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CARELESS TO CAREFUL ACTIVATION MAKING ACTIVATION WORK FOR WOMEN



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Dr Mary Murphy

FOREWORD

For many people activation, helping people move from welfare to work, is like mother hood and apple pie and therefore difficult to argue against. However badly designed activation policy and/or poorly implemented policy can have unintended and negative consequences. This is particularly so for women. They struggle to move from a familial welfare system, which still reinforces women's role as carers and risk moving into a still gendered and segregated labour market where women are more likely to work in low paid, part time and precarious work. This implies many potential traps. In the worst case scenario activation could force women into a triple lock where domestic work, care obligations and low paid employment combine to decrease quality of life and standard of living.

The NWCI approaches labour activation from a feminist perspective. Economic independence is a core aspect of gender equality and requires maximising women's opportunity to decent paid employment. Well designed activation can play a positive role in enhancing gender equality. However this requires an ethic of care where policy and practice facilitate care and enable greater sharing of both care and domestic work between men and women.

SIPTU approaches activation of women from the perspective of workers' rights – the right of workers to a decent job in a work environment where rights and entitlements are respected. In moving from welfare to work, the state should proactively inform welfare recipients of their rights and entitlements and take measures to ensure that workers are activated into jobs where they receive their statutory entitlements.

NWCI and SIPTU advocate that activation policy be built on a bedrock of values – care, interdependence, equality, children's rights, sustainability and participation. This requires moving from careless to careful activation

The core infrastructure of a gender mainstreamed labour activation policy and practice has to be built on strong foundation stones. This means activating the state. Firstly, a care ethic should inform all economic and social policy, not least through provision of child care and wider care and a universal quality out-of-school service. Secondly, an active state will also ensure at both national and local level that there is integrated policy and practice. This requires strong interagency governance and a clear role for relevant NGO stakeholders, including the NWCI and trade unions. Thirdly, activation policy has to be grounded in the lived experience of the user, this requires creative means to hear the local experience and insights of empowered service users.

A strong, active and co-ordinated state has to integrate three core pillars of activation: income, mediation and jobs. The ultimate aim of activation is to enable people move from passive income supports to employment. Working age women still have to navigate their way through a welfare system designed for a different era. A modernised working age welfare would not make it harder for mothers to move

into employment, rather the focus would be on individualised payments and facilitating quality part-time work and new forms of atypical work.

Gender mainstreaming requires ensuring that the process of client mediation is sensitive to gendered differences, in essence this means active attention to issues of gender bias in values and attitudes of state agencies. Rules and procedures governing the activation process have to safeguard clients from overzealous application. In particular there needs to be clear information about the right to care related exemptions. Gender mainstreamed activation requires active monitoring with gender disaggregated data used to analyse gendered outcomes.

The ultimate aim of activation is sustainable employment, employment that lasts, that is a route from poverty and that enhances quality of life and living standards for all the family. Activation policy has to work with employers to increase the range of quality part time and flexible jobs. At the same time activation policy has to guard against forcing and trapping people into precarious low quality employment.

Properly designed and implemented activation strategies have a role to play to enhance gender equality. Those countries that succeed best at activation also have the best gender equality outcomes. It is no coincidence that they are also the most competitive countries in the world.

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SOCIAL WELFARE GLOSSARY

Claimant: a person applying for a payment in his/her own right for themselves, and/or for child and adult dependants.

Contingency: this refers to a specific 'state' which a person must be able to prove in order to be eligible for certain payments, for example disability, illness, old age, unemployment.

Limitation rule: the limitation rule means that in households where both adults have eligibility for a payment in their own right (for example, both are unemployed) the total payment to the household is reduced to 1.7 times the rate of two adult payments. This rule does not apply where both adults are old-age pensioners or are entitled to disability allowance.

Means test: there are four specific tests for different categories of income. Income from earnings (and income from spouse's earnings); Benefit and privilege (value of living in the family home); Savings and investments; Rental income from property

Pay-related social insurance (PRSI) payments: Employed people pay insurance (usually a percentage of earnings) into a fund that then covers them should they be unable to work.

Qualified Adult Allowance: payment issued to a claimant in respect of a qualified adult, formerly adult dependant allowance.

Qualified Adult: a claimant can claim a payment for a dependant adult (for non old-age payments usually 70% of the adult payment) when the claimant can prove a spouse or partner does not have a social welfare payment in their own right or earn adequate income from employment (formerly called adult dependant).

Secondary Benefits: a collective term given to a group of payments, mainly the medical card, housing supplements or subsidies, fuel allowances, back-to-school allowances and Christmas bonuses and free schemes for those on old-age pensions. The term secondary benefits has no particular legal meaning, but is usually used to describe the non-cash benefits a person on social welfare might be getting in addition to their main payment. It is important to note that some of these schemes (in particular, medical cards and differential rents) are major schemes in their own right and are available subject to conditions such as means tests both to people on social welfare and to people whose income is from other sources, in other words they are not linked to a 'main' social welfare payment.

Signing on for credits: people getting certain payments from the Department of Social and Family Affairs (for example Unemployment Benefit, Disability Benefit, Maternity Benefit) automatically get credits. People not getting a payment but eligible for credits have to show they qualify (for example by sending in medical certificates in the case of illness, or by 'signing on' as unemployed). A person out of the PRSI system (paid or credited) for more than two years will normally have to pay 26 PRSI contributions before claiming credits.

Social assistance payments: these are means tested and funded totally by the Exchequer. To qualify a person must prove a contingency and pass a means test.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance: a means-tested safety net system for those who fall out of social insurance or assistance because they cannot prove any of the contingencies or because they have a specific need that cannot be met in the mainstream social welfare system.

ABBREVIATIONS

ALMP	Active Labour Market Programme
BTW	Back to Work
CDA	Child Dependent Allowance
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DA	Disability Allowance
DB	Disability Benefit
DJEI	Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation
DOF	Department of Finance
DSFA	Department of Social Protection
DWP	Department of Work and Pension UK
DWS	Developmental Welfare State
EA	Equality Authority
EAPN	European Anti-Poverty Network
ESRI	Economic & Social Research Institute
ETB	Education and Training Boards
ETUC	European Trade Union Congress
EU	European Union
FÁS	State Employment and Training Agency
FET	Further Education and Training
FIS	Family Income Supplement
FLAC	Free Legal Advice Centre
GED	Gender Equality Division
GNP	Gross National Product
IBEC	Irish Business & Employers Confederation
Intreo	Irish single point of contact for all employment and income supports
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INOUE	Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
ISME	Irish Small & Medium Enterprises
LES	Local Employment Service
NAPsincl	European Union Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy
NEAP	National Employment Action Plan
NEES	National Employment and Entitlement Service
NERA	National Employment Rights Authority
NESC	National Economic & Social Council
NESF	National Economic & Social Forum
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NWCI	National Women's Council of Ireland
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPFP	One Parent Family Payment
P2000	Partnership 2000
PSRI	Pay Related Social Insurance
PTJI	Part-Time Job Initiative
QA	Qualified Adult
RR	Replacement Ratio
SOLAS	An Seirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna, Further Education and Training Authority
SWA	Supplementary Welfare Allowance
Troika	International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank and European Commission
VEC	Vocational Educational Committee



NOTES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AND
RECOMMENDATIONS



THREE STEPS TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING ACTIVATION

Labour activation is the policy and practice of linking income supports with interventions to support and/or push people without jobs to pursue employment and related opportunities. In April 2012 the NWCi and SIPTU initiated research to develop a woman-friendly model of activation and to identify what supports female job seeker claimants, one parent family payment recipients and qualified adults need to access sustainable employment.

In the absence of a clear Irish 'model' or vision of labour market and work life balance, it is more difficult to gender mainstream activation policy. There are significant unintended consequences from failing to adequately gender mainstream activation.

1. Activation into compulsory full-time paid employment without an adequate accommodation and redistribution of care leads to a greater burden on women. Careless activation traps women into a triple burden of paid employment, care and domestic work. Full-time activation is not realistic without a fundamental redistribution of care and domestic work between men and women. Involuntary full-time work is an unfair imposition on women who have sole responsibility of care and domestic work.
2. Activation into part-time work may also have unintended consequences for women. In Ireland part-time work is precarious. It tends to be low paid, non-unionised and highly inflexible from the perspective of the employee. Without appropriate measures to tackle labour law compliance and planned routes out of part-time low paid work, there is a danger that activation could lead to and embed precarity traps.
3. Restricting activation measures to those on the live register will have the unintended consequence of leaving many women in poverty and outside the scope of labour market programmes. This would have negative consequences for women and their families but also in the longer term for competitiveness and employment rates.

Fearing such unintended consequences women's representative groups have responded to activation in different and contradictory ways with demands to stop, slow down, and speed up activation. The NWCi takes the overall approach that while women are heterogeneous and require different combinations of work-life balance across the life cycle, most women will spend a significant portion of their adult lives in paid employment and need access to active labour market supports. NWCi also recognises that there are different periods in women lives and that care of young children is a particularly challenging time for women trying to reconcile work and family life. Good quality part-time work should be encouraged as a necessary feature of the labour market. Part-time work however is not the only solution to balancing care and work. A defining challenge of our time is to bring men into the picture and strike a more equal sharing of child care, wider care and domestic work between men and women. Good quality part-time work options will also be beneficial for male parents and carers.

The present 'careless' model of activation has been developed without reference to the reality of care in women's lives and is to date premised on compulsory full-time employment. This will not work for all women and will not be inclusive of all women. The aim of this research is to make activation consistent with and oriented towards a carer-worker model where both men and women work outside the home but equally share domestic and care work. The objective of this research is to suggest how to develop a 'careful' model of activation, one that is gender mainstreamed, accommodates the reality of care in women's lives and plays a part in enabling a greater sharing of paid and unpaid work between men and women.

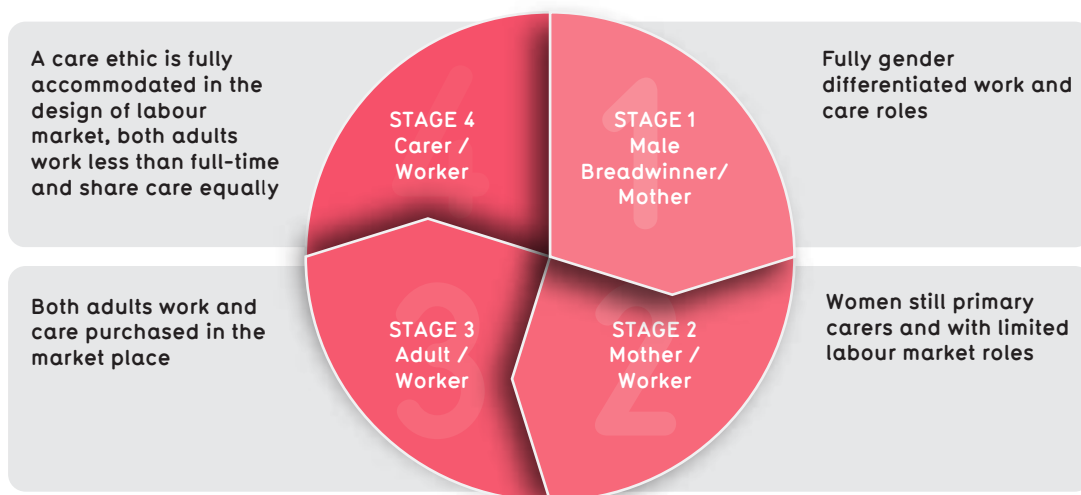
This short summary presents three steps to conceptualise gender mainstream activation and then an ABC of gender mainstreaming activation

STEP ONE

HOW DOES ACTIVATION FIT INTO A VISION OF CARE AND WORK

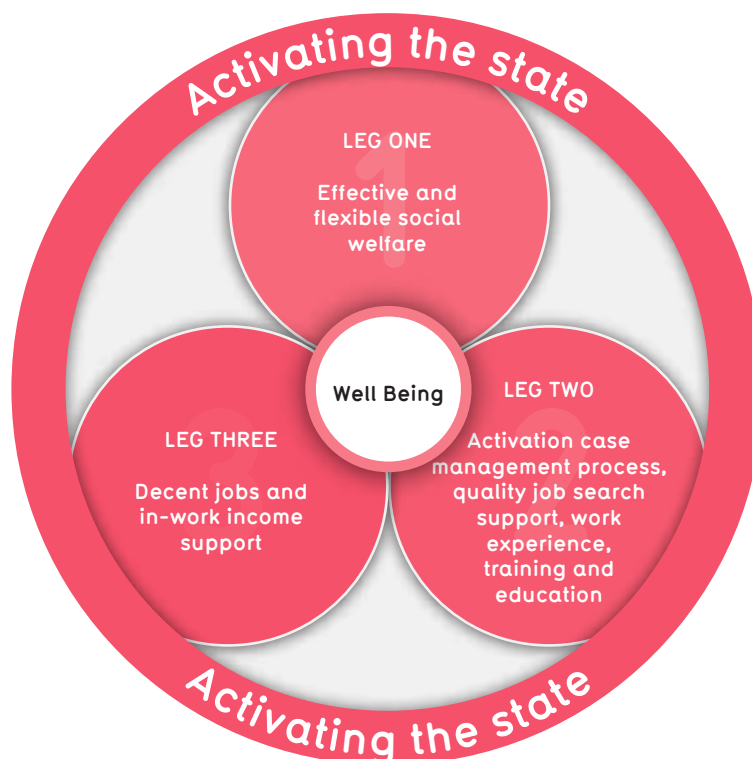
Step 1 contextualises the challenge of developing a gender sensitive activation policy in the context of a still highly gendered society and economy. Ireland has shifted significantly from Stage 1 male breadwinner to Stage 2 mother-worker where many women work outside the home but also maintain primary care and domestic roles. Activation policy, however, assumes all adults are available for and want to work full-time, leaving room for marketised care only and not accommodating affective care. Activation based on this adult-worker model (Stage 3) is 'careless' activation. Activation built on an ethic of care, (the carer-worker model), means a gendered and 'careful' activation strategy that recognises, accommodates and enables sharing of care and domestic work (Stage 4).

The NWCI vision of gender equality is of a society and economy firmly embedded in a care ethic. This would mean both paid employment and care and domestic work is shared more equally by men and women and that employment is flexible enough to accommodate care.



STEP TWO**ACTIVATING THE STATE – GENDER MAINSTREAMING THE THREE LEGS OF ACTIVATION**

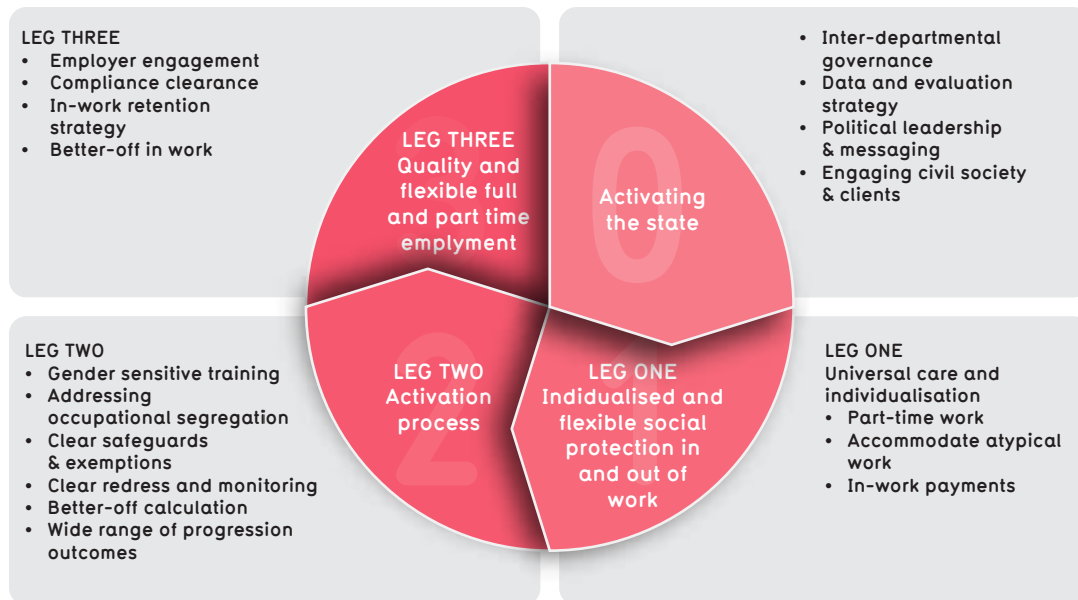
Activation strategies ideally move people from social welfare through a case management process into decent and sustainable employment. This requires well coordinated and integrated statutory policy and practice capable of working with all stakeholders from national to local level. Developing activation is about activating the state to provide the capacity for integrated, well planned, evidence based policy and planning, and making sure the state has sufficient data, skills and capacity. This means looking carefully at staff resources and investing in these skills and training to ensure capacity to consider the gendered implications of policy and practice. It also means leadership to motivate staff.



STEP THREE

APPLYING A GENDER PROCESS TO EACH LEG OF ACTIVATION

A gender mainstreaming approach to activation will have four gendered dimensions: the active state underpins the framework of three legs; the gendered working age framework; gendered activation processes; supports to enable flexible and family friendly quality and sustainable work. The boxes below outline specific recommendations under each of four headings: activating the state; modernising and individualising social welfare; gendering the case management process, and enabling flexible, but not precarious, employment.



RECOMMENDATIONS

ACTIVATING THE STATE

Interagency collaboration requires greater coherence across the three departments, DSP, DJEI and DES at national and regional levels.

User participation can be strengthened through a statutory commitment to having client representation on the board of SOLAS and on the board of each Education and Training Board (ETBs) and in key divisional Intreo offices. These can be institutionally supported through local development companies and NGOs.

A specific formal consultative mechanism is required for representative groups such as NWCi.

Intreo and SOLAS action plans need to be refocused and an appropriately senior level official needs to be assigned responsibility to adopt a gender mainstreaming approach to activation policy at national level and in each DSP division and on each ETB board.

Two gender mainstreaming 'demonstration centres', one in an Intreo and one in an ETB, can provide specialised supports.

Activation in a time of recession is necessary but challenging. Political discourse about activation should avoid blaming or stereotyping client groups and confusing activation with other control or expenditure reduction objectives.

All policy has gendered impacts. Data disaggregation is required to enable full gender proofing and monitoring of employment patterns and distributional outcomes.

Budget 2013 should initiate a second year of part-time universal Early Childhood Education along with a universal out-of-school child development programme delivered through the school infrastructure.

An 'equality in the home' attitude campaign (on the lines of drink driving, road safety or seat belt campaigns) should promote sharing of domestic work alongside policy initiatives including paid paternity and parental leave and soft supports.

There is growing disconnect between what is needed to implement good activation and the reality of cuts to childcare, literacy, community development, health counselling and personal services in local communities and the impact of cuts in such services on the lives of social welfare claimants. Consultation is needed to ensure the strategy is grounded in reality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LEG ONE

WORKING AGE WELFARE

1

The first principle of activation should be to do no harm and to enable those on working age payments to at least maintain current levels of employment and social welfare income. Plans for further cuts to income disregards in OPFP should be discontinued.

While the institutional arrangements should continue to be developed there should be no mandatory application of activation to lone parents or qualified adults without a universal after-school child service, accommodation of part-time work, meaningful in-work supports and full compliance with labour legislation.

The Limitation Rule, the concept of qualified adult allowances and OPFP in social assistance, should be abolished and family formation choices neutralised. In such an individualised welfare system, with appropriate exemptions for care roles, all adults should be considered eligible for part-time activation.

Individualisation of social welfare must be paralleled by tax reforms that enable women maximise the full economic value of their employment.

Job seekers payments must recognise part-time work choices and facilitate atypical work patterns. This can be done by moving from a day to an hours based calculation.

Genuinely Seeking Work guidelines and Available for Work guidelines need to be modernised and made gender sensitive by developing a range of criteria for what is considered a) reasonable employment and b) reasonable groups for exemption from activation. These guidelines must be publicly available and in plain English.

In-work costs, including care and transport, must be recognised in determining whether 'work pays' and a better-off calculation included in each case management process.

A system of in-work refundable tax credits should replace the in-work Family Income Supplement.

In the interim, DSP should conduct a major FIS public advertisement campaign and address delivery problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LEG TWO

GENDERED ACTIVATION FROM CARELESS TO CAREFUL ACTIVATION

2

Intreo should adopt an unambiguous framework for positive activation.

A gendered strategy should be less focused on work first and will have wider focus on progression outcomes including personal development, child and family wellbeing and education, training and part-time work. This should include a specific education first approach in targeted areas.

A gendered activation strategy would enable and respect part-time work choices, have a long term holistic perspective and promote economic independence and individual autonomy and self determination in an individualised tax and welfare system.

Activation case managers need to be familiar with the full range of supply and demand side barriers to women's employment, such awareness needs to be incorporated into training. Client mediation processes need to be of sufficient quality to enable barriers to be adequately explored.

Regulations for exemptions to GSW for parents with children, other caring responsibilities, education and health reasons need to be clearly spelt out for both clients and case workers. A protocol on exemptions and referrals needs to be clearly understood by staff and clients. Exemptions should be subject to quarterly monitoring reports for gender and regional patterns.

Child and relative care needs to be added to the profiling tool to determine Probability of Exit. In the meantime adequate focus needs to be given to care barriers.

A budget maximisation strategy has to be part of the activation process, technical tools and apps can be developed to enable 'better-off in-work' calculations.

Privatised activation services, where used, must apply equality legislation and operate to strict guidelines and standards. Payment by results often leads to cherry picking and parking and needs to be monitored tightly to ensure women are not disproportionately parked.

Consideration needs to be given to including claimants in the delivery of training and ensuring a gendered dimension and input from user groups and vulnerable clients.

Addressing occupational segregation needs to be a core objective of SOLAS and requires specific targets and interventions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LEG THREE

ENGAGING EMPLOYERS IN PROVIDING FLEXIBLE AND QUALITY EMPLOYMENT

3

Winning employers' trust, encouraging employers' engagement and increasing the number of vacancies filled through Intreo will be a considerable challenge.

Too strong a work-first approach will not meet employers' needs for effective job matching, proactive management of skills shortages and guaranteed job ready placements with minimal concerns of turnover

Incentives should encourage and enable employers to maximise sharing of existing work as well as creation of new part-time and three quarter-time jobs

While being in a job can be the first step to a better job, there are also people trapped in precarious and inflexible sectors. Intreo must monitor for and avoid these 'precarity traps'.

A gender and sectoral analysis of trends in part-time work could shed more light on when part-time work is a stepping stone and when it is a precarity trap

The emerging activation infrastructure presents a unique opportunity for the state to develop a social contract with employers and to strengthen compliance with labour rights legislation.

Following statutory tendering and procurement practice, all employers availing of state employment incentives should sign a self-declared compliance form.

Full information about employment rights and the right to join a union should be included in the activation placement process.

Job retention requires an active case management strategy with an ongoing case manager/employer system to prevent early job loss and unnecessary and costly staff turnover.

CHAPTER

ONE

Introduction



Labour activation is the policy and practice of linking income supports with interventions to support and/or push people without jobs to pursue employment and related opportunities. In April 2012 the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) and SIPTU initiated research to develop a woman-friendly model of activation and to identify the supports female job seeker claimants, one parent family payment recipients and qualified adults need to return to sustainable employment. This report aims to gender mainstream activation policy and practice.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The 2011 Irish Programme for Government (Ireland 2011) committed to developing an activation strategy which it outlined in proposals to develop a Single Working Age Payment (SWAP) (DSP 2010) and Pathways to Work (DSP, 2011). A detailed National Employment and Entitlement Services framework (NEES) for merging delivery of income supports and employment services, and a second plan for merging further education and training into a new agency, SOLAS, were launched over the last year (DSP 2011a). NEES was renamed Intreo in October 2012. Implementing both strategies is considered a core part of Ireland's structural adjustment. The Troika Memo of Understanding includes reporting schedules to reinforce various activation targets.

Increased economic participation of women is also a core objective of government policy, the National Women's Strategy 2007-2016 (Ireland 2007) and a key requirement of Lisbon 2020 (see box). A critical question is how activation policy can assist in national objectives to increase women's economic participation and maximise Irish competitiveness.

In March 2010, the EU Commission's Europe 2020 Strategy set a headline EU 2020 target of 75% employment for 20-64 year-olds. Ireland adopted a midrange 2014 employment rate target range of 69-71% and is to focus policy on the following: areas of weak labour demand; incentives and stimuli to increase employment within enterprise; longterm and structural elements of unemployment; persons with low levels of educational attainment and younger higher education graduates. Over the longer term, groups with historically relatively low participation/employment rates – females, persons with a disability, older workers, lone parents and welfare dependants – are to become a policy focus (FORFÁS 2011).

TENSIONS IN GENDERING ACTIVATION.... DOMESTICITY AND PRECARIETY TRAPS

Activation policy is being implemented in challenging times amidst considerable capacity issues concerning data, infrastructure, staff skill sets, inter-agency co-operation and industrial relations. Recognising this reality, the particular focus of this research is to constructively influence the development and implementation of Irish activation policy, to devise a framework to gender mainstream these strategies and enhance activation policy's relevance to other gender equality objectives.

Feminist literature (Lynch and Lyons 2008) argues for 'an ethic of care' where everyone has access to the opportunity to develop loving and

caring relations and to both give and receive care. The research complements NWCI aspirations for a women friendly social welfare system and a care ethic. It argues that interdependency is at the heart of personal and family sustainability. It promotes principles of freedom, choice, capability, quality, sustainability and economic autonomy and independence. The challenge is to balance the need for reciprocal care relations with women's economic equality. This has implications for the practical design of child and elder care policy but also for health, justice, education and other institutions, including labour markets, social protection systems and our whole economy. Human rights principles should likewise be fully incorporated into both the design and functioning of activation (Holland 2012, One Family, 2006).

Part of the challenge in developing a gender mainstreamed activation strategy is a fundamental ambiguity concerning policy and societal ambitions for women and more specifically mothers and employment. This creates tensions; demand for increased labour market participation overlaps with demand to facilitate choice. At the same time unaffordable care denies some mothers the option to work in paid employment. Different countries try to strike the balance between care and work in different ways. This research is informed by a typology previously used by NWCI to develop an understanding of gendered patterns of work and care combinations. The NWCI have consistently argued for an ethic of care to inform social and economic policy and for a carer-worker combination where both work and care is shared more equally between men and women. Irish policy has yet to adopt a vision informed by an ethic of care. Without this activation policy is 'careless activation'.

Finally, it is clearly challenging to implement activation in a context of austerity. On the one hand resource limitations restrict capacity, and on the other hand the lack of growth associated with austerity means less employment opportunities. At the same time activation is a necessary response to unemployment. The focus has to be on getting the basic infrastructure in place and enhancing activation policy and practice as resources allow, but also being proportionate in demands and expectations on claimants.

THE CHALLENGE OF GENDERING ACTIVATION – AVOIDING UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

In the absence of a clear Irish 'model' or vision of labour market and work life balance, it is more difficult to gender mainstream activation policy. There are significant unintended consequences from failing to adequately gender mainstream activation.

1. Activation into compulsory full-time paid employment without an adequate accommodation and redistribution of care leads to a greater burden on women. Careless activation traps women into a triple burden of paid employment, care and domestic work. Full-time activation is not realistic without a fundamental redistribution of care and domestic work between men and women. Involuntary full-time work is an unfair imposition for women who have sole responsibility of care and domestic work.

2. Activation into part-time work may also have unintended consequences for women. In Ireland part-time work is precarious. It tends to be low paid, non-unionised and highly inflexible from the perspective of the employee. Without appropriate measures to tackle labour law compliance and plan routes out of part-time low paid work, there is a danger that activation could lead to and embed precarity traps.
3. Restricting activation measures to those on the live register will have the unintended consequence of leaving many women in poverty and outside the scope of labour market programmes. This would have negative consequences for women and their families but also in the longer term for competitiveness and employment rates.

Fearing such unintended consequences, women's representative groups have responded to activation in different, and at times, contradictory ways with demands to stop, slow down, and speed up activation. Elements of all three perspectives surfaced in focus groups and interviews undertaken during this research. This research acknowledges these tensions. Consistent with previous NWCI work, it takes the overall approach that while women are heterogeneous and require different combinations of work-life balance across the life cycle, most women will spend a significant portion of their adult lives in paid employment. It also recognises that there are different periods in women lives, and that care of young children is a particularly challenging time for women trying to reconcile work and family life. A defining challenge of our time is to bring men into the picture and strike a more equal sharing of childcare, wider care and domestic work between men and women.

The present 'careless' model of activation has been developed without reference to the reality of care in women's lives and is premised on full-time employment. This will not work for all women and will not be inclusive of all women.

METHODOLOGY

Gender mainstreaming is an approach or a strategy that involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities – policy development, research, advocacy, dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, as well as planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects (Carney 2002, ILO 2009). A gender mainstream approach develops a best practice framework for activation that delivers high standards for men and women. Ireland is not alone in failing to adopt gender mainstreaming. The European Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men highlight the low visibility of gender in European-level responses to the crisis and active labour market policy.

Unintended consequences arise when policy-makers press ahead with reforms regardless of evidence that policies are unlikely to have the stated intended effects (Wright 2012 322). Christopher (2004) offers five principles for feminist research to ensure research is grounded in the practical reality of women's lives:

- Draw from the diversity of women's lived experience and include women's own voice;
- Acknowledge the gendered nature of labour market, economic and welfare institutions;
- Stress the non objective nature of research as a theory of action to improve women's lives;
- Account for women's unpaid work and care ethic;
- Highlight power differentials.

The primary methodology was a literature review that explored international evidence of positive models of activation and gender mainstreaming strategies in processes of employment activation. The focus was on contemporary post crisis Anglo Saxon literature and Dutch and Nordic models of activation. A secondary method was to engage the expertise of Irish and international stakeholders through 12 qualitative policy interviews. In keeping with the NWCI principle that women's voices inform research, focus groups were conducted with lone parents, women live register claimants, qualified adults and DSP staff. A feminist theoretical framework was used to develop a gender mainstreaming framework or strategy. All research took place between June and October 2012. The research was actively supported by an advisory committee which met three times.

STRUCTURE AND RATIONALE

The report is organised into six chapters. Chapter Two is concerned with women on the live register, women in receipt of One Parent Family Payment and women who are qualified adults (spouses or partners of unemployed claimants), the barriers they face and the support they need. Chapter Three defines the challenge of how to develop a gender mainstreaming approach to activation that maximises gender equality outcomes. It examines international experiences of activation and proposes a gendered model of activation. Chapter Four examines policy and brings a gender perspective to recent developments concerning welfare reform and the emerging infrastructure of Intreo and SOLAS. Chapter Five reviews practice and what needs to be done to gender mainstream implementation in a way that balances work and care. Chapter Six looks at how activation policy can maximise work quality and in-work progression. Recommendations are highlighted throughout the text in red and summarised in the Executive Summary.

NOTES

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CHAPTER

TWO

Unemployed women, lone
parents and qualified adults,
barriers and supports.



This chapter is concerned with unemployed women, lone parents and qualified adults. The chapter has three key objectives. It first reviews recent economic and poverty data from a gender perspective. It then reviews employment barriers under five headings: care; familial social welfare and tax systems; part-time work and low pay; occupational segregation; inadequate public services. Finally it explores specific experiences of lone parents and qualified adults.

It is important to acknowledge that women and their experiences are heterogeneous. However it is possible to discern specific barriers to employment that are more likely to be experienced by women or are experienced more intensely by women. Many of these barriers are directly and indirectly linked to care. Others are related to the historical legacies of a gendered welfare system and segregated labour market. Focus groups and qualitative interviews confirmed the literature review finding that barriers are often intensified when gender disadvantage overlaps with other inequalities including disability, ethnicity or age. Many social welfare dependent women have been the most vulnerable to cut-backs in public services over the last five years, live in disadvantaged areas and face increasing day to day difficulty in managing the pressure of poverty. Barriers to labour market inclusion are thus intensifying (EAPN 2012, Holland 2012). Activation policy and practice has to recognise and factor in these gendered barriers and the reality that five years of austerity has impacted negatively on local capacity to maintain services necessary for a gendered activation. People are suffering.

‘They are getting rid of all our community centres, the family resource is next to go, then the creche will go, then how will we get the children minded.’

REVIEWS

THE GENDERED NATURE OF THE ECONOMY

The employment rate for both men and women declined significantly over the crisis and the gender employment gap narrowed. In Q 2 2012 there were 953,300 men and 832,000 women working in Ireland. Table 1 shows women’s employment rate fell from a peak of 60.8% in 2007 to 57.0% in 2009 and to 55.0% in the third quarter of 2011 (below the Lisbon target of 60 per cent). Men’s employment rate has fallen from its peak in 2007 of 77.0% to 65.3% in 2009 and to 63.3% in 2011 (CSO 2011a). This measurement is not adjusted for part-time employment. If adjusted to full-time equivalent jobs the gap is significantly larger at 13.8% leaving Ireland ranked 11th in the EU 27 for the gender gap in economic participation.

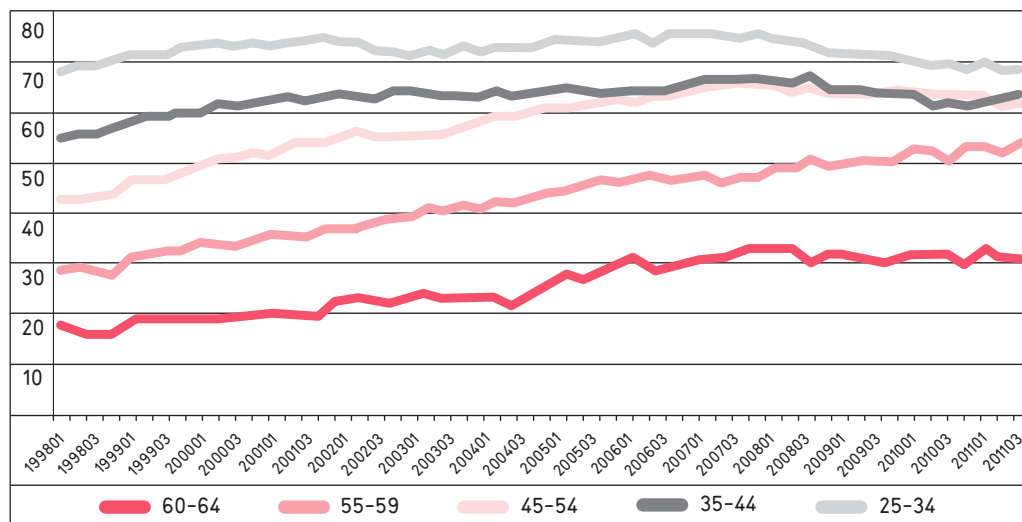
Table 1 Gender Gap in Employment Rates 2004, 2007, 2011

Ireland	2004	2007	2011
women rate (%)	57.2	60.8	55.0
men rate (%)	76.0	77.0	63.3
Gap	18.8	16.8	8.3

Source QNHS Q1 2012

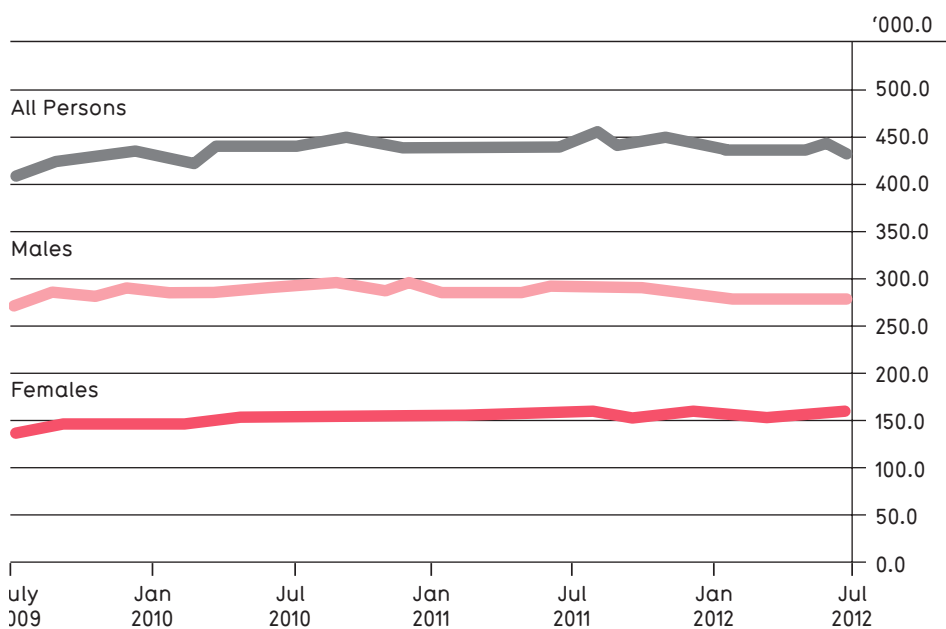
In the four year period 2008 to 2011, a decline of 5% is observed in female employment rate while the male employment rate declined by 14%. The considerable variation in employment rates between women with children and men with children intensifies with more children. This is discussed below under childcare. This means the female employment rate varies significantly by age. The decline in numbers for the 25-34 age group is noticeable. Older women 55-59 and 60-64 are experiencing a considerable growth in employment participation (possibly motivated by the need to secure pension entitlements).

Fig 1 Female employment rates by age 1998 - 2011



Source Duwurray 2012

Fig 2 Unemployed men and women Ireland



Source CSO July 2012

Those on the Live Register (437,300 in July 2012) are the primary target for activation. While Fig 2 shows unemployment is dominated by men the gap between men and women is narrowing. Official unemployment as measured through the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), recorded an increase in unemployment between Q4 2010 and Q4 2011. This was accounted for by females (+3,900 or + 4.1 %). Female unemployment rose by 15% in the year to March 2011 while male unemployment rose by 3.5%.

The economic impact of the crisis is now shifting from male oriented occupational sectors to sectors likely to employ women, especially retail. The Live Register (July 2012) saw the ratio of new JSB entrants was 47.9:52.1 for men and women (18,001 to 20,620). Some women and men, while still jobless, do not progress from JSB to a JSA payment. This group (who fail household means tests and are no longer entitled to a job seeker payment) can sign on for credits. However an unknown number of men and women do not sign for credits and therefore their unemployment remains unrecorded. Of those who sign for credits, females outstrip men with 12,144 men and 22,142 women, and an annual increase of 1,438 for men and 2,255 for women.

Despite the growth in numbers of women claiming JSB, male unemployment rates still significantly outpaced female rates at all age groups and male long-term unemployment far outstrips female long-term unemployment at all age groups with a general 70:30 ratio (a shift from a more typical 60:40 ratio before the recession). However this gap is narrowing, over 2011 long term unemployment grew by 11% for women compared to 3% for men. Youth unemployment is particularly problematic for both young men and women but more young men are considered to be NEETs (not in education, employment or training).

POVERTY

There is a high correlation between unemployment and poverty and also between workless households and poverty. While women often bear the brunt of managing poverty, poverty rates are broadly similar for men and women. Women's poverty appreciated considerably in 2010 with women's consistent, at risk and deprivation rates increasing faster than men's in all three categories (largely an outcome of budget distributional impacts on single families with children).

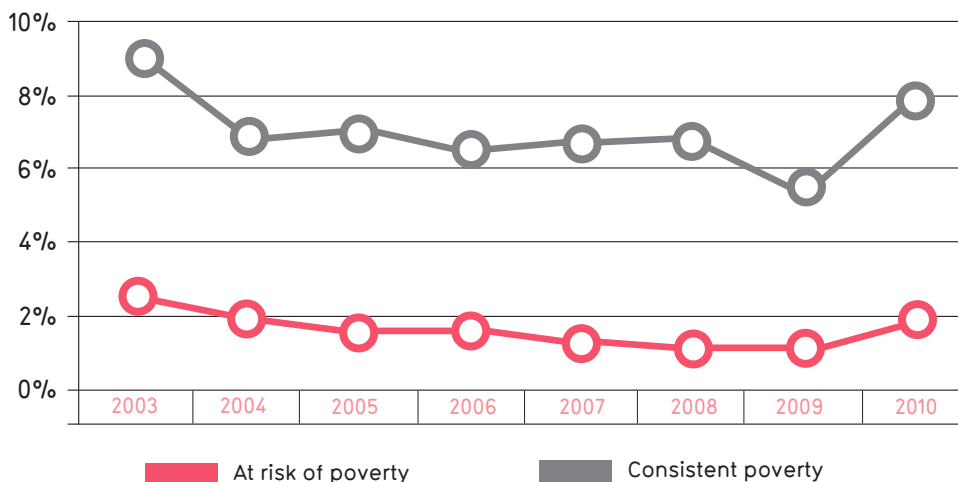
Table 2 Poverty rates for men and women 2009 and 2010

	Consistent poverty 2009	Consistent poverty 2010	Relative at risk of poverty 2009	Relative at risk of poverty 2010	Basic deprivation 2009	Basic deprivation 2010
Female	5.4	6.6	14.1	15.9	17.7	23.4
Male	5.5	5.9	14.1	15.9	16.8	21.6

Lone parents have long been the group with the highest risk of poverty and are still at a very high risk. While the 2010 'at risk of poverty rate' saw a drop for households with one adult and children under 18, the group 'other households with children' saw a substantial rise and now has the highest risk of poverty. A job is not a guarantee

against poverty but it does make it much less likely that a family will be poor. While in-work poverty increased between 2009 and 2010 and is more marked for men, there is still a marked difference between households with no adult working (14.5% risk of consistent poverty) and those with at least one adult working (5% risk). Those households with 2 adults working experience only a .6% risk of consistent poverty.

Fig 3 Poverty rates for people at work



Source SILC 2010 (CSO 2011)

In 2009, 5.5% of working people were at risk-of-poverty, rising to 7.8% in 2010. Consistent Poverty among people at work increased from 1.1% in 2009 to 1.8% in 2010. In 2009 14.3% of all those at risk-of-poverty were at work, by 2010 this had risen to 17.3%. One in ten of all those in consistent poverty were at work in 2010, an increase from 7.6% in 2009. The Irish League of Credit Unions 'What's Left' tracker 2012 suggests that rising poverty is resulting in debt, borrowing and financial stress for both the working and non-working adult population.

The concept of Very Low Work Intensity (VLWI) is used to describe working age adults who worked for less than one fifth of the available time over the previous year (Watson et al 2012). A broader measure than 'unemployment', it considers someone 'jobless' even where the person does not define themselves as unemployed. This may be particularly relevant to women who define themselves as 'home-duties' and 'carers'. The number of coupled households where neither partner works increased from 9% in 2007 to 15% in 2010 (Watson et al 2012). The share of persons aged 0-17 living in a household where no one works rose from 10.1% in 2000 to 23% in 2010 (or from the EU average in 2000 to more than twice the EU average in 2010). The Intreo focus on live register long-term unemployment will not necessarily be inclusive of all jobless families. This is particularly problematic for child poverty strategies. Ritchie et al (2005) argue that worklessness is not the same as unemployment. VLWI is associated with a greater level of educational and social class disadvantage and lone parenthood and requires a broader range of responses than those addressing unemployment. As well as job search supports, human capital development and provision of supports for childcare and disability supports are needed.

BARRIERS

CHILD CARE

As the table below shows, women begin working life with higher participation rates than men but participation drops drastically with children and drops even more on the birth of the second child. Childcare is the dominant employment barrier for women. It also interacts with other barriers to limit job search. For example, care and transport barriers combined are a lethal combination limiting the feasible geographical scope of job search or commuting.

Table 3 Employment rate for couples and lone parents by age of youngest child (2011).

Family status	Employment rate men %	Employment rate women %
No children	84.8	85.7
Youngest child aged 0-3	78.9	57.0
Youngest child 4-5	73.8	51.5
Youngest child aged 6 or over	76.8	58.1
Total	79.4	62.2

Source CSO QNHS Q2 2011

Decreased labour participation is not only about the absence of childcare. Bashir et al (2011) describe a moral rather than a rational process of decision making for women who are trying to balance care and work choices. Many women position themselves in relation to the labour market with reference to their role and responsibilities as mothers. Table 4 below shows 2011 Irish childminding arrangements dominated by family based options.

Table 4 2011 Irish childcare arrangements are dominated by family based options.

Childcare arrangement	Children 0-5 %	Children 5-12 %	Children 12+ %
Parent guardian	63.0	82.0	
Unpaid relative	7.0	57.0	*
Paid relative	3.0	51.5	
Child minder	9.0	58.1	
Creche – or after school	23.0	62.2	
Home alone			*

Source Mahon 2012

This does not necessarily imply Irish parents prefer home-based childcare. The traditionally low participation rates of women in employment is linked to limited access and the high cost of childcare – estimated to be around 45% of the average wage, compared to the 16% EU average (Daly 2010). Callan et al (2012) find that parents manage childcare in very different ways, thus childcare costs vary widely. Only 20% of parents source paid childcare, of these about half pay less than €85 per week and 1 in 6 pay more than €200 per week. The average expenditure is €144pw. They conclude childcare costs do make a difference to replacement rates but, for most families, work pays and that even those with high replacement rates still choose to work.

Table 5 variation in childcare across households

Childcare arrangement	% of households
Under €40	21
40-85	29
85-150	20
150 -200	14
Over €200	16

Rearing kids on your own – it's tough – I can't even find time to do the homework – let alone work

Lone parents have different care needs to coupled parents. Himmelweit (2004) argues that the poverty of lone mothers is structurally rooted in a lack of time. They use their time for two competing purposes: to earn an income sufficient to support their families and to care for their children and themselves. A lone parent has less time for these purposes than that available to a couple. Millar et al (2012) argue that without childcare support from extended families, particularly from grandmothers, lone mothers would be hard-pressed to enter the workforce and play the triple role of "carer", 'worker' and 'parent'.

'What to do with them in secondary school students is especially problematic – I have had neighbours dropping in, I'm uncomfortable leaving children alone – someone would have to drop by'

'What is the point of being a parent if you are not with them enough to get to know your own child?'

Coupled mothers and lone parent mothers have a different experience of childcare as a barrier. While coupled mothers will have greater numbers of children than lone parents they are less likely to use childcare and more likely to have wider caring roles and responsibilities. Social class also differentiates attitudes to care and work (Albelda 2011). There can be reluctance to leave children with men and there are class differences in ideologies about motherhood and caring. Irish qualified adults often prioritise their maternal role and value being present for children in the home (Cregan 2008). Such women working outside the home are rarely relieved of domestic duties even when the male spouse is unemployed.

'I had to leave work, I was working full-time but lost a stone in weight not being able to cope. The expense of living and the stress of living on low wages and then trying to get to work and stuck in traffic, then come home do the housework and get the dinner on the table. It just wasn't worth it'. (Cregan 2008)

The present childcare infrastructure remains inadequate. The free pre-school year in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE) was introduced from 1 January 2010 to replace an Early Childcare Supplement. Approximately 95% of childcare and pre-school services participate in the programme, bringing participation rate in State funded pre-school in the year before Junior Infants to 97%. There is strong demand that this be extended to a second year. The Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) Programme and Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Programme both play a valuable role and should continue to be supported and refined.

Out-of-school care is a neglected aspect of Irish childcare provision (Hennessy and Donnelly 2005). Qualitative research shows mothers constantly juggle and rely on afterschool sports, youth clubs, grandparents, relatives, neighbours and leaving children at home alone or in the care of older siblings. This is especially problematic for migrant parents without extended family networks. There are international examples of quality school based out-of-school care but focus groups suggest Irish women are concerned that provision in Ireland is of relatively low quality. Extension of school hours to accommodate parental work necessitates a coherent strategy. Children's Services Committees need to be given responsibility and related resources for developing local strategies, monitoring local out-of-school care provision and identifying gaps. Provision of out-of-school care needs to be included in plans to develop and build new schools and changing school management systems.

'I would not like the kids to be in school setting all day, like if you think about it they love school but they do be dying to get out, they run out the door to you, it would be too long a day having them there all day, where would they get a nap.'

Gendered care roles in extended families also mediate work availability for both men and women but women are more likely to be adult carers of people with disabilities, ill-health and the elderly. Objective 4 of the 2012 National Carers Strategy, 'Recognised, Supported, Empowered,' commits to measures to support labour market connection and participation, it shows that of 187,112 carers (4.1% of the population), 73,999 are males and 114,113 are female (an increase of 20% in the number of male carers since 2006). In July 2012,

on the instruction of the Taoiseach, carers were exempted from the Single Working Age Payment proposals and activation and it is not clear how labour market support will be provided to carers.

Early Childhood Care and Education should be extended to a second year.

A universal and subsidised extended Out-of-School Care service for five to 14 year olds should be introduced on an incremental basis. Places should be provided for all eligible five and six year olds in 2009 and extended by each age group per annum up to 10 year olds in 2013 and incrementally so all eligible 13 and 14 year olds are included in 2015.

FAMILIALISTIC TAX AND WELFARE SYSTEM

The married or cohabitating woman is not treated as an individual within the social assistance system. Rather a basic payment for a claimant is augmented with an additional payment of 70% of the basic payment for the qualified adult. The social welfare system also traps women in other ways. Eligibility for Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) requires women with care responsibilities to prove they can cover childcare needs, can work full-time and are looking for full-time work. Failure to satisfy these conditions means women cannot establish an individual right to payment and sign on the Live Register a gateway to education, training and employment opportunities. Even if they can overcome such obstacles they must pass a household means test. With more married men than married women in the labour force, unemployed women are more likely to fail household means tests and so are less likely than men to qualify for JSA. They therefore experience a more complex relationship with benefit entitlements than men.

‘The Community Welfare Officer told me I had no rights on my own that I am dependent on my husband and that I should send him in. The exchange broke something inside of me’.

‘8 years ago at age 40, because I had no source of income I was not able to open a bank account in my own name to put my birthday gift from my mother’.

While the structure of the labour market is shifting, the nature of the tax and welfare system remains familialistic in a partial male breadwinner/housewife model. Perceived high marginal effective tax rates resulting from the family based taxation elements are an obstacle impeding female participation in, or returning to, the labour market. Women tend to transfer tax credits and bands to their spouse and hence have higher marginal tax rates on low earnings and therefore tend to undervalue the economic return from their participation. They also tend to discount childcare costs from this

income (Mahon 2012). The 2011 EC Joint Employment Report refers to the inadequate fiscal treatment of second earners where there are higher effective taxes for married women than for single earners.

Continued progress should be made to individualise the tax and welfare systems with the default option being individual assessment in coupled households and with accessible information to enable women see and value their earned income.

The family-based social welfare system and rules governing access to the Live Register together comprise a significant structural barrier to women in accessing ALMPs (P2000 1999). Some times women struggle to reconnect to the labour market.

'I got a bit of work and once my stamps kicked in and I was in the system I could do a course – I started with childcare and now I am due to start third level'

Table 7 Gendered barriers in relation to eligibility to labour market programmes and supports

ALMP	Men Live Register	Women on Live Register	OPFP	QA
ST Enterprise Allowance	YES	YES	No	No
Part-time Job Initiative	YES	YES	No	No
TUS	YES	YES	No	No
Community Employment	YES	YES	Yes	Spouse swap*
HR SWP	YES	YES	No	No
Job Bridge	YES	YES	Partial eligibility	No
Revenue Job Assist	YES	YES	Yes	No
PRSI exemptions	YES	YES	Yes	No
FÁS Training	YES	Yes	Limited eligibility	limited eligibility
BTEA	YES	YES	YES	YES
Earnings Disregards	Max 3days X€20 income disregard	Max 3days X€20 income disregard	€130 income disregard	Max 3days X €20 income disregard
Conditionality	YES	YES	In 2015 when youngest child is 7+	No
Spring board	YES	YES	No	No
EFW	No	Yes	Yes	
				Yes

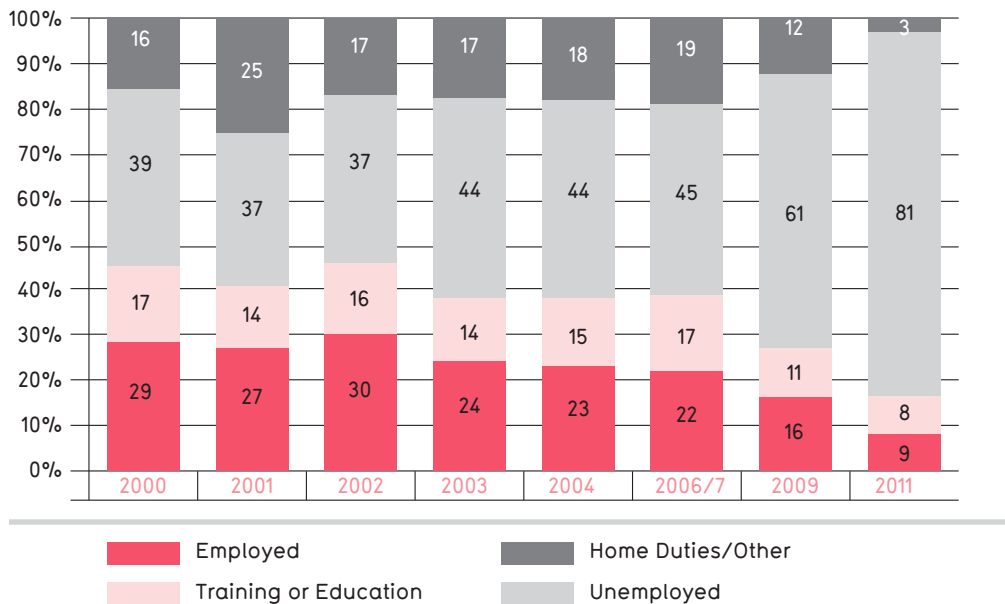
Source compiled by author

*Spouse swap enables qualified adults use their spouse's eligibility in practice few have used this option

The degree to which live register status still governs eligibility to ALMPs can be seen in the very sharp drop in home duties as entry routes into training programmes. FÁS (2012/20) found participation of those on home duties moved from 16% in 2000 to 25% in 2006 before

dropping to 12% in 2009 and 3% in 2011. Those on One Parent Family Payment moved from 2% in 2002 to 9% in 2006 down to 5% in 2011.

Fig 4 Prior status of training programmes % 2000-2011



Source FÁS 2012

PART-TIME WORK AND UNDER-EMPLOYMENT

The significant number of women in voluntary part-time employment is a structural feature of Irish labour markets. This has significant implications for activation policy and labour market reform and for wider issues concerning gender pay gaps and pension equality.

Unlike The Netherlands Irish part-time employment is more likely to be low paid and poor in quality leading to precarity and poverty traps for part-time workers. In-work poverty in Ireland is associated with the low rate of employment participation of specific groups. The in-work poverty rate for part-time workers is more than twice that for full-time workers. (EC 2012) show that at 22% the share of part-time employment is higher than the EU average of around 19%. An increasing share of part-time employment is involuntary.

In 2000, just over one in six people employed in Ireland worked part-time (OCJSPE 2012b). Since the economic crisis hit in late 2008, the share of part-time work has increased considerably. The proportion of men working part-time doubled from 6.1% to 13% between 2004 and late 2011, while the proportion of women working part-time has increased from an already high 31.6% to 36% over the same period. By the first quarter of 2012, close to a quarter of all those employed, or over 417,000 employees, worked part-time.

CSO data shows that the share of involuntary part-time working, or under-employment, is growing. By the first quarter of 2012, there were over 135,000 underemployed part-time workers, a 46% increase from the third quarter of 2008. The QNHS Q1 2012 recorded 124,400 men and 293,500 women working part time. Of the men, 65,300 are

not underemployed leaving 59,100 involuntary part-time workers. Of the women, 217,400 describe themselves as voluntary part-time leaving 76,000 as involuntary part-time or under employed (OCJSPE 2012 b). Older men are more likely to be working part-time (reflecting preretirement and involuntary under-employment) and younger women are more likely to be working part-time (reflecting their care responsibilities).

The relationship between part-time work and social welfare protection is problematic. A significant proportion of the live register (19%) is comprised of people in casual employment. Men outnumber women numerically (47,797 to 40,244) but proportionally more unemployed women participate in casual employment. However cutbacks and social welfare anomalies mean that up to 55,000 involuntary part-time workers are not covered by any social welfare payment (OCJSPE 2012b). This can be likened to a seesaw of precarity where people struggle to find the balance between maintaining social protection as a primary source of income security whilst trying to be as flexible as possible about accessing paid work.

OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

In focus groups carried out as part of this research Irish women suggest they would work anywhere and do anything but when asked where they could see themselves finding employment most imagine gendered sectors including retail, hospitality, the health care sector and childminding.

‘The jobs I used to do were all hands on jobs, doing things, in the caring industry, I would not do retail, anything that involves numbers I just wouldn’t do because I couldn’t deal with sums.’

‘I would do anything. Home help, meals on wheels, childcare, catering, hair dressing, McDonalds, Spar, anything... It is not what I want to do but I’ll do it’.

Anna moved from employment in the insurance industry to unemployment. Having been depressed for a year she took part-time employment in a butcher shop, she is now establishing a business in upholstery.

Occupational segregation has long been a feature of the gendered Irish labour market. Care obligations, restrictions on the hours they can work and the related need to stay local can reinforce segregation of women into certain sectors of the labour market and low paid occupations.

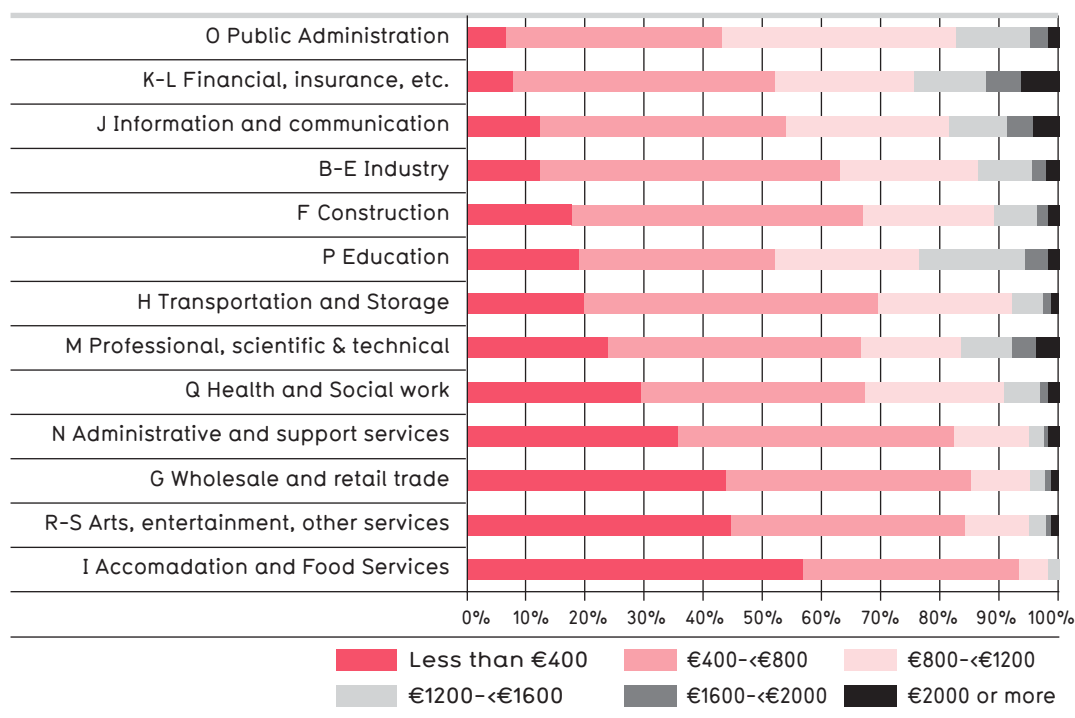
Table 8 Men and women in employment classified by economic sector 2007 and 2012

Sector	2007				2012				Percentage of women per sector	
	Male	Female	Women as % of total	Male	Female	Women as % of total	2007	2012		
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	98.5	10.6	9.7%	71.7	9.0	11.2%	1.2%	1.1%		
Industry	219.5	85.0	27.9%	165.9	66.7	28.7	9.5%	8.0%		
Construction	258.5	12.3	4.5%	96.1	6.6	6.4%	1.4%	0.8%		
Wholesale and retail trade	148.6	144.9	49.4%	135.1	128.4	48.7%	16.2%	15.4%		
Transportation and storage	76.2	16.6	17.9%	71.3	17.5	19.7%	1.9%	2.1%		
Accommodation and food service	55.1	77.8	58.5%	51.6	60.0	53.8%	8.7%	7.2%		
Information and communication	45.6	20.2	30.7%	52.5	22.7	30.2%	2.3%	2.7%		
Financial, insurance and real estate	41.7	58.4	58.3%	45.1	53.9	54.4%	6.5%	6.5%		
Professional, scientific and technical	63.4	43.8	40.9%	59.0	36.4	38.2%	4.9%	4.4%		
Administrative and support services	36.2	37.7	51.0%	32.1	28.0	46.6%	4.2%	3.4%		
Public administration and defence	49.6	52.4	51.4%	51.4	48.5	48.5%	5.9%	5.8%		
Education	38.1	102.2	72.8%	38.6	107.2	73.5%	11.4%	12.9%		
Human health and social work	35.9	175.1	83.0%	43.7	190.5	81.3%	19.6%	22.9%		
Other NACE activities	39.5	58.3	59.6%	39.3	57.4	59.4%	6.5%	6.9%		
TOTAL	1,206.4	895.3	42.6%	953.4	832.8	46.6%	100.0%	100.0%		

Sectors of the jobs market that women seeking part-time, flexible employment are often forced to turn to include some of the lowest paid (I (accommodation and food) G (whole sale and retail) and RS (arts, entertainment and recreation). The hotel and catering workforce is 41% male and 59% female, and 35% of its work force is drawn from migrant labour. Migrant women are therefore particularly vulnerable (MRCI 2010).

Fig 5 Distribution of employees (%) by mean weekly earnings (€) classified by economic sector Oct 2009

Economic Sector



Source CSO 2012e National Employment Survey 2009 and 2010
Supplementary Analysis survey Oct 2012

The biggest sectors contributing to the rise in male unemployment were construction and plant and machinery, while for females employment prior to unemployment was spread across a number of sectors, including clerical and secretarial, sales and personal and protective services. These different work histories will clearly have implications for prospects of reemployment, for the need for re-skilling as well as the design and provision of ALMPs with the possibility of proportionally more men designated as needing complete re-skilling. This means that new employment opportunities, particularly in the high technology sectors are more likely to be filled by men. Some sectors where women dominate are also forecast to be growth sectors including health and care services. As these are more likely to be filled by women, it may well reinforce occupational segregation.

Table 9 Education profile of those unemployed 2006 and 2011 (%)

	Males 2006 Q4	Males 2011 Q2	Females 2006 Q4	Females 2011 Q2
Education				
No formal	23.4	12.2	12.1	6
Junior certificate	27.3	23.9	21	15.3
Leaving certificate	25.4	29.4	30.1	31.8
PLC	7.7	18	10.	16.1
Third level non degree	6.4	7.7	13.5	13.4
Third level degree	9.7	8.8	13	17.4

Source Kelly et al 2012

Gender analysis of education and unemployment highlights two significant trends. Firstly, compared with women, men are more likely to have no or very low qualifications but this gap has narrowed. Secondly, a significant number of women (more than double the amount of men) have third level non-degree and third level degree qualifications (it is not clear why these women are less likely to find employment than male third level graduates). For both men and women, those with a Post Leaving Certificate education were more likely to be unemployed than those with higher secondary level education. This is likely caused by the specific sector in which these people had PLC qualifications (e.g. construction, retail etc). Kelly et al (2012) show that the numeracy or literacy difficulty rate was much higher (more than double) among men (8.9%) than women (4.2%), but both males (7.6%) and females (7.3%) with literacy issues seemed equally less likely to exit the Live Register. OPEN (2010) highlight how some groups face specific educational obstacles, for example those from non-EU countries are subject to higher fees than Irish students attending the same institution.

Occupational segregation of the economy is a reflection of the social construction of career choices. It must be a concern for SOLAS that career choices are highly gendered. In 2009, women represented 56.8% of all third-level graduates in Ireland. A total of 31.2% of female graduates were in social sciences, business and law while one fifth (19.9%) were in health and welfare. A total of 31.8% of male graduates were in social sciences, business and law with one in five in engineering, manufacturing and construction (20.7%). Women represented nearly five-sixths of graduates in the health and welfare field and nearly three-quarters of graduates in education. Men represented nearly five sixths of graduates in the engineering, manufacturing and construction field.

PUBLIC SERVICE BARRIERS: TRANSPORT, HOUSING, HEALTH

The effect of cutbacks are more acute for women who comprise a greater proportion of public service users in housing, health and transport services. Cuts can also amplify barriers to employment. The combination of housing and transport policy, for example, creates location traps. Irish settlement patterns combined with poor public transport create what Wickham (2006) calls 'locational obstacles to employment'. The net impact of travel costs is quite small (Callan et al

2012), the real issue is access to transport. In both rural and deprived urban areas with poor public transport, those who do not own a car have genuine difficulties accessing transport. The degree to which women's unpaid care responsibilities limit them to local labour is reinforced by lack of car ownership (Grant and Buckner 2006). Opening hours need to be aligned with local transport options and school opening.

The loss of a medical card is particularly pertinent for people with children as it passports eligibility to other child related supports (school transport, exam fee exemptions). The expansion of primary healthcare to all children is included as a PfG objective but now appears under some threat, and even if implemented, will not directly address the issue of passported benefits.

Housing costs are a significant poverty and unemployment trap. Exploring differences in employment rates between lone and coupled mothers, Hayes et al (2007) found the tenure profile of accommodation 'explained' an overall difference of 15 percentage points in the rate of participation in paid work, with owner-occupiers having a high propensity to be in paid work. All focus groups stressed the impact of taking up employment for parents in private rented accommodation. Lone parents are most likely to be in receipt of rent supplement and have to factor in the loss of the supplement in any work decision. This should be resolved by the new Housing Assessment Payment (HAP) due to replace the Rental Allowance Scheme and to be fully implemented through the local authorities in early 2013. Focus groups suggest however that even the more graduated income test for local authority differential rent schemes also causes significant disincentives.

'I would love a job cleaning, in the evenings, but I would lose so much money to my council rent, it just would not be worth it'

EXPERIENCES

IRISH LONE PARENTS

Berthoud (in Haux 2011) argues that the risk of not being in employment for lone parents increases sharply with the number of disadvantages, from around 4 per cent for those not having any disadvantages to over 90 per cent for those with six disadvantages: having a child under five; three or more children; a health problem; no qualifications; no recent work experience; being a social housing tenant.

According to Census 2011, the number of Irish lone parent families with children rose from 152,500 in 2006 to 179,800 in 2011 (CSO 2012a), an actual change of 27,300 and a percentage change of 17.9%. This group is very heterogeneous in relation to the cause or entry route into lone parenthood, with the majority once married. Lone parents also differ as to the impact of parenting alone on quality of life, employment and poverty. Many (almost half) do not claim

OPFP, they are fully or part-time employed and/or in receipt of income maintenance. However there has been a significant growth in numbers relying on the payment over long durations, this group bear a very high risk of poverty and this risk is heavily gendered. 2,146 males (2.4%) and 88,161 (97.6%) females made up the total claimant group of 90,307 in 2010, a somewhat counter intuitive slight decrease in the numbers claiming OPFP from 2010 to 2011 (DSP 2012).

With only one parent to do the school run, look after children when they are ill, help with school work and fulfil domestic responsibilities, a family friendly job is absolutely essential (Gingerbread 2012 9)

By definition, all of this claimant group have children, many are in part-time employment but earnings from paid employment are low enough to keep them in receipt of OPFP. DSP 2011 data shows approximately 38% of lone parents on OPFP use income disregards. Data from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners shows that in 2009 13% of lone parents were earning less than €2,000 per year, 15% earned between €2,000 and €5,000 per year, 28% earned between €5,000 and €10,000 and 44% earned more than €10,000 per year. Analysis of data from One Family (2008) shows flexibility and part-time work is the dominant work pattern for lone parents and only one quarter want to work full-time. The age cohort of lone parents under 50 years of age is a significant 83,426, with a further 4,522 aged between 45 years and 60 years and only 204 over 60 years of age. A total of 76,450 have two children or less, with only 4,164 having four or more children¹. By 2015, lone parents with children aged seven and older will no longer be entitled to OPFP and will have to access JSA.

A total of 76,694 OPFP recipients (84%) have a youngest child under the age of 14 years, 69,226 (76%) have a youngest child under the age of 12 years, 60,684 (67%) have a youngest child under the age of 10 years and 45,484 OFP recipients (or 50%) have a youngest child under the age of 7 years. Almost half the cohort of OPFP recipients is in the activation target group. Focus group participants had mixed opinion about this policy. All else being equal, most would work if they could satisfy childcare requirements but many wanted to work on a part-time basis only.

¹ Data direct from DSP August 2012

Table 9 Age profile of children of lone parents 2012

Age of the youngest child	Number of OFP recipients
0	3,903
1	7,337
2	7,561
3	7,805
4	7,071
5	6,273
6	5,534
7	5,413
8	4,983
9	4,804
10	4,454
11	4,088
12	3,833
13	3,635
14	3,182
15	2,935
16	2,553
17	2,349
18	1,417
19	816
20	541
21	338
22	68
	90,888

Data direct from DSP August 2012

‘When I am at work my mother drives from Clondaklin to Coolock to pick up my children from school.’

Irish lone parents experience is consistent with well documented international barriers to employment, including quality and accessible information services and personal support, pre-school and after-school childcare, housing, education and training, high debt levels and low income (DSFA 2006, OPEN 2010, One Family 2008, Millar et al 2006) There is clear demand for flexible employment, adequate pay, quality of work and family friendly working practice that facilitate parenting.

Millar et al (2012) challenge whether “activation” can be the sole solution to problems of economic hardship and social exclusion experienced by lone parents and their children. There is a subgroup of lone parents whose priority is caring for their children on a full-time basis and/or caring for someone with a health condition/ disability. Rather than focusing on compulsory work engagement, policy should develop a system of supports that recognise the importance of

parenting and family well being, and in the longer term addresses educational disadvantage before employment barriers.

Traveller lone parents also face issues of discrimination, stereotyping and stigma in relation to lone parenthood. The general barriers facing other ethnic minority groups are augmented by additional challenges as a result of language barriers, legal status, racism and discrimination (One Family 2008 and Open 2010). Parents without immediate family and kinship support networks, such as many of those with migration backgrounds, may become even more vulnerable and at risk of poverty.

Living on low income is a constant struggle ‘I was noticing my book going down all the time, fuel, Back to School Footwear and Clothing, child benefit, they all went down. I borrow every week – I get to Thursday and then I borrow’

‘People are just living day to day – my washing machine broke – now I am walking half hour to me ma’s house with me laundry’

IRISH COUPLED MOTHERS OR QUALIFIED ADULTS (Q&As)

Qualified adults or coupled women are a relatively invisible group of women without direct access to the social welfare system and about whom relatively little is known. The NWCI has repeatedly called for data to be collected and disaggregated on QAs arguing that the absence of data remains a real impediment to effective gender mainstreaming. We concentrate here on qualified adults of job seeker claims, assuming that qualified adults of disability and retirement payments have caring roles and/or are near retirement age. DSP data for August 2012 shows 95,045 Qualified Adults in payment across all Job Seeker payments (JSB, 10,098; JSA, 81,231; Back to Work payments, 3,716). Of those on JSA, 46,613 qualified adults use the income disregard (more than 55% and substantially more than the 38% of lone parents using the income disregard). The percentage of unemployed recipients with a Qualified Adult is 10.2% for JSB and 23.1% for JSA (a total of 19.8%)². A total of 21,462 do not have children, while over 51,500 such families do have children. A live register profile of coupled registrants on August 11th 2010 showed these couples have specific difficulty accessing employment especially if they are part of the 12.9% claiming rent or mortgage interest supplement. Claimants with a QA (with or without children) had only 67% of the average rate of claim closures and were considerably less likely to leave the live register. These should be a primary target for activation as they live in jobless households, experience a high rate of poverty and educational disadvantage.

² A further 27,804 job seekers are in receipt of a payment for a half rate child or children suggesting the other adult in the household is earning enough to disqualify the household from a full child rate. A total of 11,158 qualified adults in households in receipt of employment supports are in working age households but at least in households where there is some labour market activity and may be more connected to the labour market.

To date the qualified adult is not required to seek work, and entitlement to this payment is not contingent on parenting or care responsibilities. Rather, the payment supports 'wifely labour' or the role of a full-time traditional housewife (Shaver & Bradshaw, 1995). Changes introduced as part of Budget 2007 made the qualified adult income disregards consistent with the JSA income disregard. Poverty traps for the Qualified Adult are more complex and work incentives less generous than for Lone Parents (INOU 2012).

Couples tend to share similar characteristics with respect to age, ethnicity, education and health. Hasluck and Green (2005) report that some individuals in couples face interlinked multiplicity of barriers to work and that many workless couples are likely to be 'hard to help'. Both partners are at a high risk of being out of work. People were aware of poverty traps and perceived they may be no better off after participation costs but sometimes lacked a full understanding of the financial outcome from taking up employment.

Cregan's (2008) qualitative interviews of Irish qualified adults mirrored the findings in international literature. She concludes that many partners face complex barriers to work including caring demands, health problems and insufficient qualifications or experience to enter the labour market. While formal care is given less significance, the importance and ability to draw on informal care arrangements was important. Lack of confidence/information, compounded by long periods of labour market detachment, was highlighted as a particular concern. Women strongly criticised the quality and quantity of information about job opportunities. With no previous work history and being confined to the home, the transition to work is harder and entry restrictions present real barriers. Financial concerns and the role of the partner in financial decisions are significant. Cregan (2008) observed male vetoes in unequal power relations and her research showed that more traditional men can feel undermined and 'kept' and may not want the woman working.

'Sure I can hardly go to the shops without him wanting to know where I am, never mind working'

'I couldn't of worked full-time 'cos if I had of worked full/time, he would of lost his labour'.

Likewise Cregan (2008) found Information around entitlements was not readily accessible and had to be sought out. Dealing with social welfare officers was generally viewed negatively, with many criticising the attitudes of staff, finding them lacking empathy and to be quite dismissive. Some felt staff were suspicious and made them feel like spongers. The tensions of negotiating as a couple were evident

'I was trying to explain our situation. I was trying to tell her that me husband suffers with depression and she was sitting there ignoring me through the glass'.

'I could see he was getting annoyed and just wanted to get out. When we got outside, I had to listen to him for bringing him there in the first place'.

CONCLUSION

Barriers are often the inverse of supports (Mahon 2012). There are two levels at which barriers can be mitigated and supports facilitated in the activation process.

Some barriers, especially childcare and transport, are outside the direct control of Intreo or activation policy and require national policy intervention. This requires efficient interagency and inter-departmental work. Intreo can be a valuable source of evidence concerning the barriers experienced and supports needed to return to work and data gathering processes need to be included in the activation case management process and used in an active system of policy feedback. It is vital this policy intelligence is gender sensitive.

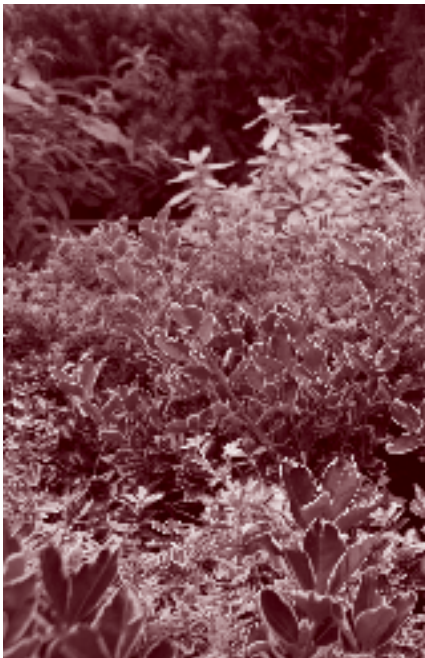
At a departmental level, Intreo has the opportunity to address barriers like the complexity of means testing, and facilitate supports like information provision. The practical policy agendas under the control of DSP, Intreo and SOLAS are addressed in Chapter 4. Awareness of gendered barriers needs to be incorporated into the training of front-line workers. Given the personal sensitivity in disclosing such barriers, an empathetic approach and continuity in the case management process is crucial. The profiling exercise has to be holistic enough to capture this broad range of barrier. These issues are further addressed in Chapter 5. The issue of job creation and precarious work is addressed in Chapter 6.

NOTES

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CHAPTER THREE

From Careless to
Careful Activation



This chapter discusses different types of labour activation, draws attention to the negative implications of low quality activation, briefly reviews gendered international literature on activation and develops a gender friendly model of activation. The problem as identified in Chapter One, is that activation is marked by the absence of an ethic of care, is framed by a familial social welfare and tax system and often tries to activate women into a gender segregated and often precarious labour market. There is a danger that gender-blind careless policy will activate women into a patriarchal economy where they are segregated into low paid and part-time jobs without adequate social protection.

DEFINING ACTIVATION POLICY

Labour activation includes in its scope a broad range of approaches. These lie on a continuum from 'full conditionality' or a sanctions led work-fare approach where no welfare is available without a work requirement, to 'fully voluntary' where a wide range of supports are offered to a claimant and where the offer of support towards some form of progression is not linked to income support.

There are many pathways an activation policy can take (Barbier and Ludwig -Mayerhofer 2004). Some low road, liberal or defensive 'work first' activation strategies focus on short term paid employment outcomes, which stress getting a claimant back to work as quickly as possible. This work may be transitory in nature with people recycled back into unemployment or locked into a cycle of in-work poverty. Other more universal or high road, offensive, long term 'human capital' oriented approaches stress education and training routes to more long term sustainable employment options which enable transition from welfare through an inclusive supportive system into work that sustains families over a longer period.

Fig 6 Low road and high road activation



Pursuing a negative low road activation policy runs the risk of substantial collateral damage. Badly designed activation policy can have unintended consequences. It can stigmatise people on low income and can normalise and facilitate insecure, low-paid employment. Feminists challenge activation strategies that conflate citizens with workers, ignore the care dimension of social relations and disconnect policy from the reality of lived experience in low income households (Wright 2012). Activation policy shapes and is shaped by the wider political economy. Low road activation can restructure welfare into a transitional rather than long-term support, push people to work in a more precarious economy and enable employers sustain inferior employment (Rafferty and Wiggan 2011 287).

The language of labour activation is also controversial. It can imply a problematic level of inactivity in the welfare population and a negative stereotype of welfare recipients. Activation can be used to politically manage unemployment or legitimate public expenditure cuts. Governments struggling to reduce unemployment can be tempted to redefine unemployment as a personal deficiency of unemployed people (Convery 2009). Others argue that a focus on 'activating' people misses the point, that the real barriers to work are not the behaviour of welfare recipients but the structural barriers they face in moving from welfare to work (NESC 2011).

INTERNATIONAL GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF ACTIVATION

It is difficult to draw conclusions from international literature reviews of activation. Activation on its own is never sufficient and needs to be accompanied by parallel measures. In the US, for example, tax credits are deemed responsible for about one-third of reductions in numbers on welfare. The economy and welfare reform were each responsible for another 25 per cent.

The aim of activation varies widely and includes reducing out-of-work benefit dependency, increasing employment, increasing earnings, reducing child poverty, increasing child well-being, and changing attitudes towards employment, the benefit system and family responsibilities. Goals and welfare regimes within countries differ so much that it is not feasible to establish meaningful comparative conclusions from evaluation evidence. The institutional landscape of activation is also constantly changing and meaningful data is scarce and rarely disaggregated for gender. Little overall analysis of activation is gendered, though activation evaluations that do provide gendered disaggregated data find some gendered patterns relating to training options and occupational patterns in job take up. Knight (2010) found greater British female progression to employment but that men are more likely to be offered access to a basic skills course and any form or type of training course.

A meta analysis of over 50 evaluations of active labour market programmes found little gendered analysis of activation (Kelly et al 2011). They distinguish between activation measures that impact on demand side factors (public or private employment subsidies) and supply side factors (job assistance, sanctions, training, education and work experience). They clearly find that private employment subsidies are much more effective than public subsidies in generating employment (albeit they carry the danger of displacement). On supply side measures they argue that employment focused education, training and work experience fares better than more generalist training. Citing evidence from Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands, France, Belgium and the UK, they conclude that job search assistance measures, including interviews, counselling and job placement services work best in a context of monitoring and sanctions. NESC (2011) found mixed approaches to activation appear to work best. Effective 'mixed' strategies include rapid jobsearch targeted at those close to employment, with significant pre-existing job experience and/ or skills, and training provision for participants with little work experience and greater need for skill improvement.

ACTIVATION OF LONE PARENTS AND QUALIFIED ADULTS

Activation without parallel measures to address child care, elder care and in-work income is unlikely to work.

Knijn et al (2007) identify a long term international shift away from supporting lone mothers and low income mothers to be full-time mothers towards supporting their employment. This is done not only through activation policy but also through increased financial support for employment and increased support for working parents (maternity leave, parental leave, flexible working, and childcare services and subsidies).

Millar and Ridge (2008) and Finn and Gloster (2010) find work related requirements mean mixed results for children and family life, positive for younger children but sometimes negative for children making the transition between primary and secondary education and teenage children. Greater involvement of an older sibling in care and household responsibilities and a reduction in parental supervision can be negative impacts but positive impacts include greater responsibility for self-care and growing independence. Bell et al (2005) emphasise that the work and care orientation of the mother is crucial. Work readiness depended on whether they had a 'strong work attachment', a 'high parenting orientation' or had experienced a 'critical life event'. Effects are determined by the quality of parental employment and how the parent feels about being in work. Better quality and more stable employment has more positive impacts on children. Lengthy commuting times and little job autonomy spills over and negatively impact on children.

LONE PARENTS

Evaluations of lone parent and coupled mothers' experiences of activation are generally positive but often focus on short term indicators of success such as reduction in welfare caseloads. Finn and Gloster (2010) reviewed the effects of international policy changes concerning lone parents in GB, Australia, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United States (US, Oregon and New York City). US evaluations show that the economic status of many lone mothers improved during the economic expansion in the late 1990s, but Christopher's (2004) analysis of their lived experience shows more mixed results with many US lone mothers continuing to experience in-work poverty and material hardship.

Gingerbread (2012) describes searching for a family friendly job as 'searching for a needle in a haystack'. Coleman and Lanceley (2011) and Lane et al's (2011) studies of UK activation for lone parents is most relevant for Irish policy. The latter surveyed British lone parents forced to shift from a non conditional Income Support when their youngest child is seven and found considerable diversity in terms of characteristics and circumstances. Of the 83% of relevant lone parents that had left Income Support, 16% moved straight into work of 16 hours per week or more; 56 % moved onto Job Seekers Allowance, 18% moved onto Employment Support Allowance (previously disability); 2% re-partnered and 8% had an unknown outcome. Lone parents were generally positive about JSA and work orientation. A total of 68% of lone parents who found work entered low skilled,

low-paid elementary jobs (personal services, cleaning, waitressing, low-level clerical and administrative work, and retail positions). Hours worked were generally between 16 and 29 hours per week and often within school hours. Work had a positive impact on them and their families beyond the financial impact of work. Crucially in the UK the system allowed case worker flexibility to restrict their availability for work to part-time or school-hours work. Recognising the right, and enabling access to, part-time employment is also a cornerstone of The Netherlands activation strategy for lone parents.

‘Money factors in right at the end. In my head, it is ‘got to get a job, got to get 16 hours, and it’s got to be local, fit in around school, and then I look at the money.’ (Single parent, Gingerbread 2012 p5)

Gingerbread (2012 p13) found inconsistent implementation in the UK. Advisers were not trained in single parent issues and were viewed as less supportive by single parents, sign-on appointments are rushed, single parents are largely unaware of the flexibilities available to them, and they were not routinely offered support unless they ask for it proactively. It is clear some lone parents felt threatened.

‘You are scared of rocking the boat; you don’t want to upset them so you say ‘oh yes I can work from 6 in the morning’ or whatever. They give you the impression that you are going to be in trouble and they have the ultimate sanction of taking your money away and that terrifies most people. It is the difference between feeding your kids or not or heating your home or not.’ (Gingerbread 2012 p14)

Nonetheless Finn and Gloster (2010) conclude that it is possible to make activation work for lone parents. They advise a strong but balanced employment-focused ‘message’ delivered through well-trained case managers, with the flexibility to tailor employment assistance and support services, including work-focused education and training, to meet the needs of individual lone parents. Engagement with such services may be secured through clear communication of requirements reinforced by varying sanctions, although care must be taken to ensure that such families do not become ‘disconnected’ from the services that they, and their children, need.

COUPLED WOMEN

Coupled women in jobless households may be more difficult to assist than lone parents. Bewley et al's (2005) UK analysis of activation of partnered women shows an only slightly increased chance of exiting JSA. This policy exempted spouses from activation where they are prevented from seeking work due, for example, to illness, disability or caring responsibilities.

Couples with longer unemployment spells are likely to be more difficult to help. Qualitative results suggest joint claims had been most effective for those who were already motivated to find work. Jobcentre staff, while positive, found delivery problems included insufficient and inappropriate training and knowledge. Women in couples were less likely to have been offered training or education opportunities, by Jobcentre staff, than men. In The Netherlands, case workers appear more inclined to progress husbands into full-time jobs and complete exit from welfare to work. Wives, who are more likely to want part-time employment, will remain partial clients and an administrative burden for case workers and consequently are more likely to be parked.

Qualified adults are not a homogenous group. Specific obstacles for qualified adults include lack of experience, length of time away from work and little exposure to information technology. Bewley et al (2005) found insufficient training left job centre staff lacking in knowledge around the process of joint decision making between spouses. Decisions about labour market participation are mediated by family responsibilities. Circumstances of couples may be therefore more complicated than those of lone parents or single job seekers and attitudes of one partner can impact on the other.

Calculations can be more complex and it can also matter, in internal negotiations, who directly loses and who gains. Women gear themselves towards part-time and low paid work to mitigate the way earnings from their employment affect their partner's social welfare payment. Some women face significant obstacles. Violent partners sabotage women's ability to gain independence through paid employment (Cregan 2008).

GENDER AND SANCTIONS

Labour activation often implies making established welfare rights more conditional on job seeking efforts. Focus groups showed general acceptance of mandatory job search provided there was quality and meaningful opportunities and supports. Much of the function of sanctions is focused on communication where they are intended to create ex ante 'anticipation effects' where people cease claiming benefits or take up ALMPs prior to being required to attend interviews. In these circumstances the 'bark' is considered more important than the 'bite' and the hope is that sanctions will not be actually applied (Finn and Gloster 2010). In a specific study of the impact of sanctions on lone parents Millar and Ridge (2008) found sanctions enabled engagement with the hard to reach and that lone parent's evaluations of mandatory work focused interviews are positive. They conclude there may be a case for making participation in the case management process mandatory.

Messaging or 'signalling' can only lead to behavioural change when in-work support, such as tax credits, make it possible to move from welfare. Hence sanctions have most behavioural effect on those who have alternatives and work least, and pose the greatest threat for those with few chances to enter the labour market. Sanctions are experienced disproportionately by the more disadvantaged (poor literacy levels, longer on benefits, risk of homelessness) and some female claimants end up 'chronically disconnected' from both employment and cash welfare (Turner et al 2006, Finn and Gloster 2010). Hardship, debt, stress, anger, humiliation, depression and anxiety, homelessness, prostitution and destructive relationships have been associated with sanctions (Fletcher 2011, Wright 2010). Recognising these dangers, all countries have a range of exemptions for lone parents, mothers and those with health care roles in the family (Coleman and Lanceley 2010). This need for exemptions is further discussed in Chapter 4 and 5.

'I have done every single course on this list and nothing has come out of it, I know one woman forced into an office job she was useless at'.

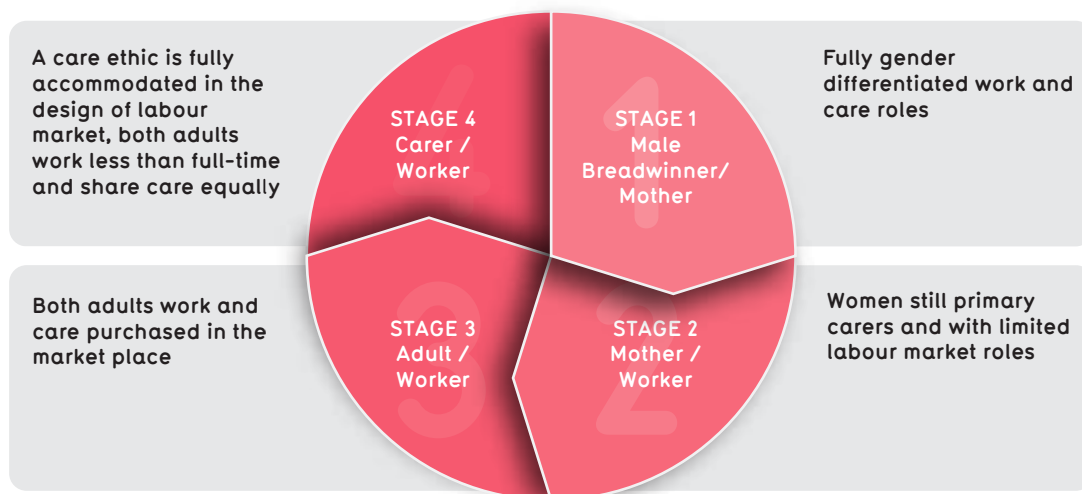
'no one even writes back – you know you are perfect for the job and you should get an interview – but you don't' . 'I felt like two inches when I came out of it'

'you are better to be doing something – 'it might open a door into something else', 'nothing leads to nothing'

GENDERED PATTERNS OF CARE AND WORK

This section develops a feminist framework for activation policy. It builds on the NWCi feminist framework for understanding work-life balance. It seeks a careful activation policy with a strong but gender-neutral ethic of work and care that reflects broad trends in contemporary Irish choices regarding work-life balance for both men and women.

Fig 7 Gendered Patterns of Care and Work



Until recently Ireland was a strong example of a male breadwinner (1) tax and welfare model where men worked full-time and mothers cared full time. The 'male breadwinner' lives on in socially constructed care and work roles and in our familial tax and welfare system. Greater economic participation of women has not necessarily led to reconciling work and family life or to men taking on greater care obligations. A still gender-differentiated stage, a mother-worker stage (2) acknowledges the duplicate roles contemporary women play as mothers or carers and increasingly as workers, while also carrying a disproportionate burden of domestic work.

Activation policy is not driven by this reality but by the objective of an adult-worker stage (3) where both adults in a two parent household work a significant number of hours (virtually full-time) and where care is commodified or catered for in the market. The EU Lisbon 2020 target of 75% participation rates for men and women is framed in this adult worker model where a care ethic is absent and where gender equality is framed by the overall priority of economic competitiveness. This model informs much contemporary thinking about labour market and social security reform in many Western European countries and compels activation strategies towards full-time work options.

An alternative carer- worker (4) model promotes gender equality by sharing both care and work more equally between men and women and accommodating a care ethic in the wider society and economy. This recognises that not all care can be commodified and supports the primary need for affective care. Achieving the appropriate balance of reciprocal care and commodified care is not simply a matter of childcare policy but is a deeper question of the combined fiscal, social security, education and labour market systems which promote more parental care (Lewis and Gulliani 2005).

Although it frames much policy discourse, Lewis et al (2008) finds little convergence in Europe towards a dual, full-time worker model family outside the Nordic countries. Sweden and Denmark travel further down the adult-work model encouraging full-time work for

both mothers and fathers and facilitating this through high quality public childcare, thus in Denmark almost 75% of men and women work full time. In The Netherlands and Finland there is more focus on facilitating parental care through facilitating good quality part-time work. Thus in The Netherlands almost 70% of women work part time. Neither model is perfect, both have advantages and disadvantages.

EVOLVING IRISH PATTERNS OF WORK AND CARE

Ireland has changed profoundly over the last two decades and the recession is having a further impact on gendered patterns of employment. The evolving social and economic roles of men and women have shifted Ireland from a dominant one earner 'male bread winner model'. O'Sullivan (2012) found support for traditional gender roles declined over the period from 1988 to 2002, and Irish women now have greater economic participation, independence and autonomy. A total of 430,042 couples (54%) are both earning and 373,482 (46%) have one earner (Mahon 2012), this means there is no specific pattern of work for Irish women, a breadwinner/housewife contract co-exists with an adult-worker contract and there remains a very high proportion of women "not in the labour force".

The recession has deepened the significance of women's role as earners within their households. Recession has shifted the overall share of employment in the economy towards women who accounted for 47% of employment in 2010, compared to 43% in 2007. A review of the work intensity of Irish households bears this out, as there was a smaller decline of employment in couple households where both partners worked full-time than the overall national decline in employment (Watson et al 2012).

It is impossible to separate structure and agency (Wright 2012). There is considerable contingency and variation between what women do and what women want (Collins and Wickham 2004). Lynch and Lyons (2008) argue that in the present social construction of what is masculine and feminine, women do not necessarily 'choose' to care. Rather they have a moral obligation to care that is constructed and reinforced by church, education, media and family institutions. Further, the economic cost of care means the alternative choice of paid employment in the workforce may not be a viable option for many mothers. The presence of young children in a household still has a dramatic effect on the activity of women in paid employment. The Irish employment rate for women with no children is almost equal to that for men with no children but drops by approximately 30 percentage points when young children are present in the household. Of women not participating in the labour force, 61 per cent were looking after home or family, while this was true of only 1% of men outside the labour force. The birth of the second child prompts many women to exit the labour market. In this pattern women's care roles become embedded. They spend 20 hours per week more than men at home duties (McGinnity and Russell 2007). Irish family members (partners and grandparents) play a significant role in providing childcare and whether by choice or necessity, non marketised care is still the dominant form of childcare (Millar et al 2012, Readdick et al 2012).

The recession has increased the number of men in at-home father roles and doubled the number of men in part-time employment but it is not clear whether this will translate into long-term change in work care roles. Patterns need to be in place for substantial periods of time to challenge gendered divisions in work/family responsibilities (Chesley, 2011). Obstacles to more egalitarian sharing of care is constrained by the lack of well-paying jobs for women to replace lost wages of partners and the lack of new ideologies to support men's equal participation in household labour (Legerski and Cornwall 2010). Such obstacles are more dominant in working class families.

A carer-worker model cannot evolve without a significant increase in men's participation in both domestic and care work. This shift can be promoted by public policy. It is an opportune time for a public attitudes campaign about gender roles in domestic work and care. Paternity and parental leave is also necessary to recognise a father's caring role and support men to parent and care.

Lewis et al (2008) conclude that Ireland is clustered in a group of countries with a one and a half pattern of balance between care and work and where part-time work is particularly important for women. This is similar to The Netherlands but gendered inequality of domestic and care work is stronger and part-time work is of poorer quality and more precarious in Ireland. Irish women thus face a dual trap. They are still trapped by domesticity and may be increasingly trapped by precarity. Careless activation will intensify such traps.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING: BUILDING AN ETHIC OF CARE INTO ACTIVATION

Ireland has yet to develop an adequate vision of gendered work-life balance. Consequently activation policy is not informed by or guided by a vision of a labour market with a particular work life balance. It is careless activation. To develop careful activation we need to merge a care ethic with models of good practice in activation. Such a model aims for sustainable outcomes consistent with the needs of society. It seeks to avoid futile or self-defeating activation that edges people into low quality and short term outcomes. This framework requires effective safeguards and reassurances of quality standards for all claimants and a quality work environment for public servants delivering activation.

Fig 9 Three legs of activation underpinned by an active state

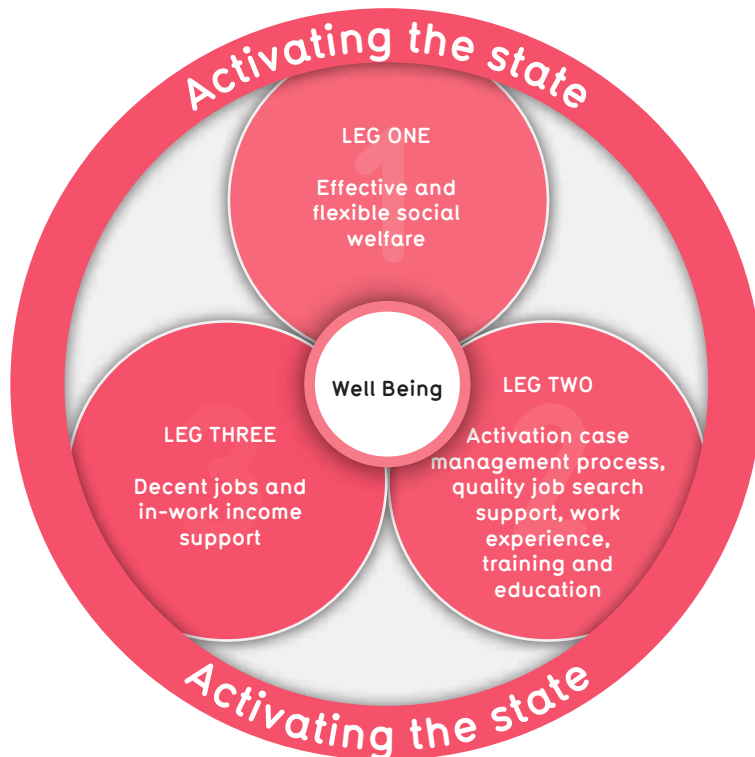


Fig 9 outlines three essential legs of activation: income supports, the activation process and quality employment. Each 'leg' requires strong state capacity and active state intervention.

Murphy (2008) identified a number of best practice models for activation. A social inclusion approach to activation policy can be distinguished from an opposing workfare approach. The Ladder of Integration offered by Nicaise (2002) allows the timeframe between rungs of the progression to be individually determined and accepts some may never climb the full ladder. The four stages in the social inclusion approach: social integration, education and training, work experience and labour market integration are characterised by universal approaches to ensuring additional services offering choice, a focus on better pay and/or remuneration and more generous social protection rates to achieve less poverty. This can be contrasted with a work-fare approach characterised by combating dependency among welfare clients, restricted choices, a focus on financial and legal pressures and low replacement rates leading to more in-work poor.

Torring (1999) distinguishes between 'workfare' as a neo-liberal discourse in the US and UK and 'welfare to work' activation as a Nordic social democratic and universalistic discourse. In the latter activation is focused on education, training and skill improvement rather than job search; programmes are geared towards the general workforce rather than only welfare recipients; legal guarantees mean no activation into 'futile work for the sake of work'. The focus is on empowerment rather than surveillance, control or punishment with relatively high rates of payment and less in-work poverty.

Geldof (1999 p22) offers a number of assessment criteria for emancipatory, rather than disciplinary, activation. The former is geared towards wider inclusion and is embedded in a broader structural policy aimed at combating poverty and social inclusion. It aims for lasting integration rather than temporary activation initiatives. It is less control oriented and respects claimants. It promotes voluntary rather than forcible activation, is focused on opportunities for participation not sanctions for non-participation, and is capable of incorporating non standardised implementation.

The European Commission concept of active inclusion stresses labour market attachment but also income support, accessible services, decent standards of living and social integration to those who are and will remain outside the labour market. For those in work it requires labour market integration programmes and quality work. It also recognises the need to bridge 'social' and 'labour market' integration (Murphy 2008). This is consistent with the type of human resource approach advocated by One Family (2012a).

NESC (2011) argues that Ireland is at a cross roads. It is not exclusively an Anglo Saxon 'work first' model, nor is it consistent with a Nordic model with high quality 'human resource' activation. The challenge is now to ask how can gendered values inform policy and how can activation policy enable and respect care and broad life choices. Most activation strategies offer a number of criteria for success, ranging from numbers off benefit, numbers in employment or reductions in working age or child poverty. Wright (2012, 324) argues for a more holistic approach and a maximum variety in the definition of successful outcomes. In a gendered lifecycle approach, care relations and obligations are present at every stage of the life cycle and care is often relevant to labour market decisions. Feminist principles, including economic autonomy and self determination, allow a positive model of activation to be developed.

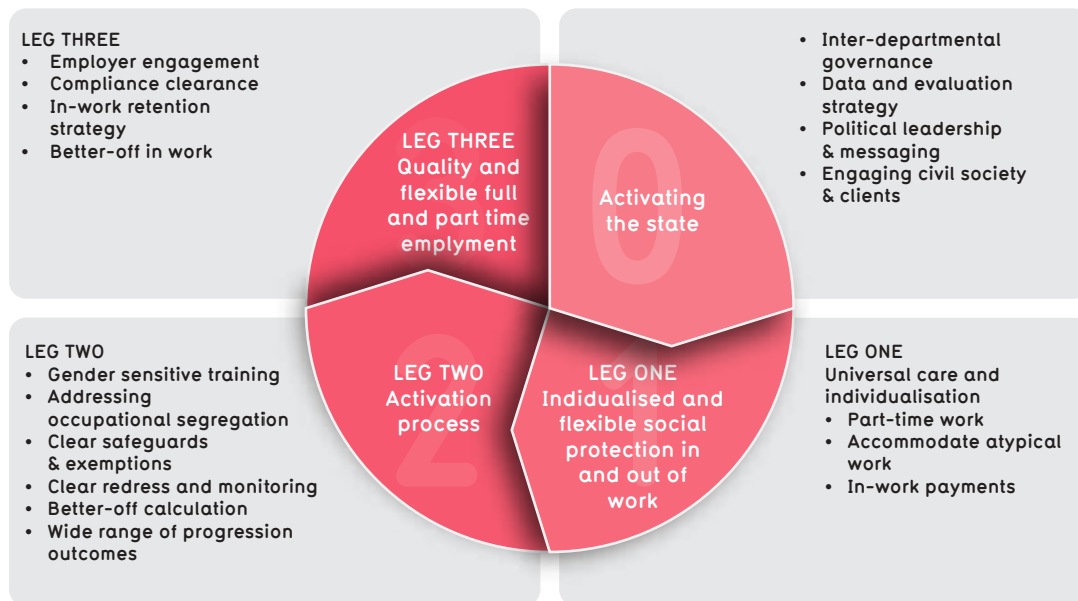
NESC (2011) considers the following to be fundamental requirements of good activation. The other dimensions have been added to develop the gendered approach to activation. (Outlined in red)

Table 10 NESC Criteria for good activation augmented with gendered activation (in red)

Client	Public system
Integration of benefit with use of services Range of services Effectiveness of services Personal progression plan Personal advisor Referrals and sanctions	Effective public system Active case management Staff numbers and competencies Shared information systems Direct employment options Diverse providers, governance, performance management
Work options to facilitate care Range of progression outcomes Opportunity for part-time work Flexible work life balance	Individualised income support and taxation Gender sensitive systems and training Exemptions and legal safeguards Facilitation for part-time work and costs of care

The charts opposite graphically illustrate the key components of each leg of activation and the underpinning infrastructure required of an active state committed to gender mainstreaming. Having outlined the basic principles of gender mainstreaming activation, the following three chapters address each leg of activation. Chapter 4 reviews what needs to be done to reform income supports from a gender perspective. Chapter 5 genders the process and practice of activation and Chapter 6 reviews gender issues associated with job creation and precarity traps.

Fig 10 Four aspects of gendered activation



NOTES

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CHAPTER

FOUR

Irish Activation POLICY:
Intreo, SWAP and
SOLAS

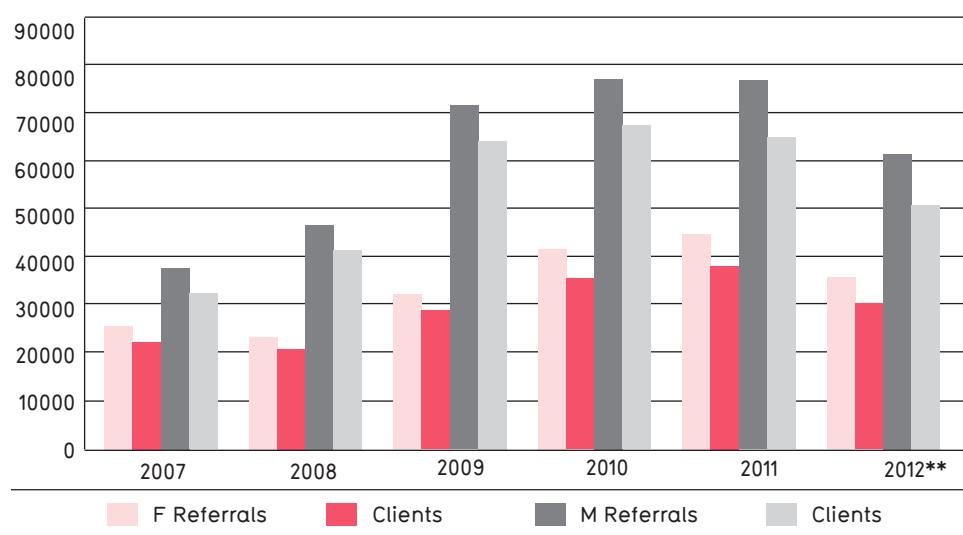


This chapter reviews recent Irish activation policy and evaluates new institutional arrangements for activation against the principles of the gendered model of activation developed in the previous chapter. Beginning with the present, it describes the emerging Intreo infrastructure and the key tool of profiling. It then reflects on reform of working age payments focusing on four key issues: application of conditionality to OPFP when the youngest child is 7; cuts in income disregards for OPFP; extension of the limitation rule beyond unemployed couples; the need to reform guidelines for eligibility to job seekers payments and treatment of part-time and atypical work. It then turns to implementation of SOLAS and issues concerning gendered patterns of access to ALMPs.

NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT ACTION PLAN (NEAP)

Ireland's slow progress towards labour activation has recently shifted pace under the NEAP. In 2011 FÁS Employment Services dealt with 121,000 clients referred from DSP for interview during the year. Group Sessions were expanded to 19 locations during 2011. There was also renewed emphasis on sanctions. From April 2011 to July 2012, 1,250 people had a 44 euro deduction applied to their payment. A detailed labour activation implementation report, which includes a regional analysis of sanctions data, is included in the quarterly Troika process. This is not publicly available and is not disaggregated by gender.

Fig 10 NEAP activation interviews 2007- July 2012



** date to end August 2012, source direct from DSP

INTREO

Ireland entered the 2007 crisis, with a social welfare and labour activation policy largely unreformed from the 1980s and clearly unfit for purpose (NESC 2011). Initially outlined in the 2010 Troika MOU, Pathways to Work (DSP 2011a) outlined a labour activation strategy focused on social protection modernisation, a working age payment and more intensive conditionality. The initial step in the establishment of Intreo, integration of FÁS Employment Services and Community Programmes and Health Service Executive (HSE) Community Welfare

Services (CWS) into the DSP, was successfully completed on target on 1st January 2012, when 54 former FÁS premises and in excess of 700 staff transferred to the Department. The full HSE complement is also fully transferred. The objective is to fully integrate the provision of employment services and benefit payment services within the Department. Four Intreo pilot programmes (Tallaght, Kings Inns, Arklow and Sligo) are due to be completed by end 2012 when 14 Intreo offices will be rolled out. Interviews and focus groups suggest the transformation has proved challenging with significant values, cultural and practice differences between the three institutions. Institutional reconfiguration, staff training, industrial relations negotiations, pilot testing case management processes and the profiling model are all ongoing.

‘integrating us all is like mixing oil and water’

To date no attention has been given to gender mainstreaming the strategy nor is it clear which model of activation is driving Intreo. The DSP define activation as

‘a social contract where the claimant commits to engage with services in a process of active case management to develop and implement a personal progression plan and where failure to engage can lead to withdrawal of payment’ (DSP 2011 1).

The August 2012 Troika reporting requirements for Intreo show a strong emphasis on reducing duration on the Live Register with a strong role for penalties.

- Average duration on the Live Register
- Fraction of vacancies filled from live Register
- Engagement with employment services as a precondition for payment
- Profiling and group or individual interviews
- Increased number referred to education and training
- Live register data on continuous duration and probability of exit
- Summary statistics of those in receipt of sanction by duration of unemployment
- Data analysis by exit destination and length of penalty period
- Improved data collection

This mix of outcomes places Irish activation somewhere between low road and high road versions. Activation is clearly linked to control and cost saving functions. While social and economic participation are both valid outcomes, the overall emphasis is on a work first strategy and for education and training interventions to be short term and work focused. It is also likely that key services within Intreo will be contracted out to private providers who will be paid according to employment related outcomes. All this points away from a gendered approach, which would include a wider number of progression outcomes, incorporating a wider view of equality and inclusion.

PROFILING MODEL

In 2006, the ERSI were commissioned by DSP to develop a statistical profiling model to assess a claimant's 'probability of exit' (PEX) from the Irish live register. This profiling exercise is now part of the Intreo pilot in four areas. Claimants with the least probability of exit (those with a high PEX score) will be selected for more intensive or more active case management.

O'Connell et al (2010) having assessed factors determining their probability of exit from the live register, found a distinct gendered pattern in the distribution of exit across time on the live register with the probability of exit relatively lower for women than for men (O'Connell et al 2010 p40).

The ESRI statistical profiling findings show the experience of men and women on the live register is largely similar. For males the probability of remaining on the live register for 52 weeks or more is associated with increasing age, number of children, relatively low education, literacy/numeracy problems, location in urban areas, lack of personal transport, recent unemployment and geographic location. Individuals who previously participated in community employment schemes have a higher likelihood of returning to long-term unemployment. The results from the female model are broadly similar to those of males. However, some differences were apparent in the areas of spousal income, the impact of children, education and location (O'Connell 2012 p159).

There are two significant and gendered limitations to the profiling tool. While the number of children is profiled, specific care obligations are not profiled. The exercise assumes all claimants for JSA are fully available for work and have no care restrictions or barriers. This ignores the reality that women live register claimants, in order to access payments, often overstate the readiness of their care arrangements. It will also be inadequate to the task of profiling lone parents and qualified adults with greater care roles and responsibilities. Perry (2009), in a UK context argued that the coding of economic activity in Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data and surveys should include caring for relatives as a specific category.

ESRI recommend updating the Irish model every three years and identify additional variables that could be added, including earnings, occupation and sector, but crucially not child or relative care. It is the DSP view that for technical and contractual reasons the profiling tool cannot be adapted in the short term. It is the NWCI view that the absence of care in the profiling tool is very problematic and that three years is too long to wait to adapt it. In the meantime, ancillary questions in the form of a questionnaire about care need to be asked and a process developed to augment the profiling tool.

Child and relative care must be incorporated into the profiling instrument as soon as possible and interim arrangements made to ensure care is adequately profiled.

The second significant gendered problem with profiling is the restriction of the profiling exercise to the live register. The live register

is a gendered register, by definition it does not include almost 90,000 lone parents and 193,000 qualified adults, nor does it include carers. Present policy is to move lone parents when their youngest child is 7 to JSA. They will then be in the profile cohort. There is no indication of whether or when qualified adults with youngest children over seven will be included in the profiling exercise. Carers will not be included. Nor will women on home duties. The decision to limit activation supports to those profiled through the live register has been made for cost and capacity reasons. The Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Social Protection and Enterprise (OCJSPE 2012 p32) argue that 'adding lone parents, people with disabilities, carers and qualified adults to those already classed as unemployed would bring the number of people requiring activation to approximately 635,000 or more than 100 people for every single job vacancy' and that the state 'would be swamped if all categories of working age social welfare recipient were to be made subject to an activation condition'.

While this may be true, the danger is that if women are not engaged with they will be parked and ignored for the remainder of what looks like a very long recession. This may be very short sighted. Women's economic participation is central to Ireland's competitiveness and to Ireland achieving the Lisbon 2020 75% economic participation rate. Further, as ESRI (2012) shows, very low work intensity households are often headed by women or have two adults unemployed. Including both adults in these households in activation strategies is the most effective way to tackle poverty, child poverty and worklessness. To some degree the issues raised here are similar to the debate about distribution of labour market supports raised in the P2000 Women's Access to the Labour Market Working Group in 1999. The issue of individualisation of social welfare must be part of the solution and is addressed below. It is necessary to keep 'gender on the agenda' of Intreo and SOLAS and to find creative ways to manage scarce resources in a way that maximises opportunity for all to exercise their right to work.

WORKING AGE PAYMENTS AND WELFARE REFORM

DSP (2010) aims to simplify the present system of different rules and income disregards in the different working age payments. It proposes to have one single working age payment (SWAP) but to offer three levels of activation support (determined by the profiling exercise). The primary motivation for this reform is to tackle long benefit duration for working age claimants particularly lone parents. The aim is to narrow the gaps between job seekers payments and other working age payments (Martin 2011).

There have been a number of public reactions to the proposal. Many cede, in principle, the need for reform but are cautious about reforms that reduce the real income of social welfare recipients and do not offer sufficient commensurate supports including childcare. The NWCI initial reaction was mirrored in the May 2012 OCJSPE (2012a) report which, while approving in principle of SWAP, recommended that it should not be introduced at this time because the necessary supports, activation opportunities and quality jobs are not in place. EAPN (2012) raised similar concerns. An April 2012 Cabinet Sub Committee on Social Inclusion also concluded SWAP was premature.

On July 2012 Taoiseach Enda Kenny directly intervened to exempt Carers Allowance from SWAP. There is also disquiet about the political consequences of a significant increase in the live register. The issue of SWAP is now under consideration by National Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare (NAGTSW) but appears to be losing political momentum.

CHANGES TO LONE PARENTS INCOME DISREGARDS

Budget 2012 initiated the first step towards working age uniformity by reducing income disregards for OPFP. Up to 2012, where a OPFP recipient was engaged in employment, the first €146.50 pw was disregarded and the balance was assessed at 50%. Entitlement to a payment ceases once gross earnings exceeded €425 per week. The DSP 2012 Social Welfare Bill reduced income disregards for OPFP by €16.50pw with a view to reducing them by €70 pw by 2016 (uniform with the JSA income disregard).

This means significant reductions in lone parent's income from employment. A lone parent with €300 in net earnings and one or two children will stand to lose €74 pw from the intended policy change. It is not clear how this is an incentive or a support to work. The reform fails to incentivise full-time work and much of the savings in OPFP are neutralised by increased in-work support demands of the Family Income Supplement. While it is too early to ascertain impacts from the loss of income disregard, it is highly ironic that a welfare to work motivated policy change may, in practice, reduce welfare to work outcomes.

Irish policy has interpreted SWAP as requiring all working age people to have the same payment, the same means test and the same income disregards. Martin (2011) suggests that a rational structure for payments does not necessitate uniformity. Both the UK and Australia allow higher premiums and different rates within a working age payment regime.

Further reductions of the OPFP disregards should not be countenanced and the general direction implied by SWAP more fully considered by NAGTSW.

The 2012 Social Welfare and Pensions Act also legislated that from 2015 lone parents with a youngest child aged seven will have to claim Job Seeker's Allowance and so be available for full-time work (albeit with political assurances that these will not activate until appropriate childcare infrastructure is in place). Compulsory full-time attachment to the labour market is strongly opposed by Lone Parent organizations in the 'Seven is too Young' campaign who protested against the lack of choice and the absence of supports and viable childcare (OPEN 212a).

Without a universal out of school care service, an appropriate exemption regime and accommodation of part-time work there should be a pause in implementation of work conditionality for primary carers.

QUALIFIED ADULTS - LIMITATION

Other implications arising from SWAP include the possibility that the limitation rule (which limits couples on JSA to 1.7 of two adult payments) will apply to a wider range of working age couples. This would mean losses arising in coupled households presently in receipt of carers' or disability related payments and for whom the limitation rule is not currently applied. These losses are significant. A couple on a combination of CA and JSA would lose €81.90 per week or €4,258 pa. The SWAP proposal justifies limitation by virtue of its simplicity, assumed economies of scale in those households, an orientation towards work incentives and lower replacement ratios.

This direction is inconsistent with previous policy recommendations for qualified adults (DSP 2006) which argued that administrative individualisation could be a first step towards an individualised social welfare system and that individualisation can be achieved by way of a part-time parental allowance available with a part-time job seekers allowance.

NWCI have consistently argued that simplification and gender equality can be achieved by abolishing limitation and awarding a direct payment to the qualified adult as recommended in DSP 2006

IN WORK SUPPLEMENTS

Evaluations of welfare to work outcomes show that economic buoyancy and tax credits are the two primary drivers for welfare to work outcomes. Ireland is somewhat of an outlier in using a means tested social welfare payment (Family Income Supplement (FIS), and in its resistance to fiscal approaches to subsidise low income employment. Low pay and employment sustainability has been addressed in most Anglo Saxon states through the fiscal system and a variety of tax credit mechanisms, many of which are refundable to workers who do not earn sufficiently to utilise all available tax credits. This issue of refundable tax credits was given insufficient attention by the Commission on Taxation (2009) and is on the work agenda of the National Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare. Social Justice Ireland (2010) define a refundable tax credit as where, in the event that the income of an individual is insufficient to use up all of his or her tax credits, the remaining credit is paid to the individual by means of a cash transfer. While intrinsically fairer in distributional terms, the refundable tax credit also enables welfare-to-work by making low income jobs more sustainable for the employee without any impact on the employer and so acts as an employment incentive. It also has the attraction of being able to be designated to particular policy targets – working families, families with children, etc. A limited and targeted workers refundable tax credit to benefit 240,000 people was estimated to cost €140m in 2010.

A proposal for a refundable tax credit should be prioritised in the work agenda of the NAGTSW and reported before budget 2014.

In the interim, maximum effort must be made to enhance the take up of Family Income Supplement, make annual roll over automatic and resolve delays in processing FIS (OPEN 2012b)

'I know all about the Septic Tank thing and I haven't got one, I know all about that Saorview thing and I don't need one, they are in your face with ads about things we don't need, why can't they do a campaign like that for the FIS, it has to be on the radio and TV, writing to people about things doesn't work.'

Callan et al (2012) and NESC (2011) conclude replacement rates are not as significant an issue as often portrayed. Nonetheless public perceptions are important and individual decisions regarding transition from welfare to work require information about the real impact of employment. Finn and Gloster (2010) identify a new focus in activation policy on work-related expenses, such as travel, childcare and clothing costs, and the costs of food eaten away from the home. Collins et al (2012) examination of minimum income standard of living (MESL) also factors in 'in-work' participation costs. They note the importance of childcare and labour market participation costs, transport costs and rural transport infrastructure.

The issue of being better off in work is crucial. Confusion and information deficits mean many legitimately think it does not pay to work. A 'better-off calculation' needs to be factored into the case management process and case workers need to work with the client to enable them maximise income from paid work.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

JOB SEEKERS PAYMENTS

GUIDELINES FOR REASONABLE JOB OFFER AND EXEMPTIONS FROM JOB SEARCH

The full range of guidelines under 'Genuinely Seeking Work (GSW)' and Availability for Work (AW) regulations needs to be reviewed at four levels; to facilitate part-time work; to define a reasonable offer; to enable exemptions; atypical work regulations.

Firstly, a requirement for full-time work availability is inconsistent with established work patterns for many mothers. The UK JSA and Dutch guidelines were adapted to allow lone parents moving from income support to JSA to satisfy requirements by being available for part-time work.

Irish AW guidelines need to facilitate part-time work at 19.5 hours pw.

Secondly, a reasonable offer of activation also needs to be defined and gender mainstreamed. The Canadian Economic Action Plan (2012) criteria for determining 'suitable employment' includes recognition of personal circumstances or health problems that prevent a claimant taking a particular job, and family obligations that prevent them from working at certain times of the day. A one hour commute is considered reasonable but the code recognises limited transportation options in terms of commuting to and from work and physical limitations to performing some work. A position cannot be offered if vacant due directly to a strike, lockout or other labour dispute.

Irish GSW guidelines need to be amended to expand on the definition of reasonable work and what is considered reasonable in terms of family/work balance. The following are suggested guidelines

- Nature of employment contract – zero hours contracts and contracts of less than six months duration are not reasonable .
- Wages – consistent with sector and minimum wage legislation
- Hours of work – these can be limited for care reasons
- Involuntary part-time work must have progression routes
- Travel time to and from work – one hour commute or shorter if childcare obligations exist
- Hours of work – reasonable to align with care and/or parenting obligations
- Availability of childcare (subject to appropriateness and affordability and allowing for parental norms)
- Health and safety – full compliance with all legislation
- Financially better off – better off calculation shows clear financial improvement from taking up work
- After in-work costs – included in better off calculation
- Consistent with progression plan – right to follow direction of agreed activation plan

- Vulnerability of child – clear reference to rights of child to parental care
- Trade union membership – right to join union respected.
- Exemptions for specific care obligations and meeting specific child needs

Thirdly, many countries exempt a parent on a number of grounds including distance travelled, other care obligations, health, home schooling, fostering or attending to children's special needs. All countries exempt lone parents who have, or whose children have, a disability, a significant health problem or special education needs. US states can exempt up to 20% of their caseload from time limits and work requirements. France and Norway exempt lone parents from job search in the first year of becoming a lone parent. In The Netherlands and Australia, lone parents are not obliged to accept a job if they are not financially better off in work. In Australia, principal carer parents who are registered and active foster parents, recognised home educators or those facilitating distance education, or those with four or more school-aged children, may claim an automatic exemption for up to 52 weeks at a time Others can access renewable temporary exemptions of up to 16 weeks that are decided on a case-by-case basis.

Finally, a DSP 2006 Review of the Application of the Unemployment Benefit and Assistance Schemes and Conditions examined the application of the jobseekers benefit and allowance scheme conditions to workers who are employed on a part-time, casual or systematic short-time basis. Instead of accommodating atypical workers Loftus (2012) and OCJSPE (2012b) note recent changes have had the cumulative effect of excluding more low paid and precarious workers from social protection. The net impact is to create a dual labour market and a dual social protection system. The changes distort the capacity of the social protection system to support precarious and atypical work, make precarious work less attractive and increase in-work poverty. They make welfare to work less likely to happen. These changes have greater consequences for women and suggest a fundamental ambiguity in government policy where government wish to increase the number of women in employment while simultaneously making it more difficult for women to access sustainable part time work that best suits work life balance.

An 'hours worked' or 'earnings' guideline should determine unemployment. A precarity impact assessment should be retrospectively made of social welfare changes over 2008-2012 budgets.

SOLAS

In July 2011, government decided to integrate the delivery of all Further Education and Training (FET) under 16 new Education and Training Boards (ETBs) that will replace the existing 33 Vocational Educational Committee's (VECs). This will involve transferring the FÁS Training Division – comprising some 800 staff – to the ETBs and reducing the number of existing VECs to 16. These will be governed by a new Further Education and Training Authority – to be known as SOLAS (An Seirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna). SOLAS will not deliver programmes; rather the ETBs will have responsibility for managing training contracted to private, public and not-for-profit providers in their catchment areas.

The Education and Training Boards Bill 2012 is envisaged to be passed by the end of 2012 after which the process of formally establishing the new Boards will commence. A SOLAS Action Plan will maintain day-to-day service delivery during this daunting transition period. Progress in establishing SOLAS has been relatively slow. An internal transformation team in FÁS works in a technical and advisory capacity with the SOLAS Implementation Group in conjunction with Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA). As with Intreo there are considerable cultural, institutional and pedagogical issues in merging education and training. Kelly et al (2011) express concern that relevant experience may not be available at local level in Local Training and Education Boards to engage with quality training delivery.

The Equality Authority submission to SOLAS argued that equality should be a high level objective of SOLAS. While little consideration appears to have been given to gender mainstreaming SOLAS, there is much to build on. FETAC accreditation already requires providers to have equality assurance. Much can be done to incorporate gender equality as a high level SOLAS goal. This can be related to the Lisbon 2020 goal of 75% economic participation and economic competitiveness, as well as EU level initiatives to have explicit gender equality goals embedded in measures to address the crisis and to make the links between high levels of economic participation of women and dynamic economies (EU 2012).

Specifically, SOLAS objectives can be aligned with Theme 1 of the National Women's Strategy, 'Equalising socio economic opportunity for women' and Objective 1, 'To increase the participation of women in the labour force'. Any forthcoming legislative statutory duty which enables affirmative action can be achieved by mainstreaming previous FÁS initiatives which offer supports to enable women to return to the labour market and by new initiatives to address occupational segregation and stereotyping in career choices. Despite a bursary, women presently comprise only 143 of 90,000 apprentices. A specific goal has to be to expand the range of apprenticeships and address women's low take up. Given there are no jobs for life, most people will shift occupations more than once in their lifetime. Awareness campaigns, education and challenging stereotypes are important ways of challenging role models and sexist perceptions of women in the economy and of the economy more generally.

There is significant tension between models of activation that stress long term, human resource focused paths to sustainable long-term jobs and activation strategies that stress quick, work first outcomes. International evidence shows that use of private agencies paid on employment outcomes/results may put pressure on FET to deliver shorter and/or lower quality training and education outcomes and may lead to clients being parked or cherry picked with less than optimal use of training and education. It is imperative that SOLAS influences the evolving activation strategy towards a human resource oriented strategy and that it monitors the 'drivers' of education and training demand to ensure that wider outcomes relating to participants progress and wider, societal benefits of all education and training, are fostered. Much can be done to align SOLAS goals with the objectives and goals of the national social inclusion strategy particularly as it relates to people of working age and to make social inclusion an explicit part of the SOLAS mission.

Fahey (2012) observes the high poverty risk for a specific group of lone parent families and larger 2 parent families. They have in common mothers who were early school leavers and whose first birth was under 25. These women require an education led strategy. Many of these families live in disadvantaged areas.

Given the scale of education deficit it would be more long sighted to forego immediate expectations of employment progression and instead invest in longer term local community based education strategies.

Both Intreo and SOLAS, through the ETBs provide guidance and advice. It is not yet clear where the specialist education and training advice will be located or what the nature of relationship between the client and the guidance adviser will be. This INTREO-SOLAS-ETB model of referral will be finalised following a review of the application of the interim referral protocols. Gender should be a consideration in this process and The Equality Authority can advise on resources that can be used to provide training on gender mainstreaming to all new and serving managers.

ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET PROGRAMMES

Expenditure on ALMPs is presently spread between DSP and FÁS. There is considerable pressure on ALMPs. Despite investment in Pathways to Work there are insufficient courses to ensure activation for all working aged and jobless adults. Criteria determining which target groups are identified as priority for activation is crucial. The absolute gender distribution of opportunity and the pattern of distribution of specific opportunities needs to be explicitly monitored analysed and reported.

While Intreo profiling will target high PEX scores of those on the live register, there is still a need for supports through further adult education programmes for groups of adults who will not be able to access live register routes. While it was assumed until recently that most economically inactive adults would be subsumed into a SWAP, this now looks less likely. This is particularly pertinent for women returners and has implications not just for gender equality but also anti-poverty outcomes and economic competitiveness.

Qualified adults in the social welfare system should have full access to all FET and women returners specifically should be mentioned as a specific target group for SOLAS.

The Gender Equality Division (2012) Review of the Gender Equality Horizontal Principle welcomed greater gender disaggregated data, but was specifically critical of FÁS's lack of analysis of this data. Participation by women in training courses fell from 42% in 2010 to 38% in 2011. This was above the percentage of women in the cohort of the unemployed but does not reflect the percentage of women in the working age social welfare population. The FÁS Social Inclusion Unit monitors and analyses labour market policies in relation to social inclusion, equality and diversity. The FÁS 2011 Annual Report shows 163,000 learners benefited from some form of training provision and employment support schemes during 2011.

TABLE 11 Number of women completing FÁS programmes by programme type 2010

Total number	Training type	Number & % of women
7,618	Off-the-job apprenticeship training phases,	29 (0.4)
14,458	Specific Skills Training Programme	4,330 (30)
2,444	Traineeship Programme	1,765 (72)
2,892	Foundation Programme	1,013 (35)
369	Return to Work Programme	174 (47)
2,914	LTI Programme	1,449 (50)
121 e	Linked Work Experience (LWE) Programme,	62 (51)
1,514	Community Training Programmes	624 (41)
1,442	Specialist Training Providers	642 (44)
31,125	Community Employment Programme,	16,846 (54)

The key issue here is that women are under-represented on those courses most likely to achieve progression and over represented on those courses least likely to achieve progression. From January to December 2011, 8,884 people in receipt of the One Parent Family Payment completed training and employment programmes and 9,865 people in receipt of the One Parent Family Payment started on training and employment programmes, 74% of these on employment programmes (Community Employment/Job Initiative) with the lowest progression outcomes. Over 30 new courses have been developed in 2012, many in environmental, technology and green energy sectors. It is not clear how gender segregated those programmes are in uptake or whether there are any gender targets in relation to participation or initiatives to target women into these new areas. Recruitment into training in areas of new opportunities, such as in the care and services economy, should also be gender desegregated. Learner centred opening times need to be addressed. For instance, the long standing practice of 8.30 opening times is inappropriate for parents. Information barriers can be addressed through a single course database and a single course calendar, and courses should also be made available on a modular basis.

CHAPTER

FIVE

The practice: Gender
Mainstreaming
Implementation



The devil is in the detail. Design and delivery of activation matters hugely in terms of its effectiveness (Millar and Evans 2003, Finn and Gloster 2010). Women are not a minority group but many of the women who will pass through activation processes will experience inequalities that cross cut gender. Men also stand to benefit from a gender mainstreamed approach to policy and practice. This chapter addresses gender mainstreaming implementation issues for Intreo and SOLAS. The key issue here is developing competency to 'do' gender mainstreaming, capacity to identify when there is a gender issue and the motivation and ability to address the issues. It begins by reviewing international experiences of implementation and addresses practical issues concerning gendered implementation under the following five headings; leadership, governance and hearing women's voices; discretion, shifts in power, exemptions, safe guards and appeals; gender sensitive training and front line service delivery; gender issues for privatisation and NGO delivery in LES and partnerships; gender sensitive data and evaluation strategy

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE, HEARING WOMEN'S VOICES

Integrated delivery is at the heart of good activation. Focus Groups showed women lack confidence in state agencies capacity to deliver inter-agency services. Senior civil servants interviewed report that previously social partnership structures had the (perhaps unintended) consequence of interdepartmental collaboration, planning and review. In its absence, a system of national policy planning and collaboration is needed.

Activation in many European countries has meant giving regional and local actors more power and authority to determine the nature of activation policies. Decentralisation and deregulation trends differ considerably across welfare states (Van Berkel and Van Der Aa, 2011). Ireland, with weak local government structures, is particularly challenged in developing local integrated activation strategies. The Oct 2012 reform proposals for local government envisage a larger role for Local Authorities in employment and enterprise and therefore activation. A Socio-Economic Committee (SEC) will replace each City Development Board. The SEC will have planning and oversight of all local and community development programmes and will comprise 15 members drawn from Local Authority, local and community interests and appropriate state agencies, a 5-year City or County Local and Community Plan will be part of the City/County Development Plan. This emerging framework will need to be incorporated into the governance and implementation structures of Intreo and Solas.

Lipsky (1980) argues that policy is shaped through bottom-up negotiation and consensus building. Given activation implies a shift in power between the client and mediator, there is a strong case for representatives of users, including women, to have capacity to influence and monitor practice. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights recommended that human rights concerns be mainstreamed in Intreo and recommended popular participation in both the design and implementation of crisis response measures (Holland 2012). NESC (2011) recommend a client council similar to the Dutch model WMCZ (Wet Medezeggenschap Cliënten Zorginstellingen) which obliges publicly funded service providers to

establish a client council that deals with and represents the interest of clients (Danaou 2009).

The governance structure should enable NWCI to specifically represent women's interests.

The SOLAS and Intreo action plan commitment to engagement with client representatives could be operationalised by means of regional client councils using the ETBs and the DSP divisional structure. This could be institutionally supported through local development companies and other local NGOs.

'I wouldn't mind a social contract if it said what the government had to do and that they could not change everything all the time, if it said these are the resources and we won't be taking them away.'

Political leadership and discourse is crucial in gender mainstreaming (McGauran 2005). Social Protection Minister Joan Burton first used the language of 'life style choice' and 'social contracts' on July 17th 2011. This was consistent with the Mutual Obligations strategy which stresses 'messaging' in activation and a discourse aimed at making people 'anxious' about being long-term unemployed. This fuels an understanding of labour activation as a disciplinary reaction to a perceived welfare dependency, as well as the need to combat fraud. NESC (2011 ix) observed government's tendency to over associate incentive to work, fraud, control and contract messages with labour activation policy and warned against the 'convenience' of exaggerating fraud or 'welfare lifestyle'. There is a gender dimension to the discourse of labour activation, with lone parents in particular being vulnerable to negative stereotyping and problematised as 'welfare dependent' (Uttely 2002). Knijn observes that in The Netherlands negative political and policy discourse and continual rule changes concerning different age requirements for activation caused lone parents constant stress.

Political discourse should be constructive and avoid blaming and stereotyping welfare clients.

DISCRETION, SHIFTS IN POWER, EXEMPTIONS, SAFEGUARDS AND APPEALS

Interviews with Irish frontline staff suggest they anticipate a more complex and ambiguous role as new control functions overlap with original guidance roles and determination of eligibility to payment overlaps with employment services and guidance. Little is known about the role of frontline workers in implementing and delivering activation (Van Berkel and Van der Aa 2012) but activation policy is by its nature discretionary, ambiguous and open to values and interpretation.

Carter (2012) found implementation of activation meant, in some cases, local practice was simply rebranded without change. In

others, hyper-innovation from the centre left local implementation processes reeling under complex and contradictory messaging with little practical guidance. In other instances there was values-led resistance to change at the local level. This is particularly so in the case of women where local staff in The Netherlands, Sweden and New Zealand ignored welfare to work guidelines because of traditional beliefs concerning whether mothers of young children ought to be in paid employment. In line with Lipsky's (1980 p37) 'corrupted world of service', workers often manage discretion for the benefit of the worker rather than the client. Rafferty and Wiggan (2011) suggest pressured case workers cherry pick easy to place clients and park or exempt harder to place clients. Women are less likely to be cherry picked and more likely to be parked.

Van Oorschot's (2012) examination of the evolution of administrative law in Denmark, Finland and Sweden notes how activation policies often subordinate individual rights to the pursuit of organisational and other objectives. To protect individual autonomy, self determination and participation, he argues for a strong rights and legislative approach, such as making the right to social services an administrative law and giving constitutional status to social rights. This is consistent with the principles of a feminist framework. The appeals system is vital. British experience shows that overzealous case workers were held accountable by the appeals system (Fletcher 2011) and Murphy (2008) found the Irish social welfare system robust in challenging unreasonable application of conditionality. However advocacy is vital to enable those most vulnerable to effectively use the appeals system. Women's groups budgets have been cut by over 40% (Harvey 2012). Cutbacks are downgrading traditional NGO sources of advocacy.

As discussed in Chapter 4, different countries operate various exemptions to activation but exemptions are not always used in the interests of the client, some who want support find themselves exempted and 'parked'. The use of discretion has potentially profound implications for severely disadvantaged groups who are very vulnerable to an over-zealous application of discretion by adversarial staff (Fletcher 2011). McNeill (2011) acknowledges the complexity of dealing with chronic barriers such as addiction, homelessness and mental health. Those at an early stage of resettlement or recovery require basic supports before moving to a stage of job readiness (Tischler 2008). There is extensive experience of working with hard to reach groups in Ireland (Focus Ireland 2012) Perry (2009), looking at activation of qualified adults, argued that delivery could be improved by early exclusions through initial sifting processes to identify where work was not a possibility, even in the longer-term. She recommends a family focus, providing integrated support for the couple and family as a whole.

Exemptions are often not 'well understood' by lone parents and/or staff. Information about exemptions from Genuinely Seeking Work guidelines is crucial to ensure common standards of decision making. This is vital in a new culture that draws in two cohorts of staff who had worked with significant discretion but will now have to adapt to a more formalised culture of decision making. Guidelines will be particularly

important in the event of privatisation. They set standards as to what is considered reasonable standards of employment in a changing and more precarious and low paid economy.

The workers should have clear guidelines and we should know what they are too, women should not be hounded if they are depressed or up to their gills with worry, they might be in the middle of a domestic...

A protocol on exemptions and referrals needs to be clearly understood by staff and clients. Exemptions should be subject to quarterly monitoring reports for gender and regional patterns.

GENDER SENSITIVE TRAINING, STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY STANDARDS

Activation workers have different educational profiles and backgrounds in different countries. In some countries, activation workers are 'traditional' social workers, in others they are benefit administrators (Van Berkel and Van Der Aa 2010). Women dominate this grade of public sector workers. This raises the issue of training and qualifications required of Irish frontline workers. There was a history in Ireland of specialist training of civil servants in the previous National Manpower Service. The Adult Guidance certificate or diploma delivered by the Department of Adult and Community Education in the National University of Ireland Maynooth is the standard for all Intreo frontline case workers (previously FÁS ESO's). It is important to build on this positive feature by adopting best practice in gender mainstreaming training (McGuaran 2005).

All ETB FETAC accredited training providers are already required to have undertaken equality awareness training. Building on this, all training delivered with Intreo and SOLAS should include a specific gendered perspective with information and input from gender representative organisations.

Much training is on the job, takes place under pressure and tends to be rules and legislation based. There is rarely opportunity to examine values or develop communication skills (Fletcher 2011). DSP staff interviewed for this research voiced concern about anticipated changes to OPFP and QA and felt inadequately prepared to translate the reasons behind policy changes to clients. The national political environment is an important component in the uptake and dissemination of gender sensitivity training – staff must be able to 'connect the dots' between the focus on individual level and the political context (Celik 2009).

Training is crucial to achieve gender mainstreaming but gender sensitivity is not an easy concept to grasp and continuous exposure to educational initiatives and learning in the workplace is also crucial (Celik 2009). The active involvement of key actors (top and middle management) in the process of organizational learning is required to support professionals and create the conditions needed

to adopt gender sensitive actions in practice and, in particular, to shift the institutional value base towards valuing gender equality. Including women in the process is vital. Women claimants can be invited to participate in different ways; in the development of the training intervention; giving feedback on the training and its elements; participating in the provision of the training; explaining to professionals what matters when it comes to being sensitive to gender issues and in evaluating the training (Celik 2009).

As women develop different coping strategies to men (TUC 2009) employment service officers have to be aware of the different gendered experiences of unemployment. Whelan et al (1991) found gendered impacts of unemployment on health. Unemployed married men suffer the greatest negative effect on their mental health, whereas for females the effect is greatest on those that are single. With unemployment, the stress and anxiety of making ends meet is the main cause of the greater incidence of mental ill health. Depression and anxiety disorders feature more among women and addiction features more strongly among men. Mental health, while normally recovered with renewed employment, can also be a factor restricting capacity to work full-time (O'Shea and Kennelly, 2008). Delaney et al (2011) found men experiencing unemployment felt they were intruding into their wives domestic space and that loss of their "breadwinner" role undermined their masculinity. Women on the other hand felt invisible, and older women found menopause made coping with unemployment harder. Women reported lower self-esteem and depression as a consequence of unemployment but also felt better able cope by expanding household tasks to fill time. NYCI (2011) did not report any gender differentiated findings amongst young unemployed.

Case workers need specific training about gendered consequences and impacts of unemployment and the gendered mental health consequences of unemployment.

'Work keeps you sane-I haven't got anything to talk about'.
'I like work, you are out there living it'

Gender equality should be a core value and principle informing staff training programmes and the design and delivery of programmes. Gender and equality training skills from the Equality Authority and Gender Equality Division should be fully utilised.

A nominated staff member should have an explicit gender mainstreaming function to champion change in culture and values in mid management. A gender demonstration model in one nominated Intreo and ETB can help promote best practice.

Focus groups highlighted various service delivery issues in the transformation of Intreo and process of integrating DSP, HSE CWOs and FÁS ESOs. Merging FÁS training and the FE sector culture and practices through SOLAS has not yet begun but is likely to be challenging. The majority of workers in these services are women

hence there may be particular gendered aspects to consider.

Key issues of concern include: whether meeting spaces are open plan or will be managed through use of glass hatches as safety barriers; issues concerning use of technology; the degree of physical integration across the merging organisations; opening times; safety protocols etc. From a staff perspective, resource limitations are significant at local level and all job descriptions are likely in some way to be impacted by the scale of change. Human resources report increased levels of stress related sick leave and higher incidence of anti-social and threatening behaviour in local social protection offices. Health and safety and human resources policy can develop supports to mitigate or alleviate stress including internal recruitment, job matching, internal job rotation and protocols to deal with serious stressors, for example, claimants threats of suicide. Negative threatening political discourse makes it more difficult for staff working to deliver activation on the ground with clients who may be more anxious and hostile.

GENDER ISSUES IN RELATION TO NGOs AND PRIVATISATION

Use of private providers with payment conditional on completion rates and job retention has been a controversial aspect of activation strategies in the US and UK. Finn (2009) and Rafferty & Wiggan's (2008) review of 'quasi market' services delivered by a range of private, voluntary and public sector organisations in Australia, the USA and The Netherlands conclude there are gendered patterns of 'creaming' and 'parking' of participants (Wright 2012 321). Policy motivation for privatisation is not only cost savings but also shifts reliance on public sector workers reluctant to implement sanctions or implement 'work first' outcomes, especially to women with children.

EAPN (2012), has serious concerns about privatisation. The €20m Labour Market Education & Training Fund (LMETF) is part of the Government's 2012 'Action Plan for Jobs Initiative' and is being implemented through 140 providers sourced through a call for expressions of interest from private and voluntary sector Education and Training Providers. It is important to maintain the proviso that providers need to deliver FETAC accredited training and are thus exposed to equality benchmarks and training.

OECD (2008) and Kelly et al (2011) believe Irish public employment services are lacking in both numbers and skills capacity. Given the lack of internal capacity in Intreo and SOLAS, contracting out, at least, some activation functions seems inevitable. It is also the case that use of privatised services may be vitally important to re-establish the reputation of public employment services amongst Irish employers.

Employer gender bias and discrimination in the labour market may be augmented by case worker bias in public employment services and in private recruitment agencies. Russell et al (2008) found men are more likely to report experiencing discrimination looking for work, while women are more likely to report experiencing discrimination in the workplace. Lone parents have one of the highest probabilities of reporting discrimination particularly within the services domain. Focus groups report bias in public employment services and social

protection offices. Pregnant women are increasingly vulnerable to employment based discrimination (Russell and McGinnity 2011) .

In the event of privatisation, all procurement for contracted tendering should include compliance with all equality and diversity legislation. Monitoring is necessary in all procurement contracts.

The Local Employment Services Network (LESN) and other NGOs including women's groups, CICs and Centres for the Unemployed play an important mediation, advocacy and translation role. Their role in activation is crucial. LESN has tended to fill gaps left by FÁS services such as job matching, C.V. preparation etc and also made services available to women returning to the labour market. Given the important issue of targeting jobless households and local unemployment black spots, it is crucial women remain included in such local strategies. These services are under increasing pressure and need to be supported and valued.

'When I get a letter I freak, I bring it straight over the centre, otherwise I just would not open it.'

Job Creation through social enterprise models have been successfully pioneered to develop local responses to care needs and quality local employment for social welfare dependent women in Collingslen Twinbrook in Northern Ireland and in inner city Dublin through the National College of Ireland.

GENDER SENSITIVE EVALUATION, MONITORING AND DATA STRATEGY

There are significant gaps in understanding gendered patterns in use of ALMPs or outcomes from ALMPs. So, too, there are gaps in knowledge concerning lone parents and qualified adults use of income disregards, levels of earnings and motivations concerning part-time work. Given that Intreo and SOLAS are in an early stage of implementation, there is opportunity to devise systematic evaluation and tracking processes to monitor progression and learn from the Gender Equality Division experience that even when data is disaggregated at source it is often insufficiently analysed and used to develop policy.

Harmon et al (2012) made a series of recommendations for evaluation specific to activation. Intreo and SOLAS should consider systematic control groups: enable academic access to administrative data; qualitative studies of implementation; longitudinal qualitative tracking of clients and ethnographic studies of organisational culture. Various gender impact tool kits in areas ranging from occupational segregation, family friendly work and supporting lone parents in employment are available to help develop gender sensitive practice (ILO 2009, Span 2007).

SOLAS and Intreo should introduce a gender-oriented perspective in policy, planning, implementation and evaluation of research. Gender impact assessment needs to be built into policy and practice and made a formal function of an assigned staff member who has responsibility for gender mainstreaming

More can be made of qualitative and quantitative analysis of the various LESNs and community based guidance initiatives including, for example, the Mount Street Fund projects and Equality for Women Measure funded initiatives.

One example is the use of SROI (social return on investment) methodology to place a monetary value on training (as pioneered by Ballymun Jobs Club). This evaluation framework enables measuring the value created by an organisation, service, project or activity. More use should be made of EU projects which have pioneered transfer of innovation in specialised career guidance training and methodologies including Leonardo da Vinci, EGUIDE /INFORM, CHOICES, Know How, Motives, Manage your career, MST-EI eMERGE and Equal Youth.

CARELESS TO CAREFUL ACTIVATION
MAKING ACTIVATION WORK FOR WOMEN

CHAPTER

SIX

Avoiding the
Precarity Trap



The ultimate goal of activation is employment. The labour market context for activation is crucial (Lewis et al 2008). Reforms operate differently as labour market conditions fluctuate (Herbst 2008, Kjeldstad, and Rønsen 2004) and the largest activation effects are generated in favourable labour market conditions. While British New Deal activation is positively evaluated, the context of labour market buoyancy was crucial to its success (Convery 2009, Wright 2012 p320). More can be done to align job creation with activation. The quality of jobs also matter and tends to deteriorate during recession. ILO stress the centrality of freely chosen and decent employment and argue for the importance of recovery and growth with decent work and puts gender equality at the heart of decent work (ILO 2009)

The ILO definition of decent work might usefully frame what is considered acceptable or reasonable: 'work that is productive and delivers fair income security in the work place, social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concern organise and take part in the decisions that affect them and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men' (ILO 2009).

In France, the French Christian Workers Confederation argue that the quality of employment should not be traded for the quantitative objective of reducing unemployment. Therefore, CFTC proposes to implement a job quality index based on important indicators such as qualifications, lifelong learning, gender equality, health and safety in the workplace and work-life balance so that it can monitor developments in this trade-off (Eurofound 2010 20)

This chapter focuses on the nature of the labour market women are likely to enter. Work first activation strategy assumes that any job is better than none and that a job acts as a stepping stone to a better job. The evidence however is that precarious jobs trap people into precarious working patterns and that many people in precarious work do not progress to better employment. This chapter focuses on the relationship between Intreo and low paid and precarious work and examines four areas: employer engagement; job retention strategies; part-time employment, and compliance strategies. The ultimate goal is to ensure work is a sustainable route out of poverty.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Activation does not work without jobs and engagement with employers. The September Troika report (2012 8) specifically outlines the challenge of employer engagement in the national activation strategy and sets a target of increasing the number of vacancies being filled from the live register. The FÁS National Contact Centre (NCC) in Edenderry has a computerised vacancy notification system. Recruitment activity by employers increased in 2011 with just under 69,000 vacancies nationwide notified to FÁS, up from 64,000 in 2010 (FÁS 2012). Despite this, clearly employers have not been using public employment services to meet recruitment need and successfully engaging employers is the greatest challenge facing Intreo.

Its first step is to win employers trust. It is proactively selling the various incentives available to employers to recruit various categories of hard-to-employ people within Intreo catchment groups. These create a relatively complicated menu for both employers and case managers and could be simplified. Some are aimed at increasing income for the employee (Revenue Job Assist, Part-time Job Incentive, Back to Work supports) and some aim to reduce the cost of job creation for the employer (PRSI exemption, Job Bridge and specific supports for people with disabilities).

Largely driven by the need to control costs and secure greater job placement and retention for hard-to-place clients, French and Dutch activation policy have become more employer oriented and proactive in reorienting companies' hiring behaviour. The employer is increasingly seen as the client of activation services and case workers are proactive in seeking to shape the employers job design, recruitment and selection processes. Three approaches are used to entice the employer: soft appeals to corporate responsibility; regulations that take away the administrative burden of perceived risky employment choices; activation case managers managing aftercare and in-work problems (e.g. guaranteeing job ready placement, job matching and no turnover problems). While there are clear limitations to the present capacity of INTREO, in the longer term there is potential to work with employers to proactively place groups considered hard to place including women returners, lone parents and women with disabilities. Various tools already exist, One Family (2012b) has produced an employer tool kit to promote equality for lone parents in the retail sector and have an established placement programme with Marks and Spencer.

Employers need effective job matching, proactive management of skills shortages and guaranteed job ready placements with minimal concerns of turnover.

For reasons of space, strategies to promote greater family friendly policy and in-work training are not addressed in this chapter. ILO (2009) offer a range of tools and best practices for gender mainstreaming decent employment. In the Irish context, legislation for the merged equality and human rights infrastructure may enable a requirement of positive action or statutory duty for affirmative action for gender equality. The Gender Equality Division highlights some best practice developed to address issues of gender inequality in the work place including gender sensitive employment handbooks and a gender pay audit template developed by IBEC, a tool-kit on tips for employing and retaining lone parents, and the ESF Integration of Migrants programme. Similarly, a tool-kit on Recruiting and Retaining Women in Non Traditional Positions has been developed in the UK and can be used as templates for affirmative action in Irish employment services. The Equality Authority 2011 also has an extensive range of tools to promote human rights and enable equality practice be embedded in the public service including implementing 'Equality in the Workplace' in SMEs.

JOB RETENTION

International studies find that significant cohorts (up to 70% of those 'activated') do not retain their jobs and return to the benefits system (Finn and Gloster, 2010). Reasons include problems with childcare and work environment, poor initial job match and/or the precarious nature of the employment involved. Various employment retention strategies include post-employment case management support, tax credits or continued benefit receipt and occupational skills training to improve potential earnings and progression. Of these, state financial support available to low-paid families appears most crucial. A further strategy makes outcome-based payments for programme providers contingent on employment duration. This is a particular feature of privatisation but is associated with cherry picking, parking and manipulation of outcomes data (Wiggan and Rafferty 2011, Finn and Gloster 2010).

Job readiness is a key factor determining job retention and work first strategies can be counterproductive if people are activated too early. Cook (2007) found some Australian lone parents in mandatory welfare to work lacked material, social and psychological resources to make a successful work transition. Yeo's (2007) 'cycle of vulnerability model' shows how small scale problems can soon escalate without the continuous relationship with the case worker. She identifies four retention and advancement interventions:

- Financial incentives, emergency funds, in-work 'better-off' calculations
- Case management strategies (most employment lost within the first three months)
- Skills development linked to demand in local labour market
- Employer focused strategies (push and pull) for family friendly employment

Millar and Ridge (2008) highlight social as well as economic factors in sustaining employment. Flexibility is dependent on informal social relationships which can range from supportive to inconsistent and arbitrary. Ridge and Millar (2011) found even when jobs are retained that incomes were complex, unreliable and insecure leaving a 'rubber band' of poverty dynamics with vulnerability to quite small shocks in the incomes or circumstances.

'I would not mind if there was like a long term plan, if there was time to let me get ready to go back to work, it would have to be gradual, 'I'm worried its paying lip service to all the idea of support, it will just be – 'here, take that job'.

Job retention can be enhanced by multiple factors but the first step is avoiding work first strategies when claimants are not job ready. Ensuring that low paid work pays is a second necessary strategy. Activation policy has to avoid placement in precarious employment and work with employers to address the quality of employment and work-life balance.

PART-TIME AND PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT

There is polarisation in many national workforces, with an increasing proportion of both low-paid and part-time workers, and high-paid workers. Many low paid and/or part jobs are only sustainable for the worker if wages are topped up by social welfare or in work tax credits. Dean (2012) rightly argues there are limits to which governments should supplement low wages or support low paid and possibly exploitative work in the economy. However there are also tensions when the state fails to protect low paid workers from the precarity of a dual labour market. Growing duality in both the labour market and the social welfare system means precarious workers are increasingly unlikely to benefit from social protection (Murphy and Loftus 2012).

Fig 12 – insiders and outsiders



While Intreo clearly has to win the trust of employers, this should not be at the expense of poor quality employment. Chapter One discussed the danger that badly designed activation can lead to a precarity trap where workers particularly women, are caught in a vicious cycle – being churned from welfare to precarious work and back again. Part-time employment often facilitates women's entry into employment. However part-time employment in Ireland is constructed to suit Irish employers rather than Irish workers, and is often a source of difficult working conditions for women. While recognising capacity issues, over time Intreo could develop an objective of working with employers to produce good quality part-time employment.

'I would do anything, there is no such thing as a really bad job, I would do waitressing, childcare Tesco's, house cleaning – for me it is time that decides what is possible – my ideal job was 9.30–3.30 and cover for holidays.'

Chapter 3 discussed the growth in the precarity of the Irish labour market. Loftus (2012) finds Ireland is a relatively precarious labour market with very flexible hiring and firing practices and with 20% of the labour force and 26% of women in low paid employment. Full-time employment has steadily declined from 70% working 35 hours or more in 2001 to 60% in 2011. Average hours worked have declined. Part-time work share in private sector employment rose from 15% to 23% and hours worked dropped from 33pw in 2008 to 31.6 pw in 2011 (Bergin et al 2012).

A zero-hours contract of employment means the employee is available for work but does not have specified hours of work. The Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 does not apply to casual employment but requires that an employee under a zero-hours contract who works less than 25% of their hours in any week should be compensated. If the employee got no work, then the compensation should be either for 25% of the possible available hours or for 15 hours, whichever is less. If the employee got some work, they should be compensated to bring them up to 25% of the possible available hours

Non-standard employment, such as non standard contracts and 'zero hours contracts' are prevalent in gendered sectors like home helps and retail; short-term contracts of less than six months are often utilised in seasonal work (tourism, hotel, agriculture, food processing etc). The male construction and security sectors also utilise non standard forms of employment such C45 self employment. Atypical forms of employment (especially those on short contracts) tend to receive less training and career development opportunities and experience more health and safety problems. Russell et al (2011) found distinct gendered atypical working patterns. Specific sectors dominated by women were vulnerable to atypical work patterns. Mandate has highlighted the nature of zero hour contracts in the retail sector particularly in large multiples like Dunnes Stores. SIPTU draw attention to the Irish state's use of such contracts in the home help and caring sector. The contract cleaning sector is dominated by competitive tendering which often leads contractors to under bid and engage in a 'race to the bottom' reducing working hours, reducing pay and other terms, laying off staff and intensifying workloads in order to make profit. Temporary jobs are considered to be particularly damaging for women considering having children, denying them both maternity benefits and capacity to plan.

The nature of the Irish jobs strategy has so far been focused on high end high quality jobs, many of which have to be filled by migrant labour with IT or language skills. Job creation strategies need more overlap with activation strategies in terms of the job mix in the economy and the balance of high and low paid jobs and full and part-time jobs. The focus group conducted for this research shows demand for part-time and three quarter time jobs but not for precarious jobs.

Intreo has the option of encouraging employers to create part-time jobs. To do so will have gendered implications for the distribution of employment. This is highly relevant in a time of weak economic growth. Increasing the number of net jobs means increasing the income of low paid households, this increases aggregate demand and contributes to growth. The OCJSPE (2012b 12) discusses the need to grow atypical work in Ireland. Assessing the claim duration of part-time work, it makes a strong case that part-time workers do not remain on social welfare for long periods and recommends encouraging part-time work as an activation measure. This is the implicit assumption behind their recommendation to make more use of the Part-time job Incentives Scheme and enable part-time work as a

stepping stone to full-time employment.

On the other hand, Loftus (2012) shows women in the retail sector spend very long durations in atypical employment and that precarity has intensified over the recession. The difficulty of securing social protection for atypical work was discussed in Chapter 4. Rather than being a route out of poverty precarious employment can aggravate the possibility of finding full-time employment. The Irish transition to full-time employment (18%) is lower than the EU average of 20% (EC, 2012). Working less than a full year is associated with an almost double rate of poverty risk (15% for the EU25) compared with working a full year (8%). Working part-time (12%) also nearly doubles the risk compared with full-time work (7%). Having a temporary employment contract (13%) increases the poverty risk almost three times compared with having a permanent contract (5%). Irish low pay is particularly associated with temporary work agencies (Eurofound 2010 9). Flexibility required by one employer can also militate against the possibility of securing employment from a second employer (Loftus 2012). Dobbins (2010) concludes that people in non-standard forms of employment find it difficult to bridge the transition to standard employment. Employers often use such contracts as an ongoing (rather than temporary) means of achieving flexibility and reducing labour costs, and this becomes a subsidy trap for government.

The Action Plan for Jobs (DJEI 2011) is therefore crucial. While the Action Plan has a sectoral dimension, there is little discussion about the skill composition of jobs and the balance between creating full-time and part-time jobs. These are vital questions with a strong gender dimension. There is a conflict between reducing the number of working poor and increasing the number of people in work through part-time work. This is a difficult balancing act. One thing is clear however, government subsidies should not be used to promote low paid, poor quality jobs. The issue of compliance with standards and labour laws is key to ensuring that the 'race to the bottom' is avoided.

Atypical work can cause a precarity trap for men and women and cannot necessarily be considered a first step to decent employment. A gender and sectoral analysis of trends in part-time work could shed more light on when part-time work is a stepping stone and when it is a precarity trap.

COMPLIANCE

The Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act, 2012 came into effect on August 1st 2012 and the new industrial relations machinery is still emerging. There are serious concerns that compliance and enforcement mechanisms will be downgraded in the context of a short sighted compromise that prioritises job creation over job quality and compliance. SIPTU and NWCi recognise the importance of maintaining and improving conditions for low paid workers and are concerned that lowering working standards and worker rights may be an unintended consequence of mandatory activation.

‘Employers would treat you like dirt if they knew you had no choice and you could not leave, people could walk all over you if you had no rights and you would lose your welfare if you walked out.’

The Coalition against Low Pay (which includes NWC and SIPTU) argue against inability to pay clauses in contracting industries where competitive tendering is the norm. The introduction of derogations or an inability to pay clause will remove the ‘level playing pitch’ which is currently on a statutory footing and so disadvantage good firms, while others compensate for poorer quality by cutting wages, thus ensuring a ‘race-to-the-bottom’. This has to be considered in the context of a compliance rate of just 21% in Catering, 27% in Hotels and 28% in Retail in 2009 and 46% overall compliance in the first nine months of 2010.

Government needs to legislate for the introduction of stronger deterrents and fines for instances of non-compliance. The EU Directive giving equal treatment rights for agency workers in respect of pay and conditions should also help unions in their quest to regulate non-standard employment.

Ireland holds the EU presidency in the first half of 2013 when an EU resolution on women in the services sector will be passed in the European Parliament. Almost half the women in employment are concentrated in 10 of the 130 occupations and many experience an increased prevalence of flexible working hours: weekend work, irregular and unpredictable working hours and the extension of the working day, some of which takes place in the casual or shadow labour market.

The Irish presidency should forward the resolution to make combating undeclared work a key objective of national reform programmes submitted under the Europe 2020 strategy (p12).

Intreo has a role to play ex ante in preventing unreasonably low quality jobs being administered through Intreo and an ex post role in monitoring the ongoing quality of employment conditions. Over time these may be useful ways to engage with employers concerning employment pay, conditions and employment progression opportunities. To avail of any such in-work supports employers should have to commit to upgrade employment over time and will need training and supports to enable them to do this. The public procurement process requires private business tendering for government contracts to signal full compliance with labour legislation. Without wishing to burden employers, it should be possible to require employers to self declare compliance as a requirement of use of government employment subsidies.

Ex ante - Intreo can have a preventative role - employers availing of PRSI exemptions and other job subsidies should ‘self declare’ full compliance with labour legislation and equality legislation

Ex post – Intreo case managers have a role in reporting breaches of compliance to the relevant authorities

Intreo case manager can also inform clients of their employment rights and right to join a trade union

FROM A CARELESS TO A CAREFUL ECONOMY AND SOCIETY.

Irish activation policy has to deal with the challenge involved in moving low income women from a discriminatory social welfare system into a still patriarchal and careless labour market which can often trap women into precarity. Activation policy may have the unintended consequence of embedding and guaranteeing workers for part-time but precarious, low paid and low quality employment. This danger is particularly evident for women who are more likely to be in precarious part-time work and be second earners in the family. There are also care traps. Redmond et al (2010) recounts how women struggle to manage the pressures of combining work and family life. This requires addressing childcare needs and responsibilities and issues such as eldercare responsibilities, education and training opportunities, and the need for personal time in order to combat negative stress experienced in the workplace.

There is hope. In Germany and Sweden 90% of companies are already dividing their working week in new ways, judging staff on annual rather than weekly hours and allowing husbands and wives to share jobs. The Netherlands has developed a system of high quality part-time work and a social consensus about more equal gendered sharing of work, care and domestic work. Optimistically in the long term, Intreo, as a point of contact with employers, is well placed to promote new ways of thinking about part-time work, job design, job creation and job sharing, and that can contribute to a more equal society and economy.

In the short term activation must be proportionate and the state cannot expect more of claimants than they are prepared to invest in claimants. Activation, no matter how well meaning, can have unintended and adverse consequences. Gender mainstreaming activation will go some way towards safeguarding rights and protecting claimants, women, men and their children from activation into an increasingly precarious labour market.

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