

# Section One Introduction

## 1.1 Preamble

Leitrim is situated in the North West of Ireland and covers an area of 689 square miles. It shares its boundaries with Counties Roscommon, Sligo, Donegal, Longford, Cavan and Fermanagh. It is one of the six counties that make up the Border Region, which is the most disadvantaged of the eight regions in Ireland.

Leitrim County Development Board was established in 2000. Its mission is to “enable the people of Leitrim to influence the future development of their County in order to ensure a better quality of life for all”. Leitrim County Development Board published the The Social Economic and Cultural Strategy 2002-2012 in 2002. The Strategy sets out a broad framework for development in Leitrim. It includes overall objectives, targets to be achieved and indicators to measure development progress. The integrated nature of the Strategy involves identifying the various agencies operating at local level responsible for and their role in delivering these objectives. In 2006, a three year action plan was prepared that concentrated on a number of key projects across economic, social and cultural development.

The Social Inclusion Measures Group (SIM Group) is a sub-committee of the County Development Board and works to ensure social inclusion in Leitrim. Leitrim: A County in Change was commissioned by the SIM Group in order to profile the extent of poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage in Leitrim.

## 1.2 Profiling Poverty and Social Exclusion

On a national basis, poverty and social exclusion are measured by surveys such as the Living in Ireland Survey and, more recently, the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). These surveys indicate, for example, how many people nationally are living in income poverty<sup>2</sup> or consistent poverty<sup>3</sup>. They also indicate what groups of people and households are most at risk of poverty, for example, households headed by an older person, households headed by a person with a disability and lone parent households. However, these surveys do not provide information on a county or sub-county level and while useful in providing a contextual background to a study such as this, they provide little real information at the level that a County Development Board needs to address.

2 Relative income lines are based on disposable income and construct a poverty line by calculating the average household income, taking differences in household size and composition into account. Income Poverty Lines are usually drawn at 50%, 60% or 70% of average disposable income.

3 The measure of consistent poverty combines income poverty lines with a measurement of deprivation. A basic deprivation index has been constructed by the Economic and Social Research Institute and looks at the enforced lack of a number of items such as lack of adequate heating, a day without a substantial meal, arrears on rent, mortgage, going into debt, etc.

Poverty is primarily a structural (rather than a spatial) phenomenon. In other words, where someone lives does not determine whether or not that person experiences poverty or disadvantage. Rather, a person's experience of a range of socio-economic factors such as educational attainment, social class, age, un- (or under-) employment determines the extent to which they live or are at risk of living in poverty. The spatial dimension comes into the picture because people experiencing one or more of the factors determining poverty and social exclusion tend to be concentrated in certain areas. This understanding of poverty allows for a profile of poverty and social exclusion to use available information to indicate or suggest the extent of poverty and disadvantage at a county and sub-county level. This information is, in the main, drawn from the National Census of Population which is the only data source that provides information on every person in the state. This information is usually supplemented by local sources of information that are used to give a more rounded picture of an area. This is especially important given that some facets of Irish society are changing at a rate that the national census, given that it is only conducted every five years, cannot match.

## 1.3 The Policy Context

There are two major considerations in relation to the policy context of addressing social exclusion and poverty. The first of these relates to policy on addressing poverty and disadvantage and the second refers to local authorities and their role in addressing poverty and disadvantage.

In relation to the first, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy – Sharing in Progress was drawn up by the Irish Government following the United Nations Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995. Published in 1997 against a background of economic growth and decreasing levels of unemployment, it was an effort to address the fact that many were not benefiting from this prosperity and despite the economic boom a substantial number of people were still living in poverty. It was the first strategic attempt by the Irish Government to tackle poverty.

The definition of poverty used by NAPS is as follows:

People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living, which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.

NAPS, as it is commonly referred to, and its descendants Building an Inclusive Society: Review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, 2002 and the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPS/Incl), 2003, adopted a relative definition of poverty. They recognise that the term poverty is not inclusive of all those experiencing disadvantage and so included the term social exclusion in the strategy. The notion of social exclusion relates to barriers to participation such as discrimination; physical barriers such as lack of transport or accessible amenities; people lacking in the skills etc. required to fully participate in society or other barriers to full participation. The definition of social exclusion used is one defined by Partnership 2000 and is as follows:

Cumulative marginalisation: from production (employment), from consumption (income poverty), from social networks (community, family and neighbours), from decision-making and from an adequate quality of life.

In 2000, after an initial assessment of NAPS was carried out, Building an Inclusive Society was launched. Essentially an updated version of NAPS, it prioritised those living in consistent poverty<sup>4</sup>, which was defined as being below 50-60% of average disposable income and experiencing enforced basic deprivation. The themes to be addressed were also updated and are now:

Educational Disadvantage

Unemployment

Income Adequacy

Disadvantaged Urban Dwellers

Disadvantaged Rural Dwellers

Housing/Accommodation

Health

## **Cross-Cutting Themes**

Child Poverty

Women's Poverty

Older People

Ethnic Minorities

People with Disabilities

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<sup>4</sup> Consistent poverty is a measure of poverty that combines relative income measures with eight basic deprivation measures which were regarded as necessities and possessed by a majority of those in the Living in Ireland Survey conducted by the ESRI.

The key target set out in Building an Inclusive Society is to: *Reduce the numbers of those who are 'consistently poor' below 2% and, if possible, eliminate consistent poverty, under the current definition of consistent poverty. Specific attention will be paid to vulnerable groups in the pursuit of this objective.*

Published in 2003, the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPS/Incl), was part of an EU drive to meet the objective set by the European Council in Lisbon in 2000 'to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by 2010'. It does not differ significantly from Building an Inclusive Society.

The current National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 is intended to set out a coherent and comprehensive approach for the next ten years using the lifecycle approach<sup>5</sup>. The overall goal of the strategy is to make a decisive impact on consistent poverty – to reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016 (p. 26).

The second policy area relates to the increasing role of local authorities in combating social exclusion and poverty. This was first introduced by the policy document *Better Local Government: A Programme for Change* in 1996 and subsequently *The Local Government Act, 2001* sets out the legislative framework for the implementation of the reform envisaged in Better Local Government. One of the elements in the role of local government is in facilitating the integration of local development systems. Towards 2016, the Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015 envisages the development of this role and says that "the work of the SIM groups, including implementation at local level of the commitments contained in this Agreement where appropriate, will be prioritised by the CDBs and supported by relevant Government Departments and national agencies". *Transforming Ireland - A Better Quality of Life for All: National Development Plan 2007-2013* sees the County/City Development Board structure as the key coordinating mechanism for public service delivery (including social inclusion activities) at local level and the means of ensuring more joined up delivery of social inclusion programmes on the ground, and envisages that they will be developed and strengthened to support the role in coordinating public service delivery at local level. In this context, the extension of Social Inclusion Units to half of the city and county councils by end 2008 will support this approach (p. 238).

As part of this process many County/City Development Boards have engaged in the development of a Social Inclusion Strategy and one of the first steps in this process is to ensure that all the information pertaining to that area is gathered and compiled. This is what a profile such as Leitrim: A County in Change does.

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<sup>5</sup> National Economic and Social Council, The Developmental welfare State and adopted by the National Partnership Agreement Towards 2016 and the Social Inclusion aspects of Transforming Ireland - A Better Quality of Life for All: National Development Plan 2007-2013.

## 1.4 Profiling Poverty and Social Exclusion in Leitrim

Research at national level has highlighted the fact that Leitrim is one of the counties at highest risk of poverty (along with Donegal and Mayo)<sup>6</sup>. According to an analysis of the National Survey of Housing Quality, 2001/2002, for example, Leitrim has a risk of income poverty of 1.3 times the national average figure (50% relative income poverty line). This is the second highest risk rate in the Border Region, behind Donegal at 1.7<sup>7</sup>. Leitrim also emerged with one of the highest risks of modified consistent poverty with a risk of 1.5 times the national average figure.

Leitrim: A County in Change was commissioned by the SIM Group of the Leitrim County Development Board in order to present the information pertaining to poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage in Leitrim at a county and sub-county level. In the main, this report draws on information from the Census of Population 2002 and 2006 in the form of the Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) that provide information on a county, rural area and electoral division (ED) level. The information from the two censuses was supplemented by information from local agency sources in Leitrim such as Leitrim Partnership Company, Leitrim County Council, Health Services Executive West, the North Western Regional Office of the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Community Welfare Office and others.

Much of the contextual material was drawn from *Sharing in Progress: National Anti-Poverty Strategy (1997)*, *Building an Inclusive Society: Review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2002)*, *the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPS/Incl) (2003)*, *the National Development Plan 2007-2013 Transforming Ireland: A Better Quality of Life for All*, *the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016*, and *Towards 2016: Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2016*. It also draws on information from various government departments, the Central Statistics Office, the Combat Poverty Agency, the Economic and Social Research Institute and other national sources, and on some of the literature pertaining to the spatial dimensions of poverty.

In order to allow for comparison of areas, the information from the census of population is usually translated into ratios or percentages. For example, the number of people from each social class is presented as a percentage of the overall population. However, using percentages and ratios must always come with a warning and this is especially the case in an area such as Leitrim where the population base is so low. For example, consider two EDs with 20% of the population unemployed. If the percentage figures were read on their own, this would indicate that equal resources in supporting people who are unemployed should be put into the two areas. However, if one ED has a total of 100 people and the other ED has a total of 2,000 it would mean that the first ED has a total of 5 unemployed people and the second ED has a total of 400 unemployed people. Taking this into account, it is important that all percentages and ratios are read in the context of the absolute numbers for that variable.

<sup>6</sup> Watson et al, 2005

<sup>7</sup> Watson et al, 2005, p. 65

## 1.5 Indicators and Domains

A profile of poverty and disadvantage analyses a number of indicators that are useful in identifying area based social exclusion, disadvantage and marginalisation. In Leitrim these indicators were decided on after a process of consultation between the SIM group and the researcher. The report structure follows the outline of the domains and indicators. They include:

### List of Domains and Indicators

#### Demographic Profile

Population

Population Change

Age Profile

Age Dependency

#### Principal Economic Status, Economic Dependency & Social Class

Principal Economic Status

Economic Dependency

Social Class

#### Education

Level of Education

Age Education Ceased

#### Health

Groups vulnerable to ill health

#### Households, Families and Accommodation

Households & Family Units

Accommodation

#### Vulnerable Groups

Lone Parents

Children and Poverty

Childcare

Older People

Nationality

Ethnicity & Members of the Irish Traveller Community

People with a Disability

People experiencing homelessness

#### Resources & Amenities

Cars

PC Ownership and Access to the internet

Sports and Recreational Facilities

## 1.6 Rural Areas and Electoral Divisions in Leitrim

There are five rural areas and seventy-eight electoral divisions (EDs)<sup>8</sup> in Leitrim. They are:

001 Ballinamore	012 Aghacashel	027 Aghalateeve	034 Arigna	056 Aghavas
002 Cloverhill	013 Annaduff	028 Aghanish	035 Ballaghameehan	057 Beihy
003 Corrala	014 Barnameenagh	029 Aghavoghill	036 Belhavel	058 Breandrum
004 Drumreilly North	015 Carrick-on-Shannon	030 Gubacreeeny	037 Cloonclare	059 Bunnybeg
005 Drumreilly South	016 Drumreilly East	031 Kinlough	038 Cloonlogher	060 Carrigallen East
006 Garadice	017 Drumreilly West	032 Melvin	039 Drumahaire	061 Carrigallen West
007 Greaghglass	018 Drumshanbo	033 Tullaghan	040 Drumkeeran	062 Cashel
008 Killygar	019 Drumsna		041 Garvagh	063 Castlefore
009 Newtowngore	020 Gorthagullion		042 Glenade	064 Cattan
010 Oughteragh	021 Gowel		043 Glenaniff	065 Cloone
011 Stralongford	022 Keshcarrigan		044 Glenboy	066 Corriga
	023 Kiltubbrid		045 Glencar	067 Drumard
	024 Leitrim		046 Glenfarn	068 Drumdoo
	025 Moher		047 Killanummery	069 Drumod
	026 Yugan		048 Killarga	070 Fenagh
			049 Kiltyclogher	071 Gortermone
			050 Lurganboy	072 Keeldra
			051 Mahanagh	073 Lisgillock
			052 Manorhamilton	074 Mohill
			053 Munakill	075 Rinn
			054 Sramore	076 Riverstown
			055 St. Patrick's	077 Roosky
				078 Rowan

<sup>8</sup> The term electoral division is now used instead of the term district electoral division.

## 1.7 Issues With and Gaps in Information

There are a number of issues and gaps in the information available to a profile of poverty and disadvantage. First, the National Census of Population is the primary source of information used but it is not specifically designed to measure poverty and disadvantage and this presents limitations. Second, although there is much data and information available on poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion on a national basis, this information is rarely available at sub-county level. Although information from these sources can be used for contextual purposes they yield little real information to a project such as this profile. Third, while local sources have been invaluable to the compilation of information in this report, different institutions gather information and data in different ways and based on different geographic catchment areas. This can present difficulties when it comes to making comparisons and drawing conclusions.