs.
Appendix 1. Membership of the Working Group of this Review

The members of the Working Group were:

Breda Naughton (Chair) Further Education Section, DES
David Delaney (Secretary)* Further Education Section, DES
Marian Carr** Further Education Section, DES
Martin McLoughlin*** Further Education Section, DES
Dermot Stokes National Co-ordinator for Youthreach
Gerard Griffin National Co-ordinator for STTCs
Padraig Kirk Inspectorate, DES
Fintan O’Brien Central Policy Unit, DES
Brendan O’Leary Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

The Working Group would also like to recognise the important contributions to this review made by;
- Mary Gordon, Senior Psychologist, Further Education Section, DES
- Shivaun O’Brien, Co-ordinator for the Quality Framework Initiative
- The programme stakeholders who attended the consultation days, in particular the learner and those who contributed submissions to the Working Group.
- Mary Ryan, DES who assisted with formatting the final report.

* Until March 2007
** Replaced Peter Kelly, Further Education Section, DES in March 2006
*** Replaced Michael Lyons, Further Education Section, DES in July 2006
Appendix 2. Summary report of the Consultation process\textsuperscript{19}

1. Introduction

The Value for Money Review Working Group identified the following personnel as those to be consulted in the review of Youthreach and STTCs:

- Representatives of strategic organisations (e.g. IVEA, AEOA, TUI, NEWB, NAYC, FÁS, ADSTTC, NATC)
- Representatives of agencies or professional groups whose work might be considered to relate to the programmes in some way (e.g. VTST, NCSE, NEPS, SCP, SIU of DES, JLO, NTWF, Pavee Point, ITM, NEOTE)
- Representatives of operational personnel from a sample of centres
- Representatives of learners from a sample of centres
- Representatives of parents of learners from a sample of Youthreach centres.

A programme logic model was used as the basis for the issues that would be addressed in the consultation and consultation questions were developed to reflect the Terms of Reference of the VFM Review. Invitees were asked to consult widely within their own organisations with a view to generating as representative a perspective as possible. It was decided that the perspective of the learners was essential and that a sample of learners should be consulted at the same time as the operational personnel. Parents were also consulted by facilitators making arrangements with centres to interview a small number. Questions asked of the learners and parents were derived from those developed by the Inspectorate for use in whole centre evaluations and were designed to ascertain the reasons why the learners had left school early, their experiences of various aspects of the programme, their expectations of what they would achieve in the centre, their ideas about what they might do when they leave and their evaluation of the operation of their centre. The parents’ questions related to their degree of satisfaction with the education being provided to their child and their evaluation of the level of liaison between home and centre.

Staff and learners attending the three sessions that were held in Limerick, West Dublin and Carrick-on-Shannon Education Centres were together for an initial presentation about the Value For Money review process and again at the end for a

\textsuperscript{19} A full report of the consultation process is available on the programme websites www.youthreach.ie and www.sttc.ie
plenary session but were separated into a) staff in Youthreach and STTCs, b) learners in STTCs and c) learners in Youthreach for the consultations proper.

2. Consultation sessions

The meetings with the representatives of strategic organisations and with representatives of agencies or professional groups took place in the Department of Education and Science on 8 and 11 May, 2006 respectively. The Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers was consulted separately at a meeting on 23 May. Consultation with operational staff and learners took place at three separate sessions in Limerick, Tallaght and Carrick-on-Shannon on 9, 16 and 18 May. Parents were consulted in centres in Dublin, Kildare and Donegal during the months of June and July.

Attendance at the meeting with representatives of strategic organisations was strong with every organisation invited being represented by at least one representative and more often by two. The level of engagement with the review was very high at this session. The consultation with representatives of agencies or professional groups was less well attended, with a number of invitees sending apologies. As a result, the views of service providers and programmes such as NEPS, the School Completion Programme and the Probation and Welfare Service were not ascertained. The business of the majority of the agencies and personnel that did attend was with Traveller rights and development and so the conversation tended to focus primarily on Traveller issues. Approximately one third of centres, from a wide range of geographical and demographic contexts, were represented in the three sessions conducted with operational personnel and learners.

The three sessions with operational staff were well attended. An issue articulated at all three sessions concerned the reason for the review, with the fear being expressed that it was part of a process aimed at closing the centres. This point was answered clearly and people informed that the purpose of the review was to support and encourage the service, not to close it down. It was apparent from the outset that demographics, size of centres and ethos within each centre meant that some issues were seen as more important than others to the individuals concerned.

There were differences in the degree of engagement with the process by learners in the three venues. In one, they were so involved in the process that they contributed to the plenary session as well as in their separate sessions, while in another the facilitators were largely unsuccessful in persuading the Youthreach learners to treat the consultation as an opportunity to express their views about the programme.
3. Outcomes of the consultation

3.1 Objective and programme structure

While some differences were expressed as regards the aims in the conclusions drawn about whether or not the 2001 objective for the programmes was still relevant there was broad agreement concerning the need to establish separate and distinct objectives for Youthreach and STTCs. Those consulted felt that the current objective was no longer appropriate. It needed to be broadened to take account of the diverse range of specific needs of the learners, did not accurately represent the diverse work being carried out in centres and, in some respects, actually under-represented the nature of the work currently being undertaken. The difference in age profiles between and within the two programmes was cited as a major reason for developing separate objectives for the programmes. While Youthreach catered for learners aged between 15 and 20 years, for example, there is no upper age limit to those who could enrol at an STTC. The age range in STTCs is very diverse and they cater for two very different groups; (i) the majority - older people who left school early or maybe never went to school (for whom the centre might represent a first chance to education) and (ii) the minority - young early school leavers. The reference to adult life in the objective for STTCs was heavily criticised, given the proportion of adults participating in the programme.

Those consulted were of the view that the principal objective of Youthreach should be on providing an individualised, flexible and balanced programme which facilitates the young person to move confidently towards positive participation in society. Learners, it was stated, were no longer preparing just for the work force in the centres, but also for further study, apprenticeships and worthwhile employment. The personal and social development of participants, it was suggested, also needed to be recognised as an explicit objective. A standardised objective, it was claimed, was now needed for all Youthreach centres, and one which incorporated personal, social and health development, positive learning experiences, experiential learning, positive relationships, teamwork and individual learning plans.

With regard to STTCs those consulted expressed the view that the current objective did not reflect the historical context of Traveller education and the role that STTCs played in acknowledging and respecting Traveller culture. The current objective, it was suggested, did not reflect the legislative and structural bias with regard to housing, employment and general discrimination towards the Travelling community. It was further suggested that it did not reflect the fact that for many learners it was
their first time in an education setting where they experienced a positive interaction. It was mentioned repeatedly that the objectives laid out in the two phased approach were not being met mainly due to time constraints. The idea that adult Travellers needed “skills and attitudes to successfully make the transition to work and adult life”, as portrayed in the current objective for the programmes, was described by some as derogatory. It was also suggested during the consultation process that a reference to “life in the home” should be included in the objective in the case of STTCs, while the reference to ‘work’ should be to “external work” as STTCs were often seen as a place of work by the learners themselves.

The question of the desirability of including a reference to “access to mainstream education” or “employment” in any revised objective was discussed during the consultation process. Differences emerged between those who thought any renewed objective(s) should include outcomes such as engagement in employment or mainstream education, as these were desirable goals, and those who thought they should not refer to outcomes that might not be realistic in the short term or desired by the learners themselves. It was suggested that “employability” rather than “employment” might be a more appropriate term since factors such as discrimination by employers and a tradition of self-employment meant that employment in the mainstream economy may not be achieved as an outcome for many of the Traveller learners.

Those consulted felt that the different needs of Travellers must be addressed within any renewed objective(s) for the STTC programme and employment as an objective needed to be of lesser importance to the personal, social and educational development of participants. Given that 80% of enrolment in STTCs is adult, the view was expressed by a number of participants that social inclusion, community development, personal empowerment and personal advancement should all be included in any renewed objective(s).

Age of learners/target groups

There was considerable discussion regarding the age ranges of the programmes and the consequent implications. This was especially so of the STTC programme. As one respondent put it “The age of the participants in STTCs can range from 15 to 50+ years, which can impact on the ability and freedom of all participants to actively participate and achieve their potential”. This poses problems of organisation and provision but also for staff who can find it difficult to work with both younger and older groups. Traveller organisations consulted argued strongly that nobody under 18
should attend STTCs but should attend school or, as an alternative, Youthreach, which they regard as mainstream provision.

As regards Youthreach, it was pointed out at one session that the recruitment age of 15 years is in contrast to the Education (Welfare) Act which recommends school retention until 16 years and beyond. But it was also acknowledged that the centres represent the only viable option to school in most parts of the country and that there will be a continuing need to provide for those under 16. One submission argued for a managed transition from school from first or second year in second-level school.

**Phases**

Consultation participants questioned the continued relevance of the two-phase approach set out in the Framework of Objectives and noted that a different model is set out in Youthreach 2000 and on the Youthreach website. There was a general consensus that the structure needs to be re-balanced to reflect the needs of participants at different times, through engagement, foundation and progression phases. For learners at the progression stage in their programme there was some frustration about the behaviour of new entrants: Behaviour programmes or courses should be introduced before someone can join the centre – so they won’t mess up classes and cause trouble fighting. The need for transition support (out of the programme) was also mentioned as was the desirability of forging links with employers, especially by STTC programmes.

**3.2 Programme management and delivery mechanisms**

The key observations were as follows:

**Pay resource allocation (staffing levels)**

It was argued, particularly as regards Youthreach, that staffing levels are not based on any analysis of learner need and are inadequate to achieve the programme’s objectives. In addition, “salary increments and the creation of permanent posts have had the effect of eroding the number of teaching hours available”. Initiatives such as the Quality Framework and Special Education Needs training were complimented as being excellent new ideas but it was noted that the necessary planning meetings “erode the time available to students”. The need for management structures and administrative support was also argued as “The responsibilities of directors have
grown in scale and complexity and include budgetary duties, staff management, the need for individualised learning schemes, the addressing of behavioural and learning difficulties and various cultural factors”. Funding for administrative, cleaning and maintenance support staff was described as both insufficient and inconsistent between the two programmes. There was a call for the staff resource to be increased for Youthreach, possibly tied to specific purposes, such as the SEN initiative announced in December 2006.

**Time issues**

There was broad agreement that the time structure of the programmes needed to be addressed. Discussion revolved around the following:

*The number of days constituting a year* – 225 in Youthreach and 209 in STTCs: there is no particular reason for this difference. Some VECs cavil at releasing staff for training because it would affect their ability to deliver 226 operational days’ training. It was also argued that it is very difficult to maintain attendance in summer months when Youthreach participants’ coevals are on school holidays and families of STTC participants may be attending festivals, etc. While school was not a good experience for most learners, many wanted the same hours and holidays as school. As against that, it was also acknowledged that some learners need the support of the centres during summer months and there was some speculation as to how this might be delivered, for example using youth workers.

*The length of the week* – the programmes are currently expected to deliver 35 hour training week for participants. Participants argued that the emphasis should move from quantity of training to quality of training. It was noted that FAS trainees in apprenticeship and specific skills training do 32.5 hours per week. Under the productivity agreement of 2001 governing the FAS-funded Community Training Centres, trainees in pre-apprenticeship training, Foundation or progression training are present for 27 hours per week. As one participant noted “We are working with early school leavers who didn’t continue in mainstream or Travellers with limited experience in education and they are being expected to attend more and for longer than mainstream provision”. Also desired were longer breaks during the day, including at lunch time.

*Part-time options for learners* – there was broad agreement that learners in both programmes would benefit from being able to attend on a part-time basis. As regards Youthreach participants, this was thought particularly useful at two points, in the initial phase of engagement – many are unable to commit to a full-time programme at
the outset – and as they move towards leaving the programme. As regards Travellers, it was argued that a part-time option would allow Travellers to tailor participation to suit their way of life. It would also facilitate them as regards other income sources. In one submission from the Directors association, it was suggested that the programme’s specification be changed from a fixed number of places – which is rarely fulfilled, as “Absenteism and transition periods result in there being less than the full number of possible students attending on any day” – to an allocation of hours “with part-time options above 400 hours p.a. being available”. Alternatively a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis was suggested to a set maximum proportion of a centre’s allocation.

Work outside of the centre – it was also argued that programmes should operate both within and without the centre. As one respondent commented, “The School Completion Programme model has in- and outside-school elements – this could be looked at for comparison”.

Length of participation – a variety of views was expressed. On one hand, it was felt by staff that ‘two years is in many cases too short and greater flexibility should be allowed to properly respond to individual needs’. This view was endorsed by Youthreach parents. This might be regulated through a different programme structure, with greater flexibility for the engagement and foundation phases – based on need – but with clear time limits for progression/transition. One submission went further, arguing for an ‘option of up to 6 years, i.e. two programmes of up to 3 years each. There should be links with social inclusion measures e.g. URBAN, RAPID, etc’. As against that, reservations were expressed about the open-ended nature of some participants’ involvement. One meeting participant commented that “STTCs can be seen as almost a charity, with people there for 10 years”. This, it was noted, often arose from their inability to find employment in the settled economy – the programme is seen as a permanent job.

Differences between the programmes

Consultation participants pointed out that there are significant differences in resources within each of the programmes, between the two programmes and between centres and schools. For example, Youthreach Centres are allocated 4200 hours per group of 25 whereas STTCs are allocated 5,250 hours per group of 24. Respondents argued that there is no sustainable case in logic for this distinction (“there are Travellers in YR too”). The difference between the status of teaching staff in some STTC programmes and Youthreach was also noted as was its impact on pay and conditions.

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20 This is the cut off point for BTEI
It was also suggested that the allocation to Youthreach ‘is interpreted differently by different VECs’ and that “There are differences in how VECs treat administration budgets with some keeping the staff they pay for internal to VEC administration and others allocating these staff to centres”. As regards the STTC programme, staff “can be working under one of three different arrangements” and “There are differences in the recognition of staff and qualifications across the country. Some VECs recognize specific university qualifications whilst others do not”. The length of the working year was stated to be three different lengths for different staff, which “causes operational difficulties as well as employment inequalities”. The effects of the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Workers) Act were also noted:

There are differences in pay between the part time staff hourly rate and that of full time staff, with the part time rate being much higher and carrying less responsibility.

Staff roles, status and qualifications

The nature of the work involved in both programmes generated discussion of the type of staff needed. Three broad lines of argument emerged. The first may be summarised by the statement that “all teachers in STTCs should be properly qualified teachers”. While this view was not so expressly stated regarding Youthreach staff, there was significant support for the view that staff should be “treated and recognized as teachers equal (to) others in the system”. This view was strongly asserted by the TUI delegates to the initial consultation meeting. The second is summarised in a submission:

Teaching is a tiny part of what is involved in these programmes – developmental work, pastoral care, are as important. Therefore there is a question about the importance of teaching qualifications. The question needs to be asked who the client group in Youthreach is (and) what (therefore) are the skills staff need to have?

The third view links both of the above, that “staff in STTC and Youthreach should be seen not just as teachers but as a multi-disciplinary team able to respond to the varied needs of the particular learner group”. Those propounding this view argued that, in addition to teaching and instruction staff, such a team would include staff with skills in the areas of counselling, family support, management, tutoring, youth work, agency and community liaison, and administration. How pay arrangements would work in a multi-disciplinary team was not discussed.
Also, while there was no disagreement regarding the importance of staff permanency it was conceded by a number of respondents that this can lead to inflexibility. Once again, the impact of the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Workers) Act was noted:

The Part-Time Workers Act means that part-time staff is more costly and must receive equal treatment in terms of training, etc. This is not cost effective if a staff person is working a very small number of hours per week. It is difficult to develop a good team if a large number of part-time staff is involved.

Concern was expressed regarding staff qualifications and the consequences, for example, as regards registration with the Teaching Council. The importance of a comprehensive programme of staff training was also raised. Respondents argued variously for guidelines in relation to CPD funding, a national CPD programme to be devised centrally and delivered locally, training in how to deal with the differing learner needs, intercultural training and an induction training programme for all new staff on Traveller culture and identity. Some respondents suggested that the availability of a staff training budget is unclear since the funding for this has become the responsibility of individual VECs. Concerns were raised in relation to training for part time staff and the need to pay such staff to attend training.

**Learner allowances**

There was unanimity that learners under 16 years of age should not receive an allowance. There the agreement ended. As regards young people, a sharp divide was apparent between Traveller organisations and the Visiting Teacher service on one hand and those with interests in Youthreach on the other. As one respondent noted “The training allowances in further education can have the unintended consequence of creating an incentive for some young Travellers to leave mainstream education”. However, the allowance was seen to be a useful incentive to encourage disadvantaged young people from the settled community to return to education and training. Other issues arose regarding Traveller men. For example, in many instances “they lose money in the form of housing benefits or other benefits if they enter training”. It was suggested that social welfare rules regarding eligibility for allowances should be reviewed “with a view to encouraging more adults to attend and to considering the benefits of transferring the payment of allowances to Social Welfare”. There was universal agreement that the present meal allowance of €4 per week is entirely inadequate (or “derisory” as one respondent put it). Many centres are meeting basic needs such as food and warmth and the funding does not address this. While the travel

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21 Under the CPD budget
allowance was not raised as an issue, the difficulties faced by many learners in getting to and from their centres, especially in rural settings, were raised, particularly by learners themselves. This applies to all, including young people who use school transport. When schools close, this transport is not available even though centres are still open. This is seen as an issue of access and a major concern that needs to be addressed.

Learner supports

There was a general consensus that participants come to Youthreach and the STTCs with a variety of needs that impinge on their ability to maximise the value of the education and training opportunities presented by the programmes and that a range of supports must be provided, some from within the centres and others from without. The former include “learning support, counselling, advocacy, mentoring, skills development and family liaison” and it was argued that resources to provide these supports are currently very limited.

There was full consensus regarding the need to make provision for learners with special educational needs and emotional and behavioural disorders. High numbers of participants with SENs and EBDs were reported and respondents pointed out that young people who are able to avail of additional supports in school have these withdrawn when they join Youthreach. As one commented, “There should be a seamless transfer from school to centre but there isn’t”. It was also pointed out that these young people have legal entitlements to supports but receive no service from NEPS or the NCSE.

As regards guidance, counselling and psychological services there was consensus that such services are of the utmost importance both throughout the programme and as learners progress but that a very limited budget means that services are insufficient and, as a result, inconsistent. “In some cases guidance, counselling and psychological services are subsidised from the non-pay budget”. The importance of guidance, mentoring and advocacy as learners leave the programmes was also emphasised. It was acknowledged that particular problems exist for Travellers in progressing into the settled labour market. While the support of FAS advocates was agreed to be very valuable, they are only available in a limited number of areas. There is no psychological service back-up. The need to define and embed an appropriate model of guidance and counselling was also argued, for example by the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE).
As for literacy supports, many learners have very significant difficulties in literacy and numeracy and, given their centrality in both employment and active citizenship, it was acknowledged that development is needed in centre practice (for example, integrating literacy models). But equally, it was argued that this needed to be underpinned by adequate resourcing.

On the subject of childcare it was very strongly argued, especially by the learners, that childcare supports are fundamental to making both programmes accessible and that crèches are particularly important: “It makes it possible to attend, where children learn at the same time and come on so well”. But it was also asserted that the budget for childcare is inadequate to meet all needs.

External supports

The importance of inter-agency work with local services in support of learners and in order to integrate, as far as possible, actions intended for their benefit and, critically, to continue to provide much-needed additional supports was agreed. Respondents complained that

In the majority of instances the referral agent stops providing support. This is particularly the case when the referral agent is a health board which may have specialist services that the centres do not have.

The external supports needed include mental and physical health services, social services, domestic violence services, welfare services and counselling services. Programme staff experience great difficulty at times in accessing these services on behalf of participants. The lack of support from schools after referral is also of concern. The prescription of the programmes under Education (Welfare) Act is a priority.

Non-pay funding

There was universal agreement that the non-pay budget is inadequate, having remained “almost static from 1989 until 2005, at €48,000 per group of 25 participants”. In 2006 it was increased to €52,000, but this still represents a huge decrease in real terms from the original allocation – “What it buys lessens every year as programme costs such as transport, insurance, light and heat have increased dramatically”. Much equipment is obsolete and the budget is not sufficient to renew it. High insurance costs were also cited as draining resources and inhibiting many activities that would be of benefit to the learners. Respondents argued that the non-
pay resource to both programmes should be increased to reflect the increase in the CPI since their establishment and that the allocation to VECs for programme administration resource should be aligned.

**Accommodation**

Particular criticism was reserved for the absence of a capital account building programme for Further Education and the consequent delivery of the programmes in rented accommodation or old VEC buildings. One Youthreach respondent pointed out that in many cases the programme is being delivered in sub-standard accommodation using obsolete equipment adding that

There is an urgent need for a review of premises and equipment and funding to allow VECs to repair, maintain and equip centres to a standard which meets basic Health and Safety requirements.

Another asked “What message is being given to students who are seen as ‘failures’ if they have to attend substandard and grossly inadequate buildings?”

Learners in the consultation asked for bigger buildings and more space, for “a bigger budget for the centre”; “a kitchen in the centre”; “better upkeep of building and equipment and a new paint job”; “a full time crèche”; “disability access”; “a gym to be provided or upgraded”; “smoking areas”; “benches outside for sitting” and “a library in the centre”. It was also suggested that links be established with out-of-centre facilities (e.g. as operated by youth services). There should be, it was argued, a general commitment to maximising the use of facilities in general.

3.3 The appropriateness of the educational provision in the programmes

**What do learners want?**

Both sets of learners were clear about what they wanted and their focus was on certification and the development of job prospects, e.g. “More skills to get a job; Leaving Certificate or Leaving Certificate Applied; Junior Certificate; FETAC; progression to other courses/work”. Some comments included a focus on personal development issues: “I want to gain the confidence to go for the job I really want; I want to achieve all I set out to do; I need this time to get it right”. One person stated that “The experience of working things out, after leaving school early, will benefit my own children”. As regards employment, jobs identified were Plastering, Office worker, Hairdressing, Carpenter, Tiler, Mechanic, Plumber, Childcare, Labouring,
Metalworker, Computers, Coaching / Sports and Recreation, PE teacher, Gym instructor and Professional singer. The courses that learners intended to pursue included FÁS apprenticeship, Childcare, Classroom assistant and Care assistant. Five learners said they wanted to go to college and that they intended to “Study graphic design, Become a tutor and work in a centre, Get childcare qualifications, Become a PE instructor” and “Do legal studies”.

**What programmes are offered?**

The following were specifically mentioned as the types of programmes or courses offered to learners: FETAC courses at level 1, 2, 3, 4 and, a couple, at 5; Junior Cert, LCA; Safe Pass; non-certified courses in e.g. car restoration, tiling, personal care, literacy and numeracy, sexual health programmes, social health programmes, parenting skills, body care, alcohol and drug programmes, road safety, guidance, work experience. A key aspect of the programme in one Youthreach centre is the transnational exchange, where two-way and multilateral exchanges take place with groups from countries such as Norway, Slovakia and Portugal. (Note: This would be unusual). Sport and outdoor education are core elements in many centres.

**Nature of the programmes**

Learners, and the parents of Youthreach participants, were generally very positive about the programme provision. As regards the educational provision, there was a general view that for most learners the experience was a very positive one and the options on offer were, within the existing resource limitations, appropriate. That said, various respondents also argued that “There should be more subject choice”, “more counselling in centres”, “more one-to-one tuition”; “more exercise both in and out of centre”; “a car to repair”; “a car to do driving lessons in”; “more books / more reading time”; “more foreign trips”; “more visits to other centres (You can learn from what others are doing)”; “talks on our own culture”. Also mentioned was the need for individual assessment of learners and a plan of action, individual learning plan, to be put in place for each learner.

**Academic drift**

Reservations were generally expressed regarding a perceived ‘academic drift’ – “There is a need for an increase in the vocational aspects of the programme towards practical and project-based work. There is a need for a re-balancing of accredited and non-accredited aspects of the programme with more time devoted to confidence.
building and developing life-skills”. Respondents noted that the staffing structure may be implicated in this, with a high proportion of part-time teachers being deployed, many of whom are unfamiliar with the different approach required on both programmes. VEC staff recruitment policies (e.g. requiring teaching qualifications) were cited as a cause for concern as was consequent staff turnover. The importance of inter-cultural education and an intercultural ethos was also argued.

**Work experience**

All the learners from two of the three Senior Traveller Centres said they had not been on work experience, either because they were not there long enough or because it was not available in the centres. In the remaining centre five learners had been on work experience “Working with disabled children”, “In a furniture shop”, “As a carpet fitter”, “As secretary with the local school” and “Assisting a youth worker”. A very large percentage of Youthreach learners had been on work experience. The areas were varied and included “Landscape gardening, Labouring, Supermarket work, Mechanics, Childcare, Plastering, Dental lab work and Building site”. Those who had gone on work experience said “It should be in all centres as it is a good way to see why you have to learn things in the centre”.

**ICTs**

With regard to computers, with the exception of one learner who did not like them, every learner in both Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres used computers. The list of uses included “For doing assignments, Internet, Research, ECDL, Photography, Theory test-driving, FETAC modules level 1 and 2, Downloading music / newspapers, Looking for jobs, Maths and Games”. It was also pointed out that centres do not qualify for the ICT resource available to post-primary schools.

**3.4 Effectiveness**

**Context**

Several references were made to changes that had occurred in the category of learners now being catered for by Youthreach. The profile of participants and societal expectations had, it was reported, changed significantly. The increasing numbers of participants with special educational needs and the emphasis on certification resulted in new challenges for staffing provision, programme content and support services. There were differences in terms of age (younger) in the increased level of difficulties
presented by learners in the social, emotional, educational and health-related fields. A number of factors, it was highlighted, had resulted in these young people now attending Youthreach. Reasons were offered which included improvements in the quality of interagency relationships in local areas, the increase in the number and variety of agencies referring young people to Youthreach and the gradual increase in school completion rates, allied to the introduction of the NEWB service and the pressure now being put on schools to retain students. (The NEWB pointed out that it does not deliver a service to centres at present as the programmes have yet to be prescribed under the Education Welfare Act, 2000).

References were made to changes that had occurred since the programmes were established. The curriculum in centres, for example, was now partly similar to that in second level schools and centres were now designated “Centres for Education” under the Education Act (1998). The social context, it was mentioned, had also changed primarily as a result of legislation, staffing increases at second level, behaviour difficulties and the role of Youthreach and STTCs in relation to these behavioural difficulties (viz. School Matters, Chapter 9, 2006).

The number of places

There was a general agreement that allocated numbers are not sufficient to meet demand in many places and should be increased sufficiently to meet the demand. As against that, it was also acknowledged that limits had to exist, even if only to emphasise that the programmes are not intended as a default option for everyone not accommodated in a school/college context. This is especially the case in Youthreach.

With regard to this theme, there was a robust assertion that the programmes were as efficient and effective as they could be given the resource limitations within which practitioners have to operate. It was argued that staffing levels were not based on any meaningful assessment of needs nor the resources necessary to respond to those needs. Inherent in these observations was a sense that the resources themselves were utilised efficiently but were so inadequate or inappropriate to the task in hand that providers are hard-pressed to deliver on programme objectives.

Asked what they got from the programmes, learners from both Youthreach and STTCs responded in the same way, mentioning educational and vocational learning and certification and also such things as friendship, a good routine and money. Some had already got jobs out of it. Frequently mentioned phrases included “Keeps me off the streets and out of trouble; It’s easier to learn there; Relationships are better with tutors; It’s a place to get a second chance – I never got that before”.

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Several respondents referred to changes in the profile of learners being catered for by Youthreach centres compared to the early nineties, including “the increasing numbers of participants with special educational needs and the enhanced emphasis on certification (nationally and at programme level)”. Also mentioned were “differences are in terms of age (younger), personal grooming and presentation (poorer) and in the increased level of difficulties in the social/emotional, educational and health-related fields”. These, it was argued, “are resulting in new challenges for staffing provision, content and support services”.

**General outcomes**

One submission listed the following as regards the Youthreach programme:

“Youthreach is a holistic programme which attempts to place the participant at the centre of its provision. It has an impressive track record in:

- Re-engaging in education young people for whom the formal educational system has not worked well
- Supporting participants who are experiencing difficult personal and social problems in a safe and non-judgemental environment
- Assisting participants in developing a toolkit of important life skills such as decision-making, coping strategies, problem solving
- Working with young people experiencing crises such as pregnancy or alcohol / drug addiction and encouraging them to engage with the addiction services
- Developing innovative ways of reaching those in need of the service”

**Soft skills**

Respondents in the consultations listed a broad range of beneficial learner and community outcomes including increased self-esteem and confidence, diversion from crime and prison, decrease in anti-social behaviour, responsible substance usage, healthier relationships, appropriate means of dealing with health issues, communication skills, improved health and fitness, being viewed differently in their community and ability to access services.

Some other less obvious outcomes were also mentioned, including “stability for learners who have personal health issues or problems with the law and linkages with other services”. Specifically in relation to Travellers, the STTC programme was described as “a safe haven and a place where Travellers can express their own identity and culture”.

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Certification

Among the programme outcomes identified was certification – “Young people who did not relish the prospect of facing formal exams have been able to achieve recognised qualifications through the FETAC system. The outcomes have been very positive with students, sometimes viewed as ‘no hopers’, who had written off their chances of acquiring qualifications through the formal school system achieving full certification and progressing to PLC courses in growing numbers, and acting as role models to younger peers”. Employment and further training (e.g. LCA or FÁS apprenticeship courses) were also described as outcomes of the programmes.

Views of learners and parents

Parents reported that they were happy with their son or daughter attending the centre, that the centres had a good reputation and that they had heard no complaints. They were also happy with the education their son/daughter was receiving although a small number commented that they had never heard of FETAC and needed to have explained what it meant in relation to the Junior Cert or Leaving Cert. Asked how the Youthreach / STTC programme suited their children better than school, all said it was a much better system, friendlier staff and young people were taught at their own pace. They were “encouraged” and not “put down”. One parent said that it was ‘not as strict as school’ even though there were rules, they seemed to be fairer and ‘everything was explained – “they can laugh and be themselves”’. A number of parents commented that their child seemed happier at Youthreach and got on with instructors. Another said she did not believe her child would have progressed in his career had it not been for the Youthreach centre.

These views were consistent with those of programme participants – it was clear that the learners would rather go to the centre than go back to school. Learners from both programmes cited friendly / supportive / understanding and encouraging staff – *not* like school – as why they liked being in a centre. “The teachers teach you at your own pace and don’t leave you out; they treat you with respect, like an adult and no matter what stage you are at, you are accepted”. They also mentioned subject choices that interested them and an opportunity to go back to education to learn new skills and gain qualifications. Asked what subjects they liked, learners in both programmes instanced FETAC-certified programmes, Maths, Woodwork, Metalwork, Computers, Art, Communications and making videos. STTC learners also mentioned: Crafts-Glasswork, Knitting, Painting and Crochet, Reading and Writing, Learning, Projects,
Photography, Personal development, Drama, Hairdressing, Leisure and recreation and Counselling. The Youthreach learners also specified ECDL, Childcare, Hotel and catering; Construction studies; Engineering, PE, Irish, Junior Certificate and Home Economics (“You get fed and it keeps you calm”).

Learners also commented that: “It’s a place to go”, “to gain confidence”, “meet new people”, “a social place where I feel relaxed, not pressurised”; “It’s a daily routine”. The fun element was also significant: “trips away”, “playing pool”, “football”, “summer programmes” and “exchange”. Also mentioned were “No uniform”, “no homework” and “getting paid”. In addition, learners in STTCs mentioned liking “The fact that I am learning; Have literacy tuition and am learning to read and write; Am getting help in setting goals” (both in the centre and in general) and “Am able to help my own children with homework”. Youthreach learners added “You are off the streets”.

3.5 Gaps in provision and where improvements can be made

A range of gaps in provision were identified at different levels.

At the level of general services to young people and Travellers, it was argued that while many services exist these are frequently insufficient, incoherent and inappropriate. They are also often unavailable, especially as regards crises which, given the circumstances of many participants, must be expected. This places additional demands on programme staff who are often the only professionals engaged in solving problems or providing responses. Many programme staff feel that these demands go far beyond what can legitimately be expected of people engaged in an education and training process and argue that they should be able to integrate with a range of more specialised supports outside the education system. It is apparent from the consultation that, for all the useful work being done by various services at local level, services, for young people in particular, been not integrated in a consistent or coherent way. Some respondents argued for increased resources to support more effective networking, “a national publicity campaign” and a “top-down” practice of encouraging local services and agencies to provide support to the work being done in Youthreach” (and by extension, the STTCs).

Participants in the consultation also pointed out that the availability of Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) varies throughout the country. Also, although the centres have been designated as centres for learning under the Education Act 1998 (in
Circular F49/04) they have not yet been prescribed under the Education (Welfare) Act (2000). As a result, some EWOs are reluctant to engage with centres on an official basis. For this reason, they argued that this prescription should follow immediately.

Finally, they also noted a gap in provision for young people under 15 and as young as 11 or 12, some of whom are accommodated in Youthreach. While acknowledging that this was often the only provision available and was frequently successful, they questioned the appropriateness of such an arrangement, firstly on structural grounds – there should be a national mechanism in place – and secondly on the basis that having vulnerable children in the same education/training premises as older adolescents or adults created particular challenges for child protection and the organisation of learning.

**At the level of programme resource allocations:** Previous observations regarding programme resource allocations apply here. It was variously argued that learners’ needs are becoming more extreme every year, respondents citing increases in behavioural problems, drug use, suicide, under-age pregnancy and community violence. It was also pointed out that work often operates on a crisis-to-crisis basis with some of the young people and that time and resources are needed to go beyond what is available for the daily programme.

The importance of staff training and maintenance was also argued as was the need to explore methodologies which would allow the programme(s) to adapt to particular needs. A beginning has already been made in addressing this point with the allocation of resources to VECs for staff training under a number of headings (CPD budget, training in the profiling web, training re SENs).

Respondents also argued for extra resources to track former participants, for networking and inter-agency work. One respondent also argued for “additional administrative hours to allow for the accountability and participant monitoring without penalising programme activities”.

**At the level of programme supports:** Previous references to supports apply here, especially as regards (i) both high-incidence and low-incidence SENs, (ii) guidance, counselling and psychological services, including advocacy and (iii) childcare. There was a general consensus that levels of supports in these regards provided for the programmes should be consistent with the levels of learners’ presenting needs.
However, it was also argued that **the way the supports are delivered** is of fundamental importance and that these should be consistent with learner needs and programme methodologies. The development and implementation of the Quality Framework Initiative was instanced as best practice in this regard as were the approach proposed for SEN provision and the development of the ‘profiling web’ and training staff in its application.

By way of example, the National Centre for Guidance in Education set out a detailed account of the forms of guidance service it saw as necessary for learners in both Youthreach and STTC programmes. This should be “appropriate” and “holistic” and should incorporate “personal, social, life skills, educational and career guidance” elements”. This, according to NCGE, would demand more resources. It argues that

> The qualifications required would be the same as those for the Adult Education Guidance Service or those required by the DES for second level schools. It would be desirable if current Youthreach staff undertook the necessary professional training to take up these posts in order to retain the expertise and experience of these staff members.

With regard to participants in STTCs and the 18 to 25 year age group, the NCGE suggests that guidance provision could be supplied by the Adult Education Guidance Service, “if this service were to receive the additional qualified guidance counsellors and the funding to facilitate a structured programme delivered through a combination of outreach and integrated programmes with other adult learners”.

Finally, the NCGE also argued that access to a qualified clinical psychologist and / or counsellor should be available if required as “the role of referral to qualified personnel is of the utmost importance”.

### 3.6 Performance indicators

There was unanimous agreement among respondents in the consultation that programme outputs and outcomes should be measured – “We are not familiar with looking at how to measure outputs – we need yardsticks for measuring outputs and include these in the annual reports for the VECs”; “2nd level schools provide hard data in statistical form to DES, but Youthreach/STTCs don’t”. There was also a general confidence that programme aims are being achieved. As one respondent commented, “We are doing it – so let’s measure it”. In this regard, the usefulness of the Quality Framework in setting out a broad definition of what the programmes were about was

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22 Career guidance elements include job search skills, goal setting, progression routes (including educational and training opportunities such as apprenticeships) and further and higher education.
acknowledged. However, it was also strongly argued that whereas outputs are relatively easy to measure, outcomes are less tangible. The numbers of programme places or FETAC qualifications achieved are straightforward to enumerate, but how to record an improvement in the quality of a learner’s life or improved family relationships? How to measure the prevention of teenage pregnancy, suicide, offending behaviour, incarceration or drug use? One respondent commented that

There is a difficulty in measuring what you prevent. It is also difficult to measure soft skills. Attainment rates can be measured—how to measure self-esteem?

Others pointed out that while delivery of an individual learning plan is a success for centre and learner, providers cannot control the subsequent outcomes—employment, for example, is not within the gift of the centre. For example, Travellers may encounter discrimination from employers—this is beyond the centres’ capacity to influence. Also as regards Travellers, it was argued that “The knock-on effect on the attitude to education within the Traveller culture is a major outcome, but one that is extremely hard to measure”. Overall, there was agreement that appropriate quantitative and qualitative performance indicators should be agreed.

As regards quantitative indicators, centres already report on recruitment, learners’ presenting situations, throughput, certification and progression. This system might be refined to better demonstrate effectiveness—it was argued, for example, that “It is important to measure the beginning and the end—not just the end”. Success in the form of certification was seen as important but as only a part of the measurement—“Academic achievements are not the only system for measuring a programme like ours. The Youthreach Annals of Achievement show that qualifications are more important for some people than others”. It was also suggested that FETAC certification levels 1 and 2 will help with the measurement of progress in the Engagement phase in Youthreach, described by one respondent as “the stage before the Foundation phase, where there may be severe behavioural issues”.

As regards qualitative indicators, it was suggested that these record achievement under a range of different headings e.g. soft skills, leadership skills, participation in the community, etc. Given the difficulty with having employment as a performance indicator, many favoured the term “employability” rather than “employment”. One respondent suggested examining the indicators set for Community Training Centres, noting that while FÁS has a labour market focus and vocational outcomes are central for CTCs,

Personal development is also regarded as important. A broad definition of progression is used. Each client in a centre has their own individual learning plan.
A record is kept on their IT system. The Board of Management have an important role in outlining performance indicators for CTCs.

Many participants saw the Quality Framework as providing the basis for measuring achievements in both programmes:

The QFI sets the standards that need to be achieved and the performance indicators to measure these. Annual internal evaluation combined with external evaluations by the Inspectorate will lead to improvements and build up both qualitative and quantitative approaches to the measurement of achievement.

Also suggested for measuring soft skills was the use of individualised learning plans or mechanisms such as *Mapping the Learning Journey*. The Profiling Web was instanced as particularly appropriate – a learner-led mechanism through which progress in identified areas of need could be agreed and recorded. There was a general agreement that results should be verified by the Inspectorate as part of its external evaluation function under the Quality Framework and by VECs as part of their annual audit and reporting functions.

Finally, it was also suggested that outcomes ten years after finishing the programme might be analysed as part of the national longitudinal study being initiated by the Office of the Minister for Children.

### 3.7 General issues

A number of issues arose during the consultation that are not directly covered by the terms of reference but are significant.

*Publicity, status; position within the system*

A major issue identified in the consultation was the general feeling that Youthreach and STTC programmes are at the bottom of the pile and under-funded in comparison to the rest of the education sector. There was a palpable sense that for most decision-makers and also much of the public “second-chance” is co-terminous with second-class. Respondents cited many examples, e.g. that centres are not covered by the Department’s buildings programme, they are not included in national teacher training programmes as a matter of course, they are not circulated with information or materials relevant to curricular programmes nor were they included in the roll out of broadband into schools. It was alleged that obsolete equipment from VEC schools had been reallocated to training centres “when the equipment was deemed unsuitable in the schools for Health and Safety reasons”. Uncertainty over the continued funding of
the programmes (especially in STTCs) and ongoing industrial relations issues were said to be causing stress among staff and detracting from the provision to the learners.

Set against this sense of siege and of being considered second class was a robust belief in the effectiveness of the work being done under the respective programmes. Both staff and learners arguing that the centres were working with people whom the mainstream system had failed and were achieving substantial progress with them. They argued that this success was not recognised or given due acknowledgement either within the education/training system or outside. They argued the need to publicise and affirm the programmes i) with other sectors and agencies, ii) within the Department of Education and Science and its associated agencies and institutions at national level and iii) within VECs and service networks at local level.

Respondents cited the many positive reports on the work of the programmes and argued for the general line recently outlined by the Task Force on Student Behaviour in School Matters (2006) in favour of ‘one system, two modes’. There were also calls for sustained PR campaigning to raise awareness of the programmes, with providers arguing that “we should advertise the programme more; We should emphasise the positive – it is important for status”. When asked for recommendations, learners expressed a strong value for the programmes and for the benefits they were deriving from being in their centre. They asked that Government Departments be made aware of “the excellent service that centres provide to local communities”, that “Centres are a valuable place to go and correct mistake” and “More people should be encouraged to attend”. More information should be given to the public about the centres; they said adding that “Someone should promote the work of the centre because no one knows what we do there”.

**The purpose and position of STTCs**

Discussion of the appropriateness and purpose of STTC activities was diverted to some degree into a general discussion of Traveller education. This prompted a defensive alignment from providers and, coupled with the terms of reference themselves, meant that certain wider issues to do with the purpose of STTCs and the appropriateness of some of their activities to educational settings were not addressed. However, either overtly or indirectly, questions were raised which are significant and need attention.

The questions derive from the STTCs’ origins. Various issues of purpose and structure were left unresolved when responsibility for the centres transferred to the Department of Education and Science and the VECs in 1997. Two are of particular
significance, firstly the perception among many Traveller participants that their place in the centre is a job and secondly the role of the STTCs as putative centres of community development. In neither case is it disputed that these are necessary or desirable. But it is certainly open to question whether it is appropriate that such actions be funded by the Department of Education and Science and staffed by teachers.

A job for life?

It is clear from the consultation that many participants in the STTCs regard themselves as in employment in the centre. One meeting participant commented that “STTCs can be seen as almost a charity, with people there for 10 years”. This, it was noted, often arose from their inability to find employment in the settled economy – the programme is seen as a permanent job. Some call the centre ‘the Anco’ or ‘the FÁS’, they refer to their participation as a job and see this as not being time-bound. Many of the activities they undertake are work-oriented, the kind of activities undertaken by the centres when they were funded by FÁS. There is a strong argument that such activities are both necessary and useful given high levels of social exclusion of Travellers and their difficulty in finding sustainable employment. Such essentially sheltered employment also allows for more general development activity to be undertaken, for example to encourage Travellers to support their children in school attendance and completion. But are these features (sheltered employment and lengthy participation) consistent with programme aims and description? Is it appropriate to have teachers supervising sheltered employment activities (given the constraints of a teaching contract regarding ‘class contact’, etc)?

It might be argued that it would make little sense to move these activities from the STTCs to other centres. But it can also be argued that STTC sheltered employment activities should be funded by the employment authorities and staffed accordingly. This would ensure that teachers are engaged in educational activities. It would also allow the centres to extend their range of activities.

Community development

Similar issues arose regarding the centres’ role in community development. This role was foreseen in their original development. But change has occurred in the Traveller community over time and this function is now seriously questioned by various Traveller organisations.
Some respondents wanted a broader role for centres, arguing that “Centres are promoting leadership and community development, not just teaching subjects” and that “when problems such as health or housing present… some centres see this as part of their job”. But others argued that “the programmes can’t be all things to all people” and that “an educational programme cannot create major social change e.g. improve housing, etc. – other agencies do these jobs”.

One respondent posed the fundamental question: “What is the core business of the programmes? What are they equipped to change? There is a need to put the qualitative goals into the aims and objectives. Don’t say you will do it if you won’t. There are certain things we don’t do”.

It is clear from the consultation that Traveller learners acknowledge the value of the centres in both personal and community development and affirmation. It can certainly be argued that community development is an appropriate action for the centres to undertake, although this should now be happening in much closer cooperation with national Traveller organisations than appears to be the case at present. But once again it can be asked whether it is appropriate that such activities be funded by the DES and staffed by teachers. Given new structures (DCRGA, CDBs, etc) now in place would it not be more appropriate that the community development activities of the STTCs be funded through these channels? This, again, would free teachers to teach as well as bringing a structural cohesion to the activities of the centre.

**Pay and conditions issues**

While IR issues are not included in the TORs, one central IR theme ran throughout the consultation. This concerned the illogic of the situation whereby STTC staff carry different terms and conditions than Youthreach staff despite doing the same work in the same settings. Disparities between fulltime and part-time staff in Youthreach (which work to the disadvantage of full-time staff) also generated strong feelings.
Appendix 3: Youthreach and STTC Programme
Logic Model

**INPUTS**
Definition: Resource dedicated to or consumed by the programme

Planned Inputs:
- Financial Resources provided by DES
- Training/Professional development
- DES staff input including DES inspectorate

**ACTIVITIES**
Definition: What the programme does with inputs in pursuit of objectives

Planned activities:
- Planning, administrating and delivering education programme.
- Monitoring of Youthreach and STTCs in DES

**OUTPUTS**
Definition: Intended direct products of programme activities

Planned Outputs:
- No. of educational programmes delivered
- No. of learners gaining certification
- Delivery of individual learning programmes
- Qualitative outputs

**OUTCOMES**
Definition: Intended impacts of programme during and after programme activities

Planned Outcomes:
- No. of learners going on to further education
- No. of learners going on to work training programmes
- No of learners obtaining employment
- Qualitative outcomes

**EXTERNAL FACTORS:**
Family support, Community Support, Inter Agency linkages

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Appendix 4. The Web Wheel

Key principles of the Web Wheel form of learner support are the integration of support provision into the core work of centres, the adoption of a developmental approach over time and the paying of attention to the social ethos and context of the centre. Members of staff show flexibility and responsiveness to the individual needs of their learners by engaging in mentoring, profiling and individual programme planning processes with them. Profiling is holistic and multi-factorial with attention paid to the learner’s educational and vocational learning, to their personal and social development and to any other practical factors acting as barriers to their full participation in the centre. Where necessary the staff engages in inter-agency work with services outside of the centre. Increasing the capacity of a centre to support its learners is achieved through the provision of a programme of staff training and support.

Assessment is conducted through the use of the Web Wheel profiling tool, and can be considered to represent a form of support intervention in itself. The Web Wheel examines sixteen factor areas, taking the form of a series of interviews between a key worker (member of staff in a centre) and a learner. The learner is invited to reflect on themselves under each of the factor headings, to rate their situation in terms of whether they perceive it as positive or negative and to identify goals for themselves in relation to that aspect of their lives.

The Learners’ version of the Profiling web Wheel is largely blank. This is in order to avoid making any suggestions to them about the kinds of problems or issues that they might bring up. The Key Workers’ version lists some possible issues to explore under each factor area. This is to help them to be sensitive to possibilities in the experiences and circumstances of the learners but should not be used as a check-list to quiz them on. Only those issues that learners bring up themselves should be explored by the key worker during the mentoring session.

The learner chooses from a five-point scale how they want to rate their situation. This rating is meant to be subjective and has no objective reference point. The purpose of
the rating is to help the learner to make an evaluation of their situation and to distinguish between an area of positive strength (5), a situation that is not causing problems (4), a mild problem (3), a relatively serious problem (2) and a situation that is critical and needs urgent action (1).

When introducing the Wheel the ratings are explained along the following lines: The learner should give themselves a:

5  If they feel happy about the situation under consideration or it is an area of positive strength for them.
4  If they feel they have no particular problem in this factor area.
3  If they feel they have a bit of a problem in this area.
2  If they feel that they have quite a big problem with some or all aspects of the situation under consideration.
1  If they recognise that they have a very serious problem or feel that they are not coping generally with the situation.

5  Strengths / resources / resilience factors
4  ---------------------------------------------
3
2  Problems / difficulties needing attention
1

The ratings are more problem- than strength-focused, but that doesn’t mean the learner shouldn’t be encouraged to identify their strengths, coping strategies and resources and the situations that are working well for them during the profiling sessions. Building on strengths and developing resilience is central to support work. Goals and plans can therefore arise in factors that are rated above or at the line (5 and 4) as well as those that are rated below it (3, 2 and 1).

The individual action plan that is developed out of the Web Wheel process is informed by the learner’s own perceptions of their strengths and needs and is based on
their expressed personal, educational and vocational goals. The plan describes the actions that will be taken in pursuit of these goals. It will identify clearly

a) the academic or vocational options that will be chosen, covering the subjects / modules to be studied, activities (e.g. sports, music) that will be engaged in and the teaching methodologies that will be used in the various subject areas (e.g. group work, individual attention, visual or tactile approaches, etc.);

b) the supports to be provided in the centre (e.g. one-to-one literacy, counselling, guidance, work experience);

c) any local services or agencies that will be worked with (e.g. garda liaison, HSE, addiction counselling, money management, etc.).
### Appendix 5. Glossary of Abbreviations/Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADSTTC</td>
<td>Association of Directors of Senior Traveller Training Centres</td>
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<tr>
<td>AEO</td>
<td>Adult Education Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>AEOA</td>
<td>Adult Education Officers Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOMs</td>
<td>Boards of Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>BTEI</td>
<td>Back to Education Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAG</td>
<td>Comptroller and Auditor General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDP</td>
<td>Competency Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDVEC</td>
<td>City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERT</td>
<td>Board Failte</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLÁR</td>
<td>Ceantair Laga Ard-Riachtanais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>Consumer Price Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuous Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Central Statistics Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTC</td>
<td>Community Training Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCU</td>
<td>Dublin City University</td>
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<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Department of Education &amp; Science</td>
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<td>DETE</td>
<td>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment</td>
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<td>Department of Education (Northern Ireland)</td>
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<td>DJELR</td>
<td>Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>EBDs</td>
<td>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</td>
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<td>ECDL</td>
<td>European Computer Driving Licence</td>
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<td>EOTAS</td>
<td>Education Other Than At School</td>
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<td>EPSEN</td>
<td>Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs</td>
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<td>ESF</td>
<td>European Social Fund</td>
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<td>ESPAD</td>
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<td>ESRI</td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Institute</td>
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<td>EU</td>
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<td>Education Welfare Officer</td>
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<td>FÁS</td>
<td>Ireland’s National Training and Employment Authority</td>
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<td>Further Education</td>
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<td>Further Education and Training Awards Council</td>
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<td>Home School Community Liaison Scheme</td>
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<td>Health Service Executive</td>
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<td>Information and Communications Technology</td>
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<td>ILP</td>
<td>Individual Learner Plan</td>
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<td>ITM</td>
<td>Irish Traveller Movement</td>
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<td>Irish Vocational Education Association</td>
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<td>JC</td>
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<td>Junior Certificate Schools Programme</td>
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<td>JLO</td>
<td>Juvenile Liaison Officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>LCA</td>
<td>Leaving Certificate Applied</td>
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<td>National Advisory Committee on Drugs</td>
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<td>National Action Plan Against Racism</td>
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<td>NAPS</td>
<td>National Anti-Poverty Strategy</td>
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<td>NATC</td>
<td>National Association of Travellers’ Centres</td>
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<td>NAYC</td>
<td>National Association of Youthreach Co-ordinators</td>
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<td>NCCA</td>
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<td>NDP</td>
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<td>National Educational Psychological Services</td>
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<td>National Framework of Qualifications</td>
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<td>National Rehabilitation Board</td>
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<td>National Skills Strategy</td>
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<td>NTWF</td>
<td>National Traveller Women’s Forum</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>Pavee Point</td>
<td>Voluntary organisation committed to the human rights of Travellers</td>
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<td>PE</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
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<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
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<td>PLC</td>
<td>Post Leaving Certificate</td>
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<td>QFI</td>
<td>Quality Framework Initiative</td>
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<td>RAPID</td>
<td>Revitalising Areas by Planning Investment and Development</td>
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<td>SCP</td>
<td>School Completion Programme</td>
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<td>SDP</td>
<td>School Development Planning</td>
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<td>SEC</td>
<td>State Examinations Commission</td>
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<td>Special Education Needs</td>
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<td>Special Education Needs Officer</td>
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<td>Social Inclusion Unit</td>
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<td>SLSS</td>
<td>Second Level Support Service</td>
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<td>SMI</td>
<td>Strategic Management Initiative</td>
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<td>Special Needs Assistant</td>
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<td>Social, Personal and Health Education</td>
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<td>SSP</td>
<td>School Support Programme</td>
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<td>STEP</td>
<td>Survey of Traveller Education Provision</td>
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<td>STTC</td>
<td>Senior Traveller Training Centre</td>
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<td>TUI</td>
<td>Teachers’ Union of Ireland</td>
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<td>VEC</td>
<td>Vocational Education Committee</td>
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<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>VFM</td>
<td>Value for Money</td>
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<td>Vocational Services Support Unit</td>
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<td>Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme</td>
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<td>Visiting Teacher for Travellers</td>
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<td>VTST</td>
<td>Visiting Teachers Service for Travellers</td>
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<td>WG</td>
<td>Working Group</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>YEP</td>
<td>Youth Encounter Project</td>
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<td>YMCA</td>
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