

EDUCATION GUIDANCE NOTE

INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that there are direct linkages between poor educational attainment and inter-generational disadvantage. At an individual level, there is the increased likelihood of unemployment or low-skilled and poorly-paid employment and also low levels of self-esteem. For society, a wide range of social and economic inequalities is perpetuated and the gap between the better-off and the less-well-off is widened.

The education system operates in the broader social and economic context. A wide range of issues such as poverty, family breakdown and health problems can adversely affect the learning capacity of pupils. The education system cannot resolve these issues single-handedly, but it can adopt a lead role in influencing interventions that directly impact on the ability of pupils to derive maximum benefit from educational provision. It is clear that one of the most significant factors, if not the most significant factor, in helping people to escape inter-generational poverty, is educational attainment.

EDUCATION AND RAPID

RAPID presents a valuable interagency forum and support structure, working in parallel with local education programmes to enhance the local co-ordination of existing and new services to RAPID areas. In the context of the broad-ranging social disadvantage faced by children within RAPID communities, it is essential that integrated responses to local needs are developed, involving the home, school, community, adult education, and other relevant voluntary/statutory services. The RAPID AIT structure can facilitate the process of identifying need and achieving synergies at local level to maximise the impact of targeted measures.

Each RAPID area will be expected to develop a local strategy that will focus on working with local service providers and programmes on the educational needs of RAPID residents and will focus on the following:

- Improvement of educational outcomes at Primary and Post Primary level
- Increasing participation in Further and Third Level Education
- Improving linkages and communication between education authorities and providers and local RAPID structures.

DEIS

The Government's commitment in responding to Educational Disadvantage has been reinforced through the introduction of DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion. The frame of reference for DEIS is based on the definition of educational disadvantage in the Education Act (1998) as:

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

DEIS is grounded in the belief that:

- Every child and young person deserves an equal chance to access, participate in and benefit from education;
- Each person should have the opportunity to reach her/his full educational potential for personal, social and economic reasons;
- Education is a critical factor in promoting social inclusion and economic development.

The approach adopted has focused primarily on identifying primary and post-primary schools serving disadvantaged communities and targeting additional supports towards such schools under a range of measures.

The DEIS action plan is one element of a continuum of interventions to address disadvantage, which include second-chance education and training and access measures for adults to support increased participation by under-represented groups in further and higher education.

The action plan states that a common set of indicators will be developed on a partnership basis to facilitate progress reporting on the implementation of school and school cluster/community action plans. Some examples of areas of activity for which indicators would be appropriate include:

- pupil attendance;
- pupil retention;
- literacy and numeracy progression/attainment;
- educational progress/examination attainment for second-level students;
- parent and community partnership;
- partnership between schools, including in relation to transfer programmes;
- links with external agencies.

RESULTS AND INDICATORS

The following results and indicators reflect the policy objectives of the Department of Education and Science (DES) in relation to each of the RAPID Education sub-themes indicated and also the programmes and supports that are available locally. Collectively, they provide a reference point for the identification of need, the development of local co-ordinated proposals and the measurement of progress at local, as well as national level.

SUB-THEME	RESULTS	INDICATORS
Improving Educational Outcomes at Primary and Post-Primary level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced linkages between local stakeholders and education supports including HSCL; SCP; NEWB; Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres. Support of local co-ordinated strategies available to respond to educational disadvantage in RAPID areas. Raised awareness of supports available under the DEIS Programme and their positive impact on educational disadvantage. Raised awareness of the valuable role parents/ guardians can play in the education of their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the number of those who leave primary school literate and numerate. Increase in the number of students who complete senior cycle or equivalent, (including ICT) appropriate to their capacity and interests. Improved measures at local level to combat early school leaving. Improved attendance levels. Increased level of educational progression, retention and attainment at primary and second-level. Enhanced involvement of parents/guardians in local community initiatives and school based initiatives supporting student education.
Increasing participation in Further and Third-Level Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local co-ordinated responses developed to enhance and support the participation of RAPID residents in further educational opportunities. Stronger linkages developed with VTOS and BTEI programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased participation of adults in the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS). Increased participation in Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) courses. Increased participation in adult literacy programmes.

SUB-THEME	RESULTS	INDICATORS
Improving linkages and communication between education authorities and providers and local RAPID structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearer understanding developed of the further education needs of RAPID residents. • Encourage participation of RAPID residents in further education opportunities. • Comprehensive information on DES programmes and available resources provided to the education representatives on RAPID AIT's. • Raised awareness of the remit of the DES and available supports and resources at local level. • Improved communication links between the DES and AITs. • Capacity to develop consistent and co-ordinated approaches to emerging issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased numbers of mature students attaining Junior and Leaving Certificates. • Increased participation of mature students in further education, training and third level education. • Improved communication between the DES Regional Offices and AIT's. • All stakeholders are aware of the remit of the DES, current policies to combat educational disadvantage and resources available to local areas. • Stronger communication between RAPID, local education service providers and the programme structures. • Informed and coordinated responses are developed to respond to the needs of the RAPID area. • The RAPID AIT works collaboratively with education providers as a mechanism to develop a targeted approach to education-related projects in RAPID areas.

EXISTING INPUTS

The resources made available by the DES to RAPID areas are those presented through the budgets of the local education service providers and other programme structures. In the context of this strategic theme, the relevant core resources are primarily the DEIS Programme and other supports and services intended to mitigate the effects of educational disadvantage. These are set out below. The extent to which existing services can be maintained and/or new services provided is critically dependent on the level of available resources.

DEIS SUPPORTS

- Reduced class sizes of 20:1 in junior classes and 24:1 in senior classes in Band 1 primary schools;
- Administrative Principal in primary schools;
- Enhanced guidance counseling provision (50 DEIS schools with highest concentration of disadvantage);
- Provision for school library and librarian supports (50 DEIS schools with highest concentration of disadvantage);
- Access to Junior Cert Support Programme (JCSP) and Leaving Cert Applied (LCA);
- Additional non-pay/capitation allocation based on level of disadvantage;
- Additional funding under School Books Grant Scheme;
- Access to Schools Meals Programme;
- Access to Home School Community Liaison services;
- Access to range of supports based on best practice of the School Completion Programme;
- Access to literacy/numeracy programmes at primary level as follows: Reading Recovery, First Steps, Maths Recovery, Ready Set Go Maths via the Primary Curriculum Support programme; access to summer literacy camps;
- Access to transfer programmes;
- Access to planning supports;
- Access to a range of professional development supports.

DORMANT ACCOUNTS FUND

The Dormant Accounts Fund (DAF) directs moneys unclaimed in dormant accounts to persons affected by educational disadvantage, economic and social disadvantage and persons with a disability.

The DAF has funded a number of education initiatives at local level, such as the small-scale capital grant-aid scheme for DEIS schools, schools in or serving RAPID areas and special schools.

YOUTHREACH AND SENIOR TRAVELLING TRAINING CENTRES

Youthreach is a joint programme between the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. This Programme offers a flexible and dynamic programme of integrated general education, vocational training and work experience.

Senior Traveller Training Centres operate on the same basis as Youthreach Centres, but there is no upper age limit - particular efforts are made to encourage Traveller parents into the centres because of the impact this can have on their children's schooling.

NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE (NEPS)

All primary and post-primary schools have access to psychological assessments, either directly through the NEPS or through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA). Schools that do not currently have NEPS psychologists assigned to them may avail of the SCPA, whereby the school can have an assessment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved and paid for by NEPS.

NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL WELFARE BOARD (NEWB)

The NEWB was established in 2002 to monitor attendance and to help get young people back to school. Its general function is to ensure that each child attends a recognised school or otherwise receives a certain minimum education. Educational Welfare Officers also help parents to get a school place for their child and run promotional campaigns on the importance of attendance and finishing school.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION (NCSE)

The NCSE was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs, particularly children. A network of 80 Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) provides an effective and speedy education service to children with special education needs and their families. Working locally on the ground, the SENOs are the focal point of contact for parents and schools.

BACK TO EDUCATION INITIATIVE (BTEI)

The BTEI provides for an expansion of flexible part-time options across Further Education. Its priority is those adults with less than upper second-level education. The programme's aim is to give adults who wish to return to education an opportunity to combine their return to learning with family, work and other responsibilities. Programmes are offered on a part-time basis, in the mornings, afternoons, evenings or at weekends.

ADULT LITERACY

Funds for Adult and Community Education services, including adult literacy and community education, are provided by the DES to VECs. The disbursement of these funds is a matter for each VEC, which, subject to its budget, decides the nature of the Adult and Community Education service to be provided in its area and the manner in which the funds should be spent. Classes in English for speakers of other languages, principally attended by migrants, are funded through the adult literacy budget.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Community education refers to education and learning, generally outside the formal education sector, with the aims of enhancing learning, empowerment and contributing to civic society. The measure is funded by the DES, which provides annual grants to

VECs for this purpose, subject to allocations. It is a matter for each local VEC to set up educational programmes and distribute funds at its discretion.

OTHER

Other existing inputs include:

- Pre-school services - Early Start.
- Services provided through the VECs and funded by DES, e.g. VTOS, adult guidance and counselling, literacy programmes, and student grants.
- Community Training Centres (operated by FAS) – VEC teaching hours provided.
- Third-level access programmes.
- Improved access to third-level institutions and lifelong learning through Strategic Innovation Funding administered by the Higher Education Authority.
- Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers.

LINKAGES

The extent of a person's educational attainment has a critical bearing on that person's life prospects, access to employment, income level, participation in society as an active citizen, etc. In addition, planned and co-ordinated service delivery across the range of strategic themes is essential to enable each individual and the communities in which they live to derive maximum benefit from publicly-funded services. Consequently, education is linked to all of the other strategic themes, especially:

1. Employment and Training

Individuals with limited education and no training find it difficult to secure employment. Providing training and employment opportunities in areas of greatest need will have a long-term positive effect on their home and community environment.

2. Youth Support

Education takes place in both a formal and informal context. Youth service providers have an important part to play in providing education and structured activities for young people in an informal setting. These in turn can influence the prospects of young people in accessing training and employment.

3. Physical Environment

There is a close link between the quality of the housing and environment in which people live and their physical and mental health. These in turn can have a direct bearing on their capacity to access and derive benefit from education and training.

4. Health

The health and wellbeing of an individual, family and community may be determined by a number of factors, including the quality of the physical environment in which they live, their economic status and the support needs of the family. Health status can play a large role in the ability of a family to support and nurture its members, especially children, and hence enable them to access and derive benefit from

education and training. In turn, adult and community education can play an important role in the area of health promotion.

IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION STRATEGY

The DES has put in place a network of ten regional offices throughout the country to represent its interests at key regional and local fora and to convey information on educational issues to and from the DES.

At Regional level, this linkage will be further enhanced by holding bi-annual meetings between Regional DES Offices and regional clusters of AITs.

Through their membership of Social Inclusion Measures sub-groups of City and County Development Boards, it is also intended that regional office personnel will serve as the main conduit of information and proposals between local AITs and the DES.

The above approach would facilitate effective, accurate information flows, as well as timely identification of, and the development of consistent approaches to, emerging issues. It would also facilitate the development by each AIT of a realistic local education strategy and action plan.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE EDUCATION SUB GROUP

It is recommended that the following service providers, agencies and groups should be invited to participate in the Education Sub-Group:

- Representation from DEIS Schools
- Representation from School Completion Programme
- Representation from relevant VEC Personnel
- Representation from community based educational projects
- Representation from LDSIP
- Representation from local School Principles Network

Leadership of the Education Sub-Group could be assumed by the local VEC representative or any other relevant Education representative on the AIT.