infants and children. A 1988 study noted that 78 per cent of travelling people are aged under 25 years. This has major implications for policy planning both in relation to the education and employment sectors.

Travellers tend to be found in larger, urban areas. Research indicates that over half of all travellers are clustered in one of four counties - Cork, Dublin, Galway, or Limerick. Examination of Health Board statistics reveals that the Mid-Western area contains the third highest concentration of travelling people in the country. As a consequence, the problems associated with itineracy are coming increasingly to the fore in planning of social services within this area.

Need for Services
The obsolescence of their traditional trades and services has increased the dependency of travellers on social welfare payments and greatly decreased the possibility of employment for them. In addition, the poor quality of their living conditions indicates a need for more and better facilities. The tackling of employment and housing issues raised by the travelling community would help overcome the difficulties that travellers have in being accepted by the settled community. However, current policy on travelling people has been lacking. Little or no steps have been taken to generally improve the circumstances of travellers and no progress has been made in providing a policy specifically designed for the travelling community.

The Policy Framework
The first recognition by Government of the need for a policy for travellers was the establishment, in 1960, of a Commission on Itineracy. The emphasis of the Commission's Report was on the absorption of travelling people into the general community. At the time of the Commission little or no information was available on the travelling population and on the issues of relevance to them. Following their inquiry, the Commission made
recommendations on specific issues such as housing, education and employment but, more importantly, the Commission made several general recommendations which represent the beginnings of policy concerning travelling people as a marginalised group.

Five general policy objectives were presented by the Commission. These were:

1. to bridge the gap between the social and economic standards of the itinerants and of the settled community
2. to encourage itinerants to leave the road and settle down
3. to recognise that the absorption of itinerants into settled society will take time and patience
4. to establish a central body to deal with problems and practical difficulties involved in reaching the objective of absorption
5. to provide finance for the transition of families from the roadside to settled accommodation.

The policy of assimilation of travellers into the community did not prove to be a successful one. Temporary halting sites were made available to travellers as a first step towards settlement but it was found that travelling people stayed on these sites and did not move on. Absorption into the community was not seen as a viable option by travelling people themselves. As a consequence, a second major review of services for travelling people was established in 1981. The Review Body's membership included two members of the travelling community and the Review Body's report, published in 1983, emphasised that consultation with travellers should play a continuous part in the policy-making process. The Review Body made extensive recommendations on various aspects of travelling life including accommodation, education, health, income and relationship with the settled community. The main differences between the recommendations of the Reports of 1963 and 1983 are that the latter document recognises that the attitudes and desires
of travellers, in relation to integration, should be respected\textsuperscript{10}. The newly defined objectives of policy were thus seen in terms of the need for:

- travellers rights and obligations to be recognised
- suitable housing
- health promotion
- education and training\textsuperscript{11}.

Recommendations in each of these four areas were considered by a Task Force of Ministers of State and a Statement of Government Policy was produced. This led to the establishment of a Committee to Monitor Implementation of Policy on Travelling People whose reports are published at regular intervals. Despite these developments in policy, the day-to-day conditions of most travellers have not changed significantly.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A brief look at available literature on the travelling community shows that travelling people themselves are seldom given the opportunity to discuss their own needs. Their distinct lack of confidence in dealing with people outside their own community, coupled with the negative attitudes of the general population towards them, have not facilitated their involvement in decision-making. In this section the unmet needs of travelling people, as identified in the available literature, are presented and the implications for services discussed.

Travellers as an Ethnic Group

The first point to be made in relation to travellers' needs concerns the debate on their ethnicity. Writers have argued for the recognition of travellers as an ethnic minority and not simply as a sub-culture of poverty who need to be rehabilitated or domesticated\textsuperscript{12}. A 1989 article, using a socio-anthropological approach, applies the concept of ethnicity to the travelling culture and concludes that travellers do in fact represent an
ethnic group. An acceptance of this view implies that travellers have a separate identity and cultural tradition and should be permitted to live accordingly. This also indicates that policies like absorption are contrary to the wishes of the travelling population and are not, therefore, meeting their needs.

Whether or not one accepts the notion of ethnicity which is presented in the literature, it is clear that travelling people do face discrimination and prejudice in their day-to-day lives. This has implications for both the extent and the way in which their needs are viewed by the rest of the population.

Identified Unmet Needs of Travellers
In the available literature on the travelling community, there is only one paper in which travelling people themselves speak out and identify the problems facing them. This can be viewed as a symptom of the poor system of communication between travellers and the settled community. In this paper the authors encourage efforts to get travellers involved in making decisions about themselves rather than getting settled people to act as brokers on their behalf.

A review of current literature reveals that there are several primary needs which are unmet among the travelling community. These needs are:

- appropriate housing and living conditions
- social acceptance
- education and training
- health promotion
- employment.

Need for Appropriate Housing
Research shows that travellers are not a homogeneous group when it comes to housing and accommodation. The Review Body outlines four different categories in relation to the need for accommodation:

Families who want to live in a house among settled people
Families who wish to live in a house but situated in a group housing scheme
Families who wish to remain living in a caravan in an authorised site with facilities
Families who wish to continue travelling but who could use authorised sites when and as long as they want.

Given that such a variation exists, flexibility is an obvious necessity in devising policy in relation to housing. The need for suitable accommodation is pivotal in the lives of travelling people since most of their other needs are determined by the living circumstances in which they find themselves. The Report of the Review Body concluded that the cycle of inhuman living conditions experienced by travellers can be broken given the provision of suitable and adequate accommodation.17

Available information on living conditions of the travelling community is sufficiently detailed to allow an overview of their lives. Research carried out by St. Vincent de Paul shows that in the Limerick area alone, there are thirty-seven families who live in caravans without electricity, running water, toilets or rubbish collection.18 These conditions appear to be the case for a large proportion of travelling people who live by the roadside.

On a national level, statistics show that, although over half of all travellers are housed, only 47 per cent of traveller households live in a standard house.19 Figures from 1986 show a three-fold increase in the number of traveller families living on the roadside since 1982.20 However, the number of families living on authorised sites remained more or less the same in the same period.21

At present, the issue most likely to produce controversy between travelling people and the settled community is the question of sites. A Charter of Travellers Rights was drawn up and adopted by the Council for Travelling People in 1984.22 Amongst its articles...
the Charter outlines several important points relating to accommodation. These include:

- that sites for travellers should not present risks or hazards and should take into account family groupings;
- that for travellers wishing to continue travelling, serviced sites should be provided close to facilities.\(^{23}\)

Facilities on sites have always created tension between local authorities and the travelling people. The situation in 1986 did not appear very satisfactory for the travelling community - 'of these families resident in serviced sites 22.3 per cent have no piped water supply, 37.6 per cent lack toilet facilities, 99.4 per cent are without a hot water tap and the same percentage without bath/shower facilities; 92.8 per cent lack a connection to public electricity supplies'.\(^{24}\)

A publication by the Navan Travellers Committee also noted that many local and district councils have plans to locate site areas where they will have the least impact on house prices.\(^{25}\) Cauley et al.'s article also comments on the undesirable conditions experienced on some of the sites in Dublin.\(^{26}\)

The obvious key to the problem of housing experienced by travellers lies not only in the availability of suitable accommodation but also in the extent to which they are included in normal community living by the rest of society.

**Social Acceptance**

The travelling people have for generations stood on what one writer terms 'the bottom rung of Ireland's social and economic ladder'.\(^{27}\) Research shows that of all itinerant peoples - including indigenous groupings from Holland, Sweden and Czechoslovakia - the Irish travellers are the least assimilated or accepted into society.\(^{28}\)

The need for social acceptance by travelling people relates directly to their poor relationship with the settled community.
It appears from the literature that little has been done by way of tackling the prejudices of settled people towards travellers. One journal article written by Irish social workers, dealing specifically with travellers, suggests that the physical and geographical separation of the travelling community through poor housing and inadequate accommodation reinforces a sense of prejudice from the settled community. Also, some features of travellers' lifestyle are regarded by society as disruptive and as a consequence travellers' own sense of self-esteem is reduced.

Improvement in the relationship between travelling people and the rest of the community requires adjustment of attitudes towards one another and a degree of integration of both cultures. The extent to which the two can be integrated depends on individual decisions. It has been found that some travellers would like to be totally integrated with the settled community and be indistinguishable from them. There are others who wish to continue the travelling lifestyle. The majority, however, tend to adopt features of the settled lifestyle while retaining traditions peculiar to the traveller way of life.

Evidence suggests that the attitudes of most of the settled population toward travellers are conditioned by the behaviour patterns which have come to be regarded as the norm among travellers - 'constant begging, petty pilfering, trespass and damage, drunkenness, noisiness and brawling'. The concentration of travellers in urban areas where they exist without running water or sanitation is also seen to engender hostility among the settled community.

**Education Needs**

The education needs of travellers are very much inter-related with their unstable living circumstances. The Commission on Itineracy pointed out that due to the lack of formal education, almost all travellers in 1963 were illiterate. Since this, however, there has been a marked change in numbers enrolling at primary school
level. The travelling community have begun to recognise the importance of at least basic education for their children. However, it appears from the figures presented that the numbers attending school represent only 66 per cent of the school-going population among the travelling community. Reports show that the majority of non-attenders are in families without stable living conditions who may move on before establishing a pattern of regular attendance at school.

Of those who do present at primary school, very few remain to continue second-level education. It has also been found that traveller children who do attend school invariably have to have special tuition having been assessed as slow learners. However, because their assessment is constrained within the criteria adopted by the settled culture, travellers automatically fare badly. Research has shown that travellers' children when asked, for example, to manipulate the objects of the settled world in I.Q. tests tend to do badly but are capable of manipulating the objects of their own world - animals, cars, vans, metals of all kinds - in a way that no settled child could. It has been suggested that to overcome this, curricula should perhaps be broadened to include subject areas that would be of greater interest to travellers. Also proposed is the provision of separate education facilities to meet the special needs presented by travellers' children. The main opposition to such an approach is that although allowing scope for fostering of a traveller cultural identity, such a policy reinforces their alienation from the mainstream of society and maintains their marginal position in relation to employment and social opportunities.

The educational status of adult travellers has improved very little over the past number of years since about 90 per cent of all adult travellers are illiterate. It has been shown that the educational aspirations and needs of travellers depend very much on their desire for integration with the settled community. Three categories of need can be distinguished among the
travellers. The first category includes those travellers who want full integration with the settled community in housing and who normally want their children to be fully integrated into the ordinary school system. The second grouping consists of those who want to be settled with their own people and would prefer their children to attend special classes or a special school. The final category is perhaps the most difficult to provide for and includes families who are transient but who want their children to receive an education.

Training Needs

The need for training is again directly linked with educational attainment and housing needs. Attendance at training centres after primary level school has begun to gain acceptance among traveller parents and children. In 1986 there were 25 Traveller Training Centres throughout the country catering for approximately 600 trainees. A study of Youth Training Schemes showed a paltry 124 per cent uptake among travellers. Those interviewed said they would not attend the scheme because they felt 'ashamed' and 'embarrassed' because they could not read and that settled people would treat them as different because they were travellers. The vast majority of travelling people are unemployed. As well as not having a job, expectations of work among the travelling people are low because they are unskilled and untrained and are not regarded very highly among the settled population. Studies have highlighted the need for improvement in the employment circumstances of travellers through tackling the social, environmental and educational disadvantages they experience.

Organisations like the Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group (DTEEDG) are involved with improving employment opportunities for travelling people. Their premise is that no lasting progress can be made unless travellers themselves are involved at all stages. This would appear to be the way forward in developing the acceptance of travelling people by the rest of the community.
Health Needs

The low life expectancy and high infancy and childhood mortality rates of travellers indicate how far below World Health Organisation standards they are. Statistics show that the infant mortality rates per thousand live births currently stand at 9.9 in Ireland as a whole but is 28.3 for the travelling population\textsuperscript{47}. It has been pointed out that the one factor which can break the occurrence of high birth rates and apparently short life span is the provision of suitable and adequate accommodation\textsuperscript{48}. The link between accommodation, living conditions and health status cannot be ignored.

Information is currently being collected on the health status of travellers to establish means of improving life expectancy and mortality rates\textsuperscript{49}. A statement of policy for the Traveller Population by the Government indicated that the Department of Health would exercise particular responsibility to oversee action to effect improvement in the health status of travellers\textsuperscript{50}. There is, therefore, a recognition that the living conditions of the travelling population ought to be improved but responsibility for the task is divided between the Departments of Health and Environment and, consequently, little change has occurred.

Employment Needs

It has been pointed out that travellers experience certain pressures which need to be overcome if they are to work satisfactorily\textsuperscript{51}. These pressures include difficulty in leading a disciplined working life and fears of and isolation from the settled community\textsuperscript{52}. Employment is also dependent upon level of educational attainment and attendance at training schemes. Studies suggest that low levels of employment among the travelling population can be accounted for by a culture of dependence on social welfare payments and a consequent loss of self-esteem\textsuperscript{53}. In trying to develop a response to this situation arguments were presented for a community work approach in order to promote
travellers' participation, involvement, empowerment and a collective response to issues.\textsuperscript{54}

\textbf{METHODOLOGY}

This section outlines the procedures used to explore unmet needs among travelling people. It presents a profile of the group interviewed and describes the themes around which the interview was structured.

\textbf{Profile of Travellers Interviewed}

As with the other groups, interviews were exploratory in nature. Ten travellers were interviewed. Eight of these were women and two were men. The predominance of females is due to the fact that in travelling families the woman is usually more vocal and more willing to talk about living situations than the man. The age of interviewees varied from 23 years to 60 years. All were heads of families. Rural and urban areas were equally represented among the interviewees with five being from Limerick City and five from rural County Limerick. Those selected for interview come from a variety of living circumstances - half are living at the side of the road with little or no facilities, three are living on halting sites and two are living in houses. All of those interviewed were receiving income maintenance payments. All but one of the ten had never worked in steady employment.

\textbf{Means of Contact}

Contact was made with the travelling community through social workers in Limerick Corporation and Limerick County Council, through a child-care worker specifically involved with travellers and also through the St. Vincent de Paul Committee who are responsible for working with the travelling community. The travellers were informed of the objectives of the study and were told that a fieldworker from the SRC would call on them. The social workers contacted felt that, at least for introduction to the travelling community, the fieldworker should be accompanied by someone already known to them. They pointed out that the
travelling people regard with great suspicion any member of the settled community who comes to ask them questions. Consequently, for half the interviews the fieldworker was introduced by a social worker and for the other interviews was accompanied by a worker from St. Vincent de Paul. With the travelling community, it was particularly difficult to assign particular times for interview because, as one social worker pointed out, their conception of time is not the same as that of the settled community. Instead most interviews were carried out without appointment. All of the travellers contacted were willing to take part. In the case of one interviewee who had not been well, his wife took part in the study instead.

Location and Duration of Interview
All of the travelling people involved in the study were interviewed in their place of abode. In eight of the ten interviews other members of the family were present; due as much to curiosity as to the lack of private space in which to speak with the fieldworker. However, the presence of other family members did not seem to inhibit the responses of the interviewees. Respondents were not perturbed by the presence of a tape-recorder although one did express concern that the tape might be used publicly. Once reassured that the information was strictly for use in the study, this respondent was put at ease.

Themes covered in Interview
In the interviews, emphasis was placed on exploring the perceptions and experiences of the travelling people. The interviews provided them with an opportunity to give their views on their needs and to indicate to what extent their needs are currently being met.
Throughout the course of the interview, the following themes were covered:

- general needs
- family circumstances
- housing
- financial
- educational
- employment/training
- health
- contact with settled community
- support networks
- access to services.

The following section provides a qualitative description of the findings obtained from the ten interviews.

**FINDINGS: MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED UNMET NEEDS**

One of the most striking impressions which emerges from the interviews with the travellers is the lack of acceptance which they encounter from the settled community. Apart from acceptance, two further outstanding areas of unmet need relate to housing and financial circumstances.

**Need for Acceptance from Settled Community**

In the descriptions of their everyday lives, the travellers make very clear the extent to which they experience lack of acceptance from the settled community and how this affects them. A young mother of four children living on the roadside sums it up as follows:

'We're not accepted by the settled community... even in some shops we're not served... that's a big problem. Being unsettled is about the biggest problem. When you're settled you're accepted a bit more - when you have a house you're accepted. When you have a caravan you're not wanted anywhere... no matter where you pull to there's problems...
we're here now and there's a big problem but even if we pulled out the road from the town there's still a problem... there's always something.'

Many travellers articulate their greatest perceived need in terms of acceptance and of being given a 'chance'. They feel that they do not get a fair deal from the settled community:

'I didn't think it was a fair deal what happened to us with the site down the road. We were here for eleven years and the people around knew we were here for that length of time and... they knew we were here to stay. Their children and our children are going to school together. I didn't think they'd kick up as big a fuss as they did. That would hit you. We've been here long before any of those houses across the road. We didn't object to them coming to live beside us.'

The hostility expressed by the settled community towards the travellers comes across frequently in the interviews. Interviewees felt that settled people did not understand travellers and the travelling way of life. As a result the travelling people withdraw into themselves, reinforcing their views towards settled people and of settled people towards them. This appears to be true not only of travellers living on the roadside but also of those settled in houses. The lack of contact which results is illustrated in the following quote:

'Well we keep very much to ourselves... We don't get on with the neighbours at all. They don't let our children play with their children... I'd really like if they were friendly but they're not.'

One of the outcomes of lack of acceptance, is the sense of being marginalised; of not being part of the community even though the traveller may be settled in a house. One woman related how she had expected that attitudes would change when she was housed but the community still rejected her:
'I see people around, they can get dressed on a Saturday night and walk down the road with their husbands and it's great. So I often felt kind of hurt inside that I can't walk down the road with my husband to the local pub especially when we're housed, we're part of the community. That's what I always thought when I was in a caravan, when I get a house it will be great. I actually thought that I wouldn't be a traveller when I was housed.'

Need for Appropriate Housing
When asked what would be of greatest help to them in their lives, most of the travellers interviewed indicated appropriate housing as one of their greatest unmet needs. As one roadside traveller commented:

'The most important help for travellers like myself with big families is some place they can settle down and say it's their own.'

Many felt that several other of the problems they experience could be addressed through the provision of housing appropriate to their needs.

'I'd say if we had a house many of our problems would be solved, to be honest.'

There appears to be no uniform need in relation to living circumstances with felt needs being influenced by family situations and the desire to be accepted by the settled community. All but one of the travellers interviewed expressed a need for change in their current accommodation. The need for alternative accommodation was voiced in one of three ways:

- those living on the roadside wanting to be housed
- those living on the roadside wanting to move onto a halting site
- those living on halting sites wanting improved facilities and conditions
Among those who wanted to be housed, being settled was seen as being of primary concern. A house not only offers better facilities than the roadside but is also seen as increasing the likelihood of being accepted in the community.

'I'd like to have a house to be honest with you. I lived in a house for eight years and I'd like to get one and settle down with my children. My children are going to school and I'd like for them to be accepted... there's at least ten problems we have that we wouldn't have if we had a house... you have all the facilities that you don't have on the side of the road, you have running water, toilets, light, electricity, you've rooms for the children...''

For a lot of young travellers, marriage usually means taking to the road whether or not they have previously lived in a house. Lack of money and the need to break away from their parents' results in confinement to poor living conditions.

A travelling man who has been married for three years and who has spent two of these on the roadside near his wife's home expressed the problem as follows:

'We've been here two years... we're not used to travelling around... we lived in a house all the time... When you're in a caravan you need water facilities and toilet facilities and things but you haven't got those... If we got a house in the right place it would be grand.'

Travellers interviewed see their chances of being housed as contingent on the number of children each family has:

'On the last scheme of houses built three itinerants got houses. Five families were in but one had no kids so we stand a better chance than them. There was two families left and one had six children so the more children you have the more chance you have of a house'.
This increases the likelihood of both starting a family early and having greater numbers of children thereby reinforcing conditions of overcrowding and poor living circumstances.

Some consider that a halting site rather than a house best suits the needs of travellers and accommodates the strong tradition among travellers of keeping families together. Among the older travellers, in particular, the advantages of a house have to be weighed up against the prospect of having to be separated from their own children. One of those interviewed is a mother of twenty, six of whom are married and all living in the one place. For this woman, a house would be her own wish but housing seven families at one time in the one area is slight. Accordingly, this woman feels that a halting site would be better:

'I think that travellers who want sites should be entitled to them. And, moreover, I think for any big family, a site is the most suitable thing for them... I'd like a house but... there's six of them married and... they're all here in the one place. I think a site would be most suitable... we'd be all together then.'

The need for halting sites is highlighted in the comments of several of the interviewees.

One woman, a mother of a large family, felt too that a halting site would best suit the needs of her and her children. She described some of the appalling conditions experienced by her in her previous position on the road:

'We had to move out here because there were so many rats, an unbelievable amount of rats. If I get up in the night and go to open the door or have to go to the tap for water the rats are on the step of the door... we had to move because we were afraid the rats would come into the trailer... it's very hard at times. If we had a halting site now that would mean a lot to us... we'd really love that.'
Some of those interviewed are currently living on 'temporary halting sites' but would like to see improvements in living conditions. The kind of conditions needed are outlined in the following quote:

'I think that to have a proper site... everyone should have their own bays that would be private and you should have hot and cold water and electricity... and with only a number of families on each site - about six is the limit.'

An elderly traveller, living in a halting site with some members of her family, agreed that this was the best for her and her large family. However, she experiences considerable difficulties in managing the simplest of tasks such as washing clothes. She suggested that any improvement in the gravelled site would be a welcome one:

'You'd like to see the place as good as you could. But this isn't a site at all is it? It's very shabby ain't it? I'd like to see it tarmacked with special toilets... we have a toilet here already but no shower or no bathroom for the kids. We manage as best we can... we boil up water in a black pot outside and boil the clothes and wash them outside...'

Interconnected Housing and Health Needs

The poor living circumstances in which travellers find themselves - particularly those living on the roadside - have repercussions on the health of the travelling community. Some of the mothers interviewed referred to illnesses in their children which are worsened by the fact that they live in such poor conditions:

'The side of the road really for children ruins their health. They get sick more often. One gets ear infections and running noses, colds and things like that.'

Most health complaints relate to infections picked up due to lack of sanitation or pulmonary conditions often associated with dampness or cold. As one woman explained:
'I have a very sick child and toilets are an awful big problem. In the wintertime if a child is sick they have to go outside for a toilet. I have a child with a very bad chest... and that's going out in the cold at night.'

All those interviewed agree that a general improvement in living standards would greatly help the current low health status of the travelling community.

Need for Adequate Financial Support
All of the travellers interviewed are receiving social welfare payments. All feel that the money they receive is not sufficient to meet their needs. One man who gets £86 a week for himself, his wife and his two year old son explains how he finds it difficult to provide even the basic necessities such as food:

'We barely manage from week to week, there's often a week we have to go and borrow money. We're struggling. We mightn't have food on the table sometimes.'

Two of the travellers who are widows also point out how extra money is needed simply to buy essentials. As one woman says:

'Extra money would make a big difference, you could have a bit of dinner or something. But out of that money you can't have a bit of dinner.'

Similarly, the other widow speaks of the difficulty of buying a bottle of gas out of the payments she receives. Those living in houses find it even more difficult to manage financially because of unexpected overheads like rent and electricity:

'That's a big need now is money, especially when you're in a house. I don't know how anyone with a big family can cope with it... Children's Allowance... you have to pay the electricity bill out of that... I can't even afford a table.'

Some find that they have fallen into debt which adds to their financial problems:
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'At the moment now my rent - I owe arrears so I give £20 a week for rent until the arrears are paid off... I have light to pay and TV so it's all bills - so it isn't easy.'

Those experiencing acute need depend on family to help out or on help locally:

'At times if I run short of anything the shop would help me - I'd be able to get things - I couldn't pay them back with the dole - I'd have to wait for the family allowance to pay back the shops.'

**ADDITIONAL PERCEIVED UNMET NEEDS**

Apart from the three outstanding unmet needs outlined above, the experiences recounted by the travellers highlight several other areas of unmet need. These additional unmet needs relate, for the most part, to employment opportunities and issues of service delivery.

**Need for Employment Opportunities**

It is clear from the interviews with the travellers that financial needs are interconnected with employment. In turn, opportunities for work are perceived as being very much influenced by housing circumstances. The lack of work opportunities is expressed by one young traveller who has completed the Group Certificate:

'You know the way - when you're at school you think that when you leave school you might get a job or something like that but there was nothing like that for us when we left school.'

The inter-dependency of the need for suitable housing and greater employment opportunities is apparent from the following quote:

'I never had a real good job... I don't know if it was that we were travellers or not... but when you're on the side of the road you have no chance.'
Several expressed the view that while they are capable of working, living on the side of the road is a very great obstacle to getting a job:

'Well it would be very hard for a traveller to get a job. I was getting a job in Galway once in a hotel and if I wasn’t on the road I would have gotten it.'

Even for those who do manage to get work further obstacles have to be overcome as one woman pointed out in regard to her sons' employment:

'If they had a house at that stage... they needed the room for doing shiftwork. They’d be working all night through, coming back at eight in the morning and having no room to go into for the rest of the day and they’d be working again that night. They were very happy with the work but they mightn’t get any sleep all day.'

Aside from the physical aspects involved in getting and/or keeping work, the prejudiced attitudes of potential employers also pose obstacles to work opportunities. The following quote illustrates the need for greater openness towards travellers among employers:

'The young lads would like to work if they got a good job but it’s hard to get a job. Travellers never get a job... once you’re classed as itinerants no one would give you jobs.'

One woman tells how looking for work has become increasingly difficult for her husband:

'When they find out you’re a traveller they don’t want to know you. It’s just to the stage where you sign an application form but they don’t really consider you, they say they do but they don’t'.

Need for Literacy and Numeracy Skills
Most younger travellers have completed primary school education and a number are staying longer and going on to second level schooling. However, the interviews indicate that the need for
literacy and numeracy skills is still unmet among some. Among the older travellers, in particular, literacy and numeracy skills are non-existent. Completion of official forms is regarded as a particular problem by several of the interviewees. One man who has attained a moderate level of literacy suggested that:

'They should have a day when they come in and someone will fill out the forms with them... instead of sending them out'.

Need for Trust and Understanding
The watch-dog approach which the travellers see as being exhibited by social welfare officials is not conducive to improving understanding between travellers and the settled community. On the contrary, a distinct lack of trust was seen to be foremost as the following remarks indicate:

'You feel like they don't trust you, you get that suspicion. Especially when they ask you the same questions even though they already have the file in front of them. They open the file and they ask you and they're looking away. They ask you just in case you gave wrong evidence the first time'.

Communication between travellers and service-providers is seen to be lacking in many respects. One man expresses his frustration at the bad communication between the two:

'The social worker still doesn't know what the travellers want. They're only guessing from what they come in here and write down, then they go back in and they put that back in a file'.

The need for more understanding staff in official positions was a point raised frequently by the travellers.

Need for Easier Access to Services
The delivery of social services, particularly social welfare payments, is not seen by those interviewed to be suited in any way to the travelling way of life. As one woman describes it:

'It's very hard when you're travelling... If we're going a
long distance we get our dole changed... it's very complicated. We have to bring the children's birth certs and all, things like that and we might have to wait a couple of weeks to get paid. Then we have to go the the relieving officer while waiting for the dole... it's a problem'.

Part of ensuring easier access to services is the provision of all information needed. The dissemination of information was seen as a problem in the interviews conducted with the travelling people. For example, one man had to make active inquiries about the future of their halting site which, he explained, was not an easy task:

'They won't let you know what's going on at all. You've got to get out and find out for yourself what's going on. If you don't you won't know nothing'.

Some of the travellers interviewed feel they are being marginalised in the community when it comes to the delivery of social services:

'In the dole office they have a special time for the travelling girls to get their labour than they have for the settled people. That's not fair because they're all going in for the one thing, they're all getting paid out of the one thing. I heard the men saying the same thing - it's the same in the men's dole office as well'.

Need for Social Support
Within the travelling community, the tradition of close-knit family relationships is central. This was expressed by several of the interviewees. Most of the younger families live on or near to their parents' accommodation. However, for those who have moved into houses away from their families, social isolation can result. One woman suggested that some kind of community centre would be good to allow people interact more with each other:

'If you were feeling alone and depressed you just have to keep it all into yourself. There's no-one there close that you can talk about your problems to. Someone like that would
be great. I don’t know, some kind of centre would be good for people feeling depressed or low, where you could sort out your problems and talk to people - that’s important’.

Some of the women felt that some kind of social activity is important:

‘Another thing I’d like to see is some kind of cooking class or sewing or knitting for women to get them out, maybe an hour or two hours a week, that would be great’.

The following comments from one of the women interviewed indicates the reticence which travellers feel about opening up to members of the settled community:

‘We just talk to ourselves that’s all. We don’t bother with social workers; we never talk about anything to social workers if they do come up’.

The involvement of travellers in planning for their own future was noted by one man who suggested that travellers be trained as social workers to become involved in the struggle for better living conditions:

‘I’d like to see more travellers becoming social workers because they’d understand the travellers. I don’t think the social workers in Ireland understand the travellers’.

INFERRED UNMET NEEDS

Apart from those needs specifically identified by the travellers as being currently unmet, a number of further issues in need of attention may be inferred from the experiences they describe. These inferred unmet needs are outlined below.

Need for Choice in Housing

The comments of the travellers in relation to housing clearly indicate that no one type of housing meets all perceived needs. A range of options needs to be made available which accommodates
both those who wish to continue with the travelling way of life and those who wish to be settled in houses. Adequate housing provision requires provision of choice.

Need for Education of Public Attitudes
The experiences of social rejection and discrimination recounted by the travellers highlight the need for education of public attitudes. At present, travellers - even those settled in houses - are obstructed from participating in the most ordinary of social activities because of prejudiced attitudes among the settled community. Of particular significance is the failure of potential employers to even consider travellers for work thus depriving them of the most important avenue out of the poor financial circumstances in which they live.

Need for Training of Service Providers
The interviews reveal a belief among the travellers that service-providers do not understand their needs and their conditions and indicate a lack of trust and lack of communication. These findings point to the need for training of those service-providers involved with travellers so that they may have a greater awareness and understanding of the travellers' needs and way of life. Such training would also ensure that available services are made more accessible to travellers.

Need for Involvement in Decision-Making
The interviews clearly show the importance of certain traditions to the travellers. Family ties, for example, are seen as being central to their lives. Many also want to continue with their particular way of life and wish to be facilitated in their travelling lifestyle rather than be integrated into the settled community. As one of the travellers himself suggested, travellers need to be involved in decision-making which affects them to ensure that services provided do, in fact, meet their perceived needs.
The findings from the interviews reveal three major areas of unmet need among the travellers. The travellers are agreed that they are not accepted by the settled community; that they do not have the housing they would like and that their financial circumstances are very poor. In addition to these three primary concerns, some of those interviewed point to further areas of unmet need related, most frequently, to employment opportunities, to relationships with service-providers and to the delivery of services. Finally, a number of more general unmet needs which should be addressed may be inferred from the experiences relayed.

Most Frequently Mentioned Unmet Needs

- acceptance and tolerance from settled community
- appropriate housing
- adequate financial support

Additional Perceived Unmet Needs

- employment opportunities
- literacy and numeracy skills
- trust, respect and understanding from officials and service-providers
- easy access to social welfare services
- social support networks

Inferred Unmet Needs

- choice in housing: halting-site/house
- education of public attitudes
- training of service-providers working with travellers
- involvement of travellers in planning and decision-making related to them
References:


11. Ibid.


References:

(Ref No.14 continued from previous page)


15.Ibid, p.38.


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References:

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CHAPTER EIGHT

PERCEPTIONS OF UNMET NEED AMONG SERVICE-PROVIDERS

Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to outline the perceptions of service-providers of unmet needs among clients to whom they currently provide on-the-ground assistance. Service-providers from both voluntary and statutory sectors were interviewed together because of their inter-relationship with each other and because of their shared objectives in meeting needs. It had been pointed out in preliminary interviews that statutory and voluntary agencies rarely came together for discussion but that this should be encouraged.

As well as providing valuable insight into the objectives underlying the provision of Family and Personal Support Services, the interviews with service-providers also detail the extent to which needs in the community are currently being met. The perceptions of service-providers in relation to unmet needs serve as a complement to the views expressed by their clients in earlier chapters. This chapter investigates the needs of each of the six groups as perceived by service-providers and also includes points raised in relation to general provision of services.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

In order to ascertain the unmet needs of young people from a service-provider's perspective, interviews were carried out with staff at the Limerick and Ennis Youth Services Centres and with Community Youth Workers in the Limerick City area. The following issues were raised as the primary unmet needs of young people:

- Assessment Services
- Remedial Teaching
- Work Experience/Practical Learning at School
- Incentives in Education
. Recreational Facilities
. Provisions for early school-leavers

In addition to these unmet needs, service-providers also suggested areas for improvement and/or development in the delivery of services to young people. These areas included:
. Recognition of Family Problems
. Liaison between Young People, Families and Schools
. Awareness of Unrealistic Demands
. Development of a Positive Outlook
. Improved Probation Service

Assessment Services
Those interviewed stress the need for a realistic approach in meeting the needs of young people, particularly the 13-17 year age group. Social workers indicate that there are numerous cases of teenagers 'at risk' living in the community who develop their own coping mechanisms. However, they argue that more assessment services should be made available to young people who develop emotional disorders because they are unable to cope with their own situation. According to one youth worker involved with the community, current provision of assessment services is particularly bad: 'We have to send kids to Dublin, to St. Michael's for assessment'. He suggested that within the Limerick area there is ample scope for the development of assessment services for young people.

Remedial Teaching
Youth workers interviewed suggest that young people who experience emotional problems may also have learning problems. It is pointed out that those with learning difficulties are frequently disruptive and that, in the normal school situation, teachers cannot deal with this: 'We need a back-up facility in schools - someone to deal with disruptive kids - teachers can't and don't'.
Service-providers suggest that the complex of problems which young people face generally manifest themselves in their schooling. Problems recorded by teachers include:

- low attention span
- poor communication with peers
- discipline problems

It is felt that an adequate remedial teaching service would help to improve learning skills for those who wish to remain in formal schooling but who find it difficult keeping up with the rest of their class. Service-providers agree that a remedial teaching service would cut down on the numbers leaving school at an early age with no formal qualifications.

Work Experience/Practical Learning at School
Those interviewed suggest that, for some young people, learning problems can stem as much from the structure and content of the education system as from their own emotional problems. It is pointed out that these young people have no regard for the education system because it does not suit them in any way:

`They are totally unconcerned with the subjects taught...their outlook is pessimistic about expectations from life'.

Those interviewed agree that the education system as it stands is too structured:

`the education system is overstructured...leading to tunnelled vision and this has had a part to play in young people opting out of school'.

Some of the social workers interviewed suggest that a greater level of work-related tasks be included in the curriculum and that practical learning experience could be offered in areas such as hairdressing, cooking and gardening.
Community Youth Workers suggest that programmes such as the Youth Encounter Project - which are provided outside the school system - could perhaps be incorporated into the education system so that those who opt for this kind of training would also receive some level of qualification.

Incentives in Education
Those interviewed suggest that for young people who do remain in the education system greater incentives should be provided for those who go on to complete the senior cycle. It is pointed out that young people frequently become apathetic and pessimistic about their education and about prospects on leaving school. Youth workers involved with schemes in areas of Limerick City comment on the lack of enthusiasm currently being expressed by youth because they feel that their geographical location goes against them when looking for a job. One youth worker stresses the need for more encouragement to stay at school if this is what the young person wants. He argues that if financial gain is the main motivation for early school leaving then the education system must respond accordingly.

Recreational Facilities
All of the service-providers interviewed express concern at the gross lack of amenities and facilities for young people in both urban and rural areas:

'they're very underdeveloped. It's difficult to get them off the ground'.

One social worker feels that more youth clubs are needed in which young people can get involved socially. She remarks, however, on the difficulty of getting youth leaders to organise services. Another social worker comments on the extent to which young people are increasingly being drawn into the 'pub culture'. She feels that young people need to be together and to relate to each other but that the 'pub' is the only place in which this need is currently being met. It was pointed out that youth clubs or
facilities for youth would encourage them to get together and possibly deter them from getting involved with the drinking sub-culture at such an early age.

Provisions for Early School Leavers
In addition to the provision of more and better recreational facilities, service-providers interviewed would also like to see more employment schemes for early school leavers. It is suggested that a lot of the employment initiatives for young people are geared at the over 18 age bracket and that 15-17 year olds tend to get neglected in the planning of services for employment.

Recognition of Family Problems
Service-providers are consistent in their view that, in delivering services, those responsible should recognise the complexity of problems which influence the life of a young person. These problems can frequently be tied up with the person's family situation and living circumstances:

'the family situation has a lot to do with kids' problems. If there's no stability then the kid may be on a loser'.

In the assessment of the needs of young people, it is suggested by those interviewed that a comprehensive approach be adopted in which all those factors which have a bearing on a young person's life are taken into account.

Liaison between Young People, Families and Schools
The adoption of a more effective approach to the understanding of young people's needs is seen by those interviewed to be dependent on the development of links between families and schools as well as with young people themselves. One youth worker comments on the absence of any formal liaison between school and family:

'there's a lack of communication between schools and families... there's no link person... schools are working in the dark... they don't have any idea of the family situation and neither does the school attendance officer'.

Youth workers agree that the work in which they are involved facilitates the development of relationships with the parents of young people:

'We invite positive contact... we explain the youth service... we also get them to talk about problems with the kids'.

However, it is pointed out that there is an insufficient number of workers available to facilitate this liaison between families and services.

Awareness of Unrealistic Demands
The service-providers interviewed caution that too much emphasis is being placed on doing well at school and getting a good job. One service-provider suggests that young people are constantly under pressure to achieve goals which may or may not be realistic for them. It is pointed out that non-achievement of goals can lead to disillusionment and discontent in the young person which may later manifest itself in what service-providers refer to as 'the vicious circle of crime and poverty'.

Development of a Positive Outlook
Coupled with the setting of realistic goals, those interviewed suggest that services should encourage young people, wherever possible, to look positively at life and at their future. Youth workers interviewed are particularly concerned at the way in which young people today are totally negative about their own lives, mainly as a result of not being able to find work. It is suggested that work initiatives and training include confidence-building for young people along with the skills required to get a job.

Improved Probation Service
One youth worker stresses the need for a better probation service for young people. He points out that, at the moment, there is no
statutory provision for 11-17 year olds:

'statutory services don't really take them on - they don't intervene until there's a crisis'.

It is pointed out that a service is only available to young people when they reach the stage of going to prison. It is emphasised that an early intervention programme is needed which would be a part of the probation service and would prevent young people from reaching the 'prison stage'.

Another point raised in relation to the probation service is that there is no localised provision available for those for whom a secure unit is needed:

'We don't have facilities here - we have to send them to Dublin'.

It is suggested that the development of services on a local level would reduce the emotional traumas experienced by young people at this stage and would make rehabilitation into the community an easier task.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE NEEDS OF LONE PARENTS

In order to explore the unmet needs of lone parents, interviews were held with Social Workers, Public Health Nurses, and Community Welfare Officers from the Mid-Western Health Board, and the Court Clerk for the Limerick area. In the course of the interviews the following issues were raised:

- Financial Security
- Employment Opportunities
- Equitable Income Maintenance Payments
- Child-Care Facilities
- Legal Protection Against Violence
Financial Security

Those interviewed stress the particular need for financial help for lone parents and, in particular, lone-parent families headed by women:

'money is a big need particularly in times of marital separation'.

It is pointed out in the interviews that the increase in numbers of lone-parent families has put pressure on the payment of social welfare allowances. However, it is also indicated that the payment of allowances to lone parents can be overly unwieldy and stigmatising:

'the rigidity of the system keeps you down and sometimes won't give you a state payment while you're trying to crawl up'.

One social worker criticises the way payments are delayed for long periods while the situation of the lone parent is being investigated:

'It takes so long for Deserted Wives Payments to be made... there's a long waiting period. Supplementary Welfare is not sufficient to cover the needs of the deserted wife and her family'.

The system of application for maintenance for deserted wives is also noted as requiring attention. It is pointed out that there is severe emotional and financial strain involved in going to court to decide maintenance payments:

'There's a strain in going to Court... most women can't wait for legal and court settlements... They have to make use of Supplementary Welfare'.

It is also pointed out that problems can arise where maintenance is not paid by the spouse and the case has to be brought through the courts again. In the meantime, women have no financial security.
Employment Opportunities
All of those interviewed would like to see better provision for employment opportunities for lone parents. However, it is emphasised that the accessibility of employment is very much dependent on the availability of child-care facilities as well as on the attitudes of the community towards the lone parent. As one social worker remarks, lone parents who do work are seen as abusing the system if they also receive maintenance:

'trying to provide employment is hard, especially where there is an under-current of criticism existing'.

It is suggested that lone parents be encouraged to work and to get away from their dependency on social welfare.

Equitable Income Maintenance Payments
In the interviews, it is pointed out that the category to which lone parents belong has an influence on the level of income-maintenance received by them. Social workers point out that varying rates are paid to widows, unmarried mothers and deserted wives and that this is inequitable in terms of service-provision. Those interviewed welcome the introduction of the new Lone Parent's Allowance and, in particular, its extension to male lone parents.

Child-Care Facilities
The need for child-care facilities is emphasised by all of the service-providers interviewed. Social workers are concerned with the absence of state-run child-care facilities and the lack of finances which would allow for an alternative:

'lone parents - these are the worst off group. They have no control... they have no child-care facilities'.

It is emphasised that, in terms of coping, the most efficient mechanism to help lone-parents is the availability of some level of child-care. Service-providers agree that the provision of
child-care facilities is necessary as a form of early intervention in cases which can later lead to child abuse.

The availability of child-care facilities is also tied up with training and employment as mentioned previously. One social worker mentions the case of a seventeen year old mother who had been offered a place on a training scheme but was unable to take it up because she had nobody to mind her child.

**Legal Protection against Violence**

In the case of unmarried mothers, one service provider expresses concern at the lack of protection afforded to them because of their marital status. It is pointed out that unmarried mothers cannot have their partners barred from their homes. 'Barring orders are confined to those who are married.' He emphasises that some changes ought to be made in current legislative provision so that the right to protection is available to all members of society regardless of their living circumstances.

**PERCEPTIONS OF THE NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY**

In relation to unmet needs of the elderly, interviews were held with social workers from the voluntary and statutory sections in the Clare and Limerick areas and with Public Health Nurses from Tipperary, Limerick and Clare areas. The interviews, which were held as open discussions and were relatively unstructured reveal the following as the primary unmet needs of elderly people:

- Social Work Services
- Social Contact
- Encouragement to Live Independently
- Domiciliary Support Services
- Home Nursing Service
- Home-Help Service
- Twilight Nursing Service
- Adequate Income
- Transport
. Adequate Housing
. Security in the Home
. Day Centres
. Chiropody Services

In addition to these needs, the service-providers also discuss broader issues relating to the delivery of services to elderly people. These issues include:
. Flexibility in Entitlement to Services
. Adequate Information on Services
. Health Education and Health Promotion

Social Work Services
The service-providers express concern at the lack of a social work service for elderly people. In relation to direct contact with the Personal Social Services, the elderly are regarded by the service-providers as 'a neglected group'. The need for contact with a social worker is recognised in the discussions as a result of the 'inadequate family unit' and the care it provides. One service-provider argues that the breakdown of the family unit has serious implications for the care of the elderly: 'there is no extended network to tap now'. As a consequence, greater levels of support services are required at statutory level to ensure that the elderly person does not become isolated from the rest of the community. In the experience of the Public Health Nurses interviewed, elderly people with families are often more alone and lonely than those without since they have the expectations that family members will visit.

The Public Health Nurses, whose caseload also includes 'social visits' to old people living alone, stress that now there is no time to visit 'unless we're providing a definite service'. This means that the nurses' register has been reduced and social visits are neglected. One social worker, who is particularly involved with provision of services to a rural based community, advises that elderly people living alone in the country are 'at risk':
'There is a need for more social workers for the elderly. More elderly are living longer. More are living on their own.'

She stresses that without the provision of support through a social work service elderly people will 'start to lack motivation to live'.

Social Contact
Directly related to the provision of a social work service is the need recognised by all of the service-providers for a greater level of social contact between elderly people and the rest of the community:

'Most die of loneliness rather than of old age. Their partner dies and they are left alone'.

The Public Health Nurses intimate that in attending elderly people, they naturally build up a rapport which the elderly people expect to be continued. However, the nurses interviewed share the view that they no longer have time for visits and that this need to ensure that old people in the community do not become isolated would best be served through the suggested social work service. Through the provision of this service, the needs of each elderly person could be 'assessed individually and dealt with at the appropriate level of care'. The service-providers stress that the need for greater social contact was particularly evident for those elderly people who are house-bound:

'The mobile elderly person is okay but if they're house-bound it's very tough'.

For these people, having company depends on the mercy of neighbours, family or voluntary groups engaged in work with the elderly. For the mobile elderly the service-providers emphasise that social contact is still very much dependent on the availability of transport and also on the provision of services
such as day-centres. One service-provider suggests that better planning of services targeted at older people would improve their current situation and ensure that elderly people are integrated in society.

Encouragement to Live Independently
Public Health Nurses interviewed are concerned with the degree to which elderly people become psychologically and physically dependent on their own extended family if and when they move in to live with them. They suggest that to overcome this dependency elderly people be directly encouraged to maintain aspects of their own lifestyle which might involve cooking and cleaning for themselves or even living separately:

'There's more of an inclination now towards granny-flats. This encourages the elderly to be independent - they're grateful then for any bit of help they get'.

Service-providers stress, however, that encouragement to live as independently as possible should be directly related to the mobility of the elderly person and that a process of education of 'independent-living' is also necessary for this to be ensured.

Domiciliary Support Services
The need for practical help with day-to-day chores and medical support during illness is stressed by all of the service-providers. Practical support services for the elderly include:
- Home Nursing Service
- Home-Help Service
- ...

The service-providers also recommend that a Twilight Nursing Service be established for elderly people in the community.

Home Nursing Service
Both social workers and Public Health Nurses stress the need for the provision of a home nursing service which would be
state-funded and available in all cases. The provision of this service, would, they argue, ensure that the elderly person receives the nursing care she needs as well as providing some degree of respite for the carer of that elderly person. The Public Health Nurses argue that they spend a great deal of their time and energy on curative work. In some areas, State Registered Nurses are employed on large caseloads to do dressings and the like but, as one of the interviewees claims, 'this service is very variable'. The provision of a comprehensive nursing service is seen by all of those interviewed as representing the best means of ensuring that elderly people are cared for medically and gives Public Health Nurses and other service-providers the chance to get involved in preventive care.

**Home-Help Service**

In relation to the provision, of a home-help service for elderly people, the Public Health Nurses in particular note the need for increased provision and improvements in its current delivery. Public Health Nurses are unhappy with the process surrounding eligibility for the home-help service. Under current ruling, if the elderly person is living with younger relatives he/she does not qualify for any home-help, but as one nurse pointed out:

'If the elderly person is living with someone who doesn't care about them they're not entitled to anything but they still need help'.

Another problem raised in relation to the home-help service is the lack of financial incentives to get people to participate:

'In the home-help service they have to pay the J-contribution in PRSI so it's harder to get people to do it'.

The importance of the home-help service is recognised by all of the service-providers both for its role in day-to-day tasks like cooking and cleaning but also as a source of company for the elderly person:

'There's a big need for home-helps and home carers. The
elderly need someone for shopping and making the fire but contact is very important so they need someone they know who's dependable.

In relation to provision of home-help services, one worker with a voluntary group of carers of the elderly stresses that greater co-ordination and integration is required between voluntary and statutory bodies:

'Overlap could be avoided. Better co-ordination would cut down on overlap and we could find out what's happening'.

'Twilight' Nursing Service
Public Health Nurses interviewed recommend the implementation of a twilight nursing service which would make care available during night hours. A more comprehensive approach is suggested by one nurse in providing care for elderly patients at home. She emphasises that improvements in the nursing service represents just one step in the greater improvement of liaison between hospitals and the community services — a necessary step if community care is to be regarded as a viable and lasting option. It is pointed out that there is considerable reluctance to give adequate domiciliary services to elderly people but that the State then has to bear all the costs of residential care following a breakdown in conditions.

Adequate Income
With respect to the financial needs of elderly people, the service-providers interviewed are not all in agreement that elderly people need more money to live on. Some of the Public Health Nurses feel that most elderly people have sufficient funds through the pension scheme and that they are not particularly concerned with their financial situation per se:

'They have money enough, loneliness is the problem'
However, one social worker in the County Clare area suggests that improvements should be made in the manner in which elderly people are assessed for benefits available. She recounts one case as follows:

'Social Welfare is very rigid in applying the rules. One eighty year old woman was not entitled to the free telephone but she couldn't really afford it even though she needed it for company. Her neighbour down the road got it because she didn't own her house. The rules are too rigidly applied'.

This example implies that for elderly people benefits in kind are more relevant to their lives than any form of cash benefit and that some flexibility in their allocation is necessary. It also demonstrates the inter-relatedness of the need for social contact through the provision of a telephone and the need for at least some degree of financial security.

Transport Needs

The need for transport is raised by all service-providers but is emphasised more by those working in rural areas:

'I suppose in rural parts transport is a major problem especially for the elderly'.

The problems of elderly people in relation to transport are perceived by service-providers as worsening due to the reduction in the numbers of voluntary drivers because of increased insurance costs:

'St. Vincent de Paul do some voluntary transport but accidents are reducing this voluntary work'.

Service-providers also point out that most elderly people are particularly 'proud' when it comes to depending on neighbours or an extended family to take them anywhere and that this cuts down on the opportunities to get out of the house.
Those interviewed also express concern at the reductions in availability of ambulance transport to take elderly people to and from hospital appointments:

'There was an ambulance service... now it's done away with.... people miss out on appointments because of the lack of transport'.

It is pointed out that services for the elderly are frequently provided only in the Limerick City area and that if people are to avail of these services that transport is a necessity:

'the distribution of services is bad - the nearer you are to Limerick the better.... you need transport'.

It is stressed that in the planning of services, account ought to be taken of the availability of transport for elderly people in the area. Service-providers feel that policy-makers tend to overlook this fact or dismiss it with the suggestion that elderly people already have recourse to free public transport. However, it is suggested that in rural areas this public transport is unavailable or totally unsuitable for the elderly person. Those interviewed feel that planning of services should incorporate a philosophy whereby, where possible, services would go out to the community rather than vice-versa.

**Adequate Housing**

Service-providers agree that the ability of elderly people to maintain independent living is very much dependent upon their housing circumstances. Three issues are raised in relation to the housing needs of elderly people:

- availability of adequate housing
- choice in housing
- security in the home

It is pointed out that poor housing circumstances can exacerbate the elderly person's decreased mobility and functional ability and
that equipment such as walking frames should be more readily available:

'there's a need for more equipment - that would make life easier for people in their homes - it can be very difficult to get things when you need them'.

Frequently, the houses of elderly people get run down and become difficult for them to maintain. The Public Health Nurses argue that, at this stage, elderly people should be enabled to choose between adapting their homes for their disabilities or moving to alternative accommodation.

Those interviewed stress that in relation to housing little or no choice is available to elderly people. The Public Health Nurses in particular suggest that current policy on the elderly is to encourage them to move into sheltered housing schemes where this is available. However, it is pointed out that sheltered housing is not always the best option for elderly people:

'some elderly just want to live as they are in their own place with their own things. When moved into sheltered housing they become extremely lonely. Choice is therefore important'.

Also, elderly people are often forced to sell their own homes because they are not encouraged to continue living there and they are afraid that they will not have the money for a nursing home. The service-providers emphasise that elderly people should be facilitated in every way to maintain themselves in their own homes for as long as possible. However, they also point out that should the elderly person choose to enter a nursing home, this should be facilitated. One nurse referred to a case where an elderly man was not accepted into the County Home:

'An elderly man of 75 years was sent home from hospital. He couldn't get into the County Home unless he couldn't walk'.
Security in the Home

Service-providers are particularly concerned with the numbers of old people who are living in fear of being attacked or burgled, particularly in rural areas:

'Where I work, old people are afraid - they're not going to bed at night - they're going early in the morning because they don't want to sleep in case someone comes to rob them. They hide their money down the garden'.

It is emphasised that for elderly people to feel secure in their own homes, some kind of alarm system or protection system is necessary. The need for security is seen by those interviewed to be very much intertwined with the need to encourage elderly people to live independently.

Day-Centres

The sporadic provision of day-centres across the country is not seen as a comprehensive solution to the needs expressed by elderly people in relation to recreation and activity. One social worker intimates that a well-developed network of day-centres is required in every town as a form of support for elderly people and for their carers. It is pointed out that elderly people lose their drive and then become loathe to get involved in anything. The Public Health Nurses feel that it should be their responsibility to let elderly people know what is available in the line of day-centres but they add that currently they do not have the time to do this. They also stress that transport would have to be provided for day-centres to operate successfully:

'day-centres for elderly will only work if transport is available'.

It is pointed out that a more positive orientation to day-centres ought to be promoted among elderly people because, at present, the elderly do not know what is involved in attending and are afraid that they will not fit in:

'I think if they were encouraged they would attend. They're
terified these day-centres would be for a different category.

Chiropody Services
Those interviewed point out that the degree to which elderly people can get out and make contact with other people in the community is influenced by the availability of a chiropody service. It is suggested that a chiropody service should be made available to all elderly people as a matter of right.

Flexibility in Entitlement to Services
The needs of the elderly are seen by those interviewed to require a greater degree of flexibility in entitlement to services. The examples of the elderly lady who was ineligible for the free telephone scheme and of the elderly man who would not be accepted into the County Home, because he could walk, were related by service-providers to show ways in which service-delivery had failed to adequately meet individual needs. All of those interviewed agree that flexibility in the delivery of services would ensure that a better service would result. They also intimate that because the situations of elderly people in the community differ so widely, more understanding of each case would necessitate greater leeway being given in provision of services.

Adequate Information on Services
Those interviewed point out that, depending on their level of mobility, elderly people do not leave their homes much and so cannot often avail of information sources provided in the community. Public Health Nurses feel that elderly people often look to them for information and advice which very often they do not have time to provide.

Another problem raised in relation to the availability of information is that service-providers themselves do not have
sufficient information on which to act:

'People are not given information but social workers are also not given sufficient information about available services'.

It is suggested that an improved method of disseminating information be devised which would be sensitive to the elderly person in the community.

**Health Education and Health Promotion**

It is pointed out that a preventive approach should be adopted in relation to elderly people and that they should be 'helped to help themselves' through the provision of health education:

'Elderly people should be educated for their golden years and a healthier life-style encouraged'.

Advice should be given on, for example, diet and positive living. It is suggested that elderly people, particularly the 'young elderly' should be encouraged to get involved in education programmes. This is suggested in relation to the notion of health promotion and education whereby the elderly person is encouraged to adopt a more positive outlook on life and on being an elderly person. Service-providers feel that the Departments of Health and Education should come together and devise a curriculum for elderly people in which their interests would best be reflected.

**PERCEPTIONS OF THE NEEDS OF CARERS OF THE PHYSICALLY DISABLED**

In relation to the carers of those with physical disability, interviews were arranged with service-providers employed by Clare Care, by the Mid-Western Health Board and by the local Multiple Sclerosis Society. In the interviews the following issues were raised:

- lack of formal support
- financial remuneration for caring
practical help with caring
emotional support
counselling services
social contact
respite care
transport facilities

Lack of Formal Support
The service-providers interviewed are unanimous in their view that little or no statutory provision has been made for carers of the physically disabled. Public Health Nurses interviewed indicate that although they sometimes assist the carer with practical help this service is by no means comprehensive or delivered on a regular basis. In the voluntary sector, service-providers also note that their brief as social workers is with the disabled person and it is only indirectly that their work involves carers. Service-providers suggest, therefore, that formal recognition be given to carers of disabled people and that services are planned and delivered with them as a principal target group.

Financial Remuneration for Caring
In relation to carers, emphasis is placed by those interviewed on the genuine need for some financial remuneration for the work they do:
'for some of them, money has become priority because it is so scarce'.

The financial needs of carers are particularly stressed by the service-providers in cases where it is the principal wage earner who has become disabled. It is pointed out that the need for financial help is inter-related with the way in which the carer actually copes with the situation because the availability of money determines the opportunity for getting out:
'Carers can't get out or afford to get people in'.

It is also pointed out that legislative steps have been taken to help ease the financial hardship of carers through the introduction of the Carer's Allowance, but that this allowance is not comprehensive and the rules for eligibility are too rigid:

‘the allowance is too narrow, you have to have no other income and be living alone... they're only allowed a bare level’.

One service-provider suggests that the allowance be expanded to include spouses of the disabled person and that the amount of the allowance be increased substantially.

Practical Help with Caring

The need for day-to-day help for the carer is emphasised in the interviews with all the service-providers. Public Health Nurses are particularly concerned with the shortage of aids, such as, incontinence wear and walking frames, which, they argue, are necessary provisions and whose lack creates undue strain for the carer:

‘for incontinence pads and sheets you have to go through a lot of channels to get what you need - it depends on whether they have a medical card or not - their income mightn't be enough but they still can't afford to buy the things’.

One nurse suggests that more practical help is needed but that further personnel will have to be provided. She intimates that the availability of a home nursing service like that suggested for elderly people would ensure that carers receive the help they need.

In relation to home-helps for carers, it is suggested that current services do not adequately suffice. Service-providers relate incidents where carers have refused home-help with the attitude that they can manage and that they would not like someone coming in and seeing the state of their houses. It is pointed out that a re-assessment of services for carers is required in which services
are acceptable to them and provide the help required without making them feel that they are not coping.

**Emotional Support**
As well as practical help with day-to-day tasks, the service-providers agree that carers require emotional support in coping with their 'life-long commitment to caring'. In relation to Multiple Schlerosis, it is pointed out that, before diagnosis, both the sufferer and the carer can go through a traumatic period while the problem is being identified. At this stage, it is suggested, 'there is not enough family support'. Similarly, for the mothers of children who are born with a disability, some support network is seen to be necessary: 'the needs of mothers are not being met. They need to understand why their child is handicapped but they are never told'.

The current lack of emotional support is seen by one service-provider in particular as a major contributor to the breakdown in provision of care to disabled people in the community. He argues that statutory provisions which would support carers should be implemented:

>'the Health Boards should help us help carers because if it breaks down they will have to care for both the sufferer and the carer'.

**Counselling Services**
In tandem with the development of support networks, the social workers interviewed suggest that a counselling service should be set up for parents and spouses of people with physical disabilities, both to help them come to terms with their roles as carers and to help them cope with the problems experienced by the disabled person. This is seen as being particularly important at the outset, when the person begins to adopt the caring role. Current provision of counselling is seen by those interviewed to be limited to a few of the voluntary agencies involved in
providing services for disabled people. Counselling is confined to the disabled person and in some cases, even this is not available.

Social Contact
The service-providers interviewed recognise that carers become isolated from the rest of society when they assume their duties in looking after a member of the family with a physical disability. Those interviewed agree that many carers neglect their own social lives and fail to maintain their own interests. An indication of their lack of social contact is suggested by the Public Health Nurses who, although visiting homes to help with the disabled person, frequently are persuaded to stay and talk with the carer - 'they really need someone to talk to... they never get out'. Service-providers feel that carers frequently express feelings of isolation to them but they cannot do anything about it. It is suggested that increased involvement of the community would ensure greater contact for carers with the rest of society.

Respite Care
It is pointed out that where carers provide twenty-four hour care to members of their family, a break from everyday duties is often vital to their coping abilities. Service-providers feel that current availability of respite care is not adequate: 'there just is no respite care except through some voluntary agencies'. Frequently, carers are dependent on other members of their family for a break. One social worker relates the incident of a woman with a disabled child who had to wait for a long period of time for the child to be accepted in a home:

'she waited ages... finally I got a place for her. Carers need that break'.

The service-providers also point out that, in their experience, the carer frequently expresses a form of guilt if he/she seeks some respite care. It is suggested that, along with the provision of additional facilities for respite care, carers themselves be
encouraged to take a break:

'carers suffer terrible guilt if they need to get away from their cared person... but they really need the support of knowing that they can'.

**Transport Facilities**

Those interviewed also express the need for adequate transport facilities to be made available for those in the caring role. It is pointed out that for those who have to attend for physiotherapy, assessments or other services, public transport is totally inadequate and generally poor in rural areas. It is suggested, too, that the use of taxis is not a viable option for those experiencing financial difficulty. Service-providers agree that in service-provision, the transport needs of carers have to be addressed and subsidisation made available if the disabled person is expected to attend at hospital and other appointments.

**PERCEPTIONS OF THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH LITERACY PROBLEMS**

In relation to literacy provision an interview was held with service-providers employed by the Vocational Educational Committee (V.E.C.). The main objective was to identify their perceptions of the needs of people who recognise that they have a literacy problem and approach them for literacy tuition. Emphasis was placed on needs seen to be associated with current delivery of this service, in relation to the following issues:

- Confidentiality
- Advertising/publicising the literacy service
- Diagnosis of the literacy problem
- Providing the 'right service' at the 'right time' in the 'right environment'
- Certification
- Transport
- Who should tutor?
Additionally, service-providers in this area delineate wider issues which they consider to be equally relevant to the needs of people who approach them for literacy tuition. These issues involve an examination of the following:

- the formal educational system
- philosophy of literacy
- funding of the literacy scheme
- liaison with other social services

Confidentiality
Service-providers regard confidentiality as an important issue in the delivery of literacy tuition. In their view, confidentiality is particularly necessary in rural areas, where serious mental health problems, suicidal tendencies or alcohol-related problems are often seen to result if literacy students feel their families/relatives/friends/peers have found out about their problem. It is suggested that such serious consequences are due to the very great lack of confidence and self-esteem often experienced by people who have literacy problems.

The anonymity of living in urban areas decreases the importance of confidentiality. However, when a literacy centre is provided locally, service-providers maintain that potential literacy students are often dissuaded from attending if they consider they may know the people working there. In this case, the service-providers recommend that tutors are appointed who are willing to go to people's homes when students are not inclined to attend the Adult Education Centre.

Advertising the Literacy Scheme
It transpires that the decision to look for help for literacy problems often takes years. In many cases those with problems are encouraged to seek help by their spouses or their families. However, the service-providers caution that literacy students themselves must be fully convinced that they want and are prepared for tuition.
In the first instance literacy students often hear the service being advertised on the radio. Service-providers emphasise the importance of advertising and publicity in relation to literacy provision. Radio advertising or announcements at Sunday Mass on a regular basis are regarded by service-providers as the most efficient way of informing people about the service. Posters and other written advertisements often do not reach the target-group due to the very fact that they have such poor literacy skills.

In relation to the issue of advertising the literacy scheme, more emphasis is placed by the service-provider on creating a positive climate in relation to continuing education (at any level) than on the actual medium of advertising. It is proposed that such a climate may be created when literacy students are prepared to inform other people about the scheme and perhaps even volunteer to tutor themselves. In so doing, people who have literacy problems will understand that there is nothing abnormal or embarrassing about their difficulty.

Diagnosis of the Literacy Problem
Service-providers agree that it is important to detect literacy problems as early as pre-school. They report that a child's home and socio-economic environment are the main contributory factors to the problem. Furthermore, it is generally found that parents of children with literacy problems often have similar problems themselves. In such cases, promoting the value of education at school is alien to the child as this has not been promoted or reinforced by their parents at home. Therefore, even if the problem is detected at an early stage, remedial teaching, although necessary, is not enough. Equally important is the provision of on-going adult education for parents of these children. The service-providers emphasise the importance of considering the whole environment. As they see it, a child's environment can often be quite destructive, in which case intervention is essential and should involve, for example, social workers and educational psychologists.
One of the service-providers deals specifically with young people who have not achieved adequate literacy skills. In addition to poor literacy skills these young people may have drug or alcohol related problems, may be in trouble with the law and are usually unemployed. It is likely that they have internalised a sense of failure related to education and accordingly, providing literacy tuition in conjunction with a creative programme is seen as the best approach. In this way teaching is removed from the formal educational setting and the students are helped to develop and realise the importance of skills other than conventional academic achievement.

Service-providers reiterate the importance of allowing people to define their own needs. For some, their objective is to be able to sign their name while for others it may be to read the newspaper. Indeed others may decide that literacy tuition is not for them, in which case that decision should be accepted.

Providing the 'Right Service' at the 'Right Time' in the 'Right Environment'

Service-providers reiterate the importance of providing the right service when people approach the scheme initially. The students need reassurance that the scheme adopts an approach to learning different from formal schooling. To facilitate the person's own learning it is imperative that the students make all their own decisions in relation to how and what they want to learn.

Certain people will have established poor attendance patterns at school and are likely to continue this in relation to literacy tuition. In response to this, service-providers propose the setting-up of open-learning centres where students can call regardless of the day or the time. However service-providers maintain that such open-learning centres will not be established until the actual existence of the problem receives due recognition.
The service-providers emphasise that the provision of poor quality tuition for one hour a week in unpleasant surroundings may have damaging repercussions on students, and only serve to reinforce the stigma already experienced because of their literacy problems. An intrinsic part of literacy provision involves helping students to improve their confidence and to develop a positive self-image.

People attending the literacy scheme for tuition are given the choice of group or one-to-one tuition. The needs of literacy students vary significantly making the task of group tuition more difficult. Service-providers outline the importance of students' feedback on the effectiveness of the teaching received. It is the experience of the service-providers that students often blame themselves if they feel that the literacy tuition is not beneficial to them.

There is agreement among many of the service-providers in relation to how literacy provision should be presented to the community. The main objective is to make the scheme as accessible as possible particularly to those people for whom it is not yet a priority. One suggestion is to incorporate literacy provision into general community adult education which includes cookery classes, needlework instruction, social welfare rights and so on. Without undue emphasis on reading and writing it is perceived that people may be more inclined to attend - the idea of the 'hidden agenda'. The issue of service delivery is particularly important in relation to women. Because of responsibilities with children and home management women often find that they are unable to attend literacy classes. Even where tutors volunteer to go to people's homes, having children around makes learning difficult for a lot of mothers. Service-providers recognise the difficulty of creating a supportive climate in the home.
Certification
Currently there are no links between literacy schemes and the formal educational system. Service-providers indicate the need for certification on the completion of the literacy course which would enable students to continue their education. The service-providers suggest that holding Leaving Certificate courses at night would benefit such students.

Additionally, service-providers indicate that in the absence of certification they find it difficult to measure student progress. In one Adult Education Centre they follow a City and Guilds Communications Course - which entails continuous assessment and is an internationally recognised certificate. Students are allowed to keep their own records of their work, thereby putting the control into their own hands. If they fail to do the assignments or attend the classes they must accept the responsibility themselves.

Transport
According to the service-providers the lack of transport facilities prevents some people from attending the aforesaid City and Guilds course. Due to the general lack of finance they cannot afford to run the course in various centres. In addition, with limited volunteer tutors they do not have the teaching staff which would facilitate running the course in many centres where people could attend locally. Furthermore, service-providers indicate that a course which entails continuous assessment is very demanding and given that the tutors are volunteers they could not be expected to contribute anymore than they are already doing. In general, the problem with transport is more immediate in rural areas. Particularly where a person's financial resources are limited, the choice available to them to attend one or another clinic is non-existent. As already discussed, this becomes more problematic where the person involved is anxious about the issue of confidentiality. In general more funding is required to schedule more City and Guild courses.
Who Should Tutor?
Service-providers apply very strict criteria in the selection of tutors. The ability to communicate effectively and make the student feel at ease is considered to be an essential determinant in relation to who should teach people with literacy problems. Service-providers insist that potential tutors (including teachers and other professionals) attend a training course before taking on any students. According to one service provider:

'Some people have an instinctive way of communicating... it's a question of 'who' they are as opposed to what they know and you will find that no matter how many hours of a tutor training course you implement there are some people and they just have stereo-typed notions and it doesn't matter what you say or what kind of a programme you put them through they will never identify these things'.

Service-providers note that middle-class people are usually in a better position to afford the time to tutor on a voluntary basis. They are concerned that students may be dissuaded from continuing with tuition because of the alien middle class values being promoted by some tutors.

Wider Issues: The Educational System
In the interview with the service-providers concern is conveyed about the failure of the educational system in relation to an ever increasing number of young people. One service-provider speaks of the effects she has observed as follows:

'At this stage, people have internalised a sense of failure....the school is seen as an alien institution....they want nothing to do with anything like that again'.

For many, this feeling of alienation is reinforced by an unsupportive home background and a problematic social and economic environment. Service-providers propose that remedial teachers, educational psychologists and social workers should be appointed
to schools to evaluate problems in the context of the child's whole environment.

The Philosophy of Literacy

The service-providers emphasise the importance of considering the philosophy of literacy in the tutor-training programme. The tuition that the student will receive will depend largely on the sort of ideas the tutor has about helping somebody with a literacy problem. In the service-providers' view the philosophy of literacy involves:

'Freeing people, helping people to acquire skills, changing themselves so that they have more control over their own lives and are able to make their own decisions'.

The service-providers perceive that tutors should seriously consider their own ideas and objectives in becoming involved in literacy tuition:

'A lot of the time they would need to look at themselves....you can go back to the social and economic issues, class issues, related to illiteracy to look at why the State and Educational system has failed with the bottom twenty per cent....how the socio-economic factors, the whole environment and family background influences literacy'.

The service-providers indicate that often tutors' political views may be opposed to accepting the fact that socio-economic and class factors contribute to literacy problems. Most importantly service-providers articulate the necessity of adopting a non-judgmental attitude towards the students.

Funding of the Literacy Scheme

In the service-providers' view the literacy scheme needs government recognition, funding and backing. In contrast to countries like Nicaragua and Zimbabwe, where illiteracy is recognised as a major economic issue, Irish society presumes that everybody can read and write. Additionally, in the absence of a
strong lobby group, very little government recognition has been achieved. This is partly due to the fact that people are reticent to admit that they have a problem with literacy, even to close family members and friends.

Liaison with other Social Services
The service-providers are aware of their need to liaise in the literacy scheme with other professionals, for example, social workers, psychologists, nutritionists etc. Presently, such links do not exist, with the result that the literacy scheme service-providers are left to cope with multi-problem cases without consultation with other professionals. This can have serious repercussions on individual students if problems are not dealt with in an expert professional way.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE NEEDS OF TRAVELLERS

In order to ascertain perceptions of the needs of travellers, interviews were set up with social workers with both Limerick County Council and Limerick Corporation as well as with youth workers and a member of the Travellers Committee of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. The interviews concentrated on the perceived unmet needs of travellers by service-providers. The following needs were raised throughout the course of the interviews:

- Accommodation and Housing Needs
- Social Acceptance
- Independent Living
- Education and Employment Training
- Confidence Building
- Education of the Settled Community about Travellers

Accommodation and Housing Needs
Service-providers working specifically with the travelling community are in agreement that accommodation needs are the most
basic and as yet unmet needs of travellers, 'accommodation is obviously one of their primary needs'. It is pointed out that the needs for suitable accommodation results in numerous other social problems which in themselves generate further needs for travellers. For example, service-providers refer to the lack of sanitation facilities available to those travellers living on the road-side which leads to poor health status and, therefore, shorter lifespan:

'No water facilities, no sanitation, no toilets... Public Health Nurses will tell you that infections are rife'.

One social worker relates the example of the travelling woman who had no toilet facilities available to her throughout her pregnancy:

'she had to cross two fields both before and after the birth of her baby because they had no toilets'.

Those interviewed indicate that, to meet their accommodation needs adequately, travellers need a variety of alternatives from which to choose, ranging from standard housing to halting site facilities.

In commenting on the accommodation needs of travellers, service-providers affirm that the travelling community tend to be railroaded into accepting one alternative, the alternative most agreeable to the population at large:

'The settled community impose their standards... we try to integrate travellers... settled people seem to be forcing them in their own settled way into integrating completely'.

Social Acceptance
Coupled with, and as a result of their living circumstances, travellers are regarded by the rest of the community as unacceptable, undesirable and dirty. The service-providers interviewed indicate that there is a definite need for travellers to be given improved status within the community. However, one
service-provider comments that this could only happen through the education of the settled community about the culture and life-style of travellers.

'I would love to see an active programme within the settled community, within every university, every school, an appreciation of the travelling way of life because that is where people are most impressionable'.

Another cause for concern among service-providers is the manner in which travelling people are expected to conform to the ways of the settled community once they move into a house. Those interviewed feel that as well as having to adjust to living within four walls without being able to move off when so desired, travellers also experience a quandary in that acceptance by the settled community and social integration means rejection of their travelling culture:

'There's a dilemma for travellers in houses. They're trying to raise their family as best as they can but they're not allowed because they're identified as travellers and all the negative connotations that are associated with that'.

It is pointed out that travellers need to be helped to integrate but not in a way in which their identity is lost or confused. Service-providers feel that the perceptions of others towards the travelling community are clouded and that their attitudes need to be changed.

Independent Living

All the service-providers interviewed agree that travellers should be encouraged to become more independent and to learn to do things for themselves. Those interviewed agree that some progress has been made in this respect. For example, older travellers no longer need assistance with form-filling as their children now have sufficient literacy skills to do so. One service-provider, in particular, would like to see travellers become more active in the dialogue between policy-makers and statutory agencies and 'to
develop a voice for themselves’. It is also pointed out that travellers need more of an opportunity to define their own needs through some kind of forum.

Education and Employment Training
The comments of the service-providers suggest that although travellers need to get more involved in continuing education and training programmes, both need to be more sensitive to and inclusive of the travelling culture and the travelling way of life.

'The education system is suited to the normal child. In general, not every area has special classes... there needs to be adaptations for travellers so that they can talk about life in the caravan and looking after houses and living in the country...'

This is regarded as a currently unmet need and its consideration is advised.

Confidence Building
The inclusion of elements of the travelling culture is seen to be closely related to the travellers' self-esteem. Service-providers agree that the travelling community as a whole lacks the confidence necessary for participation in normal living:

'I'm trying to make travellers more independent of me, to enable them to take care of themselves... it's all about giving them the confidence, saying to them that they are more capable of doing it - giving them a boost builder'.

It is suggested that travellers be encouraged through the education system to boost elements of their lifestyle and to appreciate their ethnicity.

Education of the Settled Community about Travellers
It is pointed out that the needs of the travellers remain largely unmet because of opposition by the community to the positioning of
halted sites and the allocation of houses to the travelling people. It is emphasised by service-providers that the settled community impose their standards on the travelling population and define their needs in terms of the 'desirable option'.

'needs are not being met because travellers are not being understood. Things laid out for them are not their true needs'.

Service-providers interviewed stress that a misunderstanding of travellers and their needs is bred into the settled community. One social worker adds:

'unless we can get over that and sit down with travellers we can't meet their needs'.

GENERAL SERVICE NEEDS

In the interviews with service-providers, points are raised in relation to the planning and delivery of services. Although these issues do not pertain to any one of the six groups concerned they do have implications for the future direction of services. Issues raised include:

- constraints on service provision
- perceived methods of improving service-provision
- community self-help
- provider-consumer relationships
- dissemination of information

Constraints on Service Provision

In the interviews with social workers in the statutory sector, it is emphasised that as a direct result of reductions in spending, they have been given a limited brief. Concern and frustration are experienced at not having time or resources to deal with the many other numerous problems experienced by families today. Instead, they argue, problems have to be dealt with through informal support networks - like the extended family - which are part of
the community. This, however, increasingly puts a strain on 'the fragile family unit' thereby creating new and more pressing problems to be dealt with.

In some instances voluntary agencies have stepped in to meet the needs of certain sections of the population but service provision is often uncoordinated and seen as an ad hoc solution to identified needs. Unidentified needs remain unmet. The service-providers interviewed point out that the increasing child care role of social workers inhibits the development of a more far-reaching policy which would have as its aim the support and protection of the family.

Public Health Nurses interviewed point out that the setting of priorities in the case of social workers has implications for them in their work. Already stretched in the care they give to the population, Public Health Nurses now feel that they have to augment the supportive role previously assigned to social workers. This in turn cuts down on time spent on the rest of their caseload.

Perceived Methods of Improving Service Provision

The need for greater liaison between the statutory and voluntary sectors is seen as imperative to ensure overall coverage with regard to services. One service-provider notes that there is good contact across agencies but not sufficient working together with agencies in common. Improved co-ordination would ensure that no overlap in service provision would take place.

Community Self-Help

Service-providers are also concerned with the degree to which communities have become alienated. Their experience of a considerable degree of anger and frustration in people was perceived to be a result of high rates of unemployment, poor financial situations and no expectation of improvement. One service-provider stresses the need to focus on prevention rather
than cure and that families need education to cope with the problems facing them today. Community-empowerment is emphasised as a means of counteracting the poor self-esteem currently being experienced. Parenting courses are seen as one method of family-guidance.

Provider-Consumer Relationship
Those interviewed suggest that more consultation take place between providers of a service and consumers of that service. It is generally regarded that an exchange of viewpoints would both help in identifying needs and in providing suitable solutions to these needs. The combination of professional judgement and subjective experience is seen by all and sundry to represent the most effective mode for identification and classification of needs.

Dissemination of Information
In expressing their views about the role of Family and Personal Support Services in meeting needs, service-providers emphasise the value of an efficient information system through which people can ascertain their entitlements. It is pointed out in the interviews conducted that people lack self-confidence and need to be encouraged to come forward for help. One service-provider would like to see more community information centres which would cover a broad spectrum of social services from social welfare to housing. Service-providers express their own disenchantment at the level of information available to them from policy-makers and recommend that a more open communication system be established.
CHAPTER NINE

OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction
This study focuses on unmet needs in relation to Family and Personal Support Services as these are perceived by six different client groups. The study is exploratory in nature and employs a qualitative approach allowing clients to speak from their own experience and to describe from their own point-of-view the needs that arise in their lives. All of the groups involved in the study are living in disadvantaged circumstances of one kind or another although their particular circumstances vary greatly from group to group. The people selected for the study mirror the different kinds of client groups typically found within the community and also reflect different stages of the life-cycle from youth through parenthood to old-age. Previous chapters have described in a qualitative fashion the experiences and perceptions of unmet need recounted by the six groups involved. The feedback obtained from clients has been complemented by exploration of the views of those who provide the services. Feedback from both clients and service-providers has highlighted an array of needs which are perceived as being currently unmet. In some instances it is perceived that needs are unmet because services which would address them simply are not there. In other instances, however, the services do exist but fail to meet needs either through difficulties of access or through inappropriate delivery mechanisms. The purpose of this final chapter is to present an overview of the outcomes of this qualitative exploration and to assess the implications for planning and policy-making of the feedback obtained. The chapter presents recommendations for policy development in the area of Family and Personal Support Services and outlines guidelines for putting these policy recommendations into practice.
OVERVIEW OF PERCEPTIONS OF UNMET NEED

This qualitative study reveals that each of the six participant groups perceive that many of the needs they experience are unmet through current service provision. This is so regardless of the particular living circumstances of the clients and regardless of the particular stage of the life-cycle to which they belong. Some of the unmet needs identified are experienced in common by all six client groups while others are specific to a particular group. This section presents an overview of perceptions of unmet need from each of the different groups; beginning with young people at the initial stages of the life-cycle and continuing with the perceptions of lone parents and the elderly and those of groups with particular needs such as the carers of people with physical handicap, people with literacy problems and travelling people.

Since the primary objective of the study is the exploration of unmet need from the clients' perspective, the main focus of this overview is on the clients' feedback. Generally, the views of the service-providers match closely the views of the clients. Accordingly, the overview presents feedback from service-providers only where this diverges from that of clients or where further issues which are unidentified by clients are raised.

Young People from Disadvantaged Areas

In order to provide a framework within which the unmet needs reported by the different client-groups may be better understood, it is necessary to refer to the general context within which the people involved live their lives. A high level of unemployment is a prominent feature of Irish society despite unprecedented levels of growth and major economic, social and cultural change since the early 1960's. Unemployment, however, it is not evenly spread throughout the country but tends to be concentrated in particular urban and rural areas. There is no doubt that a link exists between poverty and unemployment. Poverty, however, is more than merely lack of money with economic deprivation also having social
consequences. Depressed inner-city or rural areas represent an accumulation of deprivations related to health, housing, education, employment and training and this accumulation of deprivation leads to social exclusion and marginalisation of society's most vulnerable groups. Fighting social exclusion requires not only access to services but recognition of the complexity and multiplicity of the deprivations experienced by the client-groups and an effort to respond to this complexity through the joint mobilisation of economic and social agencies.

Young People from Disadvantaged Areas
It is clear from the interviews that many of the needs identified by young people from disadvantaged areas are those typically experienced at this particular stage of the life-cycle. For example, young people, whatever their circumstances, look for respect and understanding from older adults - a need which some of the young people in this study perceive as being unmet in their lives. Young people are going through two major transitions in their lives - to adulthood and to the world of work - and many of the needs they experience spring from these transitions. The young people of the present study are not different from their less disadvantaged peers in terms of the needs they identify in relation to these transitions but their difficulties in having these needs met are clearly exacerbated by their disadvantaged circumstances.

Several of the unmet needs identified by the young people refer to their experiences in school where, for example, they perceive that weaker students were not given the attention and understanding needed, where communication between teachers and students was seen as unsatisfactory and where sensitivity to family problems was seen as lacking. More frequently, however, unmet needs in relation to school were spoken of in terms of failure to prepare young people for the world of work. The young people spoke of the lack of opportunities for work experience, of an educational
curriculum which they perceive as irrelevant and of teaching methods which fail to encourage or motivate.

On leaving school, the young people identify a number of unmet needs in relation to making the transition to the world of work. The most frequently mentioned unmet need is the creation of employment opportunities. There is a feeling of hopelessness among the young people about the possibility of getting work in the future despite participation in training schemes. They consider that they are not given a fair chance by employers and that their potential is not being recognised and exploited. An important issue in relation to acknowledgement of skills and potential contribution is the failure to award certification for completion of training courses. Related to lack of work opportunities is the unmet need for sufficient income which provides not only for basic subsistence but also allows for social participation. All the young people of the study worry about money and some are concerned about how the lack of it is likely to affect their future prospects for marriage and family life.

It is also clear from the feedback obtained that young people in disadvantaged areas are not being facilitated in social participation and involvement which constitutes an important aspect of the transition to adulthood. There appears to be an almost total lack of recreational facilities which would allow young people come together in a beneficial and enjoyable environment. The young people themselves point to the serious consequences of this unmet need and speak of the dangers of alcohol abuse when the only social outlet is the 'pub'. A further aspect of unmet need in relation to the transition to adulthood is the failure to provide advice and information and to do so in a fashion which respects the adult status of the young person. The young people of the present study perceive that they have not received adequate advice or information on a number of health related issues including smoking, drinking and drug-abuse.
In their view, neither are they sufficiently prepared for developing sexual relationships having little or no information on, for example, contraception or on the issue of AIDS.

Overall, a picture emerges of young people whose circumstances and experiences have led to lack of confidence and a rather negative approach. They appear to see their situation as one where basic needs for gainful and satisfactory work and for social involvement and social contribution are not being met. The service-providers raise concerns very similar to those of the young people themselves, particularly in relation to school experiences where the need for work experience, practical learning and incentives to remain in school are stressed. Like the young people, the service-providers identify the need for a better remedial service but further point to the lack of assessment services for learning difficulties. The service-providers are concerned that more effective liaison should be developed between young people, their parents and the schools which would lead to greater understanding of home problems and prevent unrealistic demands on young people. A further issue raised by the service-providers is the need for improvements in the probation service.

Lone Parents
Feedback from the lone parents of the study reveals that the most outstanding unmet need among this group is adequate financial support. Lack of money appears to colour all aspects of their lives and many of the needs articulated revolve around finance. The women interviewed recount the difficulties involved in establishing a secure family life when money is often not there to provide even basic necessities. Lack of adequate financial support not only prevents lone parents from meeting material needs but also restricts their own employment opportunities, educational opportunities for their children and opportunities for social participation.
The feedback obtained highlights the trap which is created through lack of support services which would enable lone parents to take up employment. The absence of child-care services, for example, confines lone parents to the home and prevents them from taking up employment, or educational or training opportunities which are the primary routes out of poverty. In addition, social welfare regulations create a disincentive to work when even low paid employment can lead to loss of entitlements. In addition to the low level of present income maintenance payments to lone parents, the feedback reveals inequities and lack of standardisation in the conditions and procedures of payment. While the new Lone Parent Allowance would appear to remedy some of these perceived inadequacies, there still remain issues of accessibility of services and communication between client and service-provider.

Apart from financial problems, a further significant factor in restricting lone parents from sharing fully in the way of life of other members of the community is their unmet need for social acceptance. Feedback from those interviewed shows how negative social attitudes inhibit lone parents from becoming involved in ordinary social activities which others take for granted and lead to feelings of marginalisation. Clearly, there is a need for education of public attitudes so that communities may understand the difficulties faced by lone parents and may provide the support they need. Perhaps more importantly, members of the community need to recognise that lone parents are not different from other parents and share the same needs for social contact, emotional support, respect and dignity. In the context of social participation and involvement, provision of child-care facilities again emerges as an unmet need which severely restricts the life of a lone parent.

Those interviewed indicate that housing is also a significant aspect of their material circumstances where needs are currently unmet. Some of the lone parents of the study are living in poor
conditions or bad environments while others speak of the lack of choice and restriction to specific housing areas.

Apart from the material aspects of their lives, feedback from the lone parents indicates that they also suffer from lack of support in regard to the emotional aspects of their lives. Lone parents, like everybody else, need to have people in whom they can confide and opportunities to express their concerns and difficulties. Related to this is the need for advice and help in coping with day-to-day concerns. An important element in empowering people and enabling them to cope is to make information readily accessible and easily available. The lone parents, however, indicate that this kind of support is not currently available to them.

One further issue raised by the service-providers which is not alluded to by the lone parents themselves is the need for adequate legal protection against violence.

The Elderly
Feedback from the elderly people interviewed reveals that, at this particular stage of the life cycle, social contact assumes central importance. When the need for social contact is unmet, as it frequently is among the elderly in the present study, the quality of life is greatly affected and feelings of isolation and loneliness result. The interviews indicate how those who live alone and those who have suffered bereavement are in particular need of support. It emerges, however, that this support is very much lacking both from formal services and informal networks. Even where visits are received from service-providers, these are perceived as being rushed with little time for providing companionship or conversation.

A significant factor which emerges as preventing the elderly from participating more fully in ordinary community life is the lack of an adequate transport system. Because they do not have access to
public transport - either because a service is not provided or the existing service is inappropriate - the elderly are obliged to depend on neighbours or relatives or to resort to hitching to get where they want to go. Lack of adequate transport means that the elderly are hindered in everyday functions such as shopping, going to the post-office or getting supplies from the chemist. Even more seriously, however, lack of transport prevents the elderly from seeing their G.P.'s and attending clinics and hospitals. The potential benefits of day-care centres - where they exist - are also made unattainable through failure to provide adequate transport.

In common with young people and lone parents, who represent earlier stages of the life-cycle, the elderly people of the study indicate that they are not getting adequate financial support to meet their needs. The needs they speak of are modest, consisting of basics such as food and clothes and some kind of social involvement. The feedback obtained also reveals the importance of the need to have enough money to ensure a proper burial and the worry which results when their present income is not seen to allow this.

The elderly people of the study indicate that their preference is to stay in their own homes for as long as possible where they remain in familiar surroundings among long established social networks. However, the feedback obtained suggests that many of the supports which would enable the elderly to stay-put are not available. Contact and companionship are seen by the elderly as essential in staying-put but, as indicated previously, this is a need which to a large extent is currently unmet. Some homes would require adaptations to enable their elderly occupants stay-put but these are not being carried out. Domiciliary support is a vital element in enabling the elderly remain in their own homes. However, the feedback obtained shows that public health nurses, for example, are often rushed and over-worked and their visits are seen as being too infrequent. Neither are home-helps or
meals-on-wheels widely available. Some of those interviewed had never even heard of these latter services.

The interviews also indicate that a significant influence on the quality of life of the elderly is the extent to which they feel safe in their own homes. Safety appears to be a constant source of anxiety for some of those interviewed and constitutes a significant area of unmet need. It is seen that support from members of the community in the form of Neighbourhood Watch would contribute greatly to this need as would the more visible presence of members of the Garda Síochána.

Overall, the feedback from the interviews reveals how the quality of life of those at a later stage of the life-cycle is decreased through failure to address needs related primarily to social contact but also related to transport, finance, housing and domiciliary support. A further significant impression which arises from the interviews is that these elderly people are unaware of any concept of active retirement which appears to spring from an attitude that the elderly are somehow redundant or defunct. In addition, few appear to plan ahead for old age or for the event of serious illness. Addressing these needs could significantly improve the quality of life of the elderly and increase their involvement in and contribution to the life of the community.

While the service-providers re-iterate many of the unmet needs identified by the elderly themselves, generally their feedback puts the emphasis on services rather than on underlying needs. Accordingly, the service-providers note the importance of providing services such as Home Nursing, Twilight Nursing and Social Work. Unlike the elderly themselves, the service-providers also highlight the importance of health education and health promotion and continuing education.
Carers of People with a Physical Disability

The picture which emerges from the interviews with the carers is one of dedication and commitment. It appears, however, that rather than being acknowledged and facilitated in the work they do, the task of caring is made more arduous through failure to meet many of the carers’ needs. One of the most significant impressions from the interviews is that carers find it very difficult to think in terms of their own concerns and wants and needs are typically articulated in terms of what is required to facilitate better caring. It is clear that carers need to be encouraged and supported in paying attention to and acknowledging their own lives and concerns and in addressing their own needs and wants.

When pressed to focus on themselves, the carers indicate that foremost among their unmet needs is the failure to provide respite from caring. Closely related to respite from caring is the carers’ unmet need for help with the practical tasks of caring. The carers carry by themselves the sole responsibility for looking after the disabled person and where help is given it is usually in the form of ‘keeping an eye on’ the person with the handicap while the carer is out. Difficulties are also experienced in obtaining practical caring aids and the level of domiciliary support is seen as very much lacking particularly in rural areas. Failure to provide support in terms of respite and practical help results in strain on the carer’s physical well-being and leads to restriction of social life and lack of contact and isolation.

Failure to provide adequate information and advice is a further area of unmet need which adds greatly to the burden of caring, particularly in the early stages of caring. The feedback from the interviews makes very clear the sensitivity and empathy needed on the part of medical personnel when imparting the diagnosis of the disabled person’s particular problem. Experience of insensitivity has made the task of coming to terms with the disability more difficult for many of the carers of the present study. Lack of an
adequate transport service is another area of unmet need which increases the difficulty of caring and which prevents carers and the people being looked after from participating fully in community life.

The feedback reveals the importance of recognising that carers do not form a homogeneous group and services - such as home-help - which are provided without regard to individual requirements often fail to meet the carer's specific needs. There are different kinds of caring and there are different stages in the caring process and carers' needs vary accordingly. For some carers the best solution is the provision of adequate financial support which would enable them choose the support options which best suit them. Financial recompense is an important unmet need among carers not only to cover the expenses of caring but, more importantly, as a form of recognition and acknowledgement of the value of the service which they provide.

Feedback from the carers indicates the strain on physical well-being which can result from caring. This implies the need for monitoring of the carers' own health and the importance of including them along with the disabled people for whom they care on the health visitor's case-load. A related issue in the context of well-being, which is raised by the service-providers but not by the carers themselves, is the need for counselling services.

People with Literacy Problems
Literacy problems may be experienced by anyone, at whatever stage of the life-cycle they may be. In the present study, the group of people with literacy problems included young people at an early stage of the life-cycle and older people approaching the other end of the cycle. Whatever their age, the feedback from those interviewed clearly reveals the devastating effect on self-confidence which literacy difficulties can produce. In an age where knowledge is the key product and ability to access information a vital skill, there is a very great need for
recognition not only of the negative effects of literacy difficulties on self-esteem but also of its far-reaching effects on other aspects of the person's life.

Recognition and acknowledgement of the existence of the problem is an important initial step but needs to be followed by action to remedy the problem. The interviews reveal that current provision for literacy difficulties is greatly inadequate with literacy schemes being too few and classes being too infrequent. Provision is also perceived as being inadequate in that it does not allow for intervention at an early stage while young people are still in their teenage years. A further lack in provision is the perceived failure to identify and address literacy problems while the person is still at school. Whatever their age, those interviewed spoke of being 'left behind' at school and of not receiving the help and understanding they needed at that stage. Part of the problem is the failure to provide an adequate remedial service in the schools.

A further aspect of the inadequacy of current provision for literacy difficulties relates to the manner in which literacy schemes are publicised. Feedback from the interviews highlights the fact that accessible and appropriate information is still an unmet need. It is important not only to provide information in a manner which can be understood by potential scheme participants but also to ensure that members of the community are aware of what is available. Two further issues in relation to current service provision are the need for choice both in the nature of tuition - whether group or one-to-one - and choice in the person providing the tuition, and the need for guaranteed confidentiality, particularly in the early stages of tuition.

Those interviewed indicate how important support and encouragement from others are in enabling them to initiate and continue with efforts to overcome their literacy difficulties. However, it appears that, as with lone parents and other groups interviewed,
education of public attitudes needs to be addressed if communities are to provide the kind of support needed. The feedback from the interviews clearly shows the continued existence of the stigma attached to literacy difficulties and the prejudice and lack of respect which people who suffer such difficulties experience. It emerges as particularly important that those involved in service-provision should be trained to be aware of and sensitive to the needs and difficulties of people with literacy problems. A further issue related to encouragement, which is also raised by young people, is the need for certification which acknowledges the efforts made and the skills acquired.

Many of the unmet needs raised by the clients themselves are also identified by the service-providers. In addition, however, this latter group points to issues of service-delivery which need to be addressed. The service-providers highlight the need for a holistic approach to literacy difficulties with different disciplines involved and liaison established between different services. The need for adequate state funding of schemes is a further issue raised by the service-providers.

Travellers
One of the most striking impressions which emerges from the interviews with the travellers is the lack of acceptance which they experience from the settled community and the extent to which this affects their lives. The consequence of this unmet need for acceptance is that divisions between the travellers and the settled community are widened and the travellers see themselves as being marginalised and cut off from the normal life of the community. As with several other of the groups involved in this study, the experiences of rejection and prejudice recounted by the travellers point to a need for education of public attitudes so that they may not be prevented from social involvement and participation.
The feedback from the travellers indicates that lack of acceptance and housing circumstances are very much inter-related with some believing that most of their problems would be solved through being settled in a house. However, it is very clear from the interviews that not all travellers want to be housed and that provision of choice in relation to living circumstances is of the utmost importance. While all travellers want to see improvements in their living conditions, for some the ideal situation is to be housed, while for others the preferred option is provision of halting sites with proper facilities. Current failure to cater adequately for the housing needs of the travellers is very evident from the descriptions given of the difficulties involved in getting a house among those who wish to be housed and from the descriptions of appalling living conditions recounted by those living in halting sites.

Housing circumstances are seen by the travellers as also being very much interconnected with employment opportunities. Prejudice stemming from perceptions of the travellers living arrangements is again revealed in their descriptions of their attempts to seek work. It is clear that living on the side of the road poses great obstacles to finding employment with employers being reluctant to even consider such travellers for a job. In turn, failure to secure employment means that the travellers interviewed are dependent on social welfare payments. As with other group interviewed, the feedback from the travellers vividly illustrates the inadequacy of such payments in meeting even the basic needs of proper food and heating.

Difficulties in finding employment arising from prejudice and living conditions are compounded by low educational levels among the travellers. The interviews reveal that provision for basic numeracy and literacy skills is still an unmet need for some, particularly among the older age-groups.
A significant aspect of the feedback from the travellers is the distinct lack of trust and lack of understanding which they perceive as existing among certain service-providers. As with other groups interviewed, the issue again arises of appropriate training so that service-providers are aware of and sensitive to the needs and concerns of their clients. An important element in creating an environment of understanding is the involvement of the travellers themselves in decision-making which affects their lives.

One issue not raised by the travellers themselves but of clear significance from the perspective of the service-providers is the importance of developing independence and a stance of self-help. An important element in this is building self-confidence among the travellers.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The feedback summarised above from each of the six different client-groups and from the service-providers working with them highlights a variety of issues for policy planning, organisation and service-delivery. Among the key issues which need to be addressed are the following:

- current lack of services to address a variety of needs among different client-groups
- need for a holistic approach which takes account of financial, emotional, psychological and social needs
- existence of inter-connections among needs as these are experienced in everyday life
- need for recognition of heterogeneous nature of different client-groups and recognition of individuals' specific needs
- the influence of economic and social context on felt needs
- need for accessible and readily available information
- need for trust and communication between client and service-provider
importance of development of community support
the importance of involvement of clients in decision-making
need for development of positive self-image among client-groups leading to greater self-help and empowerment

Some of the issues raised above relate to gaps in service-provision while others are more directly connected with the manner in which services are delivered. On another level, significant issues arise in relation to the interconnections between needs as they are experienced in everyday life and the impossibility of separating felt needs from the economic and social context in which people live their lives. A further issue which arises is the role of community support in meeting the needs of different client-groups and the significance of education of public attitudes in enabling communities to play their full part. Finally, there are significant issues in relation to the influence of self-image and self-confidence on the extent to which needs are unmet. These different levels of important issues are discussed below.

Issues Related to Gaps in Current Service-Provision
The feedback obtained from clients and service-providers indicates that there are many needs which are currently unmet because the services which would cater for them do not exist or present level of provision is inadequate. For every group interviewed it is possible to list services which are required but not provided. Since these missing services have been described in detail in previous chapters, only some of the more striking examples are summarised here.

Among young people, needs are unmet through, for example, failure to provide recreational facilities, practical learning in school, certification and adequate assessment and remedial services. Lone parents experience needs as being unmet because, for example, there is a very great lack of publicly-run child-care facilities. Failure to provide adequate transport and domiciliary support
services results in many of the needs of the elderly not being met. Carers of those with physical handicap experience needs as being unmet because, for example, there is no provision for back-up practical help or respite care. Among those with literacy problems, there is a failure to provide a sufficient number of literacy schemes and little exists in the way of early assessment and intervention. Finally, travellers reveal many unmet needs through, for example, lack of provision of adequate housing conditions, literacy and numeracy schemes and appropriate training and educational opportunities. It is clear from this kind of feedback that any strategy to address unmet needs must consider the provision of services which are currently not available at all or at an inappropriate level.

Issues Related to Current Service Delivery
The interviews suggest that in many instances needs are unmet not because the services are not there to provide for them but because there are difficulties with the delivery of the services. The feedback obtained implies that one such difficulty is related to communication between clients and service-providers. Young people, for example, speak of lack of communication and understanding with teachers. Lone parents and travellers note problems of communication and insensitivity with service-providers such as social welfare officers and social workers while carers speak of insensitivity among some medical personnel. Another problem related to communication is the frequently mentioned difficulty among each of the six groups interviewed, in obtaining ready access to information which is relevant to their situation and easily understood.

A further issue which arises from the interviews is the inflexible manner in which some services are delivered and the complex and confusing regulations and conditions of eligibility which sometimes apply. This is particularly obvious in the case of income maintenance payments and welfare benefits but is also evident in relation to, for example, allocation of housing.
It also appears from the interviews that there is a lack of standardisation in the delivery of some services with some areas being well serviced while others do not seem to have the service at all. For example, it appears the provision of the home-help service is haphazard with some elderly people never having even heard of such a service.

The implication from the kind of feedback summarised above is that addressing unmet needs is not always a matter of establishing new services but of paying attention to the way in which present services are delivered. More careful planning and better training of service-providers could achieve much without any further input of financial resources.

**Issues Related to Clients' Lived Experience of Their Needs**

One of the most significant impressions arising from the interviews is that clients' needs cannot be divorced from the context in which they live and any strategy to address needs must take account of this context. The client-groups of the present study live their lives in a context characterised by high levels of unemployment and disadvantaged social conditions. Many of the needs they express are inextricably linked with their disadvantaged living circumstances and any attempt to meet needs which does not also acknowledge issues of unemployment and poor financial conditions is unlikely to be effective. Practically every group interviewed spoke of their unmet need for adequate financial support and the feedback makes very clear the far-reaching effects on all aspects of their lives consequent on the failure to meet this basic need. Among young people, lone parents and travellers, provision of opportunities for employment would enable them get out of the poverty-trap and would address many of their other needs which arise from lack of money.

In addition to the economic and social conditions which form the context for the clients' needs, another aspect of people's lived experience of their needs is the inter-connections and overlap
between them. The feedback from the interviews makes clear that clients do not experience their needs as being compartmentalised into different categories. For example, in a client’s life failure to provide adequate financial support not only means that needs for proper food, clothing and heating are unmet but also that, for example, social needs for company and contact and intellectual needs for stimulation and development also cannot be met. Likewise, in the case of travellers, for example, the feedback obtained shows how failure to address housing needs rebounds on needs for employment and on needs for social acceptance. A further example arises in the case of the elderly where failure to provide social contact not only leads to isolation and loneliness but also means that their desire to stay-put in their own homes is not a viable option.

The feedback on clients’ lived experience of their needs implies the inadequacy of services which are compartmentalised and uncoordinated. Planning of efforts to meet unmet needs must take account of the different aspects of the client’s life and must recognise how failure to meet one area of need may have repercussions for other areas. On the other hand, identification of key unmet needs and the establishment of measures to meet them may result in other needs being automatically addressed.

**Issues Related to Community Support**

People live their lives and experience their needs within particular communities. The feedback from each of the six client-groups interviewed reveals how significant an influence on unmet needs is the level of support provided within the person’s particular community. The interviews highlight the importance to clients of social contact and emotional support and encouragement from others around them. The amount of support of this kind experienced by clients from the community appears to be very much a function of public attitudes. Feedback from several of the groups interviewed - particularly lone parents, travellers, people with literacy problems - reveals how negative public attitudes
obstruct them in their attempts to participate in the everyday life of the surrounding community.

It appears then that plans to address unmet needs must also include education of public attitudes. This is needed, firstly, to remove stigma and prejudice. Education is also needed so that communities may understand and be sensitive to the problems experienced by different client-groups and may be in a position to offer the kind of support which would help address many of their needs.

**Issues Related to the Clients Themselves**

Very many of the interviews portray clients with a poor self-image and low levels of self-confidence. Young people, for example, seem negative about their prospects in life and pessimistic about their own abilities to change anything in their situation. At the other end of the life-cycle, the elderly people appear to see their skills and experiences as defunct and have little concept of active retirement and little sense of the potential contribution which they could make to the community. Likewise, people with literacy problems reveal the devastating effects which illiteracy has had on their self-esteem. Again, lone parents and travellers show how they are affected in their self-confidence and self-esteem by the stigma and prejudice which they experience. Efforts to build confidence would seem to play a very significant role in enabling clients to work with service-providers to ensure their needs are being met. Efforts to facilitate self-help need to go hand-in-hand with help through service-provision. An important element in building a positive self-image among clients is their inclusion in decision-making which affects their lives and the use of feedback from them to inform policy deliberations and service-delivery. In addition, opportunities for continuing education are needed which, for example, enable the development of skills related to stress management and problem-solving.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear from the feedback obtained from both clients and service-providers that there are gaps in service-provision, that there are problems with delivery of current services, and that, as a consequence, needs are not being met. The findings from the interviews raise the question of how policy can be more responsive to the needs of those in the community.

While the interviews do imply that some new services need to be established if unmet needs are to be addressed, more often it is not increased expenditure which is required but restructuring of the delivery of services. Based on the key issues identified above as emerging from the feedback obtained from both clients and service-providers, the main policy recommendation is the establishment of a pilot service scheme developed according to the following principles:

- integration across different service areas
- community based service
- partnership between voluntary and statutory agencies
- client centred approach

Each of these principles is discussed below.

Integration Across Different Service Areas
In order to adequately deal with multiple and inter-related unmet needs among different client-groups, an integrated approach is required which combines services from a number of different areas. Currently, services are delivered on a functional or departmental basis - such as Health, Housing, Welfare, Education and Training - without any coherent attempt at integration. Delivery of services in a piecemeal and fragmented manner is clearly at odds with client's lived experience where needs are not neatly compartmentalised but are very much inter-connected.

Collaboration between different services is essential to ensure that all are working together in a holistic approach which matches
the manner in which clients experience their needs. An important aspect of the pilot scheme would be the development of structures which allow effective collaboration and liaison between different service areas including:

- health
- housing
- welfare
- education
- training and employment.

Community Based Service
Statistics show that unemployment, low incomes and deprived social conditions are often concentrated in certain communities and regions. Such statistics provide a strong argument for developing policies and services which are area-based. In the present context, a community based service is recommended as being the most effective in the delivery of a co-ordinated and integrated service. Using this strategy, services from a range of agencies would be integrated at a local, community level. A community based service allows for greater involvement of local communities in the planning and delivery of services and this, in turn, means that the services provided can better reflect local needs and local priorities. Local dispatch of services also has implications for equity of care in that services which are provided in the local community are more accessible and readily available.

The service has the advantage that it exploits knowledge of local needs among service-providers working at grass-roots level and consequently allows the development of specifically tailored packages of services which meet the particular needs of the community. The strategy has the further advantage that it can exploit local-area loyalty and, through this, harness and develop the potential of the community in providing support for members who are in need.
Under this kind of delivery structure, ultimate responsibility for the service would remain at Government Department level but executive powers would be devolved to local area level. Those responsible for the delivery of services locally would be accountable to members of the community for decisions taken and deployment of resources.

In order that the services delivered are suited to local requirements and circumstances, accurate information on the content, nature and distribution of needs is essential. Accordingly, regular needs assessment and evaluation of services currently provided are central elements of a community based service.

Partnership Between Voluntary and Statutory Sectors
Provision of a comprehensive, adaptable and integrated range of services involves not only collaboration between different statutory agencies but also involves integration of the work of voluntary organisations into a partnership of care.

Voluntary organisations play a very important role in meeting needs among the elderly, the handicapped and other groups and their involvement at a local level allows them to be responsive to local community requirements. Including the voluntary sector in a partnership of care can facilitate the development of supportive networks in the community and harness local goodwill and commitment. The nature of the voluntary sector lends itself to flexibility and can sometimes offer greater choice to clients than can statutory agencies. The nature of the voluntary sector is also, however, complex with diverse philosophies, objectives and target groups. Accordingly, the development of partnership between voluntary organisations and statutory agencies requires definite structures which allow interchange of information, pooling of resources and shared decision-making.
Client-Led Service-Provision

The current system for the planning and delivery of services allows little scope for the representation of clients' interests which hampers its responsiveness to clients' needs. In order to provide a service which matches real needs in the community it is essential that decisions are not just based on the views of policy-makers and service-providers but also take account of the perceptions and views of the users of the service. Client-led service-provision means that planners and providers become accountable to the users of services with regard to determining their effectiveness in meeting the needs of the community.

This kind of approach requires the establishment of a structure which allows for easy flow of three-way feedback between policy-makers, service-providers and clients. The approach requires continuous and systematic assessment of clients' needs and the harnessing of clients' energies so that they are involved in decisions which concern them and their communities. Client-led service-provision implies that service effectiveness is evaluated according to criteria which are of relevance not just to the aims and objectives of service-providers but also to those of the service users.

FOCUSING SERVICES ON THE NEEDS OF THE CLIENTS:
A POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

It has been proposed that policy may become more responsive to clients' needs by the establishment of a service which is:

- Integrated
- Community-based
- Client-led
- Involves a partnership between all different parties concerned - the community, voluntary organisations and all statutory agencies
The question then arises as to how such a policy which focuses services on clients' needs may be put into practice.

**Figure 9.1**
**FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION**

- **LOCAL AREA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**
  - Statutory Agencies
  - Health
  - Housing
  - Education
  - Welfare
  - Employment
  - Training
  - Volunteer Organisations
  - Community Representatives
  - Community Members
  - Employers
  - Trade Unions

- Community Workshops
- Community Surveys
- Needs Assessment in Community
- Pooled Information from Statutory Agencies and Voluntary Organisations; Service-providers
- Co-ordinated; Integrated Service in Community
- Evaluation of Services
- Client Feedback
- Service-provider Feedback

Figure 9.1 outlines a framework for action which acknowledges the complexity of the clients' lived experience of their needs. It represents an attempt to face the challenge of meeting real needs in a cost-effective fashion. The framework specifies an innovative approach which goes beyond existing overly compartmentalised single-sector service-provision and provides an avenue towards co-ordination and cohesion. The action outlined is comprehensive encompassing health, welfare, housing, education, employment and training while restoring active involvement and input into decision-making to the target client groups of the community. The framework proposed assigns a primary role to the local area where local partnerships and local pooling of expertise and resources are key elements.
According to this framework, a committee would be established within a local area with responsibility for managing Family and Personal Support Services in that particular area. Representation on this committee of different statutory agencies from Health, Welfare, Housing, Employment and Training and Enterprise Development would ensure the delivery of an integrated service which matches clients' lived experience of needs as being inter-connected and overlapping.

Involvement of people from the local community and of their representatives goes some way towards facilitating the active participation of the most underprivileged groups in identifying and addressing their needs and hence involving them actively in the dynamics of social integration. The involvement in the management committee of local employers and Trade Union representatives acknowledges the central significance of employment and the link between economic and social issues.

The structure of the management committee also allows for the development of an effective partnership in meeting needs by providing a forum where statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, communities and clients themselves can come together to pool their different resources and work out a common mission.

Besides involvement on the management committee, at another level the needs assessment element of the framework has one of its primary inputs from local community members through community workshops and community surveys. This needs assessment provides the essential information on which the management committee bases service-delivery. In this way it is ensured that the services delivered are those which best meet the needs of clients in the local community.

A further element in the proposed framework which ensures that the service is client-led and matches real needs is the inclusion of
evaluation. According to this framework, evaluation of services is based on criteria which are relevant not just to service-providers but also to service-users. The inclusion of client feedback as an essential element ensures that the management committee is accountable to those in the local area who use its services. The feedback provided through the evaluation element also ensures that services are continuously reviewed, and modified where necessary, to meet changing needs.

ISSUES IN DELIVERY

The framework outlined above readily allows for identification of needs, for planning of services, for feedback from service users and for evaluation of services. However, delivery of services according to this framework raises many issues, primarily for providers but also, to some extent, for clients. Resolution of these issues would form a major task of the suggested local area pilot scheme.

Development of Common Mission

At the outset, the issue arises of the development of a common mission among agencies and organisations with disparate goals and responsibilities. Development of a common mission is likely to be complicated in a time where resources are scarce and setting priorities becomes essential. In the case of statutory agencies it has to be acknowledged that there are legal responsibilities which have to be fulfilled.

At a policy level, planners from different areas will need to work together to determine agreed objectives, to allocate resources and determine ultimate responsibility for the provision of community-based services. This will not be an easy task since, under present conditions, each policy sector operates according to its own strict objectives and guidelines. To ensure that co-ordination and integration of services takes place, defined
systems of communication and feedback of information will need to be established. At all levels of policy, planners and providers will require a set of reviewed objectives incorporating the issues to be tackled by the reorientation of services. The essential key to the restructuring of services at both policy and local levels will be the development of a common mission for all professionals engaged in providing Family and Personal Support Services in urban communities and in rural areas. Planners will need to come together to formulate a plan for development in which issues such as communication across agencies and responsibility for services are addressed.

If the agreed objective of the services is to be the meeting of needs through the concerted efforts of all agencies, then professionals must bring all their knowledge and expertise to bear on the partnership. As part of their agreed mission, professionals will need to adopt an open and flexible approach to working alongside others from different backgrounds.

Allocation and distribution of resources to provide for inter-agency services is another element of service-delivery which will require the development of new approaches.

Identification of Key Worker
The implementation of the framework requires the identification in the community of a key worker to act as a local officer who would co-ordinate the delivery of an integrated service. Questions arise in relation to the identification of this key worker - who should this key person be? to whom is s/he directly responsible?

Training
A further issue likely to exert a major influence on the delivery of a cohesive, inter-agency service is the training of service-providers. A core aspect of this training involves communication skills. Communication skills are essential in two regards: firstly in relation to interactions with clients and
secondly in relation to inter-agency communications. If an integrated and unified service is to be established, then service-providers from different agencies and with different professional backgrounds will need to be able to communicate clearly and openly with one another and have an understanding of their different views and approaches to the common problems with which they deal.

Service-providers will also require training in needs-assessment particularly at the individual client level. As part of their training, professionals and service-providers need to be encouraged in their commitment to preventive rather than crisis work within the community. Training could include a common central core for social workers, community workers, teachers and the whole range of professionals who provide services to the community. This central core would facilitate interdisciplinary communications between professionals and would encourage the development of a more co-operative and better co-ordinated service. Training would include the following three areas:

. information about the broad spectrum of economic and social problems affecting the individual in the community which they serve.
. skills in working with local groups with the emphasis on problem-prevention and self-help
. sensitivity awareness through which clients' problems and the problems experienced by other professionals could be understood.

Partnership Structures
A major part of the work of the pilot scheme will revolve around the development of effective partnership structures which allow for pooling of resources, interchange of information and know-how and shared decision-making.
The Report of the Working Party on Services for the Elderly recommends the establishment of formal contracts between organisations from both statutory agencies and voluntary organisations which would define the services to be provided, the financial and other resource available and the procedures for accountability to be used.

Within the Mid-Western Region, an example of such partnership in an urban area is the PAUL project (People Action Against Unemployment, Limerick). The PAUL project involves personnel from statutory agencies and voluntary organisations along with community representatives in working together to develop employment schemes and to encourage community development. The structure of the project involves a voluntary management committee with further sub-committees focusing on particular aspects of the project. Within a more rural context, ClareCare offers a second example of an existing partnership between voluntary organisations and statutory agencies.

While both PAUL and ClareCare can provide useful guidelines and lessons learned from experience, the mission of these organisations is quite different to that which will guide the proposed pilot scheme.

**SUMMARY**

This study has explored unmet needs in relation to Family and Personal Support Services among six different client-groups in the Mid-Western Region. These groups characterise the broad spectrum of needs found in the community and represent different stages of the life-cycle. The context of the study is the alienation and marginalisation which exists in depressed urban and rural areas whose people experience an accumulation of deprivations. The qualitative descriptions obtained from these clients of their experiences and perceptions of unmet needs in different aspects of
their lives have raised a number of important issues. Firstly, it is clear that there are gaps in current service-provision which lead to many needs being unmet. Secondly, the mode of delivery of services currently in place also leads to many instances of unmet need. Apart from gaps in service-provision and problems associated with current service-delivery, a very important influence on unmet need is failure to acknowledge the clients’ lived experience of needs as being interconnected and embedded in the economic and social circumstances in which they find themselves.

Lasting eradication of the kind of social exclusion which emerges in the present study will take more than palliative and stop-gap assistance measures. What is required is new thinking about the links which exist between economic and social issues and the design and delivery of innovative services which reflect the multiplicity and interconnectedness of people’s needs.

The main recommendation being put forward is that a pilot scheme in a specified small local area be established which is based on the principles of integration and cohesion across different service areas and which is locally based and responsive to local needs. This pilot scheme would involve a four-way partnership of care with structures which allow statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, local communities with local employers and Trade Union representatives and clients themselves to work together using a co-ordinated and integrated strategy to meet needs.

The framework proposed for putting into practice a cohesive, integrated service involves a Local Area Management Committee with representation from all the parties involved in the four-way partnership. An important component of the Framework is needs assessment in the community with input from Community workshops and Community Surveys and feedback from service-providers from statutory agencies and voluntary organisations. The framework also includes an evaluation component whereby the service provided
is assessed by both clients and service-providers in terms of its effectiveness in meeting the real needs of the local area.

It is acknowledged that the implementation of such a scheme requires much debate at both national and local level to address the development of a common mission across different services and to address issues related to accountability and efficiency. It is also recognised that an important element in the success of such a scheme is the training of service-providers which allows them to effectively communicate and collaborate across different service areas. The success of the proposed pilot scheme depends on adequate structures and on adequate resources but, above all else, it depends on the good will and commitment of all the different partners involved.
References:
