MID-WESTERN HEALTH BOARD

SPEAKING OUT!

A STUDY OF UNMET WELFARE NEEDS
IN THE MID-WEST REGION
Speaking Out!
A Study of Unmet Welfare Needs in the Mid-West Region

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JULY 1991
Copies of this book may be obtained from the Mid-Western Health Board, 31/33 Catherine Street, Limerick and from your local bookshop.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCH TEAM</td>
<td>(v)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>(v)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>(vi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE:</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An overview of Social Need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO:</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unmet Needs of Young People from Disadvantaged Areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE:</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unmet Needs of Lone Parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR:</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unmet Needs of the Elderly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE:</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unmet Needs of Carers of People who are Physically Handicapped</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER SIX:</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unmet Needs of People with Literacy Problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER SEVEN:</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unmet Needs of Travellers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER EIGHT:</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Unmet Needs among service-providers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER NINE:</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview and Recommendations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STUDY OF UNMET WELFARE NEEDS IN THE MID-WEST REGION

PREFACE

This Study was commissioned in December 1989 by the Mid-Western Health Board in conjunction with the Department of Health. In commissioning the study, the aim was to explore and identify unmet welfare needs as these are perceived by different groups in the community in relation to various aspects of the services provided by the Mid-Western Health Board. The primary purpose of the study is to provide information which will contribute to a review of current service provision and inform the planning and development of future policy. It is intended that the results of the study should be used to improve the quality of the services being provided, to plan new services in response to service needs identified, and to ensure that policies and practices adopted are relevant and responsive to expressed community needs.

The study was carried out by Professor Joyce O’Connor and a research team from the Social Research Centre at the University of Limerick. A Steering Committee was formed to provide guidance, support and practical assistance to the research team, to set the scope and objectives of the study and to evaluate the policy implications ensuing from the findings. The membership of the Steering Committee was as follows:

Mr. M.J. Duffy - Mid-Western Health Board (Chairman)
Mr. G. Crowley - Mid-Western Health Board
Ms. M. Finucane - Mid-Western Health Board
Dr. J. Kiely - Mid-Western Health Board
Mr. L. Leland - Mid-Western Health Board
Mr. D. McCarthy - Department of Health
Mr. M. Moloney - Mid-Western Health Board
Prof. J. O’Connor - S.R.C., University of Limerick.
Dr. N. Ruddle - S.R.C., University of Limerick.
Fr. P. Sexton - CLARECARE
Ms. E. Sparling - Mid-Western Health Board
The study explores the unmet needs of certain client groups through in-depth interviews with 60 individuals, whose circumstances reflect different groups in the community and different stages of the life-cycle. The study provides an opportunity for clients to speak from their own experiences and to describe, from their own perspectives, the needs that arise and that are unmet in their lives. As a complement to the feedback obtained from the clients themselves, the study also provides information on the service-providers' views of unmet needs in the community.

The study is carried out within the context of a society characterised by high levels of unemployment. These circumstances have led to certain groups of people being marginalised and cut-off from effective participation in society. It is particularly important that a voice is given to these people so that their needs may be acknowledged and addressed. Through commissioning the study, the Health Board indicates its commitment to listening to the clients of its services and taking account of their views of their needs rather than acting on the basis of normative definitions of need. The study represents a step towards acknowledging the authority of experience and the role of the client in service planning and delivery. This change towards a more democratic and client-led approach is accompanied by a further change in attitude whereby people's needs are viewed in a holistic fashion. Traditionally, services have been provided on a sectoral basis as if needs may be readily compartmentalised. This study represents a unique attempt to move away from this view and to explore people's needs as they themselves experience them in their everyday lives.

The outcomes of these interviews highlight a number of needs which are perceived by the client-groups of the study as being currently unmet. In some instances, needs are perceived as unmet because the services needed do exist but are not meeting needs either because of difficulties relating to access or because of inappropriate delivery mechanisms. One of the key findings of the study is that the clients' lived experience of their needs is very much at odds with a perceived compartmentalised approach to service-delivery. It is clear from the clients' accounts that their needs are interconnected and over-lapping and are inextricably linked with the economic and social circumstances in which they live. The findings highlight that it is not possible for one agency, such as the Health Board, to meet needs as these are experienced in the community, while working in isolation from other statutory agencies and from voluntary organisations.
It is very clear that what is required is collaboration between different agencies and sectors to ensure an integrated and coordinated service delivery which operates in a comprehensive fashion matching the manner in which clients experience their needs.

In an attempt to address the unmet needs highlighted, the Steering Committee accepts the main recommendation put forward in the study which is that a pilot scheme be established within a specified local area. The pilot scheme involves the setting up of a committee which will have responsibility for managing Family and Personal Support Services in that area. The pilot scheme is based on the following principles:

- integration across different service areas
- community-based
- client-led
- involves a partnership between the different parties concerned; community, voluntary organisations, different statutory agencies, trade unions and local employers

The proposed framework for putting such a policy into practice involves a Local Area Management Committee with representation from all the parties involved in the four-way partnership. A somewhat similar mechanism has been proposed in the most recent Programme for Economic and Social Progress in relation to addressing the problem of long-term unemployment. Needs assessment within the community, through community workshops and surveys, would inform the deliberations and planning of the Management Committee and the clients themselves would play a key role in evaluating the effectiveness of the services delivered.

The delivery of a service which is integrated across different agencies and sectors will, of course, require much consideration and debate both at national and at local level. Issues related to the development of common missions and adequate structures and resources will require creative and innovative thinking if they are to be addressed. The pilot project proposed here is being put forward for consideration as a first step in the development of services which reflect the multiplicity and interconnectedness of people’s needs.
This report signifies a growing awareness of the need for service providers to consult with the community being served in order to maximise the responsiveness and effectiveness of services, and resources employed by them. The particular findings of the study should be circulated to all relevant agencies in order to ensure that the voice of the community is heard.

It is hoped that this Report will lead to other such studies, and help to ensure that service development and delivery, as well as policy formation, will increasingly be informed by the 'real' experiences of the community.

M.J. DUFFY,
CHAIRPERSON, STEERING COMMITTEE.
PROGRAMME MANAGER, MID-WESTERN HEALTH BOARD.
RESEARCH TEAM

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This study was commissioned by the Mid-Western Health Board with the support of the Department of Health. Many people contributed in different ways to the study and we are very grateful for their assistance and support. We particularly wish to thank all the members of the Steering Committee for their advice and guidance, for many stimulating discussions and valuable suggestions and their practical assistance in the organisation of the study. We also wish to thank the fieldworkers of the study - Ms. Michelle Dowling and Ms. Marie Ball - for their professionalism, sensitivity and thoroughness in conducting the interviews. Thanks are also due to Ms. Susan Horrigan for her skill, patience and good-humour in typing the different drafts of the report on the study. Finally, but by no means least, we acknowledge our indebtedness to the clients and service-providers who are the key contributors to the study but who must, of necessity, remain anonymous. We are very grateful for their help and co-operation and their generosity and openness in sharing with us their experiences and perceptions.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REPORT

DFMA   Disabled Persons Maintenance Allowance
DTEDG  Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group
ESRI   Economic and Social Research Institute
FAS    Foras Aiseanna Saothair
GMS    General Medical Services
IWA    Irish Wheelchair Association
NALA   National Adult Literacy Agency
NESC   National Economic and Social Council
NYC    National Youth Council
NYP    Neighbourhood Youth Project
NRB    National Rehabilitation Board
OECD   Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SRC    Social Research Centre
TYO    Transition year Option
UVOH   Union of Voluntary Organisations for the Handicapped
VEC    Vocational Educational Committee
VPTP   Vocational Preparation and Training Programme
INTRODUCTION

Focus of the Study
This study focuses on unmet needs in relation to the range of Family and Personal Support Services which are provided by agencies in the Mid-West Region. The purpose of the study is to explore in a qualitative fashion the needs and concerns of different client groups. The study is exploratory in nature, involving fundamental field research which seeks to provide an opportunity for clients and potential clients of the Family and Personal Support Services to express their view of their primary needs and to describe how they experience these needs in their everyday lives. The Family and Personal Support Services provide the mainstay of support for a number of client groups within a community context. By focusing on unmet needs the study aims to provide information on the adequacy of these support services and on their methods of delivery. Fundamental to the provision of Family and Personal Support Services is the identification and clarification of clients' needs. A recent Report on health services in Ireland recognised the importance of meeting need as a basis for the equitable and efficient delivery of services. The Report emphasised that services - and more particularly health services - should be available according to one's needs and not on ability to pay or on geographical proximity to services.

With regard to the range of Family and Personal Support Services provided, there has been little or no mapping of existing needs or of availability of services to meet these needs.

Family and Personal Support Services
For the purpose of the current study, Family and Personal Support Services are those services which are planned and provided in a community setting with the individual as focus. Family and Personal Support Services extend to cover a broad range of services with no one agency or organisation responsible for
overall provision. A complex of government departments, statutory agencies and voluntary bodies are involved in providing care and support services.

At a national level this complex of service-providers comprises the Departments of Health, Environment, Justice, Education, Labour and Social Welfare. Through agencies like the health boards, housing authorities and Fás, a network of service providers reach into the community to deal with issues related to unemployment, poverty and inadequate living conditions. Services provided include:

- Social Work Services
- Public Health Nursing Services
- Job Placement Schemes
- Skills Development Courses
- Home Improvement Grants

A considerable amount of the services are crisis-oriented and focus on family support during periods when problems occur, or, are likely to occur. Very often, service-providers work in isolation from each other. The present study explores the range of experiences of six different client groups in relation to these services and investigates the extent to which the needs of each group are currently being met. The groups selected for inclusion in the study are:

- Young People from Disadvantaged Areas
- Lone Parents
- Elderly
- Carers of Persons with a Physical Disability
- People with Literacy Problems
- Travellers
These groups were selected on the basis that they represent the range of client-groups in the community who use the Family and Personal Support Services. In addition, the groups reflect different stages in the lifecycle from youth to old age. The study is based on a belief in the importance of using the client viewpoint in the identification and definition of needs and in effective service planning and delivery.

Context of the Study
The different groups of people interviewed in this study live their lives in the context of a society which, throughout the past decade, has been marked by persistent unemployment and its consequences. It is true that since 1987 the Irish economy has shown strong economic growth and in the period 1987-1989 its growth rate was, in fact, ahead of the EC average\(^3\). However, economic recovery has had little impact on unemployment and the rate remains at 17.4 per cent in 1990\(^4\). A recent survey shows that people in the Republic of Ireland regard unemployment as the single most serious social problem facing this country\(^5\).

An important aspect of the unemployment problem is that while all may have been affected by the economic difficulties of the country, the worst effects have been felt disproportionately by particular groups and by particular areas. For example, higher rates of unemployment are experienced among older workers, among early school-leavers and among lone parents. Statistics also show a concentrated incidence of unemployment in certain areas such as remote rural regions and in socially disadvantaged urban communities. The average unemployment rate of 17 per cent for the country as a whole can conceal huge regional differences. Within the Mid-Western Region, for example, unemployment rates of 22 per cent have been reported for certain areas\(^6\).

It has been pointed out that the uneven incidence of unemployment has compounded the difficulties of those without work in that they
live in a society where many are unaware of the day-to-day realities of unemployment. Frequently, perceived solutions among job-holders are seen in terms of the unemployed 'budgeting better' or 'going out and finding themselves a job'. The concentration of unemployment in particular housing areas also adds to the difficulties of finding a way back into the world of work. For example, many jobs are filled by word of mouth and it is people already in employment who can pass on this information. Accordingly, where unemployed people live in a community where they are surrounded by others who are also out of work, they are deprived of an important route of access to information on work opportunities. There is the further problem that the poverty, lack of self-esteem and frustration which long term unemployment can generate may give a particular area a negative reputation and diminish the chances of employment among its residents.

The consequences of long-term unemployment are serious and far-reaching. The link between unemployment and poverty, for example, has been well-documented. The difficult situation of those without work and others dependent on the Social Welfare system is vividly expressed in the following quote from the Report of the Commission on Social Welfare:

'families and individuals in many cases lack sufficient food, many cannot buy sufficient fuel, clothe their children properly or afford school books or bus fares. On a widespread and regular basis, Health Centres are thronged with applicants facing rent arrears, electricity bills, mortgage arrears and simply unable to live on inadequate social welfare incomes. It was especially apparent in our discussions with welfare recipients and in other evidence that the families of the unemployed are often in the more deprived circumstances.'

In addition to the difficulties of everyday life, it has been pointed out that the poor lack control over the development of economic resources, that they are awarded little or no social
esteem and, even at local levels, exercise little or no power over decision-making in their areas\textsuperscript{10}. Within this context it is particularly important that disadvantaged groups such as those who are the subject of the present study are given an opportunity to express their needs from their perspective and to indicate what they require to have these needs addressed.

Aims of the Study
This study sets out to provide baseline data on unmet needs in relation to Family and Personal Support Services in the Mid-Western Region. It is intended that the qualitative data obtained be used in reviewing current service provision and in the planning of future developments in the area. The primary aim of the study is to facilitate improvement of the quality of the services provided and to ensure that policies and practices adopted are relevant to expressed community needs.

In addition to the client perspective on unmet needs the study also seeks to explore the objectives underlying the provision of services to meet these needs. This is done through further qualitative exploration of client needs from a service-provider's point of view. Their perceptions serve as a complement to the views of clients themselves. By highlighting some of the essential issues, both from the point of view of clients and from the point of view of provision, the study aims to provide policy-makers and service-providers with the information necessary in the assessment of services and in their continuing development.

Objectives of the Study
The specific objectives of the study are:

1. to explore and identify unmet needs as they are perceived by different groups in the community in relation to various aspects of Family and Personal Support Services in the Mid-Western Region
2. to provide a platform for clients for expressing their views,
experiences and perceptions
to provide a means whereby the client's perceptions and
experiences can be used to influence the planning and
development of Family and Personal Support Services
to develop a methodology for assessing unmet needs which can
be used to review progress over time and which can be
replicated in other areas.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section describes the research design and general methodology
of the study. Specific details on the groups interviewed, the
topics covered in the in-depth interviews and an overview of
previous research findings are provided in the following chapters
dealing with each particular group.

Background Research
Preliminary research was undertaken to explore the concept of
unmet need and to define the focus of the study. Discussions were
arranged with both service-providers and clients to explore and
identify areas requiring attention. These exploratory meetings
also assisted in the development of the interview schedules used
in the fieldwork. An extensive literature review was undertaken
to identify research relevant to the study and to summarise
existing findings in relation to the six groups selected for
study.

Fieldwork Organisation and Interviewer Training
Following the development of in-depth interview schedules for
each of the six client-groups involved, key personnel from
statutory and voluntary agencies were contacted to arrange
discussions and to obtain names of potential interviewees.
Interviewers were briefed on the aims and objectives of the study
and were trained in accordance with the qualitative approach to be
used.
Qualitative Exploration of Needs

Exploratory interviews were carried out with selected individuals within the six groups listed. Before the interviews were carried out, pre-testing of the interview schedules was undertaken to ensure the validity of each schedule. A total of 60 interviews took place - ten from each of the six groups. The sixty cases on which the study is based are not representative in a statistical sense. Instead, the study attempts to draw, in a qualitative fashion, on the needs and experiences of each of the interviewees as a means of exploration of their day-to-day concerns and worries. This method of approach provides in-depth information on the lives of those interviewed without regarding them as figures without meaning. One writer who used a similar method of investigation concluded that the qualitative approach:

'permits a level of detail and thoroughness... which is unique... It is unlikely to reduce its subjects to ciphers, figures, so socially determined that they lack the ability to take an active part in the process of their own lives,'

To ensure a geographical mix, within each group of ten, one half was selected from a rural area and the other from an urban area. All respondents were selected from the Mid-Western Region. The interviews, which ranged from one to two hours in duration were structured around a series of topics. Separate interview schedules were used with each of the six groups. Although structured around the interview schedule, the interviews were open-ended, inviting clients to describe their experiences and perceptions rather than asking direct questions. This approach provides greater detail than the more structured questionnaire approach. All interviews were recorded on tape and transcripts made for analysis. All respondents contacted agreed to be interviewed and all expressed satisfaction at having opportunity to talk about their own needs.
Exploration of Needs with Service-Providers

Interviews with service-providers took place both in group settings and individually. Some of those interviewed are involved at a general level with provision of services while others are directly involved with one of the groups studied. Service-providers from both voluntary and statutory sectors were interviewed together as a group because of their inter-relationship with each other in providing services and because of their shared objectives in meeting needs. It was pointed out in preliminary interviews that statutory and voluntary agencies rarely come together for discussion but that this should be encouraged. Interviews were between 1½ and 2½ hours in duration. Those interviewed include the following:

- Social Workers - Health Board
  - Limerick Corporation/Limerick County Council
  - Voluntary Agencies
- Public Health Nurses
- Probation Officer
- Community Welfare Officers
- Administrators and Tutors of Literacy Programmes
- Youth Workers
- Child Care Workers (residential)
- Employees of National Rehabilitation Board
- Members of Saint Vincent de Paul
- Members of religious orders involved in provision of services

The inclusion of a mix of service-providers enabled a broad-ranging view of the needs of the community to be obtained. These interviews and discussions serve to highlight the needs of the clients through the eyes of the service-provider and act as a complement to the information obtained from the client-groups.
Analysis of the Data
Detailed content analyses were carried out on the transcripts of the taped interviews. Unmet needs were highlighted and recorded and suggestions for improvement of service-provision noted.

Planning and Time Sequence of Research
The research was conducted in a number of stages as outlined in Figure 1.1. The preliminary phase involved a detailed review of the literature and meetings with Mid-Western Health Board personnel. The main study was preceded by pilot tests to evaluate the comprehensiveness of the different research instruments. An outline of the main stages is given below.

Figure 1.1 Research Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Background</td>
<td>To explore the conceptual area of the study</td>
<td>November 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research: Meetings with Mid-Western Health Board; documentary research</td>
<td>To define the focus of the study.</td>
<td>February 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review Discussion groups with service providers and clients</td>
<td>To identify research relevant to unmet health needs already carried out in the Irish context. To provide pointers to areas requiring particular attention. To structure the in-depth interviews.</td>
<td>March - April 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Research Instruments</td>
<td>Formulation of themes to be covered in the research. Design interview schedules for: exploration of perceptions of service-providers, exploration of experiences and perceptions of client groups.</td>
<td>May 1990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pilot Tests</td>
<td>To test the adequacy of the interview schedules. To identify any difficulties.</td>
<td>June 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer Training and Fieldwork Organisation</td>
<td>To familiarise interviewers with the objectives of the study and with the use of the interview schedules. To approach service-providers to obtain contact names for clients.</td>
<td>June 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>To collect information on the experiences and perceptions of both clients and service providers in assessing unmet needs.</td>
<td>July 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Preparation</td>
<td>To transcribe taped interviews with both providers and clients.</td>
<td>August 1990-Mid September</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis
To examine transcripts and record unmet needs as specified by both service-providers and clients
September 1990

Final Report
To communicate the findings June 1991 and conclusions of the study.

Format of the Report
The Report consists of nine chapters. Chapter One examines the literature on needs and presents a discussion of the main issues in relation to the definition of need. This chapter also includes a review of models of need including a psychological model and an economic model. Chapters Two to Seven present the findings of the research in relation to each of the six client groups involved. Each of these six chapters presents a demographic profile of the group concerned, and provides a context against which the needs of the group may be considered. A review of existing literature is also presented. Each chapter presents a detailed methodology which includes a profile of those interviewed, the method by which interviewees were contacted, the location and duration of each interview and the main themes covered in the course of the interview. Each of Chapters Two to Seven then presents the findings of the research under the headings:

1. most frequently mentioned unmet needs
2. additional perceived unmet needs
3. inferred unmet needs

Chapter Eight presents the views of service-providers from statutory agencies and voluntary organisations in relation to the unmet needs of each of the groups interviewed. This chapter documents the perceived unmet needs of each of the client groups.
individually and also presents a discussion of general issues in relation to service planning and delivery. Chapter Nine provides an overview of the findings and their implications for future policy-making. This Chapter also presents recommendations for future policy and outlines a model for putting these recommendations into practice.
References:

2. Ibid.


CHAPTER ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL NEED

Introduction

Little research has been carried out in Ireland in the area of social need. In terms of the social services, needs have been defined only in terms of the demand by clients for particular services. Assessment of needs has, therefore, remained a relatively unexplored terrain. The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of the concept of social need as it is seen in the current social policy literature. The following areas are discussed in the course of the chapter:

- understanding social need
- distinguishing needs and wants
- need as relative deprivation
- definition of need
- assessing social need

Understanding Social Need

Social policy writers have begun, in part, to recognise the importance of the concept of need rather than demand as a criterion on which to base the delivery of social services. It has been suggested in the literature\(^1\) that needs distinguish the social services from any other kind of service-provision in the modern state. However, there are several problems associated with the understanding of social need.

Firstly, there is often some difficulty in coming up with objective, measurable criteria by which needs can be assessed. One study on the needs of the elderly devised scores from a list of factors such as mobility and home care and the needs of the elderly were rated accordingly\(^2\). However, the degree to which needs can be rated according to the presence or absence of some condition has been questioned.
Another issue of concern in the literature is who should be responsible for specifying an individual's needs. Some writers have suggested that service-providers and policy-makers cannot adequately define the needs of clients because their conceptualisations are too far removed from the individual. It has been suggested, instead, that clients be allowed to specify their own capabilities and requirements rather than have needs ascribed to them.

The meeting of needs by the State is frequently dependent on the availability of resources, particularly in relation to social expenditure. Recent reductions in health, education and welfare provision have led to a prioritising of client needs so that only those needs most fundamental to the individual are met. Policy-makers have been criticised for their concern with cost-cutting exercises at the expense of welfare-provision. In some instances governments have employed private market contractors to operate welfare services on the basis of business principles without regard to the deteriorating situations of those who avail of welfare services. As a consequence, needs are viewed in terms of 'wants' which can be satisfied through the private market.

**Distinguishing Needs and Wants**

In the literature on need it is recognised that the social services are intended to meet individuals' needs and that the economic market provides the framework in which wants are articulated and satisfied. As Plant points out 'it would certainly be odd to say that the welfare services exist to satisfy wants - I may desire or want a colour television set or a new car but these are not goods which are available from the social services'.

Policies for the distribution of welfare services often emphasise an absolute notion of need since this depends on conventional
interpretation to determine who should receive help and who should not. In the absolute approach, a standard is set and the needs of individuals are judged according to this standard. For example, a family of four with an income of £140 is deemed to be in need and therefore eligible for Family Income Support. The problem with this approach is that others in similar situations and with the same needs do not qualify for help. Using the example of Family Income Support again, a family of four whose earnings total £145 do not qualify for FIS despite the fact that the income-difference is only marginal and hence the needs of the family the same.

Alternatively, Sainsbury⁷ argues that judgements about the presence and severity of need will depend on the reference group with which one identifies. For example, all people need shelter but the type of shelter they need depends on their environment and on the standards and expectations of the society in which they live. Foster⁸ uses the example of a family living in a one-roomed flat in a city, who at the turn of the century might have regarded a modern high-rise flat as a luxury, yet tenants living there today are seeking to be rehoused. The relative view of the concept of need takes into account, not just the individual’s needs, but the society of which he/she is a part and seeks to explain how one individual might express a need for something despite the fact that another - in the same situation - does not.

Need as Relative Deprivation

The experience of need by an individual is closely linked to his/her feelings of deprivation in relation to those living in the same situation⁹. This indicates that what is frequently defined as basic need varies significantly from society to society and that in measuring need one must take into account the demands placed on an individual as a member of that society. As a consequence, perceptions of acceptable and minimum standards change over time and differ between countries and between
economies with varying levels of income. Much of the literature on need refers to deprivation as the concept underlying the experience of need. One writer describes deprivation as 'not having... resources or experiences which are conventionally desired... and would include all those things which may satisfy human needs in their manifold expressions'\textsuperscript{10}. Needs are identified according to two areas: physiological which includes nutrition and environment; and psychological which refers to identity and community. Sainsbury\textsuperscript{11} also relates the use of need to standards of deprivation. The form that deprivation takes is dependent on the social satisfaction of the individual and also on the culturally accepted norms of the society in which she/he lives.

Definitions of Needs
Writers have spent considerable time and energy in trying to come up with a universally acceptable definition of need. Bradshaw,\textsuperscript{12} for example, devised a typology with four classifications of social need:

- normative need is that which is defined as the desirable standard - usually specified by professionals
- felt need is that expressed by the individuals themselves
- expressed need can best be understood as demand for a particular service
- comparative need is found by studying the characteristics of those who receive a service. If people with similar characteristics are not in receipt of a service then they are in need.

This model highlights the distinction between professionally defined normative needs and individually defined felt needs. Clayton\textsuperscript{13} in a critique of Bradshaw points out, however, that the taxonomy fails to identify classes of need precisely enough to make it possible to use directly in practice. Another analysis of social need develops a fuller typology involving variation in three dimensions\textsuperscript{14}. Firstly, the unit of need is determined to
discover whether it is the individual, the family or the community which is in need. Secondly, the cause of need is assessed in order to determine whether material circumstances or personal inadequacy are involved. Finally, the assessor of need is considered and whether it is the individual or the professional who is involved.

A Psychological Theory of Need
According to psychological theory, individuals are motivated towards fulfilment of their needs. Maslow\textsuperscript{15}, for instance, has developed a hierarchy (see Figure 1.2) through which the individual works his way towards self-actualisation.

Figure 1.2

\begin{figure}
\centering
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node at (0,0) {\textsc{self-actualisation}};
\node at (0,-1) {\textsc{esteem}};
\node at (0,-2) {\textsc{belongingness and love}};
\node at (0,-3) {\textsc{safety needs}};
\node at (0,-4) {\textsc{physiological needs}};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{figure}

Once basic physiological needs such as hunger and thirst are fulfilled, other needs emerge which take priority. Maslow argues that needs do not have to be totally satisfied for higher needs to emerge.
Need as Demand
Economists have attempted to define need in terms of demand for services particularly in situations where services have to be rationed. This method of defining need has gained increasing importance following the reduction in public expenditure. Hill and Bramley\textsuperscript{16} advocate that the notion of need can best be reconciled with conventional economic demand theory. They argue that policy-makers and service-providers frequently neglect cost considerations and fail ‘to produce any vigorous analysis or justification of the provision of free and statutory welfare services’\textsuperscript{17}. As a consequence, increasing demand for services has meant unending supply and further cost to the Exchequer.

Nevitt\textsuperscript{18}, who also accepts the economist’s view of social need criticises social administrators for making heavily value-laden statements on the need for more and better public services without considering the cost of meeting this need. Social need cannot however, be regarded simply as a demand for services for a number of reasons. Firstly, economic theory neglects the non-material dimensions of welfare such as self-esteem or confidence in the individual. These must be regarded as important in understanding the needs of that individual. Secondly, economists reject what Hill and Bramley\textsuperscript{19} refer to as the moral priority for meeting needs, that is, that the state accepts responsibility for meeting an individual’s needs and does so accordingly.

Political Climate and Its Impact on Meeting Needs
Democracy and political ideology have a significant bearing on the role assigned to social policy. The degree to which the State is deemed responsible for its citizens can have a significant bearing on the distribution of welfare and hence on the meeting of needs. Three types of relationship between the State and the individual are distinguished in the literature:
the safety net approach assumes that individuals, families and local communities should be the primary source of social care with minimum state provision.

the welfare state approach holds that the State has an obligation to provide comprehensive services to respond to the problems experienced by people.

the community approach assumes that lay people have more potential and commitment to care for each other than is assumed by the welfare state approach.

In Ireland, a combination of the second and third options is generally thought to be in operation.

It has been pointed out in the literature that individual concern about needs being met is translated downwards from government policy so that primary welfare needs are defined by public budgets rather than household concerns and that a 'bottom-up' approach indicate where policy is falling down.

ASSESSING SOCIAL NEED

Service-Providers' Perspective of Needs

In the traditional view of welfare-provision, service-providers are thought to be best qualified to define and evaluate the needs of individuals. One writer points out that they also claim to be best qualified to distinguish between unnecessary demand and genuine need for a service. According to this viewpoint, in the assessment of need, clients may not be aware of their needs, and, as a consequence, do not know what would serve as a solution to their problems. One empirical study of a social services department concluded that professional social workers must be regarded as the most appropriate assessors of need because of their training.
In recent years, criticisms of this normative view in the definition of need have emerged. Sainsbury,\textsuperscript{23} for instance, pointed out that service-providers' perceptions of need can be determined according to the actual availability of resources to meet them. Also, that, in defining clients' needs, professionals must necessarily make value-judgements as to what would be best for the individuals concerned but that this may be contrary to what individuals really need.

Furthermore, service-providers often differ in their approach to defining clients' needs. As Lawton and Brody\textsuperscript{24} point out 'each investigator or practitioner feels an inner compulsion to make his own scale and to say that other existent scales cannot possibly fit his own setting'.

A final point raised in relation to professional assessment of need is the distinction frequently made by service-providers between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving poor' and the allocation of benefits accordingly. This is particularly the case where benefits are discretionary in nature.

The Clients' Perspective of Needs
The problems associated with the professional perspective of need have caused writers to take more account of clients' own perceptions of their needs. One writer refers to the upsurge of consumer interest and participation as the new politics of need\textsuperscript{25}. Writers who consider the 'felt needs' of the community see this method of needs-assessment as a form of empowerment since individuals have a chance to identify their needs and to suggest ways in which these needs may be met. Writers in the health care field recognise the benefit of consumer assessment:

'there is value to be gained from the involvement of consumers... it becomes important to identify and clarify certain of the issues such efforts raise and which now loom as barriers to further development.'\textsuperscript{26}
However, as in the professional perspective of need, consumer assessment can be problematic. Bradshaw\textsuperscript{27} recognises that felt need is 'by itself an 'inadequate measure' of real need'. Foster\textsuperscript{28} argues that it is limited by the perceptions of the individual - whether they know there is a service available, as well as a reluctance to confess to a loss of independence.

Context of the Study
Kelman\textsuperscript{29} points out that although the perspectives of providers and consumers are thought to be antagonistic this may not be the case. Professionals do have a greater understanding of the availability of resources and of the policy-making process but consumers can articulate their own perceptions of their needs. In this study the emphasis is on allowing clients to express their views of unmet needs by relating their experiences and perceptions of their situations. It is intended that through this approach a broader understanding of needs as seen by the client may be obtained. However, as a complement to the views of clients, an account of their needs as seen by service-providers is also included in the study. The perceived unmet social needs are discussed in the following chapters.
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CHAPTER TWO

THE UNMET NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DISADVANTAGED AREAS

Introduction:
This chapter explores the experiences, needs and concerns of young people who live in disadvantaged areas. The term 'young people' is generally used to cover the period of the life-cycle from 15 years - the statutory minimum school leaving age - up to 24 years of age while 'disadvantaged' refers to areas where there is a concentration of economic and social problems. Whatever their circumstances, young people are going through a period of life which involves a number of important transitions. The difficulties frequently experienced by young people in coping with these transitions are exacerbated for those who find themselves in conditions of social and economic disadvantage. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an opportunity for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to express what they see as their primary needs and to make known the extent to which they see their needs as being addressed by current service-provision. It is important that unmet needs are identified and addressed at an early stage so that a cycle of disadvantage does not become established and so that young people are given the assistance and services needed to enable them reach developmental goals.

CONTEXT

This section provides a context within which the needs of young people from disadvantaged areas may be best viewed and understood. The section outlines the kind of transitional issues faced by young people and the rapidly changing society in which young people nowadays live. Current service-provision for this age group is also described.
Demographic Characteristics

Figures from the 1986 Census indicate that there are currently 617,524 young people between 15-24 years of age in this country which represents around 17 per cent of the total population\(^1\). While the effects of the post-war baby boom had peaked in most countries by around 1980, in Ireland the youth population has continued to grow steadily\(^2\). A breakdown of the Census figures reveals that 48 per cent of these young people are at work, 7 per cent are looking for their first, regular job, and 8 per cent are unemployed\(^3\). Most of those at work are in the 20-24 year age group (62%). The younger age group (15-19 years) accounts for most of those looking for their first job (71%).

Transitions Faced by Young People

The needs expressed by young people must be seen in the context of the psychological and developmental tasks facing them at this stage of their lives. The period of the life-cycle from 15-24 years of age involves two major transitions: the transition from childhood to adulthood and the transition from education to the world of work. Youth is, accordingly, a period of great change and can be traumatic emotionally, physically and socially for young people. Particularly during the period from 15-18 years of age, the young person is struggling with identity issues related to, for example, sex, work, religion and social relationships. The young person is seeking greater independence and recognition and at the same time is having to adjust to new responsibilities and having to develop wider skills in, for example, social relationships, decision-making and problem-solving. Consideration of job prospects, occupational aspirations and preparation for possible parenthood and the creation of a new family life become important issues in the later years of youth.

Social education and support, from both within the family and from the wider community and the state, are essential in facilitating young people to grow and develop through the transitions they face. Preparation for adulthood is, however, greatly influenced
by the social and economic circumstances of the parents of the young person. According to the Task Force on Child Care Services, ‘problems of poverty, bad environmental conditions, and fragmented relationships increase the conflicts and tensions between adolescents and their world’. Among the practical circumstances which the Task Force lists as placing young people in relative disadvantage are the following: overcrowded homes in densely populated areas with a high population of children, inadequate recreational facilities and poor employment prospects. Apart from such practical difficulties, young people may also be at a disadvantage through lack of stable relationships or reliable adult models and through the presence of severe family, educational or social problems. Where the support and opportunities for development provided through the home and the young person’s community are not adequate, greater assistance through voluntary and statutory service-provision is essential.

The Changing Nature of Society
The present population of young people is faced with a significantly different situation to that experienced by their parents and teachers in their youth. Today’s society is characterised by rapid change brought about through technological advances. In this society, knowledge rather than material goods has become the key product and access to knowledge and the ability to use it are essential skills. The situation where the person acquired skills for a particular job, and then stayed in that job for the duration of their working life, is no longer possible. Continual re-training and re-skilling and employment changes have become the norm.

The circumstances faced by young people nowadays are also significantly more difficult than those experienced by the previous generation. Present Irish society is characterised by widespread unemployment. There is increasing competition for the jobs available and higher and higher levels of qualification are being required for even low-level positions. Today’s Irish
society is also characterised by the absence of old certainties with traditional values and norms undergoing widespread questioning and re-evaluation. The fact that young people live in a changed and still rapidly changing society poses particular problems for them at a stage in their lives when they are undergoing a renewed phase of socialisation and acculturisation.

Current Service Provision for Young People
Responsibility for the provision of services for young people is divided between the Departments of Education, Health, Justice and Social Welfare. Currently, there is no legislative base for planning youth policy. The availability of services is dependent on the existence of local networks of each of the governmental agencies involved. Services for young people can be divided under the following headings:

- youth work
- education
- employment and training

Youth Work Provision
The availability of youth work services is very much dependent on community resources and initiative. The main co-ordinating body for voluntary youth organisations and services in Ireland is the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYC). The NYC works to promote the development of services for young people by ensuring funding from government and also through the provision of necessary information and services to all member organisations. Most of the services co-ordinated by the NYC are mainline youth services involving out-of-school recreational and leisure activities.

In addition to mainline services, a number of services have been established in response to the needs of disadvantaged young people. These services include information and drop-in centres which provide help to young people in relation to a variety of
issues. The Youth Resource Centre in operation in Southill is an example of one such service in the Mid-Western Region. Part of the aim of this project is to facilitate the social and personal development of young people and to promote their educational potential. Youth Resource Centres are managed by the Local Authority for disadvantaged youth include:

- youth encounter projects
- neighbourhood youth projects

The Youth Encounter Projects are managed by local V.E.C.'s and are the responsibility of the Department of Education. The Youth Encounter Projects are specifically aimed at early school leavers. They generally involve the establishment of youth information centres - such as that in Galway - to help young people find work and gain experience.

The Neighbourhood Youth Projects are funded by the Department of Health and are intended to provide educational, training, recreational and welfare activities for young people between the ages of 12 and 17 who are deemed to be 'at risk'. The NYP's were first proposed by the 1980 Task Force on Childcare Services as a response to the needs of children who 'while not experiencing emotional problems... are likely to establish patterns of persistent and serious delinquency'. NYP's are used as induction courses for FAS Training Courses which are discussed in a later section.

In some areas, Health Boards also employ community youth workers specifically to deal with young people. A Juvenile Liaison Officer Scheme is also provided by the Department of Justice to prevent delinquency among young people. Unfortunately, there is very little liaison between these services.
Education Provision

Within the education system, there are several schemes to maintain young people at school for as long as possible. One scheme, the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme was introduced as an alternative to senior cycle schooling which is geared solely towards Leaving Certificate. The VPTP curriculum which may run for up to two years, consists largely of vocational subjects such as woodwork, metalwork and mechanical drawing with smaller scale time-tableing of the traditional book subjects. For schools which do provide a two-year VPTP scheme, the second year involves specialisation in one of the vocational subjects. Pupils on the VPTP are sent on work placement one day a week which increases to two days a week in the second year. Certification for the course is provided but, how acceptable this currently is, is open to question. The provision of the VPTP is not standard across schools and subject-availability is at the discretion of each school. This would indicate that the VPTP does not always target those young people who cannot or do not go on to senior cycle schooling.

Another scheme provided in the senior cycle intended to expand the range of educational and vocational options available to pupils is the Transition Year Option (TYO). The TYO provides young people with the option of participating in curricular programmes not geared towards examinations and provides the opportunity to develop skills and interests in non-academic areas. The value of the TYO, as with the other options offered, is that the longer a young person spends in school, the better are their employment prospects. From the point of view of the state, the most economic place for young people is in the educational system. The TYO represents one method of keeping young people within the system for as long as possible.
The New Curriculum

In September 1989 all pupils who entered the Junior Cycle began a new three year programme which will lead to the award of the Junior Certificate in 1992. The aim of the new cycle is to ensure that all pupils are given some certification on reaching the end of the period of compulsory school attendance. The Junior Cycle is the first of many changes suggested by the Curriculum and Examinations Board which was set up in the early eighties to look at current curricula. The Board's first consultative document sets out a framework for curriculum development which will move away from the traditional focus on schooling to an increased emphasis on skills and processes and more assessment services. A recent publication on the new curriculum suggests that these changes in syllabus have come about because of the changing needs of society and the need to ensure that young people have some qualifications on leaving school.

Training Provision

Although organisations such as CERT and local V.E.C.'s provide training for young people, FAS offers the most comprehensive range of training programmes, which are specifically designed to cater for the needs of young people. These programmes include the Community Training Programmes, which have been in operation since the early 1970's. However, it was not until 1985 when the Youth Employment Agency, on the direction of the Minister for Labour, introduced the 'Social Guarantee for Young People', that Community Training Workshops were obliged to take on unqualified school leavers. The Social Guarantee ensures that no young person will be left without some kind of scheme in which to take part.

Special training programmes are available for young people of 15 years of age and over who have left the education system for at least six months and are unemployed. These schemes include the Youth Skills Programme and the Skills Foundation Programme, both of which are specifically designed for young people. The Skills Foundation Programme is intended for young people of 16 years and
over who have left the education system and who have no clear employment objective. The aim of the courses is to provide young people with an opportunity to identify and develop their specific abilities through skills development and career planning. Payment for attendance on these schemes is confined to the equivalent of social welfare rates.

In 1988 the Ministers for Labour and Education announced details of a new programme for early school leavers entitled Youthreach. From January 1989, this jointly organised scheme gave young people with none or few qualifications the opportunity of special education and training programmes for up to two years. The Youthreach Programme absorbed a large proportion of the young people engaged in Community Training Workshops.

Teamwork schemes are community-based temporary employment programmes which provide young people with an opportunity to work while making a contribution to their own community. Teamwork schemes, which are funded by FAS, usually involve projects which benefit the community which may not otherwise be undertaken. Such projects include restoration work and community surveys. Apprenticeships, which are predominantly male oriented, are a special system for training in the skilled trades. They are available to young people over the age of 15 years. The main difference between apprenticeships and other FAS courses is that to qualify for an apprenticeship, young people must obtain GRADE D in either the Group or Intermediate Certificate. This ensures that those who do get accepted have some degree of educational achievement. Apprenticeships are available in most trades including carpentry, fitting, plumbing and toolmaking.

For young people over the age of 18, FAS also provides a scheme entitled 'Job Training', which is industry-based. Companies registered with FAS identify vacancies which are filled by
candidates referred by FAS. FAS pays participants a standard training allowance. The Job Training Scheme is more specifically geared towards the higher achievers among school leavers.

Training schemes for young people tend to be extremely competitive and very few provide any kind of certification. In an assessment of the Youthreach Scheme\textsuperscript{11} it was pointed out that the lack of discussion, consultation or local reaction to the programme has resulted in duplication and confusion in relation to service-provision for young people. It was suggested in that assessment\textsuperscript{12} that integrated programmes should be devised whose aim would be to address the economic and environmental causes that create the problems experienced by young people in the first place. The FAUL project (People Action Against Unemployment, Limerick) represents an attempt within the Mid-Western Region to provide such an integrated programme with statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and communities working in partnership to address issues related to unemployment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Little research exists to date on the needs of young people in Irish society. However, review of the small amount of literature available identifies the following as important issues to be addressed:

- education
- employment
- training
- homelessness
- substance use and abuse

In its Final Report, the National Youth Policy Committee argues that at the heart of issues such as those listed above 'is the state of dependency and the attitudes which that state imposes'\textsuperscript{13}. According to the Report, the state of dependency experienced by
young people is now more prolonged than ever because of economic reasons and this is seen as being of particular concern because of young people's need for self-reliance. Accordingly, the Report emphasises that both economic policy and educational policy are central to meeting the needs of young people.

Education

Potentially, education has a very important role to play in facilitating young people to deal with issues of transition to adulthood and work and in enabling them to reach the specific developmental goals which arise at that particular stage of their lives. While many young people, undoubtedly, receive invaluable help and support in the course of their education, there is some evidence that the present system does not exploit its full potential in enabling young people deal with the transitions they face. One survey of young people found that almost a quarter considered that education had done very little or nothing for them; this attitude being particularly common among those in the lower socio-economic groups. The young people in this survey also perceived that the educational system had fallen down in not explaining what working life is like and in not helping them to understand life.

With regard to the transition to adulthood there is an emphasis in education on academic development which is often maintained at the expense of emotional and personal development. While some second-level schools do carry out life skills programmes, this aspect of development is not generally seen as an integral part of the curriculum.

With regard to the transition from education to employment, there is evidence that the problems experienced by some in making this transition may have their roots in school. According to a recent NESC report, the present points system at second-level emphasises the traditional academic ethos at the expense of vocational elements. The emphasis is on the academic achievements necessary
for accumulation of points which lead to procurement of the limited places in the third-level system. According to the NESC report it is not clear that this pattern of education necessarily results in the appropriate level and mix of skills given the requirements of the Irish economy.\textsuperscript{16} It has also been noted that those who have succeeded in the competition for third-level qualifications have often found themselves in jobs for which they are over-qualified and where they are inadequately stretched and challenged\textsuperscript{17}. Moreover, since the majority of young people do not go on to third-level education, they may begin to perceive the second-level curriculum as irrelevant and may develop serious problems of motivation. The outcome often is low levels of numeracy and literacy and poor examination results leading to later difficulties in obtaining employment. With regard to third-level education, there is concern about the absence of specific incentives which would direct students towards training and studies which would maximise their employment possibilities\textsuperscript{18}.

The most severe difficulties in the transition from education to work are experienced by those who leave the educational system without any formal qualifications. The employment record and labour market experience among this group has been shown to be extremely poor with an unemployment rate of 45 per cent being reported\textsuperscript{19}. Those who attain the Leaving Certificate benefit in terms of employment, financial earnings and in terms of the greater range of job opportunities open to them. Despite the critical importance of qualifications to employment prospects, an analysis among 1983 and 1984 school leavers showed that 9 per cent of boys and 6 per cent of girls left school without taking any state examination and a further 7 per cent and 5 per cent of boys and girls respectively had sat but failed to pass such an examination\textsuperscript{20}. Research also shows that those who drop out from school without qualifications come overwhelmingly from the lower socio-economic groups\textsuperscript{21}. 
Employment

A major issue for young people today is the lack of jobs and the search for employment. Census figures for 1986 reveal that 50,863 young people are unemployed of which 38,698 are in the 20-24 year age group with 12,175 aged between 15 and 19 years. As a percentage of the total registered unemployed in 1986, young people account for 22 per cent. These figures for registered unemployment do not include school-leavers looking for their first job. The unemployment figures must also be placed in the context of the numbers still involved in education and training schemes. Despite the resumption in 1987 of strong economic growth in the Republic of Ireland there has not been a substantial fall in unemployment figures. The scarcity of jobs and the increasing number of people looking for work means that young people are facing severe competition for whatever work opportunities are available. An OECD report highlights that not only has the unemployment situation among disadvantaged young people worsened since the end of the 1970's but there is also more widespread unemployment among young people who are qualified for work.

The poor employment prospects with which many young people are faced have far-reaching implications. The need for meaningful work coupled with unfulfilled expectations may lead to frustration, a sense of futility, alienation or hopelessness. Unemployment may also have profound effects on young people in terms of their future employability and earning potential. Research shows, for example, that there is a tendency for the individual with an initial spell of unemployment to experience a subsequent history of further spells of unemployment. A recent report by NESC points to the importance of counselling and assessment on the first occasion on which the person becomes unemployed. The need for counselling from the start of unemployment reflects the belief that the main cause of long-term unemployment is the fact of becoming unemployed in the first place. Lack of employment also means that young people do not
have opportunities to build up work experience and develop work discipline which may cause them to be disadvantaged throughout their working lives.

Training
In Ireland, as in other EC countries, training - including training of first time job seekers - has become one of the main policies for combating unemployment. It has been found, however, that training, so far, has achieved but a modest reduction in unemployment. This is not so much a reflection on training but on the fact that there simply are not enough jobs available for those who have completed training. In order to be successful, training has to be more than a matter of skills development but has to be accompanied by policy measures which increase the demand for the skills of those partaking in training. With regard to young unemployed school leavers, NESC recommends that a priority should be to discourage young people from dropping out of school and to encourage them to return to regular education and training. The lack of job opportunities following training frequently leads to frustration and points to the need for training to be linked to adequate employment information and preparation for the reality of the job market.

A further issue which arises in relation to job training for young people is the separation in this country between the education and training systems. Generally, training in the form of apprenticeships, on-the-job training and training schemes, takes place after the young person has left school whereas having them while still in the mainstream education system might better meet their needs.

Homelessness
Leaving home and establishing a separate identity from parents is part of the normal developmental process for young people. Where the family provides support and the young person is leaving to take up options in further education or employment, this
transition may be achieved without undue trauma. However, for a growing number of young people, the transition from home is precipitated not through educational or work opportunities but through some crisis or through lack of a supportive family situation. Research has clearly indicated a serious and growing problem of homelessness among young people over the past 10 years. While the Housing Act, 1988 provides significant powers to enable housing authorities secure suitable accommodation for homeless people, young people aged 18 years and younger are excluded from this provision.

The Streetwise National Coalition established that in a one-week period in late 1987 there were 306 young people aged 18 years or younger, who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless outside the Dublin area\(^30\). Streetwise reported significant problems of youth homelessness in all the major cities of the country with Limerick City cited as having 30 young people who were homeless and 19 at risk of becoming homeless. A later report on youth homelessness in Limerick City found that in May 1989 there were 25 young people homeless with 18 of these being male and 7 female\(^31\). In the year previous to this survey, 59 young people were reported to have been homeless in Limerick, again the majority being male (40) rather than female (19). While the Limerick Study shows a predominance of males among homeless youth, a recent Dublin study found a fairly even gender balance among the 77 homeless young people identified\(^32\).

Among young people, the number physically homeless, in the sense of 'sleeping rough' is small in comparison to those who are homeless in the sense of having no regular base and who are drifting from one insecure situation to another\(^33\). With regard to their background, research shows that while a significant number of homeless young people come from low-income families, homelessness, however, is not exclusively a problem of the lower socio-economic social groups\(^34\).
It appears from research that being physically out of home is not in itself the issue but is a symptom of underlying problems. Among the homeless young people in Limerick it has been found that certain groups are significantly represented including children who have been sexually or physically abused, those who have suffered emotional deprivation, those who have been poor attenders in school and those who had been fostered or adopted. A survey among homeless young people in Dublin found that 38 per cent had been in some form of residential care. However, it would be wrong to assume that the underlying triggers for homelessness are always dramatic or that young homeless people have invariably been abused, ill-treated or neglected at home. Research shows that conflicts with parents or with family are by far the most common reasons for being out-of-home but these conflicts are by no means necessarily caused by cruelty or neglect.

Being out-of-home has serious implications for young people above and beyond the physical problems of homelessness. According to a report to the Mid-Western Health Board in 1984, 'most homeless young people would be involved in some form of substance abuse, alcohol, tablets, glue and petty crime.' The seriousness of the consequences is highlighted in the findings of the 1989 report in Dublin which showed that a quarter of those involved in the study had either known involvement or suspected involvement in prostitution, 18 per cent had known or suspected involvement in drug abuse, and 31 per cent had known or suspected involvement in alcohol abuse, while 34 per cent were known to be involved in shop-lifting and petty crime.

With regard to provision for homeless young people, the study conducted in Limerick reports that 'a most disturbing feature of the lives of such young people was the manner in which they were passed from one agency to another in an unplanned and ultimately ineffective manner.' The study highlights the chronic lack of appropriate emergency, medium term and long term accommodation for homeless boys in the city. A further issue relates to the lack of
income among 16-18 year old young people who do not have an automatic right to social welfare assistance and where supplementary welfare benefit payments are at the discretion of community welfare officers. The study calls for a range of services which will address the needs of homeless young people in a holistic fashion; addressing both the physical problems of homelessness and the resultant emotional issues. Co-operation between Health Services, Youth Services, Residential Services, Counselling Services, Education and Training Services is seen as vital, in establishing adequate provision for homeless young people.  

Substance Use and Abuse  
In recent years much attention has been given to the issue of substance abuse among young people. In particular, concern has been expressed about the problem of abuse of illegal drugs. In 1984, the National Youth Policy Committee declared that heroin abuse was not only an acute problem in Dublin inner-city areas but it was also becoming a problem in the Dublin suburbs and in other areas. A survey carried out in Dublin by the ESRI in 1986 found that around one-fifth of post-primary school students had experimented with illegal substances; the most popular being glue or other inhalants and marijuana. With regard to current use, 8 per cent of the students reported having used at least one illegal drug during the previous month. In terms of prevalence, use of legal drugs such as cigarettes and alcohol appears to be more of a problem than illegal substance use. The 1986 ESRI survey found, for example, that over two-thirds of the students surveyed had smoked cigarettes at some time in their lives and almost one quarter were regular smokers. Use of alcohol is even more widespread with almost two-thirds of students having consumed a whole alcoholic drink at some stage in their lives and over one-third being regular drinkers. There is evidence, however, that a considerable amount of drinking and illegal drug use among students is experimental and may not develop into a regular habit. With regard to factors which influence young people in
using different substances, it has been found that having a best friend who uses cigarettes, alcohol or other drugs has a significant effect. It has also been found that those young people who are committed to and involved in school and those who are strongly bonded to family, exhibit lower levels of smoking, drinking and drug use.

In its Final Report produced in 1984, the National Youth Policy Committee emphasised the importance of education in making young people aware of the dangers of drug abuse and strongly recommended the introduction of life skills programmes into schools in an effort to prevent the problem becoming more widespread. In its analysis of prevention strategies in drug use, the ESRI points out that programmes confined to information giving of themselves are of little use and, instead, need to concentrate on developing the skills to enable young people withstand peer pressure. As previously indicated, however, general life skills programmes are not an integral part of the second-level curriculum and are not available in all schools. Neither are school programmes aimed at drug use prevention widely available. A number of community initiatives have been established which include drug education as part of their function. Within the Mid-Western Region, for example, the Southhill Youth Resource Centre provides education so that young people may be better able to make informed choices about drug use. Such initiatives are, however, piecemeal and uncoordinated on a national level. With regard to treatment for young people involved in drug abuse, it appears that while some services have been established in Dublin, very little is available elsewhere in the country.
METHODOLOGY

The procedures used to explore the experiences and perceptions of young people with regard to unmet needs are described in this section. The section outlines the general characteristics of those interviewed, it describes the methods by which they were contacted and the themes around which the interviews were structured.

Profile of Young People Interviewed
Ten young people were interviewed, of whom six are female and four male. All of those interviewed exhibit low level of educational attainment and all come from areas of high unemployment and general deprivation. All the interviewees had sought employment but were, at time of interview, involved in FAS courses designed especially for young people who are unemployed.

Those interviewed ranged in age from 15 years to 21 years. All had left school at an early age. Two had had some work experience before the FAS course but the majority had no qualifications whatsoever.

Urban and rural areas were equally represented since five of the interviewees came from a city area and five came from a provincial town and its surrounding rural areas. All of the young people interviewed were living at home at time of interview. Interviews were exploratory in nature, extracting experiences and concerns from the young people involved.

Means of Contact
The interviewees were contacted through youth workers and social workers involved in Youth Centres in both urban and rural areas. The young people were initially asked to participate and were told that SRC fieldworkers would contact them about arrangements. Some of the young people selected were hesitant about participation due to their lack of confidence. Others viewed the interview as an
assessment of their work at the Youth Centre. However, once it was emphasised that the study was being carried out by an independent agency, all interviewees agreed to take part.

Location and Duration of Interview
The young people were interviewed in the Youth Centres in Limerick and Ennis. In all cases nobody else was present except the interviewee and the fieldworker. One of the young people interviewed expressed concern at the use of a tape-recorder and questioned who might hear the tape. However, once reassured of the confidentiality of the study the interviewee agreed to be recorded. Interviews ranged from 1 hour to 14 hours in length.

Themes Covered in the Interview
The interview was designed to allow the young people an opportunity to give their views on their needs and aspirations and to indicate how adequately they felt their needs are currently being met. The open exploration of unmet needs was structured around the following topics:

- general needs
- family circumstances
- housing
- education
- finance
- employment/training
- social contact
- support networks

FINDINGS OF THE INTERVIEWS

This section describes in a qualitative fashion the outcomes of the interviews with the 10 young people from disadvantaged areas. To begin with, the section describes those needs most frequently voiced as being unmet. The section further outlines a number of unmet needs which while not being identified as such by all of
those interviewed nevertheless are raised sufficiently often to warrant attention. Finally, the section describes unmet needs which are not specifically identified by those interviewed but may be clearly inferred from the experiences they recount.

MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED UNMET NEEDS

One of the most outstanding impressions which emerges from the interviews is that young people from disadvantaged areas share the same concerns with those from more privileged backgrounds. The needs they articulate are typical of those at the stage of the life-cycle from 15 to 24 years and include the need for independence and the need for acceptance and understanding. However, the experiences they relate show how the usual difficulties of young people are exacerbated for those who live in disadvantaged circumstances. The two most frequently mentioned unmet needs revolve around employment opportunities and having enough money to live on. Other frequently noted unmet needs include adequate recreational facilities and advice and information services. These unmet needs are described in detail below.

Need for Employment Opportunities

Among those interviewed, the greatest unmet need among young people today is seen to be the creation of employment opportunities. When asked about his greatest need at present, one young interviewee responded as follows:

'I suppose work would be the most important... young people today... they need something after school... a good job and good money behind it'.

Although all of the interviewees are participating in training schemes, few feel confident about getting work. Some feel that a main obstacle to obtaining employment is the lack of
qualifications and point out that following training no certification is given to participants:

'... you don't get any certs or anything. I'd like to see it - we'd be better off. We should get some certs... for the work we do - that's what we need'.

Another perceived obstacle to finding work is the attitude of employers to young people. According to one of the young women
'I don't think employers give young people a fair enough go. Most young people are okay if they're given a chance but employers say 'you don't have enough experience or you've too much experience and not enough qualifications'... employers, if they don't like the look of you that's it'.

It appears there is a need to educate employers about the worthwhile characteristics of young people. One young woman related her experience of getting off on the wrong foot with an employer and how this prematurely ended her placement:
'I was down in the restaurant - I was supposed to stay for a month and I only stayed three days... I went down to waitress but I was only washing pots - everyone knows how to do that - and the woman said 'do you have to write down what you do everyday?' I said 'I don't need to, I'm only washing pots'. She said nothing. She phoned the Youth Centre to say that I wasn't fitting in'.

Many expressed worry about finding work and exhibited feeling of hopelessness about their situation. As one interviewee expressed it:
'I often worry alright 'cos I wouldn't like to go on the Labour. I don't know what I'll do'.

The seriousness of the situation is highlighted by the comments of one interviewee who spoke of having to look for a job and said:
'If I don't get one, I'll have nothing'.

Rather than being on the 'dole' without work some indicated that they are prepared to emigrate:

'I'd like to stay here if there's a job for me but if I can't there's not much I can do. I don't want to stay here on the dole for the rest of my life'.

'We're not getting paid enough for the work we do. It's very bad, there's a few of the girls that have left because they got sick of the hours and the work they did and they've gone on the dole because they're getting the same amount. I think they should give people a bit more incentive - especially to come in and do their work because a lot of them are only coming and doing the work for £20 a week - they say why should I work'.

Need for Adequate Financial Support

All of those interviewed feel that they do not have enough money to live on. Although most agreed that they have enough for very basic requirements, they do not have enough for social life which is a very important need for them. Their situation is highlighted in the following comments:

'I get £20 on the course and I hand up a tenner at home. That leaves me with a tenner, that's not much. You could spend a tenner in a night... just one night and then you've no money for the rest of the week'.

With one exception, the interviewees described how they worry about money and what is to happen to them in the future. One young man spoke of his concern about financial security should he meet someone and want to marry her:

'I worry about say if I met a girl and we wanted to settle down. I'd worry about that - I need a job with more money, I need a house... but I don't know, time will tell'. 
When asked whether they get a fair deal in relation to money, some noted the inequity of the system whereby trainees are paid on courses funded by FAS. Payment is decided according to age so that a fifteen year old could be doing the same work, nine to five, five days a week and getting half the payment of a twenty year old. One woman commented as follows:

'I'd like more money. There's people working here, doing the same hours, the same work for twenty or thirty pounds - why aren't they on the same hours and less money? Age is nothing really'.

Need for Recreational Facilities

The need for more and better recreational facilities arose at several points in all of the interviews conducted. The lack of facilities is emphasised in the following quote:

'A lot of people that leave school just hang around the road, there really isn't anything. I suppose there's a play scheme for children but for teenagers there's nothing, just nothing. I'd like to see some clubs or something in summer'.

Several commented that they would like to see more sports facilities. Also raised was the point that although sports might be provided in an area, they are frequently geared towards boys leaving girls with little to do:

'There's a lot of sport down there but there's no sport for girls. It's really all for boys - there should be basketball or camogie or something'.

The remarks of some of the interviewees indicated a pessimism about the commitment to provide facilities for young people:

'There's no good things about being a young person - there's nothing to do. If you're older you can go out and meet people. Now, where I live there isn't even a youth club or youth centre. They used to have a disco and they closed that
down. They used to have a youth club everyday at four o'clock until ten that night playing pool and games and things but they closed that as well'.

Several were of the opinion that because facilities for young people are so underdeveloped the temptation to get involved in drugs or alcohol abuse becomes greater:

'No there isn't enough for teenagers. I'd like to see more recreational facilities because most of the people round my age and younger, all they do is go into town and go drinking, there's nothing else really to do'.

Need for Advice and Information

When asked about their greatest need at present many of those interviewed indicated that the most important help that could be offered to young people is advice on day-to-day issues and problems they experience. One young woman expressed it simply as follows:

'More advice on drugs and generally advice on things important to young people'.

Information and advice on sex-related issues were perceived to be most lacking. For example, one interviewee described his experience of teachers in this area as follows:

'They kind of touched on them but they didn't go in depth about them... they're topics that are kept under the mat. I think the biggest issue they keep under the mat is sexuality - they don't seem to want to talk about it at all - sex outside marriage, anything like that, it just doesn't exist. They don't want to hear about it'.

Knowledge of contraception and Aids appears to be scanty. Two of the interviewees asked what was meant by contraception and one had never heard of Aids.
Those interviewed also feel that they would like more information and advice about the dangers associated with drinking, smoking and drug use. They feel that this information is not readily available. In their experience they had just been ordered to have nothing to do with these substances.

All the young people interviewed had been exposed to drugs through their friends or through someone they knew in their area. None of them had ever tried drugs but some had come dangerously close:

'I know people who can't get off drugs. They're addicted - they're the same age as myself. I know one guy who is a lot younger than me, he can't stay away from it... You'd be sitting down watching them and they're laughing away - you'd think, I'll have to try it for myself. That's the way it all leads up'.

Again, in relation to Aids, young people feel that there is not sufficient information available. One of the young people interviewed was not even aware that it existed. This indicates that more information needs to be made available specifically geared at young people. One interviewee suggests that some kind of advice bureau be set up:

'... there should be something done about it but I don't know how they're going to stop it. I think they need an advice centre on it. Leaflets were sent out an'all but no-one's taking any notice of it'.

Another person disillusioned with the current availability of information on Aids commented as follows:

'A few years back in the '80s when the Aids thing started, in Ireland there was loads of information about Aids. People think that Aids doesn't exist anymore.

One problem in the current dissemination of information is the fact that a lot of young people leave school before the age at which teachers consider them to be old enough to get this
information. This means that a lot of young people slip through the net and never get the information they need. One interviewee put forward the following suggestion:

'They should start in Primary School and build it up. Once you leave and go to Secondary School it depends on the person you are. What I understand is a lot of people left Primary School and started drinking an'all so if they had the information earlier it wouldn't be as bad'.

Some pointed to the piece-meal approach employed for providing young people with information:

'it was given in our school but not that much, never drugs, just sex education. Not alcohol either. It's important to do that'.

One suggestion for a more comprehensive advisory service is as follows:

'You really need some kind of office where you can go in and get information like that - there isn't anything like that'.

A centrally located, easily accessible centre is seen as being able to provide this service which is considered to be necessary by a lot of young people today. This would be of benefit to all young people and might avert situations like the following:

'More information should be available... my girlfriend is pregnant at the moment. She was on the pill - I don't know what happened... That was due to lack of information on both our parts'.

Concern is also expressed with the communicative aspects of the advice from older people to young people. According to a young person, older people should:

'Spend more time with teenagers and show them, don't just give them the basis of anything like sex education...
something should be done to help them listen. But when a person says don’t do this, don’t do that, you say he’s off nagging again, I won’t listen’.

**ADDITIONAL PERCEIVED UNMET NEEDS**

Apart from the unmet needs described above which were identified by all or most of those interviewed, a number of additional areas of concern were raised in the interviews. These concerns are described below.

Need for More Relevant Educational System

Several areas of unmet need were raised in the interviews which revolve around the young people’s educational experiences. For example, the traditional passive ‘blackboard’ approach to education is seen by interviewees as totally lacking in encouragement for young people. One girl, who is sixteen, left school early because she could not relate to what was happening in school:

‘I left two years ago - just after first year. I left because I was sick of it - I can’t imagine myself sitting down all day’.

Another problem experienced by young people in relation to school is the pressure to do well in examinations. Sometimes this pressure becomes too much for them as in the case of the young man who left school, to go to England, just three months before doing the Leaving Certificate:

‘Coming up to the Leaving - the pressure of this, that and the other... I decided this isn’t for me... I didn’t have problems in school. I was just on one of those downers... I didn’t want to be sitting down in a class room with forty other students - it didn’t feel right at all’.
Most of the young people interviewed feel that school would be better if it involved action learning or more work-experience. School is seen as being geared very much towards the middle class. One young man who is currently involved with a catering course commented as follows:

'If you want to be an accountant school helps you but not all jobs... like chef-work school wouldn't help you - I did nothing like that at school'.

Some also feel that there is a need to encourage young people to work in school because most of them become apathetic due to high rates of unemployment. One young man suggests more exposure of young people to working life and to the darker side of alcohol and substance abuse:

'In school I think it would be good to take them around to the rough parts of the youth - take them down to where all the winos are and say look at them now you could turn out like them some day... or show them a man working - plastering or building and say you could turn out like him. They could show them some jobs and say you could be working at that and bring them up to the dole-queue and say you could be signing on like that'.

Need for Better Pupil-Teacher Relationship

One problem experienced by many of the young people interviewed was difficulty in relating to their teachers in school. As one young man expressed it:

'Teachers, they just correct homework, give you homework, tell you to sit down - it's a joke'.

Another young woman pointed to the problems experienced by her in school where teachers were seen as only having time for the more intelligent students:

'I wasn't brainy at Maths which wasn't fair, the teacher just went ahead with the brainier people in the class - she let
anyone that wasn't brainy just go to the dogs... she'd say you, you're stupid, you can sit in the back of the class and do what you like'.

Another need in relation to education and relationships between teachers and pupils is the need for sensitivity among teachers to problems being experienced by young people in their family life and the need for a sensitive approach to these issues. For example, one girl who is now seventeen, spoke of her embitterment towards teachers in general. This was due to her experiences after confiding in a teacher that she had been sexually abused:

'I was once telling a teacher I was abused when I was five - I ended up in a home for three months - I couldn't keep it in so I told her. Then I went to the Rape Crisis Centre and I talked to a girl there. Then the teacher came in - said I couldn't stay at home, I went to the home, I hated it there... they (teachers) only get you into trouble'.

The need for greater sensitivity among teachers to weaker students is also raised and the need for more individual attention in school is stressed:

'Well I think in that situation there should be a special class for people that are slow... Maybe if I had been given extra tuition but they just didn't care'.

Need for Respect and Understanding

At different points in the interviews several of the young people spoke of their need for respect and understanding from others. As one young woman expressed it, what young people need is:

'Just to give them a chance. They're not all bad. They need a chance in life, a bit of respect'.

Several of those interviewed feel that being a young person means that adults have difficulty in understanding you as an individual:

'Well... they (adults) don't understand that every individual has their own way of living - you just live your own life.'
Everyone has their own individual needs. Things are different for everyone.

Likewise, another spoke of the need to give young people a chance to prove themselves:

'If I'd say give them a chance. There isn't a lot of chances given to young people today. I think personally - a chance to prove themselves'.

More understanding from parents is seen as particularly important. One young woman describes her experience of not being listened to:

'I think a lot of adults treat teenagers as if they're kids - they're supposed to be seen and not heard - especially in our house, my father's old-fashioned. He won't let you have your say, you're told to shut up and listen to him - the way he thinks he knows everything about it - so adults don't listen to teenagers'.

Some spoke of 'a big gap between parents and teenagers' and admitted that it is a two-way lack of communication where as one person said, 'I don't understand them either'.

One interviewee feels that it is up to parents to discipline their children and give them the guidance they need:

'some of them don't bother or give a damn about their kids or young people today. A lot of them don't... some don't give a damn if the kids go to school or not... they should be aware of what their kids are doing'.

INFERRRED UNMET NEEDS

The experiences and perceptions recounted by the young people point to a number of areas of unmet need. The impression from the interviews is that there is a sense of hopelessness among the young people involved and a belief that nothing will change or nothing much can be done. It would appear that an unmet need
among them is the development of confidence in themselves and a belief in their strength and potential. In addition, these young people would seem to need assistance in developing a more positive approach which helps them to think about solutions rather than focusing exclusively on problems. Closely related to the need for confidence-building and the development of a positive approach is the need for greater public awareness and understanding of the developmental process which young people are undergoing so that they may receive the support and guidance which they indicate is currently lacking. If young people are to develop confidence in their abilities there also needs to be greater public acceptance and acknowledgement of the potential contribution which they can make.

**SUMMARY**

The interviews with young people have provided an opportunity to explore from their perspective their needs and concerns at this stage of their lives. The views recounted highlight a number of areas of need which are perceived by the young people as being currently unmet and point to issues which need to be addressed if the potential of young people is to be exploited and they are to be involved in their communities. While many of the needs identified are those typically associated with youth, it appears that being from a disadvantaged area makes more difficult some of the transitions involved at this stage of the life-cycle. The unmet needs brought to light in the course of the interviews are summarised below.

**Most Frequently Mentioned Unmet Needs**

- employment opportunities
- adequate recreational opportunities and facilities
- advice and help given in adult-to-adult manner
- adequate financial support
Additional Perceived Unmet Needs

- educational curriculum and methods which are relevant and encourage/motivate
- opportunities in school for work-experience
- better communication between teachers and students
- attention to and understanding of the problems of weaker students
- sensitivity among teachers to pupils with family problems
- understanding and respect from older people and parents
- better communication with parents

Inferred Unmet Needs

- confidence-building and development of positive approach
- public acceptance of potential contribution of young people
References:


5. Ibid.


12. Ibid.
References:


23. OECD, 1985, op.cit


References:
27. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
41. Ibid, p.5.
References:


44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.


48. Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

THE UNMET NEEDS OF Lone PARENTS

Introduction

This chapter describes the unmet needs of parents who are raising families on their own. The term 'lone parent' may be defined as referring to any adult who is not living with a partner, either in marriage or in cohabitation, but who may be living with family or friends, and who has one or more dependent children. The term covers a number of distinct groups including families where the parent who is raising the children alone is divorced, separated, deserted, widowed or unmarried. The term is also sometimes used in a broader sense to cover families where the partner is in prison or has emigrated. In lone-parent families it may be either the mother or the father who is absent although in the vast majority of cases such families are fatherless rather than motherless. There can be movement in and out of the category as, for example, where a woman bears a child outside of wedlock and later marries. A significant number of families can expect to spend at least some time in the lone-parent group. In this study the focus is on lone parents, in the narrower sense of this term, where families of prisoners or emigrants are not included. The chapter presents the experiences and perceptions of a number of different types of lone parents and describes the extent to which they perceive their needs as being currently unmet.

CONTEXT

The purpose of this section is to outline the context within which the findings in relation to the unmet needs of lone parents may be viewed. The section presents the available data on the demographic characteristics of lone-parent families in this country. The role of the family in Irish society is outlined and relevant policies which affect the lives of lone parents are described.
Demographic Characteristics
In recent years there have been marked changes in Irish society; not least of which has been the increase in the number of lone-parent families. Census figures for 1981 indicate that, at that time, there were 96,029 lone-parent families; of which the vast majority were fatherless (76,646) rather than motherless (19,383). By 1986 the number of lone-parent families had grown to 104,713 representing around 10 per cent of all households\(^1\). Most of this increase has occurred among fatherless families where the number went from 76,646 to 85,693. It should be noted however, that these figures cover all lone-parent families including partners of prisoners and emigrants and those whose partners were temporarily absent at the time of the Census. A breakdown according to marital status among the women identified in the Census as raising children on their own reveals that the majority are widowed (64\%), 17 per cent are married, 11 per cent are separated and 7 per cent are single\(^2\). These lone mothers are looking after over 160,000 children which amounts to an average of two per household.

The steady growth in the annual rate of births outside marriage is particularly marked; increasing from 2.7 per 1,000 in 1970 to 12.6 per cent of all births in 1989\(^3\). The rate of births outside of marriage in 1990 is estimated to rise to 14 per cent\(^4\). Mothers under 20 years of age account for 29 per cent of all births outside of marriage\(^5\). However, while unmarried mothers are often seen as the typical lone-parent family the figures above show that they represent a small proportion (7\%) of such families.

Role of the Family
In the Constitution of Ireland the family is recognised as the 'natural primary and fundamental unit group of society'. According to the Task Force on Child Care Services, the family 'is the primary (though not the exclusive) source of love and individual care, recognition of personal worth and that sense of identity which a child needs'\(^6\). The State's view of the family is
one based on married partners and it pledges itself to 'guard with special care the institution of marriage, on which the family is founded and to protect it against attack'. There are no constitutional provisions for the state maintenance of spouses or children in the event of marriage breakdown. However, as the statistics presented above show, an increasing number of families no longer belong to the married two-parent category. While the stability of families headed by two married parents is protected by law and by custom, it is likely that it is the lone-parent families which need most help and protection. A list of conditions noted by the Task Force on Child Care Services as likely to create stress in families and put children at risk, includes 'incomplete family-structure, including single-parent families, desertion, separation'. The income maintenance procedures and family support services provided for lone-parent families are outlined in the following sections.

Income Maintenance Procedures

Income maintenance for lone parents relates for the most part to women. It is only in recent years that the financial burden of parenting alone has been recognised as also being an issue for motherless families. Until recently, allowances for lone parents came under the social assistance schemes with the exception of the Widow's Contributory Pension and the Deserted Wives Benefit. These latter payments were payable according to the satisfaction of PRSI conditions. All of the social assistance allowances are means-tested and payable by the Department of Social Welfare. However, there is considerable complexity in the payment of these allowances. Several eligibility conditions had to be satisfied making application cumbersome.

An allowance for unmarried mothers was introduced in 1974 payable to single women with at least one dependent child. The single mother had to be living on her own to qualify for the allowance. The introduction of this allowance indicated that the State had at least begun to recognise that other family units exist outside of
the traditional two-adult family. However, the amount of the allowance indicates that by no means are single parents on a par with their married counterparts.

In the case of separation, maintenance is generally paid by the husband for both his wife and dependent children. There is no onus on the state to maintain spouses or children in the event of separation. However, the 1976 Family Law Act sets out the grounds upon which a court may order maintenance to be paid by one spouse for the support of the other spouse and dependent children. Maintenance is normally set according to the financial and other responsibilities of the spouses and on whether the payee is in receipt of social welfare payments.

In relation to desertion, the Deserted Wives Allowance, which was introduced in 1970, was payable only after several conditions had been met. These conditions include:
1. must be deserted for at least three months
2. must not be in receipt of maintenance from husband
3. husband must have left of his own accord
4. woman must have made reasonable efforts to get maintenance from the husband
5. must not be cohabiting
6. must be over 40 if no dependent children

The allowance is made up of a personal rate with extra amounts for child dependents. In cases where separated spouses do not receive their maintenance, or, in the first three months of a spouse being deserted, an "emergency" payment in the form of Supplementary Welfare Allowance is available. This allowance is paid not by the Department of Social Welfare but by the local Health Board. Payments for exceptional needs are also available.

Widows who do not qualify for a Contributory Pension are entitled to a Widow's Non-Contributory Pension if they satisfy a means-test. The Widow's Non-Contributory Pension is also made up of a personal rate with extra amounts for child dependents.
Since divorce is not recognised by the State, there are no social welfare payments available for this category of lone parent.

Payments for lone parents have always been criticised for being based on the initial situation which led to the circumstance of lone parenthood. For example, the non-contributory allowance for a lone parent who is a widow is greater in total than the allowance for a lone parent who is an unmarried mother. In the case of lone fathers, it is only since 1989 that legislation allowed for the payment of the deserted husband's allowance and the widower's pension. However, recent changes in social welfare legislation should ensure parity between all lone parents (with the exception of divorced people)\(^{10}\). Based on the recommendations of the Commission for Social Welfare the new Lone Parent's Allowance is payable on the satisfaction of a means-test which is the same as that for the Deserted Wives Allowance\(^{11}\). The allowance has been described as a 'progressive step' since it is paid irrespective of the cause of lone-parenthood or of the sex of the parent\(^{12}\). However, some of the anomalies of delivery still remain\(^{13}\).

Family Support Services

Family support services are meant to facilitate and support parents in providing good care for their children especially in circumstances where parents are experiencing particular difficulties. The importance of support for lone parents may be inferred from the fact that within the Mid-Western Region, 60 per cent of the children in care in 1988 came from one-parent families. The report of the Task Force on Child Care Services describes family support services as ideally comprising the following: 'home help services; day care services; groupwork for parents and for children; self-help groups for parents; case-work; family therapy; advice and counselling; supervision of children living at home; and occasionally, supervision of both parents and children in accordance with a court order'\(^{14}\). With regard to families in general, it has been found that provision of support services is inadequate both in terms of the limited range of
services available and in the manner of their provision\textsuperscript{15}. When the home-help service, for example, was established in 1972, family problems were intended as a priority. However, this priority has largely been eclipsed in recent years by an almost exclusive focus on the elderly\textsuperscript{16}. In a few areas, full-time home-helps or home-makers have been assigned to working with families on practical home-management problems and in a smaller number of areas workers with training in residential child care have been assigned on an individual basis to social work teams to increase the range of supports available to families\textsuperscript{17}. Recent years have seen the development of initiatives which involve locally based resource centres for families within their own communities. One example of this type of initiative in the Mid-Western Region is the Moyross Family Resource Centre.

**Child Care Facilities**

With regard to lone-parent families, family support in the form of child care services may be regarded as particularly important in that they facilitate employment and consequently may relieve the poverty which is a frequent circumstance of such families. Child care facilities in Ireland are, however, very limited. Research shows that only 35 per cent of all children under six years of age are looked after in services outside the home and three-quarters of these are in primary school\textsuperscript{18}. Most of those children in a care facility other than school are catered for within the private sector with state provision being virtually non-existent. Less than two per cent of children under the age of six are in a state-funded nursery\textsuperscript{19}. The Department of Health, through its eight regional Health Boards, funds social service or community service nurseries or playgroups catering for those children under five years of age who are not attending primary schools. It is, however, voluntary organisations who run these services with the Department of Health's role confined to distributing state subventions and, occasionally, providing public health nurse visitors. The overall policy objective in relation to these funded services is to alleviate stress situations and prevent
family breakdown which could lead to the removal of children from their homes and placement in care. The Department's policy specifically notes as one of three priority groups for day care services 'single-parent homes where the parent is obliged to go out to work and is unable to make child-minding arrangements for the care of children under school-going age'. However, long waiting lists are common and after-school hours provision is very limited. According to the latest figures available, the Mid-Western Health Board provides some funding to 46 day care facilities, catering for approximately 800 children. These facilities include one day nursery looking after around 20 children and 45 community playgroups with approximately 10-20 children in each.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides an overview of the available literature on the needs of lone-parent families in this country. A review of the small amount of research to date reveals the following as the more important areas of need among this group:

- financial circumstances
- employment opportunities
- housing
- social attitudes

Financial Circumstances

Research shows that in Ireland, as elsewhere, lone-parent families are the most likely of all types of household to be poor. Poverty, in this context, is regarded as being relative to the standard of living enjoyed by the majority of the population and people are defined as poor if they do not have the resources to participate in their local area or society. Research among women regarded as poor reveals that poverty is much more than not having enough for food and clothing but must also take account of having sufficient resources to meet health needs and social, emotional, political and cultural needs.
Poverty among lone-parent families is very much connected with social welfare provision. A minority of women raising families on their own (23%) work outside the home; most of whom are in relatively low-level jobs in the service and industrial areas.²⁴ Among the majority who are not working, about 30,000 are in the social welfare system.²⁵ A woman raising a family on her own (widow, deserted wife, unmarried mother) gets around £53.00 for herself and between £10.00 and £15.00 for each dependent child in social welfare payments. However, a recent ESRI report shows that Irish people consider that a single person needs between £55.00 and £65.00 per week to avoid poverty.²⁶ Similarly, the Commission on Social Welfare, in 1986, recommended a minimum income of £51 to £60 per week for a single person which in today's values would amount to around £55.00 to £65.00²⁷. The payments allowed for children are also clearly inadequate in the light of estimates which, in 1987, indicated that one child under four years costs £19.60 to rear; two children under four cost £24.30; one child over four costs £28.20 and two children over four cost £44.40²⁸.

In addition to low level of payments, as indicated previously, women on some social welfare schemes have experienced the added difficulty of having to comply with strict conditions of eligibility which are often unclear and complicated. A 1990 survey among deserted wives reveals that 39 per cent of applications among this group to the Department of Social Welfare fail to qualify for a payment.²⁹ The two main reasons for refusal are that the applicant is regarded as not having been deserted and that she has failed to make reasonable efforts to trace her husband and prevail upon him to support her and their family.³⁰ Research also shows that separated women depending on private maintenance arrangements with their husbands frequently experience hardship. A 1990 survey of 1127 applications for maintenance in the District Court highlights the low amounts of maintenance awarded and the high rates of default on payment of maintenance orders.³¹ Applicants were invariably women and in 60 per cent of cases the amount of maintenance awarded was less than £32.00 a
week which is lower than the lowest social welfare payment - Supplementary Welfare Allowance. Moreover, only 13 per cent of live orders surveyed were found to be fully paid up and 77 per cent were more than six months in arrears.

With regard to widows, a survey conducted among this group in 1988 found that financial circumstances significantly worsened with bereavement and the vast majority described their current circumstances as being not good\(^32\). It emerged in this study that distribution of financial assistance in the form of contributory and non-contributory pensions is uneven and causes severe financial strain for a number of widows.

There are some indications that unmarried mothers may be in particularly poor financial circumstances. Two separate studies of small groups of unmarried mothers in Dublin found that they were a particularly vulnerable group in a number of respects not least of which was finance\(^33\).

Social Attitudes to Poverty
In addition to the physical deprivations of poverty, there are also social costs attached to being poor. Despite the fact that fraudulent social welfare claims at most amount to 4 per cent of all social welfare beneficiaries, social welfare claimants are frequently spoken of as 'spongers' or 'scroungers'. Unmarried mothers, in particular, are often the object of resentment and are accused of deliberately creating their predicament in order to claim benefits. Research on poverty and women reveals many prejudices in relation to people who are poor. Poor people are regarded as being poor through their own fault, they are seen as lazy and lacking in ambition, and are not supposed to have a social life, own a car or T.V. or dress their children well\(^34\).

Employment Opportunities
It has been pointed out that one of the primary reasons why lone-parent families have a high risk both of being poor and of
staying poor is that they have limited access to the most effective means of countering poverty which is full-time employment. As indicated previously, less than a quarter (23%) of mothers raising families on their own work outside the home. Among those in paid employment, unmarried mothers are most likely to work outside the home (36%) followed by separated women (35%). Production work and services account for almost half (48%) of all lone female parents in paid employment. Only 16 per cent are in professional occupations.

Lone parents experience a number of obstacles which make it difficult for them to take up paid employment. A major obstacle is the lack of child-care facilities. As indicated previously, state child-care provision in Ireland is practically non-existent while workplace crèches are a rarity with around nine in the country as a whole. The Social Welfare system itself also contains several disincentives to work. At present, for example, some welfare payments are cut very severely when the claimant has part-time earnings. In addition, when a welfare claimant takes up a job, s/he may lose other benefits such as a medical card and there may be an increase in the differential local authority rent paid. The fear of losing these benefits is a very real obstacle to seeking employment unless the lone parent is sure of earning a sufficiently high wage to support his/her family. Access to training schemes is also limited for many lone parents with deserted wives and unmarried mothers excluded from schemes such as the Social Employment Scheme. FAS - the state training and development agency - provides a small number of courses for women wishing to return to work but these courses have tended not to be widely advertised and women on low incomes are less likely to be aware of them. The Social Welfare system also makes it difficult for claimants to get involved in Adult Education which is potentially another avenue out of poverty. A claimant involved in education is not deemed to be 'available for work' and unemployment payments are consequently stopped. There is a limited scheme currently in existence in two areas of the country.
- the Educational Opportunities Scheme - which allows welfare claimants to study for a certificate but deserted wives and unmarried mothers are not eligible.

Housing
The poor financial circumstances of lone parents and the lack of employment opportunities available to them are reflected in their housing conditions. While about 78 per cent. of homes in Ireland are owner-occupied, lone parents who depend on Social Welfare cannot afford to own their own homes and have little or no choice over the kind of housing in which they live. A study of unmarried mothers found that almost all of the women who in 1986 contacted Cherish - a service for unmarried mothers during and after pregnancy - were experiencing some difficulty in relation to housing. According to this report 'single parent families have difficulties in acquiring independent accommodation which is secure and affordable, adequate for their needs and which allows them to establish a basis for family life and share in the way of life of other members of society'. While local authority housing is now being provided for more lone parents than in the past, there are still many problems related to provision and letting policies. Although in 1987 they made up 20 per cent of those on waiting lists, lone-parent households are a low priority for local authority housing and are regarded as less deserving than two-parent families or elderly people. Lone-parent families move up very slowly on the waiting list because the system of allocating points for housing on the basis of family size means that they are competing with larger, expanding families. In addition, there is the problem that most local authority houses are designed to meet the needs of the traditional two-parent family and there is little or no provision for the smaller family unit. Where lone-parent families are housed, they are frequently placed in areas of low demand where facilities and services are very limited. Within the Mid-Western Region, for example, 20 per cent of the population of one particular local authority housing estate are lone-parent households and approximately 30 per cent of
the children of the area come from these families. Because of these problems, it has been found that some women, in desperation, give up their local authority houses and move to the private rental sector\textsuperscript{43}. The private rental sector poses its own problems for lone parents: rents tend to be very high, the accommodation is often poor and tenure is insecure\textsuperscript{44}. Many lone parents are, however, trapped in the private rental sector being unable to afford their own homes and not being provided with suitable local authority housing.

Social Attitudes to Lone Parents

Rearing children on one's own can be a lonely and isolating experience. Lone parents lack the support which sharing affection, responsibility and decision-making with another adult can give. In addition to this, research shows that lone parents also frequently have to cope with negative social attitudes. For example, there is a feeling in society that a woman raising children on her own has no right to a social life – she should be at home minding her children\textsuperscript{45}. It is also often assumed that when a man leaves the home the woman is somehow to blame. Lone parents also have to cope with the fact that because the traditional married couple is the norm lone-parent families are sometimes regarded as an 'abnormality'.

Among lone parents, unmarried mothers have perhaps suffered the greatest level of social prejudice and stigma. Well into the middle of the present century, women who bore children outside of marriage were subjected to severe and rigid judgements\textsuperscript{46}. According to the findings of a 1970 conference on the 'Unmarried Mother in the Irish Community' 'these women are regarded and treated as second class citizens and very often their misfortune is interpreted as being of their own devising'\textsuperscript{47}. While attitudes have changed and services have been developed since the early 1970's, negative and inaccurate stereotypes of the unmarried mother still exist. In particular, the economic depression has given rise to a begrudging attitude towards unmarried mothers who
are frequently seen as having brought on their own predicament in order to be eligible for social welfare payments.

It is not just the unmarried mother, however, who experiences negative social attitudes. A recent study of widows found that a substantial number feel stigmatised or labelled or are seen as being 'different' when socialising. These widows spoke of feeling left out, feeling conspicuous, of feeling lost and lonely and quite a number had spoken of feeling 'watched' particularly by other wives who seemed to perceive them as a threat.

A recent seminar on poverty among women highlighted the vulnerability of women on their own generally. One source of difficulty is that, up to very recently, the social welfare system dealt with women primarily in terms of their relationship with men. Accordingly, women's payments were referred to in terms of marital status such as Unmarried Mothers Allowance, Deserted Wives Allowance, Prisoners Wives Allowance. In addition, the women participating in the seminar described the social stigma attached to lone parenthood and spoke of the feeling that women on their own were in some way 'suspect'.

METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the procedures used in exploring unmet needs among parents raising children on their own. The section presents a profile of the 10 lone parents interviewed and describes the themes covered in the interview.

Profile of the Lone Parents Interviewed

While the study did not intentionally focus on women, all of those interviewed were in fact female as the list of possible contacts provided included no males. The ages of interviewees ranged from 17 years to 60 years. Of those interviewed, six had been deserted or were separated, one had received a divorce abroad and had come
home to live in Ireland, two were unmarried and bringing up a child on their own and one interviewee had been widowed. Interviewees came from both urban and rural areas with four coming from Limerick City, and the remainder from rural areas in County Clare. All of those interviewed were in receipt of social welfare payments. The youngest interviewee was also involved in a FAS Scheme organised for unemployed young people.

Means of Contact
Interviewees were contacted through social workers and community welfare officers in the Mid-Western Region. They were assured that the research was being carried out independently and that staff from the SRC would contact them only if they agreed to take part. One interviewee sought written assurance of confidentiality before agreeing to take part, indicating perhaps her own sensitivity to her situation. Having made initial contact through social workers and community welfare officers, SRC fieldworkers arranged appointments with the interviewees themselves. All those contacted agreed to take part in the study.

Location and Duration of Interview
All the interviews with lone parents took place in their own homes. In most cases, young children were present. Interviews were on average 14 hours in length and the majority were conducted during daytime hours. No difficulties were expressed by any interviewee concerning the taping of interviews.

Themes Covered in Interview
The emphasis of the interview was on allowing lone parents an opportunity to express their concerns, to identify their main needs and to give them the opportunity to express to what extent their needs are currently being met. Within this context, the interviewer explored unmet needs through the following themes:
FINDINGS: MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED UNMET NEEDS

It emerges from the interviews that the most outstanding unmet need among lone parents is adequate financial support. Other frequently noted areas of unmet need include housing, social acceptance and social contact and appropriate and adequate child-care facilities. The experiences and perceptions of those interviewed with regard to these aspects of their lives are described below.

Need for Adequate Financial Support
The need for more adequate financial support arose time and time again in the course of the interviews. The extent of their need in this regard is expressed in the following comment:

'I cannot buy anything, I cannot buy clothes, I cannot buy shoes, I can't really. And if I got a house this minute - this home is fully furnished - how would I furnish it? I couldn't go to the credit union because I have no credibility, that's a major setback'.

One interviewee who is a widow with a pension of £96.00 per week describes how difficult it is to manage, particularly when an occasion arises which demands a lump sum:

'We're always pinching and scraping - I get a pension of £96.00 a week. It is hard going at times especially with the kids going to school. There's always shoes or whatever...
there's no way you can pay out a lump sum at any one time for things - you have to save it'.

Deserted wives emerge as being particularly in need of greater financial support. When asked about their greatest need at present, this group of lone parents all spoke of more money. As one woman expressed it, improvement in the money paid to her was a matter of survival.

All but one of those interviewed indicated that they worry about money. Mostly, worries revolve around maintaining a basic subsistence level:

'Well I suppose that it might get to the stage where I wouldn't be able to feed them. If that happened I'd leave everything and just concentrate on buying food'.

One woman's worry is focused on what would happen should she die:

'I feel very insecure. I would be afraid of my life that I will drop dead today or tomorrow because I have no way of burying me... It's a morbid, morbid thing but it's a real thing with me. I have tried to take out insurance with the local insurance man and because of my age I can't afford it.'

The extent of need and the consequent worry about money are very clear from the following comments:

'Yesterday my son walked in and said: 'There's something bothering you, what is it?' Well the thoughts of saying to him I have £2 to last me until Thursday, how do you tell your son of seventeen that?'

Lack of sufficient money affects the lone parents interviewed in many areas of their lives. Some, for example, were concerned about the restrictions imposed on their children's educational opportunities through lack of money. One woman described her son's situation as follows:

'He said to me he'd love to be able to do this computer course for twelve months after his Leaving. It's a long way
to look ahead... Where is this money going to come from? Maybe I could get a grant to pay for this, but there would still be other things he would need... necessities. My worry would be who's going to be short at home!

Others indicate how social activities are curtailed through lack of money.

In an effort to overcome financial difficulties, some of the interviewees are involved with money lenders or 'tick shops'. According to one woman:

'I've never actually borrowed money but I've got goods from them. And then the goods are gone before you can actually pay for them'.

The trap which poverty can create is described by several of those interviewed. Conditions for social welfare payments are such that they create a disincentive to employment which is the main avenue out of poverty. The lack of incentive to work her way out of the poverty-trap was expressed by a deserted mother of nine who was no longer eligible for exceptional needs payments for redecorating her house because of having worked for a period of time:

'I took a job to try and pull us out of it... it was only relief for someone for a few weeks and I went down (to the health centre) and she said come back when you're not working. So the job finished and I went back down and she told me I wasn't entitled'.

Need for Equity and Standardisation of Income Maintenance Procedures

Another major issue raised in relation to money is the need for reform or standardisation of the process whereby a wife can claim maintenance from her husband. One woman who receives maintenance from her husband has applied for Deserted Wives Allowance. She cannot apply for more maintenance because of the legal costs and
emotional turmoil involved but cannot receive the allowance until her husband ceases to pay maintenance:

'I've applied for Deserted Wives Allowance - I'm hoping to get it. That wouldn't be too bad. But his wages aren't very high... they advised me not to go back to court because I mightn't get anything worth talking about... besides I don't want to go back because it's upsetting for the children'.

In the meantime this woman has to survive on £75 a week which she finds difficult. As she says herself:

'I don't feel I even have enough for the basics'.

Some would like to see Government intervention in getting fathers of children to pay maintenance:

'The fathers - they should definitely be brought to face their responsibilities as much as the mothers especially when they're in the financial position to - like in England now they're bringing in legislation where the Government are actually tracking the fathers of these children through a legal process'.

With regard to the issue of equity in financial allocations, several of those interviewed spoke of the discrepancies which exist in payments given to unmarried mothers and deserted wives. One unmarried mother herself referred to the better treatment given to her group:

'It's alright for an unmarried mother. There's other people there that have six or seven kids and they are only getting £90 a week so I should be happy that I am getting it'.

Similarly, one woman who is a widow remarked:

'I mean the help is there for unmarried mothers, they get butter vouchers, shoe vouchers, free books and all - we don't'.


Similarly inequity was noted in relation to wives who are divorced and wives who are deserted. One divorcee told how she was unable to claim any Lone Parent Allowance because divorce is not recognised in this country.

Need for Social Acceptance
It is clear from the experiences they describe that many of the lone parents interviewed are not readily accepted in their communities. For many their greatest unmet need is expressed in terms of the negative societal attitudes they encounter:

'I'd like to see a major change in the attitude towards myself and my child. I don't wish to be scorned by society, I don't wish to be marginalised, I don't want to fit into a box, into a little group with a nice name and categorised from there ever after'.

Several expressed feelings of marginalisation or even disdain by society because of their marital circumstances. One woman explained what it is like as follows:

'A certain element of people seem to think that you're bad. I prefer to keep out of the social limelight because of that; even though I love music and dances and all but I haven't anyone to go with - I miss that. You just don't bother because they say 'she can go here and she can go there and she has a great time'.

All of those interviewed said they would like to get out more and mix with others but felt deterred by people's attitudes:

'I don't want everyone laughing at me and sneering. It's a big change. I used to go everywhere with my husband - now I have no-one to go out with and I hate being a burden to anybody'.

Those living in rural areas felt that because they were single parents they were frowned upon by the rest of the neighbourhood.
As one woman commented:

'...The actual place itself, I have no problem with it but I would rather be away from it because every time I go out that door - I'm looked up and down'.

One woman expressed the view that there was a lack of respect for the ability of lone parents to bring up children on their own. What is required as one woman expressed it is 'a better understanding of the situation we are in'.

Need for Child-Care Facilities
The need for child-care facilities is a recurrent theme throughout the interviews both in relation to providing a respite from parenting and in relation to facilitating employment. The following quote illustrates how trapped lone parents can feel in the absence of child-care facilities:

'Life would be made a lot easier if you had access to a lot of things and people to take care of her... like crèche facilities, that would be a big plus in the single parent's life really. You don't have money for child minders and that, it's just like the end of your life really unless you manage to get out from under it... it's a life sentence'.

The confinement in which many live is highlighted in the following comments of an unmarried mother:

'My average day starts anywhere from half five. She might get up and not lie down again... my day is really just spent with her in this upstairs flat... it's just constantly keeping an eye on her, changing her, feeding her, washing her... the day just passes... you're very severely limited in what you can do'.

In addition to the respite which child-care facilities can provide, several mothers see advantages in sending their children to play-school. As one woman expressed it:

'I'd like her to go - she doesn't have access to other...
children - single parents should definitely have more access to childcare to help with their day-to-day existence'.

Lack of money to pay for child-care services again, however, arises as a problem:
'I did use it... to be honest with you I found that they went and it was costing me £10 a week - fifty pence a day for four small ones - that's a lot'.

The role which child-care plays in employment opportunities is also raised in the interviews. One woman who would like to work part-time finds that:
'I couldn't work part-time because I'd have no-one to look after Tina. I couldn't leave the house. I often think I would even if I was allowed earn £20 or £30 a week, just to keep me going'.

Another woman describes the constraints placed on work as follows:
'I feel totally trapped because of Ann (daughter)... I could work away Monday to Friday because I can say I know where she is - she's in school from 9.00 to 3.00 but holiday time, I can't leave her here, she's only eight'.

Need for Appropriate Housing
Unmet needs in relation to different aspects of housing are frequently mentioned in the interviews. All but one of those interviewed are living in rented accommodation. For some, conditions are not good due in large part to lack of financial security:
'I have no back door - the Corporation were to do a few jobs for me - they won't do anything but I badly need a lot of repairs'

For others the problem is not the house itself but the area in which they are living:
'Well I'm trying to get a move out of it now - the place is a
bit rough. I'd like to move - I'd like it quieter. There's too many lads down the back going through the alley shouting, disturbing me at night and that'.

Objections were raised to the way in which housing authorities situate unmarried mothers in particular areas:
'I've heard it said that they want single parents to be put in certain areas in the community. It's almost like being a traveller or any other minority in life - that they like to categorise you and put you into a little box and that's the end of the story'.

Lack of choice in housing is also a problem experienced by lone parents:
'She (social worker) sent me down to this house. It was a good house but it was diabolical inside. There was no space. There was the kitchen and the bedroom altogether - she said they were fighting over the area so I wrote to her and said they could fight over the area and leave me out of it. They were made for old people. She thought I should be grateful and thanking her for telling me about this house'.

The significance of the role which housing can play and the importance of providing appropriate housing are evident from the following quote:
'I think if I had a better house - that would be my main priority. I could change. This is a depressing home - something better in this area would be a start. When you're not happy in your surroundings it shows up in other areas'.

ADDITIONAL PERCEIVED UNMET NEEDS
In addition to those unmet needs described above which were identified by all or most of those interviewed, a number of other issues were raised which also warrant attention. These additional unmet needs identified by some of those interviewed are described below.
Need for Emotional Support

In the view of some of those interviewed, the emotional needs of lone parents are even more pressing than are material needs:

'A lot of material things have been done but a person's welfare involves their own problems - themselves and their emotional problems mainly... emotional problems kind of stem from unemployment - one thing leads to another. Then of course when you're emotionally strung up or under stress it's hard to cope with the children - it's not easy with a one parent family.'

The importance of emotional support is highlighted in the following comments:

'The most important thing for a single parent is to share something that is bothering them with someone else... that's the most important thing I think; for a lone parent to be able to relate to other people and not to let things build up'.

As indicated previously, some see that support groups could provide important help but the issue of money prevents many from attending. What is required according to one woman is some kind of local centre:

'I would like to see some kind of thing where people can get together and form - I can't explain it - I'd look for a place where you could sit down and talk and have a cup of coffee and a discussion - a community centre'.

Need for Opportunities to Work

Just two of the women were working at the time of interview. The interviews emphasise that much more needs to be done to facilitate employment among lone parents. As one unmarried mother comments:

'There should be a lot more help in terms of being educated, getting back into the mainstream options, workwise, careerwise - that your life doesn't have to end once your baby is born and you keep it'.
One of the interviewees points out how present lack of provision perpetuates the poverty trap and how provision of facilities at the appropriate time could spare the state in the long-term:

'There should be facilities where they would be given a grant to be educated to help start off - the children would be put in créches and you could do a course. The state would save a lot of money really because what they pay out in 16 to 17 years for a single mother, if they only paid out £4000 or £5000 at the beginning - I'm sure they're bound to save - because you'd be able to earn your own money - the thing wouldn't be perpetuated as it is by paying out a miserable allowance'.

Another parent who had worked for a while points out the disincentives to work inherent in the system:

'I tried it (work) before. I'm taxed on every penny I earn after subsidies. I had to work an eight hour day - I tried it - going out at 7am and coming home at 4pm to work to earn extra food for my children. My rent went up - I had £40 a week after an 8 hour day in my hand and my rent went up. What good was it. I was coming home with £40, my rent was doubling and my medical card was gone so it wasn't worth it. I was losing out'.

Need for Advice and Information

In the view of some, present services fail lone parents in giving them the information they need:

'You could be made more aware of what you're entitled to - sort of pepped up with a lot of information - I think it's a very hit or miss effort depending on who you're dealing with whether you're equipped with the information or not. Whereas they should be there as a matter of course.'
Information is seen as not being readily available or widely publicised:

'There wasn’t much information available. I think they should use TV and radio to let people know. Also, some kind of community information service, information isn’t generally available'.

The unmet need for advice of different kinds was raised by several interviewees. One woman felt she would have liked someone to help me cope and adjust and that advice should be accessible’. For another the advice needed was related to money management:

'I think I’d need someone on a regular basis to advise me - that would be calling on a regular basis and could keep track of it and help me to keep track of what I owe and not to be extravagant - which I’m not'.

One suggestion for meeting the need for advice and information was the establishment of locally based advice centres where all sorts of different problems, including those related to social welfare, could be addressed.

Need for Flexible and Accessible Services

Concern was expressed that lone parents are ‘shunted from pillar to post’ when trying to apply for services. One woman explained how she has to collect her Deserted Wives Allowance in one office and her Rent Allowance from another location. This woman felt that what was needed was one main office based in the locality which would deal with all issues concerning welfare services.

It was pointed out that welfare claimants build up a rapport with their local officers but when applications are sent for approval they are dealt with by someone who is completely unaware of the circumstances and the chances of a successful application are lessened accordingly:

'It seems that when it gets to a higher level when the form goes in they say you’re not entitled or you hear nothing
about it. Here, you'd have someone to push it for you but when it gets higher you get nothing'.

Delays in receiving welfare payments due are a further source of difficulty:

'In the unemployment assistance - the welfare officer came out to me - I'd say it was five or six weeks before I got it. I wasn't told - I just had to go back and queue in the health centre - you feel like you're a number'.

**INFERRED UNMET NEEDS**

While not directly specified by those interviewed, the experiences they recount point to further areas of unmet need. These unmet needs are outlined below.

**Need for Counselling**

Several of those interviewed spoke of difficulties in coping alone, especially at the initial stages of lone parenthood. As one woman commented:

'Well it's the coping problems really. Well I suppose everyone has problems coping but I think even more so as a deserted wife because everything, practically everything is a problem'.

Another woman described how she would 'wake up at night and be crying myself back to sleep thinking where we're going next'. Yet another spoke of feeling very vulnerable and feeling 'half a person'. While none of these women directly identified what they needed to deal with these experiences, their situations suggest a need for counselling and help in the development of coping strategies and stress management skills.
Need for Education of Public Attitudes
The lack of social acceptance experienced by most of the lone parents interviewed points to the need for education of public attitudes. If communities are to be supportive of lone parents they need to have an understanding of the difficulties they face. Perhaps even more importantly, members of their communities need to understand that while the circumstances of lone parents differ from those of two-parent families, as persons they are no different from other parents and they share the same needs for social contact, emotional support, respect and dignity.

Need for Confidence Building
In view of the negative image which people around them frequently hold of lone parents, it is likely that their own self-image becomes damaged. The experiences of some of those interviewed suggest that help needs to be given to them in developing self-confidence so that they may, for example, be in a better position to counteract service-providers who 'treat them as numbers'. Self-confidence building is also needed to help lone parents move out and mix with others. One woman, for example, recounted her fear of attending a support group because she would 'feel very vulnerable going in and standing up in front of a bunch of people' while another said she would be too 'embarrassed' to attend a group.

SUMMARY
The interviews with lone parents highlight a significant level of unmet need in relation to a number of different aspects of their lives. Practically all are agreed that their most pressing need is adequate financial support. Lack of sufficient money not only prevents them meeting material needs but also restricts their employment opportunities, the education of their children and their social participation. This and other frequently noted unmet needs are presented below in summary form. Additional perceived
unmet needs are also summarised along with those needs inferred from the experiences recounted by the interviewees.

Most Frequently Mentioned Unmet Needs
- adequate financial support
- social acceptance
- child-care facilities
- appropriate housing

Additional Perceived Unmet Needs
- emotional support
- facilitation of opportunities to work
- advice and information

Inferred Unmet Needs
- flexible and accessible services
- counselling/coping skills
- education of public attitudes
- development of self-confidence and positive self-image
References:
2. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid. p.102.
13. Ibid, pp.76-77.
References:
15. Ibid, p. 69.
17. Ibid, p. 68.
References:


30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.


34. Daly, M., 1989, op.cit., p.32.

35. Ibid, p.18.


37. Ibid.


40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Daly, M., 1989, op.cit, p.77.

43. Higgins, M., 1988, op.cit, p.34.
References:

44. Ibid.


CHAPTER FOUR

THE UNMET NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY

Introduction

Discussions on care of the elderly frequently centre on the amount of services they use and the 'burden' they represent. Little research has been carried out to determine what elderly people themselves think of the services provided and what services they actually want. In the case of the elderly, research on finding out their needs is all the more important because, as a group, they participate less in public life than other groups and they are frequently relatively poor. Consequently, their needs may not be as well known as those of others who may be more in the public view. The purpose of this chapter is to explore how elderly people feel about the services available to them and their views on how their needs might more adequately be met.

CONTEXT

This section provides a context against which the needs of the elderly may be viewed. The section outlines demographic characteristics of the elderly population and describes existing policy in relation to the elderly in this country.

Demographic Changes

In common with other countries in the Western world, the demography of the Republic of Ireland is undergoing major re-shaping. There has been a steady increase in the size of the general elderly population - those aged 65 years and more - with population projections for the period 1981 to 2006 predicting a seven per cent increase. According to the 1986 census, there are 384,355 elderly people currently living in the country compared to 368,954 in 1981. However, it is among the 'old elderly' - those