

**Working Notes Issue 32:  
The 'Dependency Culture': A Good or a Bad Thing?**

# **The Dependency Culture: A Good or a Bad Thing?**

**Bill Toner, SJ**

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## **Introduction**

The other day I listened to a middle-class woman sounding off about the 'dependency culture'. She complained in particular about people who "did not need to go out to work" because they were surviving very well on unemployment assistance or lone parent allowance, rent allowance, back-to-school allowances, medical card and so on. She resented the fact that these benefits were partly funded from her own income tax payments

There is no doubt that in Ireland there has been a big rise in financial dependence on the state in the last twenty five years. In 1973, 10.4% of average household income in the state came from 'transfers' (the name given to social welfare and other state payments). By 1995, transfers made up 16.8% of average household income (Note 1).

But to what extent do state benefits act as a disincentive towards taking up employment? The issue is a difficult one for social policy makers. Given that it is public policy to try to ensure that low-paid workers do not suffer great financial loss when they become unemployed, it follows that these workers will often not be substantially better off when they became employed again. In an important study carried out in Tallaght some years ago, unemployed people who were surveyed stated that, on average, they would need about £60 more a week than they were getting on the dole to take up work (Note 2).

But what people say, and what they do, are not always the same. Research studies have found that 'disincentive effects', as they are called, are not as clear-cut as many people think. Not surprisingly, there does appear to be some connection between the duration, and the generosity, of payments, and the average length of spells of unemployment. But the effects are small overall, though they are somewhat greater in lower socio-economic groups. Most researchers are agreed that the level of benefit payments cannot by itself account for high levels of unemployment (Note 3). The main reason why people do not work is lack of jobs they consider reasonably well-paid. Of course, what people consider to be 'good pay' is partly subjective, and groups like I.S.M.E. frequently express irritation at the failure of unemployed people to seek jobs in their member firms.

The reason why unemployment benefits are only a partial disincentive towards taking up employment is that there are other aspects to a job besides money, and when the jobs are there, most people prefer to work. Few people enjoy drawing the dole and being periodically questioned by civil servants about their job prospects. A job provides people with a framework for living, a sense of purpose, and an opportunity for social contact. Also, for people with some skills, a period of

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unemployment can mean that the skills become lost or out-of-date. Middle-class people would certainly apply these reasons for taking up a job to themselves, but are reluctant to believe they are a major consideration for people lower down the social scale. Some middle-class people seem to suggest that there is some kind of 'moral failure' among working-class people which makes them work-shy.

In fact, there are more rational and obvious explanations as to why the 'disincentive' effect of benefits is stronger among lower working class people. For one thing, people who are in the 'unskilled' category may find it hard to get jobs that pay much above social welfare levels. They also have fewer skills to lose through unemployment. Again, many of the jobs to which they have access are 'dead-end', and supervision is often harsh. Finally most unemployed people operate within very tight budgets, and a move into employment has an element of risk attached to it. Many jobs available to unskilled people are likely to be temporary, and, if they are laid off again, delays involved in reclaiming benefits and allowances can be considerable. The possible loss of the medical card is arguably the biggest disincentive for people in the lowest socio-economic group, because they often have bigger families, are more affected by illness, and are unlikely to earn wages high enough to pay medical bills without hardship. This is why it has been so important to allow people returning to work to retain secondary benefits for a limited period.

So undoubtedly there is some disincentive effect associated with welfare payments, particularly for the least skilled workers. However, as we shall see, social welfare has had the effect of 'keeping people in the frame' as far as the labour market is concerned.

### **Trend in Income Shares**

It is often said that in capitalist society 'the poor get poorer and the rich get richer'. In Ireland this has been borne out in recent times, but not as much as in some other countries, notably Great Britain. In Britain:

Between 1971 and 1992 the proportion of people receiving below half the average national income increased from 11% to 21%.

From 1979 to 1992 the proportion of the national income going to the poorest 20% of the population dropped from 10% to 7%. (Note 4).

Precise comparisons with Ireland are hard to come by. However, taking the first of these statistics, we know that between 1973 and 1987, the proportion of people receiving below half the average national income increased from 17.8% to 22.9%, a less dramatic increase than in Britain.

Interestingly, the number of households living below the 50% line increased only slightly, from 18.2% to 18.9%, reflecting the increase in the size of poor households relative to the average size. (Note 5).

In relation to the second British statistic above, the same trend is not found in Ireland. However in Ireland the share of national income going to the lowest 20% in Ireland was very small to begin with. To appreciate the trend in Ireland, it is necessary to compare the richest 50% with the poorest

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50%. But significantly, there is a difference in the figures for Ireland depending on whether direct income or disposable income is taken. Direct income excludes social welfare 'transfers' and is income before tax.. Disposable income includes state transfers and is income after tax.

### **In Ireland in 1973:**

the poorest 50% received 18.68% of direct income;

the richest 50% received 81.31% of direct income.

### **In 1995:**

the poorest 50% received 11.5% of direct income;

the richest 50% received 88.5% of direct income.

However, when disposable income rather than direct income is taken, the picture changes:

### **In 1973:**

the poorest 50% received 25.16% of disposable income;

the richest 50% received 74.85% of disposable income.

### **In 1995:**

the poorest 50% received 24.26% of disposable income;

the richest 50% received 75.76% of disposable income.

The share of disposable income has thus fallen only slightly in percentage terms. The effect of Irish social policy has been to keep the relative shares of the two 'halves' more or less equal, through improvements in social welfare and other state benefits, and by increases in income tax to pay for this (Note 6).

It should be pointed out that it is unlikely that the trend up to 1995 described above is being maintained. There has been an increase of at least 20% in GNP over the past three years. During the same period the short-term unemployment assistance rate has risen from £60.40 (1995 budget) to £68.40 (1998 budget), an increase of only 13%. More up-to-date data on income distribution is not available, however.

### **Dependency v. Polarisation**

An inevitable effect of this policy has been to increase the level of dependency on social welfare benefits and to reinforce the 'dependency' culture. Assuming for the moment, that it was not possible to create more jobs during this period, the choice for successive governments was between increasing polarisation or increasing dependence. In Ireland governments chose greater dependence; in Britain governments chose greater polarisation, especially since 1979. It is not too strong a statement to say that the British chose polarisation, for although they hoped that curbing social welfare payments would encourage more people to get jobs, it was clear that these were likely to be

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mostly low-paid jobs, paying little more than social welfare rates. As in America, public policy in Britain has a preference for people to be working in low-paid jobs rather than to be idle. Public policy in Ireland, which is more influenced by the trade unions and other lobby groups than in the U.K., does not see low-paid jobs as a means of solving unemployment. This difference is also borne out by the respective levels of the proposed minimum wage, which will be £4.50 in Ireland, as against £3.60 in Britain. It is not being argued here that social welfare payments in Ireland are adequate, merely that it has not been public policy in Ireland to cut them. In fact, Ireland's social protection expenditure is somewhat low by European standards (Note 7). But in general it can be said to be better targeted than in some other countries, and at least up to recent times has kept pace with increases in per capita income.

One may assume that the policies of both countries are heavily influenced by advice from economists and it is interesting therefore both to note not only the difference in the policies, but also their effect in practice. Typical of British establishment thinking is the British Economist magazine, which has consistently advocated cuts in social welfare benefits and low income taxes as indispensable ingredients in the recipe for a prosperous society. But recently the Economist devoted an issue (17-23 May, 1997) to 'Europe's Shining Light', namely Ireland. While noting that 'generous' social welfare benefits and high personal income taxes were part of the Irish economic landscape, it did not appear to draw any broader conclusions from this. Yet it is surely thought-provoking that the fastest-growing economy in Europe is one of the few that did not rein back social welfare payments during the past fifteen years or so, and has only recently begun to cut taxes. In fact some recent research has found a puzzling positive relationship between the level of benefits and the growth rate of an economy (Note 8) Much of this research was carried out in Third World countries, and in this context it is suggested that transfer payments are a means to buy social peace and reduce social unrest, which in turn may have positive effects on economic efficiency.

### **Preserving Human Capital**

But there are also grounds for expecting that a reasonable social welfare system could have beneficial effects in more developed economies. Whatever about the theory that social welfare cuts improve the 'supply side' of the labour market by forcing people into employment, their immediate effect is often to increase poverty and alienation. There is no magic formula whereby long-term unemployed people, particularly if unskilled, can quickly adapt themselves to the kind of employment opportunities that happen to present themselves in any particular time and place. In the meantime a drop in income can be catastrophic in an already poor family. Even though it may be desirable to get people out to work, the over-riding priority must be to keep households from suffering the kind of 'degradation', in the sense of a loss of human capital, that comes with protracted poverty. Human capital refers to the various 'marketable' attributes that people accumulate during their life, such things as education, skills and aptitudes, interpersonal skills, attitudes to work and authority, and so on. By and large, Irish governments and civil servants have had the sense to see how important it is to prevent this human capital draining away through poverty. If unemployed people have enough income to preserve the family's self-respect, and are in

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a position to encourage their children to complete their education, there is some hope that the problems of one generation do not become the problems of the next generation as well. Moreover, should there be a pick-up in the economy, people who have not been completely marginalised by poverty will be in a much better position to make the transition from unemployment to work.

This is the point missed by *The Economist*. Although there are many factors contributing to the current success of the Irish economy, at least we can say that it is not held back by the existence of a large 'underclass' which might have been created by a less generous policy towards social welfare recipients in the late 70s and 80s. That is not to deny that there are a large number of people in our country who are unskilled and unemployed. But people familiar with large urban local authority estates will have noted that, perhaps contrary to expectations, these estates have not been so marginalised by the bad experiences of the past twenty years as to derive no benefit at all from the 'Celtic Tiger'. Such degradation of the communities as might have occurred, as did in fact occur in the 'projects' of American cities, did not take place in Ireland.

The ability of the long-term unemployed to rejoin the labour force is part of the reason why inflationary pressure has not built up in the economy until recently. Given annual growth rates of around 7%, one might have expected labour shortages, and thus wage demands, to have developed more quickly than they did. In fact there was considerable productive potential among the ranks of the unemployed, who may have been 'down', but were not 'out'. This was not the only factor of course, as returning immigrants, school leavers, and additional women also entered the labour force. But between April 1994 and April 1997, the number of long-term unemployed fell from 128,200 to 86,300. Even since April 1997, applicants for unemployment assistance have fallen by 27,000, of whom about 70%, or about 19,000, are likely to have been long-term unemployed. This would indicate a fall of about 60,000 in the long-term unemployed in four years. In April 1988 10.7% of the Labour Force were long-term unemployed. By April 1997 this percentage had fallen to 5.5%, and it has clearly fallen further since then (Note 9).

It is important to note, in passing, the contribution made by the 'black economy' to the stability of working class communities during a period of recession. Part of the 'human capital' that can drain away during a long period of unemployment is the habit of work, and the self-confidence that useful activity gives rise to. Unemployment benefits do not compensate for this. During times of recession it is important for unskilled workers to 'keep their hands in' by doing informal work such as painting and decorating, gardening, security and so on. Thus as the Irish economy took off during the last few years, there have been many long-term unemployed who were not so removed from the world of work that they were unable to join the regular labour market again. Incidentally, this is an important aspect of the argument put forward by CORI in support of the concept of Basic Income. CORI have consistently argued that the current policy of paying people not to work does not make sense, since, among other things it leads to a loss of skill and initiative.

Clearly, where it involves serious and persistent fraud, the 'black economy' cannot be tolerated. Nevertheless, in a period of recession, it would be desirable if some mechanism other than enforced idleness could be found to qualify people for benefit. The Part-time Job Incentive Scheme and

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Community Employment Schemes are both important initiatives, but they are too structured to suit all needs and opportunities.

Thus it is being argued here that dependency, as a by-product of the welfare state, is better than polarisation. But this is not to deny that creating dependency also carries a cost, both by reinforcing powerlessness, and by weakening social solidarity. Nevertheless it appears from the current decline in long-term unemployment that dependency may not be the incurable disease it was thought to be. People will only settle for dependency when there is nothing better on offer.

### **Conclusion**

In their choice of social policy in Ireland, successive governments have opted to risk an increase in dependency, through maintaining social welfare levels, rather than bring about further polarisation between rich and poor. From the late 70s on, this policy was at variance with those in some other developed countries, particularly Britain and the U.S. With the most recent Irish budget giving minimal increases in many welfare benefits, while also introducing many tax cuts, there are indications that policy in Ireland may also be shifting in this area.

Dependency increased during the 70s and 80s, as an inevitable concomitant of maintaining or increasing welfare benefits. Nevertheless, the avoidance of extreme poverty meant that poor communities did not become completely 'degraded' during a long period of recession, and many people in these communities are now in a position to take advantage of the current upturn in the economy. Participation in the 'black economy' also played an important role. Although some contemporary economic theory would suggest that Ireland's social policy would lead to economic stagnation, this did not in fact happen.

It is still very important to point out that, even if the situation is not getting much worse, disposable income remains highly concentrated at the top of the income distribution. This is not surprising when one considers that, in 1995, the direct income of the richest 10% was one hundred and twelve times the direct income of the poorest 10%. (Note 10).

One of the biggest contributors to this polarity is education, and lack of it. The demand for high-level skills has risen, and poorly qualified school-leavers with limited 'human capital' will remain at high risk of unemployment. As the OECD have suggested, education and training policies will have a crucial role to play in the fight against poverty and unemployment among poorly educated people (Note 11).

Education is not the only contributor to social polarisation, of course. Inherited wealth and privilege also play a major role, though these too make use of education as one way of reinforcing and perpetuating privilege.

### **NOTES**

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1. Collins, M. and Catherine Kavanagh, 'For Richer, For Poorer', in Healy, Sean and Brigid Reynolds (eds), *Social Policy in Ireland*. Dublin: Oaktree Press. 1998, p.183.
2. Tallaght Centre for the Unemployed, *Life on the Dole*. Dublin. 1991, p.42.
3. For a useful discussion on the topic see: International Labour Office, *World Employment 1995*. Geneva. 1995, p.153.
4. Dochas, *75/25: Ireland in an Increasingly Divided World*. Dublin. 1996, p.212.
5. Tim Callan and Brian Nolan, 'Income Poverty and Ireland' in Tim Callan and Brian Nolan (eds), *Poverty and Policy in Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan. 1994, p.35.
6. Collins and Kavanagh, *Op.cit.*, p.173.
7. Bonoli, G., 'Classifying Welfare States: a Two-dimension Approach', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol.26, No.3, 1997, pp.351-372.
8. See Brendan Kennelly and Eamon O'Shea, 'The Welfare State in Ireland: a European Perspective', in Sean Healy and Brigid Reynolds (eds.), *Social Policy in Ireland*. Dublin: Oaktree Press. 1997. p.210. .
9. Sources: Quarterly National Household Survey, 28 May 1998; Central Statistics Office Live Register Statements, 16 December 1997 and 5 June 1998.
10. Collins and Kavanagh, *op.cit.* p.173. The direct income of the bottom decile was 0.29% of total earned income, and that of the top 32.61%. Presumably many of the people in the bottom decile were living on social welfare, and had no direct income. The disposable income of the bottom decile was 2.23%, and that of the top decile 24.67%.
11. See Collins and Kavanagh, *Op.cit.*, p.185.

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# **Housing Associations in Ireland: Present and Future**

## **Introduction**

Housing is once again top of the political agenda. No political party in a country with 80% home ownership can afford to ignore the difficulties currently experienced by those wishing to buy a house. However, the current situation is indicative of greater changes within the housing sector.

Traditionally one either owned one's house or one rented from the local authority or from a private landlord. Now many households part-buy part-rent under shared ownership schemes and there has been a large increase in rented accommodation. While many new options have become available, the current high prices of housing, both for rent and purchase, has resulted in more people being unable to fund their own accommodation.

Media interest tends to focus on the problems experienced in the home ownership sector. However, great changes have been occurring in recent years in the social housing sector. The large scale local authority building programmes which were the norm well into the mid 1980's have now given way to smaller more considered developments with an emphasis on the types of management issues that may arise. (In fact the norm for private developments is now large estates, and such developers would do well to look at some of the errors which have been made in the social housing sector). Local authorities are investing more resources into community development to try to foster the creation of viable communities. The other major change has been the development of housing association activity.

## **Housing Associations**

Housing associations are now much more significant as providers of housing.

The housing association movement has a very varied membership. Some housing associations are well known. The Simon Community, for example, is not often thought about as a housing organisation but this is essentially what it is.

Other Housing associations have many housing schemes throughout the country. Respond Housing Association, based in Waterford, manages over 1500 houses throughout the country. Some housing associations are small and have no more than three or four properties in a rural location. These schemes provide housing for local elderly members of the community.

All housing associations have been set up by individuals or groups who were concerned about housing shortages, especially insofar as they affected particular groups, such as the poor or disabled. Because the state has recognized the value of housing associations, the government are now allowed to fund them out of public money, which the housing associations supplement through



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fund-raising. Housing associations acquire their development sites from a number of sources. Some receive donations from charitable trusts or religious orders. Some fund-raise and purchase land or property. However by far the most usual route is land which is provided by the local authority who are reimbursed by central government for land which they provide for social housing. The funds to carry out the development are provided by central government and administered through the local authority. To become eligible for funding the housing association must be an approved body. The development of schemes is monitored by the local housing authority.

### Housing Completions

*(numbers of dwellings)*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Local Authority</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Housing Association</i>
1993	1,200	19,301	890
1994	2,374	23,588	901
1995	2,960	26,604	1,011
1996	2,676	30,132	917
1997	2,632 (est.)	35,454 (est.)	756

*Source : DoE Annual Statistics Bulletin*

### Advantages of Housing Associations

Why have the government decided to foster the development of housing associations?

Housing associations have several factors in their favour as providers of social housing:

- **Scale:** by having a small stock and developing relatively small schemes, housing associations can be highly responsive to their resident communities.
- **Cost:** associations are extremely cost conscious. Their operations tend to be lean and focused, and provide extremely good value for money. The fact that they contract out most of their services means that they usually achieve maximum market value .
- **Specialisation:** housing associations are dedicated to housing and provide a tailored housing service. This is particularly true of general needs associations, and associations that provide housing only and contract in any service that residents need. Housing associations can also supply the housing needs of special or marginal groups which large state organisations find almost impossible to meet.

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- Flexibility: housing associations are organised for maximum flexibility and can work in an innovative way.
- Diversity: there are as many styles of management as there are housing providers. By using many different associations, the local authorities make maximum use of this diversity.
- Tenure: different associations give a diversity of tenure to social housing provision, helping to break up the large tracts of public housing.
- Novelty: housing associations are relatively recent phenomena, and as such they carry little historical baggage
- Orientation: associations which deal with general needs have a different orientation to other social housing providers. This has led to a lessening of the kinds of problems often associated with social housing.

### **Types of Housing Associations**

Housing Associations can build for general housing need or for special housing need or for a mixture of both. General housing need is for those who appear on the local authority housing lists and have no extra need. Special housing need refers to housing for the homeless or for people with reduced mobility such as wheelchair users. Special needs applicants often require adaptations to be made to the physical structure of the dwelling. They may need special resources, for instance counselling in the case of those escaping domestic violence. Focus Housing, in addition to providing housing for homeless applicants, also provides ancillary services such as flat finding or home making skills. The larger housing associations carry full time staff and tend to develop across the country.

Small local associations are by far the most common form of social housing. These are made up entirely of voluntary committee members who respond directly to a local need. The work they do has often helped to keep elderly people within the community in which they have lived all their lives, near their family and other supports. Many similar schemes are operated in urban areas by the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

Only since the early 1990's have housing associations become involved in general needs housing. At that time the Government decided that it wished to diversify the numbers of providers of such housing which had previously, with a few exceptions, been the preserve of the local authorities. Housing associations supplement local authority provision, and the local authorities have a role in monitoring them.

### **Community Development**

In addition to providing accommodation housing associations have also prioritised the promotion of strong and vibrant community structures. The task of providing housing is two-fold: firstly to build good quality housing which is economic to maintain; secondly and equally important, to ensure that they create the conditions in which communities will thrive. Housing associations do not create

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communities but they can create circumstances where community structures are more likely to flourish. Many community development initiatives have been developed by housing associations.

Key distinctive features of housing associations are the degree of tenant involvement, which runs from a basic level of tenant participation to full tenant co-operatives, and tenant empowerment. Residents are made aware of their responsibility with regard to the future of the scheme. The creation of a community in which they wish to live and bring up their children is in their hands. There is no landlord to rescue them if, through apathy or lack of care, anti-social elements come to dominate. The role of the association in this regard is to skill residents groups and empower them to run things, rather than taking over.

Central to housing association thinking is the principle that those who live in an area are best placed to manage it because they know the area and have a vested interest in defending those elements which foster its flourishing. No matter how benign landlords are, they will never have this level of concern for the success of their scheme. There is, incidentally, legislation dictating that a housing association must ballot its residents within five years of first letting with regard to them taking over the management of their estate.

### **Current Issues**

Current issues facing the voluntary housing association movement include:

- **Cost:** The high cost of building is making the building of housing expensive. Housing Associations build to a unit cost limit. It has become almost impossible to stay within this limit.
- **Planning:** planning is becoming increasingly controversial. Housing associations are like any other private body and must apply for permission in the same way. Delays and objections are increasing costs.
- **Social problems:** Housing associations are being asked to address ever-increasing needs. Some of the households on local authority waiting lists have many needs. Housing Associations need to continue to improve their community development skills and adopt new strategies.
- **Suspicion:** The very novelty of associations results in their being viewed with suspicion. Established interests are obviously wary of existing structures being subverted. Housing Associations have to work to convince the general public of the merit of their methods.
- **Ideology:** There are some who see echoes of Thatcherite England in the growth of housing associations. However the ideology-laden agenda of the Conservatives to destroy the metropolitan authorities in the UK is not present in Irish Government policy. There does seem to be a strong desire to achieve a diversity of social housing providers and to experience a range of management systems.
- **Purchase:** At present housing association lettings are not available to be tenant purchased. This is proving to be a disincentive for people to remain in the dwellings if their circumstances improve. It

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is not in the interests of housing associations that there be a constant turnover of residents, since this can destabilise communities.

### **The future**

Housing Associations will continue to grow. Local authorities will continue to use them as a way of fulfilling their housing obligations. Increasingly they will also be utilised to help in the regeneration of run-down areas. Smaller communities around the country will also continue to use them to provide for their local needs. For instance in Co.Limerick they are used extensively for this purpose. They also have a role in providing housing for communities which are in danger of becoming overrun with holiday homes and where local families, because of high prices paid for second homes, cannot obtain a stake in the community.

Housing Associations will continue to be the main source of accommodation for the homeless and other special needs groups. This role will expand and will continue to adapt to new homeless groups such as asylum seekers. The full potential of the voluntary housing movement has yet to be realised. It will survive and flourish as long as it retains its strong commitment to community.

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## **Care In Chaos**

**Fr Tony O'Riordan, SJ**

**July, 1998**

### **Introduction**

Prisoners aged under 21 make up about 33% of the prison population as against the EU average of 10%. In fact on 15 January 1998 there were 730 offenders between the ages of 15 and 21 in custody. Even more disturbing is the fact that 43% of those committed to St. Patrick's Institution have already served at least one previous sentence. Given this high level of repeat offending it is questionable if the prison system is achieving its objectives of rehabilitation and re-socialisation, as well as those of security and safe custody.

Most young offenders who are punished by imprisonment are committed for offences not involving violence, and most are imprisoned for relatively short periods:

- 78% of young people are committed for offences not involving violence;
- 60% of sentences are less than 12 months, and 24% are less than 6 months

After release many go on to re-offend. What can be done to break this cycle? Key to tackling juvenile crime of this sort is a response that increases the positive role that time in prison can play. But treatment programmes in prison must be such that they are integrated with community after-care when the young person is released.

### **Prevention is Better than Cure**

Firstly it is important to recognise that for persistent re-offenders, this stage in their lives is one that has had a progressive development. These are the young people that broad-based preventative responses to children at risk have failed, for one reason or another. Figure 1 gives an overview of this progression and the corresponding intervening agency.

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**Fig.1: Pattern of Progression Among Young Offenders**

Stage	Progression	Intervention
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Insecure attachment and inadequate bonding with a caring adult;</li> <li>· Poor stimulation at pre-school level;</li> <li>· Physical and emotional neglect.</li> </ul>	Parents, Pre-school Groups Barnardos, Early Start, etc.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· School attendance where culturally prescribed goals are unattainable and/or not valued in the home;</li> <li>· Lack of educational stimuli in the home;</li> <li>· Family violence, marital strife;</li> <li>· Alcoholism, drug addiction;</li> <li>· Parental control lacking or inconsistent.</li> </ul>	Special Classes Health Board Community Projects
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Child falls behind peers educationally;</li> <li>· Child becomes disaffected;</li> <li>· Begins to assert independence;</li> <li>· Starts to truant and stay out late at night;</li> <li>· Begins to smoke/abuse alcohol/drugs/solvents;</li> <li>· Becomes involved in petty crime, joy riding, shop lifting or mugging for the following reasons:                out of necessity e.g. hunger                for social acceptance and status in a peer group                for excitement, to get a buzz                out of boredom, for something to do.</li> </ul>	Potential Early School leaving programmes Youth Clubs Juvenile Liaison Scheme Diversionary Projects
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Court charges;</li> <li>· On probation</li> </ul>	Probation and Welfare service Community Projects
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· More serious charges</li> </ul>	Some limited after-care

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	· Secure Centre/Juvenile prison	Projects
6	· Repeat Committals to Juvenile prison	?
7	· Committal to Adult Prison; · Repeat Committals to adult prison	PACE (Workshops for ex-prisoners in Santry)

**Fig.1: Pattern of Progression Among Young Offenders**

In recent years there has been some development of the intervention mechanisms at most of the stages. Recent years have seen the development of 12 projects specifically targeted at young people at risk of getting into trouble with the law. However the further down the progression we go, the fewer the responses are. Apart from those working in the Intensive Probation Scheme, probation officers tend to be so over-stretched with caseloads that they cannot complete reports, let alone engage in meaningful relationships with the young people. And so another intervention fails and the young people move on to the next stage. It is at this stage (Stage 5 above) that there is no systematic intervention. Some projects do exist in areas of Dublin such as TARGET in Tallaght, but generally young offenders are released from custody and left to fend for themselves. Dublin criminologist Paul O'Mahony found that 77% of Mountjoy prisoners that he interviewed had spent some time in St. Patrick's, so it is important to try to intervene at this stage to reduce this rate of progression. What can be done to help the young people at stage 5 and stage 6?

### Characteristics of the Client Group

The homogeneity of the sociological background of these young people is well established. Typical offenders are from a large family, and have dropped out of school early. They have a limited experience of the world of work and are likely to have serious personal, emotional and addiction problems. In Dublin they are likely to come from a few identifiable postal districts characterised by social and economic disadvantage. Personal characteristics of this group include mixed motivation in relation to staying crime-free. They lead chaotic lives and often, due to their addiction, find focusing on, and maintaining, long-term goals difficult. They are in a network of friends, including new acquaintances from prison, that also have a similar life style. Staying drug-free and crime-free presents a challenge to break with long established patterns.

Young persons leaving prison will need drug treatment services, a routine, employment, an income, secure accommodation, and appropriate education and training . They will also need to acquire a range of skills that will help them deal with many of the ordinary daily events.

At present many do not have these needs met. This is because (a) the service is not available in the area (b) the way the service is provided is not user-friendly to this cohort (c) there is poor motivation and low level of social adequacy among this group.

### A Dublin Initiative

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To address this situation, one Dublin area is considering a community based after-care programme that will provide an assertive support system. Important in this response is the role of the Active Case Manager.

To clarify this: two types of case management approaches need to be distinguished, Brokered Case Management and Active Case Management. The role of the manager in brokered case management is to access the needs of the client and to arrange for the required service. The case manager will see the client only rarely and mainly in an office setting. The case load of such a manager is often as high as 60. In contrast active case managers have case loads of around 10 and they will see the client frequently (perhaps a number of times in one day) mainly outside the office. The role of the case manager involves more than just organising the required services. It also includes active intervention to help the client secure these services and offers ongoing support to the client who has difficulty negotiating the ordinary things of daily living. Often active case managers will offer 24 hour emergency cover.

The proposed after-care programme recognises that what many of the young people leaving prison require is a community based case management system that will help them negotiate the complex network of services and supports. In addition many need a supportive person who will be aware of their personal traits. For example it may be easy to arrange an appointment with an addiction counsellor but often the young person concerned needs intensive support to keep the appointment and will often need support after it. This approach recognises that these young people require individual attention. Frequent contact and monitoring of client progress will be central to this approach as will appropriate case loading. It is through this frequent contact that the case manager acquires the right to challenge the young person.

Another feature of this proposal seeks to increase co-ordination between the services and supports that are based in the community. Increased co-ordination and integration between these services (such as FAS, Eastern Health Board etc.) can help young offenders develop a framework for living and help them become crime-free. The various agencies need to develop a delivery of their services that is compatible with the chaotic life styles of many of these young people. The proposal also acknowledges the important role that family and peers play in the direction the young person will take. The case manager will also take an assertive role in relation to this aspect of the young person's life.

There will also be a need for some place to go for young ex-prisoners to go to that deals with their specific and special circumstances on release. In this place young prisoners can expect support, education and acquire skills. It will provide the young person with a routine and something to do, and help avoid boredom related re-offending. It will also be a place to where they can return when difficulties arise.

In the event that the young person is returned to custody, the community-based case manager will maintain contact with the young person. The case manager will also liaise with prison authorities to ensure follow-through of the care initiated in the community. This can also help the community-



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based services and supports to maintain the positive links with the young person while in custody, and help re-establish the active nature of these link when the young person is released.