Main Findings continued

Importance of stability in care placement for positive outcomes

An analysis was carried out to examine factors associated with more positive outcomes for young people leaving care. Positive outcomes were defined as being in the same accommodation between R1 and R2; being part in further education/training; and the absence of mental health needs. Positive outcomes were more likely when young people:

- had been in foster care during their last placement;
- had been in their last placement for more than 5 years;
- had fewer placements in care;
- were living in the same placement after turning 18, i.e. were still living with their former foster carers.

These findings suggest that young people leaving care are more likely to have positive outcomes when they have had a stable care background with fewer placement moves and remained in their last (foster) care placement after reaching the age for leaving care.

Summary of main findings

The findings show that many young people in the study who were receiving aftercare supports in North Dublin faced particular challenges including:

- having experienced several accommodation moves during the transition to independent living which was associated with a greater risk of homelessness;
- difficulties when attempting to find employment or to secure further education or training;
- dependency on social welfare as their main source of income;
- coping with the difficulties arising from having mental health needs;
- lacking some of the necessary skills to live independently, in particular budgeting skills.

Key Messages for Policy and Practice

- Achieving stability in young people's care placements helps to promote more positive outcomes for young people leaving care. Ensuring that placements meet young people's needs and providing supports to maintain placements can prevent multiple placement moves.
- Remaining in the same care placement after a young person turns 18 (where this is possible) can provide the continuity and security needed for a more successful transition to adulthood.

Aftercare support

The majority of young people agreed to receive an aftercare service, 75% (49) at R1 and 69% (45) at R2. One fifth of young people were not currently engaging or had not agreed to receive aftercare supports, 22% (14) at R1 and 23% (15) at R2. Over time, young people's contact with Aftercare Workers became less frequent.

Independent living skills

The number of young people who demonstrated the appropriate skills to live independently increased from 36% (68) at R1 to 43% (70) at R2. While practical skills were rated well, areas where young people needed to improve or to learn included paying rent regularly, managing a budget, and dealing with government agencies.

Contact with birth family

Just over half of young people, 54% (95), had contact at least once a week with a family member outside of their regular placement. This fell slightly to 46% (80) at R2. Young people were most likely to have contact with siblings followed by their birth mother.

Summary of EPIC Research Findings on Outcomes for Young People Leaving Care in North Dublin

Aims of the research

This research study focused on young people's outcomes at the critical time of preparing to or having recently left care. There were two rounds of data collection on outcomes, conducted nine months apart.

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- coping with the difficulties arising from having mental health needs;
- lacking some of the necessary skills to live indepen...
Profile of Young People in the Study

**Main Findings**

**Round 1 vs Round 2**

**Gender:** 49% (22) of young people were male and 51% (23) were female.

**Age:** At R1, 83% (37) of young people were 18 years old and the remaining 17% (7) were aged 17. At R2, 45% (20) were aged 18 and 55% (24) were aged 17.

**Country of birth:** 94% (61) of young people were born in Ireland.

**Length of time in care:** 84% (22) of young people had spent 1–10 years in care, 11% (7) had been in care for 11–15 years and 5% (2) of young people had spent more than 15 years in care.

**Current care status:** At R1, 25% (33) of young people were in a care placement, which fell to 2% (1) at R2. At R2, 30% (20) of young people were in a continuing care placement, mostly still living with their foster families. A further 15% (10) were in an alternative placement, e.g. supported or semi-independent accommodation. The remaining 43% (11) of young people were not in any type of placement.

**Total number of placements in care:** Young people were most likely to have had one or two placements during their time in care. However, 15% (9) had no more care placements, including one young person who had 42 different placements (see Chart 1).

**Stability in accommodation**

![Chart 1: Total number of care placements (N=00)](image)

One third of young people, 35% (23), had no accommodation moves over the last 21 months. However, 15% (9) had done one or more placements during this period. Most of these young people had their last care placement in foster care (42% [10]), and a further 34% (8) had moved at least two times. Over time, young people were less likely to be studying or doing a training course and more likely to be unemployed (see Chart 2). As a result, an increasing number of young people were dependant on social welfare as their main source of income: 31% (20) at R1 compared to 42% (27) at R2. In contrast, there was an increase in unemployment from 26% (17) at R1 to 37% (24) at R2. Young people were most likely to be taking a Fetac course while 3 young people were studying for a Diploma.

**Country of birth:**

Information on the number of accommodation moves was collected for the 12 months before Round 1 and the time between Rounds 1 and 2 (approximately 9 months), making it possible to calculate the number of moves in the last 21 months.

**Child dependants:** At R1, 14% (9) of young people had a child or were currently expecting the birth of a child. This rose to 17% (7) at R2.

**Type of last care placement:** 51% (22) of young people had spent their last placement in foster care and 28% (12) in residential care. A further 9% (4) were in supported lodgings and 11% (5) were in other placements.

**Educational attainment and participation**

The highest educational attainment reached by nearly half of the young people, 46% (30), was the Leaving Certificate or equivalent (including those in further education). A further 3% (2) of young people had attained a Higher Education Certificate, and the remaining 51% (33) of young people had obtained at least one certificate or qualification.

These results need to be considered in terms of the educational needs of some of the young people. In particular, 20% (13) were said to have had gaps in their schooling due to placement breakdown (5) and poor school attendance (5). In contrast, there was an increase in unemployment from 26% (17) at R1 to 37% (24) at R2. As a result, an increasing number of young people were dependant on social welfare as their main source of income: 31% (20) at R1 compared to 42% (27) at R2.

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**Economic status**

Young people were most likely to be studying or doing a training course and more likely to be unemployed (see Chart 2). The number of young people who were studying fell from 36% (20) at R1 to 28% (16) at R2. Of these 13 young people who had left secondary school after taking the Leaving Certificate and 12% (8) left school with no formal qualifications.

**Chart 2: Young people’s economic status at Rounds 1 and 2 (N=65)**

Young people’s economic status was associated with their educational attainment. At R2, young people who had obtained the Leaving Certificate were significantly more likely to be engaged in further education compared to those who had left the Junior Certificate or those who had no formal qualifications.

1. “I was going to school. It was a struggle given that the place was far away. I don’t think that it’s a place for anyone who’s going to school like.” (Peter, 18)

2. “I didn’t do my Leaving Cert so I couldn’t get into a regular college” (Ciara, 18)
Profile of Young People in the Study

Main Findings

Length of time in care: 49% (32) of young people had spent 1-5 years in care; 11% (7) had been in care for 6-10 years; and 39% (25) of young people had spent more than 10 years in care.

Current care status: At R1, 20% (13) of young people were in a care placement, which fell to 2% (1) at R2. At R2, 30% (20) of young people were in a continuing care placement, mostly still living with their former foster care. A further 15% (10) were in an alternative placement, e.g. supported or semi-independent accommodation. The remaining 55% (35) of young people were not in any type of placement.*

Total number of placements in care: Young people were most likely to have had one or two placements during their time in care. However, 15% (10) had more care placements, including one young person who had 42 different placements (see Chart 1). *7

Educational attainment and participation

The highest educational attainment reached by nearly half of the young people, 46% (30), was the Leaving Certificate or equivalent (including those in further education). A further 25% (17) had left secondary school after taking the Junior Certificate and 12% (8) left school with no formal qualifications.

Over time, young people were less likely to be studying or doing a training course and more likely to be unemployed (see Chart 2). The number of young people who were studying fell from 39% (25) to 28% (18) at R2. Much of this decline was due to young people leaving secondary school. At R2, 13 young people were engaged in further education beyond second level, which represented 20% of all young people in the study. Those enrolled in training courses fell slightly from 23% (15) at R1 to 19% (12) at R2.10 In contrast, there was an increase in unemployment from 26% (17) at R1 to 37% (24) at R2. As a result, an increasing number of young people were dependant on social welfare as their main source of income: 31% (20) at R1 compared to 42% (27) at R2.

Stability in accommodation

One third of young people, 35% (23), had no accommodation moves over the last 21 months. Most of these young people had their last placement in foster care (43). A further 30% (20) had one or two moves. However, 31% (20) had experienced three or more moves in the last 21 months, half of whom were currently living in private rental accommodation. Further analysis showed that young people who had lived at least three times were at greater risk of losing homeless at some stage during their transition from care.

If I was in crisis intervention service for a month, then I moved back in with my mam for like a few weeks. On New Year’s Day (went into emergency accommodation) and I was there until March. And then I got a placement in short term accommodation and I was there till the end of April. And then I was in emergency accommodation for like 4 days because I was getting in here [aftercare residential placement]. (Karen, 18)

Studying Training Unemployed Employed ill/Disability Other Unknown

Chart 1: Total number of care placements (N=65)

Chart 2: Young people’s economic status at Rounds 1 and 2 (N=65)

*Other placements included emergency accommodation, supported accommodation and living at home with a parent.

*The remaining cases were unknown.

*Most of these young people were living with birth/extended family, friends or in private rented accommodation.

Information on the number of accommodation moves was collected for the 12 months before Round 1 and the time between Rounds 1 and 2 (approximately 9 months), making it possible to calculate the number of moves in the last 21 months.

Only 2 of these 13 young people had sat the Leaving Certificate exams.

Young people’s economic status was associated with their educational attainment. At R2, young people who had obtained the Leaving Certificate were significantly more likely to be engaged in further education compared to those who had obtained the Junior Certificate or those who had no formal qualifications.

Young people were most likely to be taking a FETAC course while 3 young people were studying for a Diploma.

Most young people were doing a FAS course.

*“I was going to school. It was a struggle given that the place was far away, I don’t think that it’s a place for anyone who’s going to school like.” (Peter, 19)
**Profile of Young People in the Study**

**Main Findings**

**R1 = Round 1  R2 = Round 2**

- 34% (22) of young people had spent 1-5 years in care; 11% (7) had been in care for 6-10 years; and 39% (25) of young people had spent more than 10 years in care.

- 49% (32) of young people were male and 51% (33) were female.

- Country of birth: 41% (26) of young people were born in Ireland; 31% (20) were born in the UK; 16% (10) were born in Africa; 6% (4) were born in Asia; and 6% (4) were born in Latin America.

- 20% (13) of young people had spent their last placement in foster care and 28% (18) had been in residential care. A further, 9% (6) were in supported lodgings and 11% (7) were in ‘other’ placements.

- 35% (23) of young people had no accommodation moves over the last 21 months.

- Young people’s economic status was associated with their educational attainment. At R2, young people who had obtained the Leaving Certificate were significantly more likely to be engaged in further education compared to those who had reached the Junior Certificate or those who had no formal qualifications.

- Over time, young people were less likely to be studying or doing a training course and more likely to be unemployed (see Chart 2). The number of young people who were studying fell from 39% (25) at R1 to 28% (18) at R2. Much of this decline was due to young people leaving secondary school. At R2, 13 young people were engaged in further education beyond second level, which represented 20% of all young people in the study. Those involved in training courses fell from 23% (15) at R1 to 12% (8) at R2. In contrast, there was an increase in unemployment from 25% (17) at R1 to 30% (21) at R2. As a result, an increasing number of young people were dependent on social welfare as their main source of income: 31% (20) at R1 compared to 42% (27) at R2.

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**Accommodation**

- One of the main ways in which young people’s circumstances can change when they leave care relates to their housing or living situations. Over time, young people were less likely to be living in a foster home or residential family homes - 52% (34) at R1 and 37% (24) at R2. This corresponded with an increase in the number of young people who lived in semi-independent or supported accommodation. Between 20% (13) and 25% (16) of young people lived in semi-private rented accommodation between 1% (1) at R1 and 5% (3) at R2. Those left home with no formal qualifications, and in particular those who were caring for a family member or were currently expecting the birth of a child. This rose to 17% (11) at R2.

- At R1, 20% (13) of young people were 18 years old and the remaining 80% (52) were aged 17. At R2, 45% (29) were aged 18 and 52% (34) were 19 years old.

- The highest educational attainment reached by nearly half of the young people, 46% (30), was the Leaving Certificate or equivalent (including those in further education). A further, 20% (13) had left secondary school after taking the Junior Certificate and 12% (8) left school with no formal qualifications. These results need to be considered in terms of the educational needs of some of the young people. In particular, 20% (13) were said to have had gaps in their schooling due to placement breakdown (5) and poor school attendance (5).

- Young people were most likely to be taking a Fetac course while 3 young people were studying for a Diploma.

- Most young people were doing a FAS course. Young people's economic status was associated with their educational attainment. At R1, young people who had obtained the Leaving Certificate were significantly more likely to be engaged in further education compared to those who had reached the Junior Certificate or those who had no formal qualifications.

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**Chart 1: Total number of care placements (N=56)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of placements</th>
<th>% of placements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 2: Young people’s economic status at Rounds 1 and 2 (N=65)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of young people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employed ill/Disability</td>
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<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying</td>
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<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
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<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
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<td>9.2%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 3: Young people’s transition from care to adulthood at Rounds 1 and 2:**

- Young people were most likely to have had one or two placements during their time in care. However, 15% (10) had more than two placements, including one young person who had 42 different placements (see Chart 1).

- Over time, young people were less likely to be studying or doing a training course and more likely to be unemployed (see Chart 2). The number of young people who were studying fell from 39% (25) at R1 to 28% (18) at R2. Much of this decline was due to young people leaving secondary school. At R2, 13 young people were engaged in further education beyond second level, which represented 20% of all young people in the study. Those involved in training courses fell from 23% (15) at R1 to 12% (8) at R2. In contrast, there was an increase in unemployment from 25% (17) at R1 to 30% (21) at R2. As a result, an increasing number of young people were dependent on social welfare as their main source of income: 31% (20) at R1 compared to 42% (27) at R2.
Main Findings continued

Summary of main findings

The findings show that many young people in the study who were receiving aftercare services in North Dublin faced particular challenges including:

- having experienced several accommodation moves during the transition to independent living which was associated with a greater risk of homelessness;
- difficulties when attempting to find employment or to secure further education or training;
- dependency on social welfare as their main source of income;
- coping with the difficulties arising from having mental health needs;

Importance of stability in care placement for positive outcomes

An analysis was carried out to examine factors associated with more positive outcomes for young people leaving care. Positive outcomes were defined as living in the same accommodation between R1 and R2, taking part in further education/training, and the absence of mental health needs. Positive outcomes were more likely when young people:

- had been in foster care during their last placement; and
- had fewer placements in care; and
- were living in the same placement after turning 18, i.e. were still living with their former foster carers.

These findings suggest that young people leaving care are more likely to have positive outcomes when they have had a stable care background with few placement moves and had remained in their last foster care placement after reaching the age for leaving care.

Summary of care placement for positive outcomes

The number of young people who were deemed to have the appropriate skills to live independently increased from 28% (18) at R1 to 32% (21) at R2. While practical skills were rated well, areas where young people needed to improve or to learn included paying rent regularly, managing a budget, and dealing with government agencies.

Social support

Appropriate social supports are important for any young person during the transition to adulthood but were especially critical for young people leaving care who may face greater challenges during this period.

Contact with birth family

Just over half of young people, 54% (35), had contact with at least one birth family member on a weekly basis at R1. This fell slightly to 46% (32) at R2. Young people were most likely to have contact with siblings followed by their birth mother.

Health and well-being

Mental/health needs

At R1, 36% (24) of young people were said to have at least one adult they could turn to for advice and support. This was 60% (37) at R2. Examples included foster carers, siblings, parents, grandparents and Aftercare Workers.

Aftercare support

The majority of young people agreed to receive an aftercare service. 75% (49) at R1 and 69% (45) at R2. One fifth of young people were not currently engaging or had not agreed to receive aftercare supports, 22% (14) at R1 and 23% (15) at R2. Over time, young people’s contact with Aftercare Workers became less frequent.

Independent living skills

The majority of young people who were deemed to have the appropriate skills to live independently increased from 36% (24) at R1 to 43% (25) at R2. While practical skills were rated well, areas where young people needed to improve or to learn included paying rent regularly, managing a budget, and dealing with government agencies.

Significant adult

At R1, 73% (50) of young people were said to have at least one adult they could turn to for advice and support. This was 80% (48) at R2. Examples included foster carers, siblings, parents, grandparents and Aftercare Workers.

Aftercare support

The majority of young people agreed to receive an aftercare service, 75% (49) at R1 and 69% (45) at R2. One fifth of young people were not currently engaging or had not agreed to receive aftercare supports, 22% (14) at R1 and 23% (15) at R2. Over time, young people’s contact with Aftercare Workers became less frequent.

Social support

Appropriate social supports are important for any young person during the transition to adulthood but were especially critical for young people leaving care who may face greater challenges during this period.

Contact with birth family

Just over half of young people, 54% (35), had contact with at least one birth family member on a weekly basis at R1. This fell slightly to 46% (32) at R2. Young people were most likely to have contact with siblings followed by their birth mother.

It can be a bit lonely at times so I used to stay over with my mother or go over for dinner.” (Brian, 18)

“Being 18 doesn’t mean that you’re a full adult, like in your mind. I was expected to be an adult within a few days of turning 18, like it’s ‘Oh God.’” (Philip, 18)

"You learn eventually how to budget your money. It’s trial and error ‘cos I had done my plans with my Aftercare Worker and my Keyworker but it’s just putting them into action is a different story like.” (Kieran, 18)

How was the study carried out?

The surveys compiled quantitative data on many aspects of young people’s circumstances, such as accommodation, education, health, as well as their care placement history. The information was collected in May/June 2010 (Round 1) and again in December 2010/January 2011 (Round 2). The survey data were analysed using the statistical computer package SPSS.

Interviews were carried out with young people to explore their experiences of leaving care and of the aftercare supports they received. Similarly, the interviews with Aftercare Workers provided an insight into some of the issues around aftercare from a practitioner’s point of view. The findings documented in the summary paper primarily on the survey data findings, although some quotes from the interviews with young people are also presented. A final report on all of the research findings will be available in the coming months.

Aim of the research

This research study focused on young people’s outcomes at the critical time of preparing to or having recently left care. There were two rounds of data collection on outcomes, conducted nine months apart. The study included 65 young people aged 17-18 years old who had been in care in the North Dublin area. The primary aim of the research was to respond to what extent young people’s needs changed over time. The study explored young people’s progress considering the aftercare supports that were available to them.

Key Messages for Policy and Practice

- Acknowledging and understanding the importance of stability in care placement for positive outcomes is crucial for young people leaving care.
- While young people’s contact with Aftercare Workers became less frequent over time, maintaining that contact and providing supports to maintain placements can help to prevent multiple placement moves.

Relevant literature

1 The study included 65 young people’s outcomes at the critical time of preparing to or having recently left care. There were two rounds of data collection on outcomes, conducted nine months apart. The study included 65 young people aged 17-18 years old who had been in care in the North Dublin area. The primary aim of the research was to respond to what extent young people’s needs changed over time. The study explored young people’s progress considering the aftercare supports that were available to them.

2 See Health Service Executive (2006) Model for the Delivery of Leaving Care and Aftercare Services in HSE North West Dublin, North Central Dublin and North Dublin. Aftercare Workers are employed in each of these areas. This research explored young people’s progress considering the aftercare supports that were available to them.

3 This involved Aftercare Workers in the HSE and 2 voluntary organisations in North Dublin.

Importance of stability in care placement for positive outcomes

An analysis was carried out to examine factors associated with more positive outcomes for young people leaving care. Positive outcomes were defined as living in the same accommodation between R1 and R2, taking part in further education/training, and the absence of mental health needs. Positive outcomes were more likely when young people:

- had been in foster care during their last placement; and
- had fewer placements in care; and
- were living in the same placement after turning 18, i.e. were still living with their former foster carers.

These findings suggest that young people leaving care are more likely to have positive outcomes when they have had a stable care background with few placement moves and had remained in their last foster care placement after reaching the age for leaving care.
Importance of stability in care placement for positive outcomes

An analysis was carried out to examine factors associated with more positive outcomes for young people leaving care. Positive outcomes were defined as being in the same accommodation between R1 and R2; having participated in further education or training and the absence of mental health needs. Positive outcomes were more likely when young people:

- had been in foster care during their last placement; and
- had been in their last placement for more than 5 years;
- had fewer placements in care; and
- were living in the same placement after turning 18, i.e. were still living with their former foster carers.

These findings suggest that young people leaving care are more likely to have positive outcomes when they have had a stable care background with fewer placements and had remained in their last foster care placement after reaching the age for leaving care.

Summary of main findings

The findings show that many young people in the study who were receiving aftercare services in North Dublin faced particular challenges including:

- experiencing several accommodation moves during the transition to independent living which was associated with a greater risk of homelessness;
- difficulties when attempting to find employment or to access further education or training;
- dependency on social welfare as their main source of income;
- coping with the difficulties arising from having mental health needs;
- lack of some of the necessary skills to live independently, in particular budgeting skills.

Key Messages for Policy and Practice

- Achieving stability in young people’s care placements helps to promote more positive outcomes for young people leaving care. Ensuring that placements meet young people’s needs and providing supports to maintain placements can help to prevent multiple placement moves.
- Remaining in the same care placement after a young person turns 18 (where this is possible) can provide the continuity and security needed for a more successful transition to adulthood.

Remaining in the same care placement after the critical time of preparing to or having recently left care. There were two rounds of data collection on outcomes, conducted nine months apart. The study included 63 young people aged 11-19 years old (round 1) who had been in care in the North Dublin area. The primary aim of the research was to examine to what extent young people’s needs changed over time and explore the factors that influenced the type of aftercare support they received.

Interviews were carried out with young people to explore their experiences of leaving care and of the aftercare supports they received. Similarly, the interviews with Aftercare Workers were conducted to gain an insight into some of the issues around aftercare from a practitioner’s point of view. The findings documented the summary topics primarily on the survey data findings, although some quotes from the interviews with young people are also presented. A final report on all of the research findings will be available in the coming months.

How was the study carried out?

The survey comprised qualitative data on many aspects of young people’s circumstances, e.g. accommodation, education, health, as well as their care placement history. This information was collected in May/June 2010 (Round 1) and again in December 2010/January 2011 (Round 2). The survey data were analysed using the statistical computer package SPSS.

Interviews were carried out with young people to explore their experiences of leaving care and of the aftercare supports they received. Similarly, the interviews with Aftercare Workers were conducted to gain an insight into some of the issues around aftercare from a practitioner’s point of view. The findings documented the summary topics primarily on the survey data findings, although some quotes from the interviews with young people are also presented. A final report on all of the research findings will be available in the coming months.

The two rounds of data collection will be referred to as R1 and R2.

*See Health Service Executive (2006) Model for the Delivery of Leaving Care and Aftercare Services in HSE North West Dublin, North Central Dublin and North Dublin. Aftercare Workers are employed in each of these areas.

* Interviews with eight Aftercare Workers from the North Dublin area.

*This involved Aftercare Workers in the HSE and 2 voluntary organisations in North Dublin.