

WRC Social and Economic Consultants

**Measure Study of Early School
Leavers - Youthreach and Travellers
Measure 11B of the EHRDOP
Implemented by the Department of Education
and Science**

WIDER EQUALITY MEASURE STUDY

Supported by

Equality Studies Unit, Measure 33A of the EHRDOP



THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

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1. Introduction

In the context of the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2000-2006 (EHRDOP), the Equality Authority is implementing Measure 33a: Technical Assistance - Equality Studies Unit (ESU). The ESU is mandated to examine labour market inequalities and their implications for labour market policy. Its focus is on exclusion and discrimination in the labour market as covered by equality legislation and for four groups named in the EHRDOP (i.e., older workers, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups in particular refugees, and members of the Traveller community). These four groups are also the reference groups for the Wider Equal Opportunities Principle (WEOP). The WEOP is concerned with understanding, monitoring and supporting the participation of people from the four groups covered by the principle in the measures of the EHRDOP. Following on from the mid-term review of the EHRDOP, 10 measures are now required to identify and report on the actions they are taking to apply the WEOP (see Annex 1, page 64 for list of Measures)

In this capacity the Equality Authority is implementing a rolling programme of Measure Studies. These studies seek to identify and promote changes required in the planning, design and delivery of the measures comprising the EHRDOP to enhance their capacity to accommodate diversity and to promote equality. In order to accomplish this, measure studies are designed to a standard that challenges.

Measure studies draw on the analysis developed in the ESU publication *'Accommodating Diversity in Labour Market Programmes'*. Specifically the programme of measure studies seeks:

- To support new learning on the promotion of equality and the accommodation of diversity in labour market measures. It achieves this by seeking out good practice while also examining gaps, deficiencies and other issues;
- Through the manner in which it is implemented, to build the capacity of implementing agencies to identify and engage in actions to effectively promote equality and accommodate diversity; and,
- To agree recommendations for priority actions for promoting equality and accommodating diversity in the measures examined and in the broader work of the implementing agencies.

In seeking to support a process of change, the measure studies require the full engagement of those responsible for the design and delivery of the measure concerned. To this end, the measure studies are undertaken in a way that achieves ownership of the process by the relevant implementing agency. The measure studies are, therefore, pursued on the basis of a partnership approach between the Equality Authority and the organisation responsible for the measure. Within the partnership:

- The Equality Authority leads in relation to standards for the study. Terms of reference need to be established and then agreed within the partnership. These must ensure measure studies are challenging, stimulate change and extract learning;
- The Equality Authority leads in relation to quality control for the measure study.

In particular, ensuring the terms of reference are applied and convening a meeting of the partnership to discuss the action plan arising out of the measure study;

- The organisation responsible for the measure leads in relation to implementation of the measure study. The final outputs of the study are subject to the decision of the implementing agency. This includes actions to enhance the capacity of the measure to promote equality and accommodate diversity. The study is therefore owned by that organisation;
- The Equality Authority will lead in relation to assessing the progress made in implementing agreed recommendations;
- The Equality Authority will lead in relation to dissemination of learning, in particular through the framework of the EHRDOP. This will require electronic publication of the studies, development of synthesis reports that draw from a number of measure studies, and other activities.

This report presents the findings of the measure study of Measure 11B: Early School Leavers - Youthreach and Travellers. As defined in its Programme Complement the aim of this measure is "To provide second-chance education for early school leavers and Travellers with minimal or no educational qualifications." The measure is implemented by the Department of Education and Science (DES) in conjunction with local Vocational Education Committees (VECs). Operationally, Measure 11B comprises two strands of educational provision: early school leavers are catered for within Youthreach Centres and Travellers within Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs)¹. At the end of 2005, 90 Youthreach Centres and 33 Senior Traveller Training Centres were in operation. In budgetary terms, Measure 11B has an allocation of almost €407 million for the period 2000 to 2006.

Measure 11B is one of a number of measures in the EHRDOP that explicitly target particular groups for inclusion within its provisions, in this case members of the Traveller community (who have minimal or no educational qualifications). As will be discussed in more detail later, Youthreach, while targeted toward early school leavers between the ages of 15 and 20 years, also caters for young Travellers and young people with disabilities. Given the capacity of both Youthreach and STTCs to attract young members of the Traveller community, one of the objectives of this study is to examine how they address the educational and labour market inequalities experienced by young Travellers and, on that basis, identify lessons that are relevant to improving the capacity of other measures to accommodate young Travellers and other groups of young people experiencing ground related inequalities. More generally, the measure study seeks to identify in what ways the implementation of Measure 11B can contribute to an understanding of how to address the educational and labour market inequalities experienced by young people.

¹It should be noted that the EHRDDOP includes a second measure that is also explicitly targeting early school leavers: Measure 11A Early School Leaver Progression. It is implemented by FÁS who in consultation with the Department of Education and Science provide a number of programmes designed to meet the needs of early school leavers. The programmes provided include foundation training places, bridging training programmes for access to higher skills training, advisory supports to assist progression and flexible part-time and work-based options. Included in Measure 11A are activities such as the provision of counselling and guidance and remedial education. Operationally, Measure 11A is delivered in Community Training Centres (formerly Community Training Workshops).

Three points should be noted at the outset in relation to Youthreach and STTCs. First, since their introduction, both forms of provision have been in continual evolution in terms of the content, scope and process of their provision. For example, in recent years this has included engagement with FETAC in respect of developing policies on quality assurance and the introduction of the Quality Framework Initiative (QFI), providing an increased level of counselling, guidance and advocacy with support from the DES, and an involvement in delivering health promotion activities in conjunction with the Health Services Executive. Second, the profile of participants in both forms of provision has not remained static over time. While systematic data are not available there is evidence that the issues being presented by participants are not confined to the absence or low level of educational qualifications alone, but also encompass a range of other personal and familial problems. The evolution of provision is, in part, a response to changes in the profile of participants. Finally, both forms of provision have been the subject of policy reviews focusing on their relevance, effectiveness and development. Most recently, STTCs have been examined within the context of the development of a Traveller Education Strategy (e.g., DES, 2005; DES, 2006) and both Youthreach and STTCs are the subject of an Expenditure Review - now a Value for Money Review (see Box 1.1 for terms of reference of the former).

Box 1.1

Terms of Reference for the Expenditure Review^a of Measure 11B: Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres

- *Set out the original aims and objectives of the two programmes.*
- *Determine if the aims and objectives are still valid and relevant in 2006 and if they are compatible with the overall strategy of the Department.*
- *Define the outputs associated with the programmes and identify the level and trend of those outputs.*
- *Evaluate if the programmes are providing for the needs of the targeted groups and if the programme objectives have been achieved in an efficient and effective manner.*
- *Evaluate the appropriateness of the educational provision in the programmes.*
- *Identify gaps in provision – identify where improvements can be made. Are there alternatives that would be more efficient and effective and cater for the needs of the target groups?*
- *Provide potential future performance indicators that might better monitor the performance of the programmes for the learners, for the staff, for the Department of Education and Science, for the Department of Finance and for future Expenditure Review Initiatives.*
- *Provide recommendations for the future, and in particular recommend if the programmes – current or adapted – warrant the continued allocation of public funding on a current and ongoing basis.*

^aIn June 2006 the Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative was introduced replacing the Expenditure Review Initiative resulting in the planned Expenditure Review of Youthreach and STTCs becoming a Value for Money Review. Details of the Value for Money Framework are available on the Department of Finance website www.finance.gov.ie

One theme running through the consultations and reviews of both Youthreach and STTCs is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to examine their operations and effectiveness without considering their role as part of overall educational provision and responses to educational disadvantage within mainstream second-level education. That is, to a large extent both the profile of participants with which they engage and the forms of intervention they make are influenced by changes in the capacity of the mainstream second-level education system to retain students from diverse backgrounds and with different educational needs up to completion of the senior cycle.

2. Methodology

The methodology for this measure study involved:

- collecting and reviewing documentation on programme design (e.g., eligibility criteria, recruitment processes, supports to participants etc) and implementation procedures (e.g., roles and responsibilities of various personnel);
- collecting and reviewing previous studies / reports on the measure;
- obtaining and analysing data on programme participants;
- analysis of contextual data from Census 2002;
- reviewing data collection and programme monitoring procedures;
- obtaining and reviewing documentation on policies, practices and initiatives in the area of equality and promoting diversity;
- attending a round table discussion as part of an Expenditure Review of Youthreach and STTC being undertaken by the DES;
- reviewing documentation and consultation reports on the operations of Youthreach and STTCs;
- reading current policy documents on responses to educational disadvantage and educational provision for members of the Traveller community; and,
- discussions with personnel responsible for programme delivery to obtain their views on issues related to implementation of the Measure IIB.

3. Context and Policy

As defined in its programme complement, the intended beneficiaries of Measure IIB are early school leavers and Travellers with minimal or no educational qualifications. The development of educational provision for both of these groups of young people and of pathways for their integration into the labour market has been strongly influenced by the priorities and operation of the European Social Fund (ESF) since the mid-1980s (see ESFPEU, 1996 for an extended discussion of this). These priorities reflected the high rates of youth unemployment prevailing in all Member States at that time - the average across the Member States being 17% in 1985 with the rate in Ireland reaching 25%. While youth unemployment has declined significantly since that time, policy concern with early school leavers remains high though, as will be seen, the focus now reflects concerns about social inclusion, addressing educational disadvantage and enabling lifelong learning (see NESF, 1997 and NESF, 2002; and DES, 2000 and 2005).

It is notable that more recent policy and related recommendations in respect of combating early-school leaving place considerable emphasis on building the capacity of the mainstream educational system at both primary and post-primary levels to prevent early school leaving and ensuring that the needs of particular groups of young people (e.g., young people from minority ethnic groups, members of the Traveller community, and young people with disabilities) are effectively addressed within the mainstream educational system (see *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS): An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion*, DES, 2005). Moreover, there is also a growing awareness that efforts to retain young people within mainstream second-level education need to encompass actions outside of the school environment focused on the community and the family circumstances of potential early school leavers and that early intervention (at pre-school and primary levels) is also required. With regard to the former, it should be noted that within the new School Support Programme (SSP) provided for in DEIS, two of the eight programmes (i.e., the Home School Community Liaison Scheme and the School Completion Programme) are explicitly concerned with addressing barriers to learning arising from the home / familial and community circumstances of young people at risk of early school leaving. Also, in the case of young Travellers, the Visiting Teachers Service for Travellers also explicitly seeks to engage with and support Traveller parents with a view to maximising the participation and attainment of their children in the educational system.

3.1 Brief History

Origins and Objectives

Both strands of Measure IIB have been in operation for a considerable period of time. Youthreach officially dates from 1988 but reflects provision for early school leavers prior to that date, particularly provision related to the delivery of what was then called the “Social Guarantee”. The Social Guarantee, which was launched in Ireland in 1985, gave effect to the 1983 European Council Resolution on Vocational Training Policy which effectively sought to guarantee access to unemployed early school leavers to full-time programmes of basic training and work experience. The objectives of the Social Guarantee in Ireland are set out in Box 3.1 (page 12) as they serve to indicate the specific context from which the Youthreach strand of Measure IIB evolved.

Box 3.1

Objectives of the Social Guarantee in the Irish Context

- *Provide basic training and education for those who left school with no qualifications (Priority Group 1).*
- *Improve the prospects for those who left school at Intermediate or Group Certificate stage (Priority Group 2).*
- *Provide a support mechanism for all school leavers, especially those who, due to lack of qualifications, encounter difficulties in securing a firm foothold in the labour market.*
- *Provide a local, a regional and a national mechanism for joint interface work, in both planning and action, between the labour agencies and the education agencies and also involve, both locally and nationally, other relevant bodies in relation to the transition of early school leavers from school to work.*
- *Develop and expand relevant provision within both education and labour systems to meet the needs of early school leavers and school leavers generally who have difficulty in finding their way into the labour market.*
- *Build progression within and through both systems, as an alternative path to meaningful and successful careers for early school leavers who would otherwise be excluded from existing systems and to facilitate re-entry to “mainstream education”.*
- *Provide suitable and relevant certification for participants in all transition-type programmes.*
- *Provide joint in-service training for all those involved in delivering the Social Guarantee.*

Source: Evaluation Report – Early School Leavers Provision, pp. 52-53, ESFPEU, 1996.

Examination of these objectives shows that, at the time, there was a focus on enabling transitions to the labour market. The policy aim was to develop forms of provision for early school leavers that enabled them to successfully make the transition to employment (and thereby reduce the high level of unemployment among early school leavers). In that regard, there was a focus on outcomes related to employment rather than on the quality and level of educational qualifications secured by early school leavers and the relevance of such qualifications to enabling engagement with lifelong learning. This emphasis on employment was also reflected in elements of the curriculum and the development of various forms of linkages to employment (e.g., incorporation of work experience and employment placements in programmes).

The emphasis on employment related outcomes as the yardstick by which to measure the performance of early school leaver provision has somewhat dissipated in recent years as a result of a policy emphasis on lifelong learning and developments arising from the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, placing an emphasis on not just access to education and training but also on “transfer” and “progression”. As defined in the Glossary of Terms for the Development of the National Framework of Qualifications “transfer” is “the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme, having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence acquired”. “Progression” is defined as the “process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another where each programme is of a higher level than the preceding programme”. As will be seen in the discussion of the outcomes of Youthreach and STTCs later in this report, issues relating to the relative importance of employment outcomes versus progression outcomes as defined above persist.

Establishment of Youthreach and STTCs

What is now called Youthreach was formally launched in October 1988 and described as a programme guaranteeing up to two years of co-ordinated education, training or work experience for unqualified school-leavers. The programme was introduced in 1989 and was seen as a pilot and potentially temporary response to the then very high level of early school leaving and the concomitant high levels of unemployment experienced by early school leavers. Since its introduction the number of Youthreach Centres has expanded substantially and currently there are 90 centres in operation. In terms of programme content, there has been an evolution from the provision of mainly practical subjects (certified by NVCA and City and Guilds) to FETAC modules. Participants in many Youthreach Centres can pursue the Junior Certificate with the Leaving Certificate Applied being available as a progression option. In September of 2004 Youthreach Centres were placed on a statutory footing being designated as “centres for education” under the Educational Act of 1998.

The initial establishment of what are now called STTCs dates from the late 1960s and early 1970s. The context at that time was the high level of non-transfer to second-level education, the very high rate of early school leaving among young Travellers actually transferring to second-level, and the prevalence of literacy difficulties among young Travellers. While accurate figures are not available, the Department of Education and Science estimated that in the 1989 / 90 school year only 20% of Traveller children in the 12 to 15 year age group attended mainstream second-level schools and that, moreover, the majority of these young Travellers left before completing the junior cycle. While the retention rate for Travellers within mainstream second-level education has increased since then, it still remains significantly below that of their settled counterparts.

The Report of the Travelling People Review Body (1983) specifically drew attention to the “educational deficiencies” of young Travellers and supported the development and expansion of a network of STTCs. It envisaged the aim of the STTCs as: “Supplementing the educational deficiencies of young Travellers aged between 15 and 25 years and preparing them to take up gainful employment or avail of further more advanced training at the end of the course” (p. 75). Subsequently, during the 1990s, the STTCs sought to develop their provision for young Travellers, emphasising the acquisition of skills relevant to assisting the transition to work and supporting them to participate in social and community life.

The Report of the Task Force on the Travelling People (1995) commented positively on the STTCs and drew attention to the positive role of the centres in valuing and celebrating Traveller culture (and thereby being attractive to Travellers) as well as the positive role of the centres in addressing the educational needs of Travellers. One of the key recommendations of the Task Force report was that responsibility for the administration and development of STTCs should lie with the DES. This recommendation was implemented in 1998. On the basis of a review of STTCs in 2000, initiated by the Co-ordinator for STTCs, the transfer of responsibility for STTCs to the DES was viewed as having stimulated the development of a more “holistic type of education” and resulted in STTCs becoming “more student centred with a greater involvement of Travellers in the design and implementation of the cultural educational programmes” (Griffin and Harper, 2001, p. 13). As in the case of Youthreach Centres, STTCs were designated as “centres for education” in 2004.

A particular feature of STTCs is the participation of adult Travellers. When initially established, eligibility in terms of age was defined as young Travellers aged between 15 and 25 years. The upper age limit was subsequently abolished, partly in response to demand from Travellers older than 25 years for access to the centres, but also in response to the value of facilitating the parents of participants to address their own educational needs through participation in STTCs. The Operational Programme for Human Resource Development 1994-1999 included the following in its description of the activities of STTCs: "Arising from the success of the programme in meeting the needs of young Travellers, an increasing number of older adults - including parents of the younger participants - are now availing of the programme" (p. 19, OPHRD 1994-1999). In 2005 the majority (54.5%) of participants are over 25 years of age (up from a figure of 48.1% in 2003). Also, as will be discussed further below, just 8.4% of adult Travellers participating in STTCs are men.

3.2 Policy Context

There are a number of aspects to the policy context within which Measure 11B Early School Leavers - Youthreach and Travellers has operated in the past and now currently operates (e.g., educational disadvantage, educational inequality, Traveller education, employment and transitions in the youth labour market, and more recently, social inclusion, lifelong learning and equality). An overview of the various elements of this context and of important milestones in the evolution of policy and practice of direct relevance to Measure 11B is presented in *Evaluation Report: Early School Leavers Provision* published by the European Social Fund Programme Evaluation Unit in 1996 (ESFPEU, 1996). That report highlighted inter alia how the policy response at various times and to varying degrees - up to 1996 - engaged with issues such as the high unemployment rate experienced by early and unqualified school leavers, the persistence of educational inequalities based on social class related factors and, as reflected in who actually becomes an early school leaver, preventative actions aimed at increasing retention rates in the educational system.

The report also showed that, at an important period in the evolution of provision for early school leavers, there was a significant focus on "transition education which is designed to ease the move from school to work and adult life" (p. 42). The emphasis on "transition" remains as the overall guiding aim of Youthreach and STTCs, despite significant changes in the labour market context of Measure 11B as well as significant developments in educational policy and provision aimed at preventing early school leaving and enabling access to lifelong learning.

The concern with casting provision for early school leavers within the mould of transition education is still evident in the stated aims of educational provision in Youthreach Centres (YCs) and Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs). As presented for consideration in the context of the expenditure review of Youthreach and STTCs initiated early in 2006 by the DES, the aim of Youthreach and STTCs is stated as follows:

"The aim of Youthreach and the Senior Traveller Training Centres is to provide participants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to successfully make the transition to work and adult life, and to participate fully in their communities." More recently, the policy response has been shaped by a concern to achieve social inclusion, promote access to lifelong learning, and tackle education inequalities and disadvantage through actions aimed at increasing retention within the mainstream

second-level system (see DES, 2005). These more recent policy concerns, as well as the changed labour market context within which Measure IIB now operates, form the backdrop to this report.²

3.3 Early School Leaving: A Persistent Issue

In 1980 the retention rate to Leaving Certificate level was 53%. By 2000 this figure had risen to 78%. These figures illustrate the significant progress that has been made in increasing the proportion of students retained within second-level education up to completion of the senior cycle. The figures reflect the result of significant effort particularly from the mid 1980s forward aimed at retaining young people in school to Leaving Certificate level. These efforts continue and form an important focus for Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department of Education and Science' Action Plan for Educational Inclusion published in 2005.

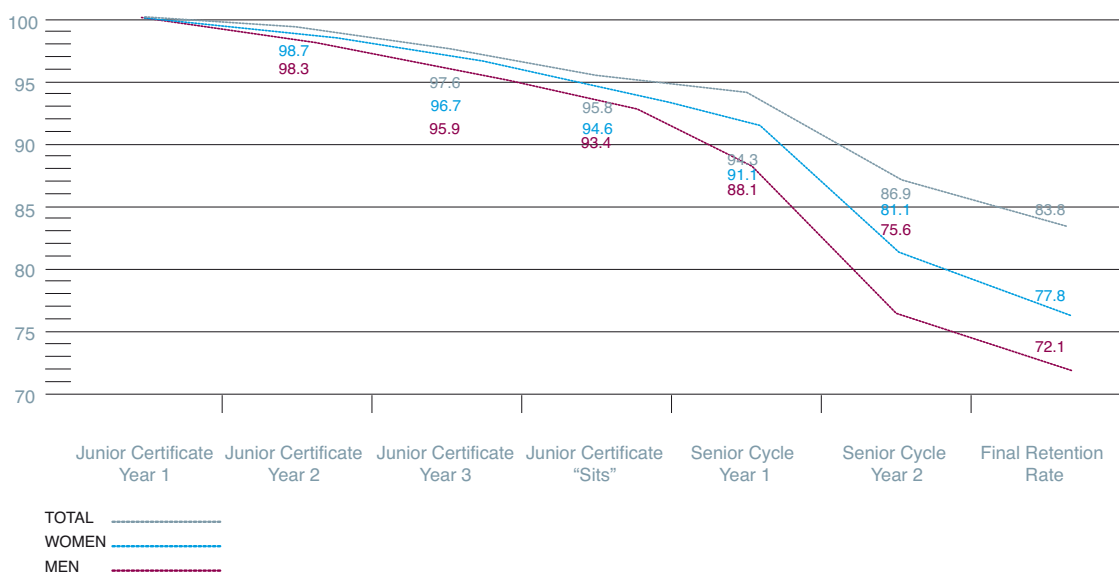


Figure 3.1 Retention Rates for each Milestone for the 1996 Cohort of Entrants to Junior Certificate Year 1 (Source: Department of Education and Science, 2005, p. 7).

² Note should also be taken here of recent influences on policy arising from the European Union's focus on actions to bring the education and training systems of the Member States to world class level by 2010. Arising from the endorsement by the Heads of State and Government of the common objectives for education and training in Barcelona 2002, a process of co-operation was launched in this area focusing on three major goals and 13 specific objectives covering various types and levels of education and training aimed at making lifelong learning a reality for the populations of the Member States. One of the key objectives is reducing the number of early school leavers (i.e., persons who completed their education with at most lower second-level education and who are not participating in education or training) to no more than 10% in 2010. Based on EU figures for 2005, Ireland's rate of early school leaving is 12.6% and is below the EU average of 14.9% and 2.6% points above the target of 10%. For more information see Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training (2006).

Despite the progress made, approximately one in five young people continue to leave second-level education without a Leaving Certificate qualification. Within this group of young people are those who leave without any formal qualification and who have never sat an exam, those who leave after completing the Junior Cycle, those leaving before competing the Senior Cycle, and those leaving without obtaining a Leaving Certificate (i.e., obtaining less than 5 Grade Ds). The points at which young people left the second-level education among all entrants to second-level education in 1996 are shown in Figure 3.1 (page 15). It shows that the level of retention to sitting the Junior Certificate is 94.6%. Conversely, 5.4% of young people entering the system in 1996 left before sitting the Junior Certificate. This corresponds to an absolute figure of 3,460. The final retention rate is 83.8% overall. Conversely, 16.2% of all entrants to second-level education in 1996 did not complete the final year of the senior cycle. In terms of absolute numbers the figure is just under 10,400.

Table 3.1 Educational Qualifications of School Leavers 2002 / 2003

	Number	%
No Qualifications	2,475	3.7
Junior Certificate	9,738	14.5
Leaving Certificate	55,167	81.8
Total	67,380	100.0

Source: ESRI, 2005, Appendix B, p. 52

The data summarised in Figure 3.1 are based on following entrants to second-level education (in 1996) and tracking them over time (up to 2002). An alternative source of data on early school leaving is the annual survey of school leavers undertaken by the DES. It focuses on the number of students leaving second-level education each year (i.e., regardless of the year they entered second-level). In line with the increase in retention rates over time, the number of young people leaving school with no qualifications or with less than upper second-level education has fallen over the past 20 years. However, over the past 10 years there has been little change in the number of unqualified school-leavers. In absolute terms this figure has been of the order of 2,500, corresponding to approximately three to four percent of school leavers annually.

Data from the most recent annual survey of school leavers dealing with young people leaving second-level education during the 2002 / 03 school year are presented in Table 3.1. Thus, in the most recent year for which figures are available almost 2,500 young people left school with no qualifications and a further 9,738 left before completion of the senior cycle. Thus, among 2002 / 03 school leavers, a total of 18.2% left school without completing the Leaving Certificate. Additionally an estimated 500 to 700 young people do not transfer from primary to second-level.

Box 3.2

NESF Observations on the “Slow Progress in Tackling the Number of Early School Leavers”

- *Young people have been pulled prematurely into the buoyant labour market.*
- *The benefits of initiatives that have been introduced to tackle early school leaving are not yet evident.*
- *Conversely, policy responses to educational disadvantage have made little or no difference to those who will leave school early anyway.*
- *At a more fundamental level, inequalities within society are being reproduced in the educational system and more radical approaches are needed if these are to be addressed.*

Source: NESF, 2002, p. 6.

Commenting on the levelling-off of retention rates to the final year of the senior cycle and the persistence of early school leaving (as counted by the annual survey of school leavers) the NESF pointed to the possible role of four factors (see Box 3.2). Significantly, the NESF also made a key recommendation in the light of their observations that “objective evaluation of the cumulative effect of the programmes introduced, on a longitudinal basis, is now needed to identify more precisely why more progress in tackling early school leaving has not been achieved” (NESF, 2002, p. 6).

3.4 Early School Leaving : Inequalities Related to Membership of the Traveller Community and Young People with a Disability

Much discussion of early school leaving has focused on the role of parental social class and employment status, poverty, and residing in a disadvantaged area as contributory factors (e.g., Hannan and O’Riain, 1993). This emphasis on the broad influence of social class is consistent with evidence of the strong relationship between social class and outcomes from the education system in Ireland (see Smyth and Hannan, 2000; Lyons et al., 2003). Other research (e.g., ERC, 2000) and the work of the NESF (2002) has drawn attention to the mediating role of school and institutional factors, ability and attainment, school attendance, peer group behaviour and family structure in influencing decisions to leave school early. Surprisingly, given evidence of ground based inequalities in educational outcomes and in relation to early school leaving, little explicit attention has been paid until relatively recently to investigating why young people with disabilities and young Travellers leave the educational system both earlier and with lower levels of educational qualifications than other young people (see Figure 3.2, page 18).

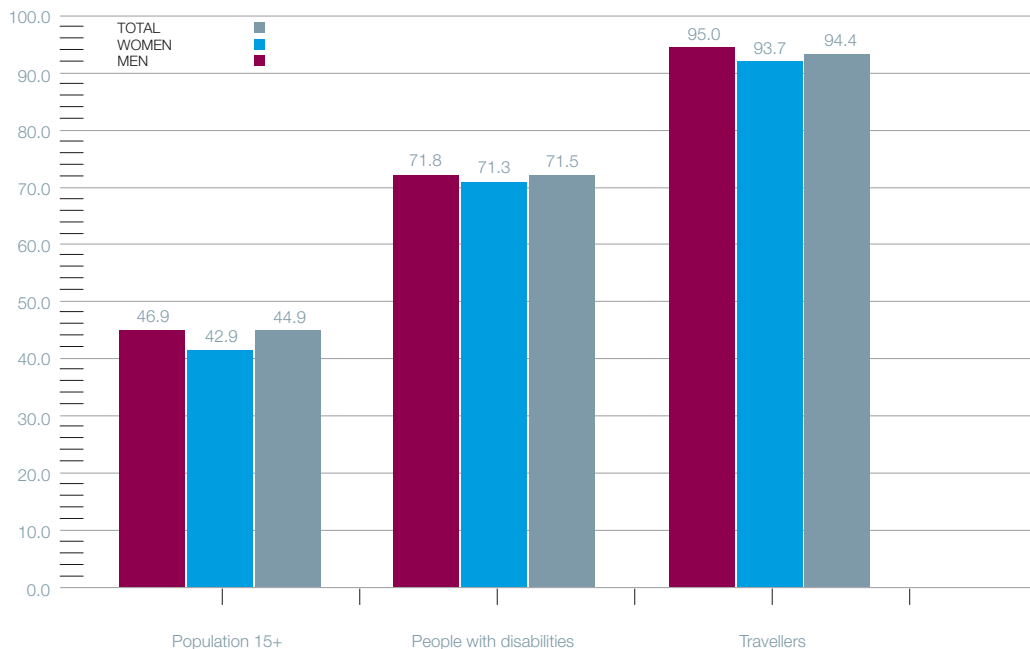


Figure 3.2 Proportion of Persons Aged 15 Years and Over who Completed their Education with Less than Upper Second-level Qualifications (Source: Census 2002)

In addition to the data presented in Figure 3.2 which are extracted from Census 2002, a number of other sources of data point to the high risk of early school leaving among young members of the Traveller community and young people with disabilities. The Survey of Traveller Education Provision undertaken by the Inspectorate of the DES and published in 2005 shows the very low level of participation by young Travellers in the senior cycle of second-level education. In the school year 2004 / 05 a total of 217 young Travellers were in senior cycle classes. Expressed as a proportion of young Travellers aged 17 and 18 years in Census 2002, this figure corresponds to just under one in five (19.7%). In relation to young people with disabilities a recent survey of young (aged 16 to 25 years) recipients of Disability Allowance in the Midlands Region found that 43.2% had no formal educational qualifications, 19.3% reported that they had left school following completion of the Junior Certificate, and 37.5% reported that they had Leaving Certificate qualifications (WRCsec, 2007). Secondary analysis of data from Census 2002 undertaken by the National Disability Authority (NDA) also points to higher rates of early school leaving among young people with disabilities than among their non-disabled peers (NDA, 2005).

The above figures strongly indicate that young Travellers and young people with disabilities feature prominently among the annual cohort of young people leaving the educational system with no or limited educational qualifications and thereby fall into the target group for both Youthreach and STTCs.

3.5 Participation Rates in Education and Training

An analysis of the number of persons aged 15 to 24 years declaring their principal economic status as students in Census 2002 was undertaken for this measure study.³ The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.2 (page 19) and they show that the proportions of persons classified as students among young people with disabilities and Travellers are considerably below the corresponding figure for the rest of the youth population.

**Table 3.2
Persons Aged 15 to 24 Years Reporting their Principal Economic Status as Students in Census 2002**

		People with Disabilities	Travellers	Rest of Population
Males	Number students	4,145	484	151,212
	% students	37.5	20.4	48.4
Females	Number students	3,529	583	167,179
	% students	40.7	23.5	54.9
Total	Number students	7,674	1,067	318,391
	% students	38.1	22.0	51.6

When the proportion of young Travellers (22%) declaring themselves to be students in Census 2002 is compared with the known enrolment of young Travellers in mainstream second-level education, Youthreach and STTCs in the 2002 / 03 school year the latter figure - at 26.1% - is found to be somewhat higher (see Table 3.3). This suggests that there may be a degree of underreporting of student status by Travellers parents responding to the Census.

**Table 3.3
Number of Travellers Aged 15 to 24 Years Participating in Second-Level Education, Youthreach and STTCs in 2002 / 2003 School Year**

Number in Population 15-24	Number in Mainstream Education Third Year and Over	Number in STTCs	Number in Youthreach	Total in Full-time Education	% of Population in Fulltime Education
4,850	462	509	296	1,267	26.1
Number in Population 15-19					
2,724	462	356	296	1,128	35.5

³ While it would have been more useful to examine the principal economic status within the population aged 15 to 19 years, figures for this age range are not available from published Census 2002 results.

Further examination of the figures in Table 3.3 (page 19) shows that among Travellers in the 15 to 24 year age range, the single largest number of “students” is found in STTCs. However, it should be noted that the majority (71.9%) of these young Travellers are women. Moreover, as discussed later in Section 6, there is evidence that the number of young Travellers participating in STTCs is declining while their numbers in mainstream second-level schools and Youthreach are increasing. When the population and participation figures presented in Table 3.3 are used to calculate the participation rate in the 15 to 19 year age band, the overall participation rate of young Travellers in second-level education, Youthreach and STTCs combined rises to 35.5%. That is, just over one in three Travellers in the 15 to 19 year age band were in education or training in the 2002 / 03 school year, with the majority of these being in Youthreach or a STTC.⁴

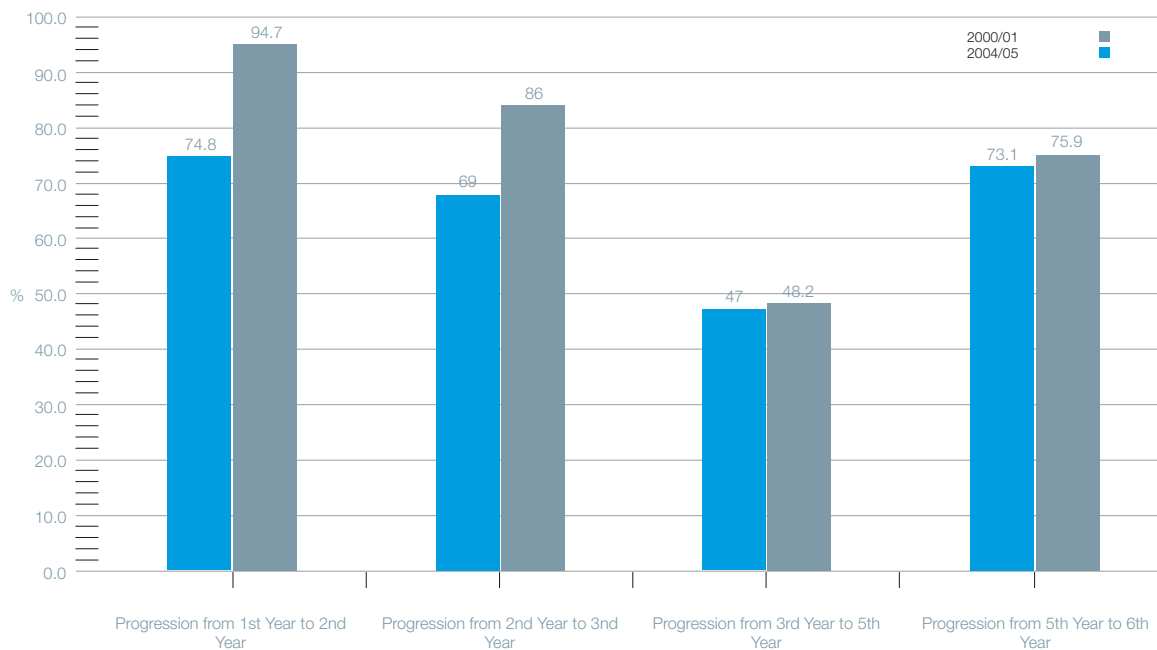


Figure 3.3 One Year Retention Rates for Travellers in Second-Level Education in 2000/2001 and 2004/2005

⁴ It should be noted that these figures presented do not include young Travellers participating in other training programmes (e.g., Community Training Centres (CTCs) and apprenticeship programmes). As the number of young Travellers participating in these programmes is small, their inclusion would not have a major impact on the trends observed.

3.6 Recent Progress in Respect of Traveller Participation in Mainstream Second-level Education

Since the publication of the *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community* in 1995 the formal position of educational policy is that young members of the Traveller community should receive their education in mainstream second-level schools. This position is also underlined in the recent Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy published by the DES in 2006. Since the Task Force reported in 1995, a range of measures have been implemented to enhance Traveller participation in mainstream second-level education.⁵ The effect of these measures has been to increase the number of young Travellers enrolled in second-level schools from 961 in the 1999 / 2000 school year to 1,845 in the 2004 / 2005 school year. The latter figure corresponds to approximately 45% of the relevant age cohort. In terms of absolute numbers, however, only a small number of young Travellers are enrolled in sixth year: 62, 63, and 72 for the 2002/2003, 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 school years respectively.

The most recent figures available from the DES on Traveller participation in mainstream second-level schools show that in the 2005/2006 school year 2,229 Travellers were enrolled, an increase of 20.8% on the 2004/05 figure.⁶ For the purpose of this report the annual proportion of Travellers progressing one year further in their second-level education was calculated for two cohorts - Travellers in second-level schools in 2000/2001 and Travellers in second-level schools in 2004/2005. The resulting proportions can be interpreted as one year retention rates. The results presented in Figure 3.3 (page 20) show that the one year retention rates during the Junior Cycle of second-level increased substantially between the two cohorts examined. In contrast, the corresponding increases to and during the Senior Cycle are very modest. Thus, while progress is apparent in respect at increasing Traveller participation in the Junior Cycle, significant challenges remain in respect of increasing Traveller participation in the Senior Cycle of second-level and, in particular, increasing the number and proportion of young Travellers completing the Leaving Certificate.

⁵ These measures include provision of an additional 1.5 ex-quota hours a week for each Traveller pupil, a supplementary capitation grant, the Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers, and the publication in 2002 of Guidelines on Traveller Education in Second-level Schools which provide advice on responding to the educational needs of Traveller students.

⁶ Figures supplied by the DES in February 2007.

4. Implementing Body

The implementing body for Measure 11B is the Department of Education and Science in conjunction with local VECs. Both Youthreach Centres and STTCs are managed and operated by VECs. Funds are allocated to the VECs to support the operation of these centres. In 2005, a total of €65.5 million was allocated under Measure 11B.

4.1 Organisations and Roles

Responsibility for Youthreach and STTCs within the DES lies with the Further Education Section. In the case of both Youthreach and STTCs there is also a National Co-ordinator whose role it is to support the implementation of the programmes and to provide developmental and other inputs, including maintaining the websites for both Youthreach and STTCs. Within both Youthreach and STTCs there are networking activities between individual centres who maintain a degree of autonomy in their operations and specific provisions. Each STTC has a local management committee which is a statutory subcommittee of the VEC. The committees comprise members of the VECs, local representative organisations, and members of the Traveller community.

4.2 Equality Policies in the Department of Education and Science

The overarching policies in respect of equality on the part of the DES are set out in a number of documents including *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* (2000) and in its Strategic Plan 2005 - 2007. Recently, the DES has also published its policy and proposals in relation to combating educational disadvantage (*Delivering Equality of Opportunity in School (DEIS): An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion*, 2005) and an education strategy for Travellers (*Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy*, 2006). There is a complementarity between the latter two reports in respect of ensuring that members of the Traveller community should be supported to receive their education in post-primary schools in an integrated manner and to secure outcomes from the educational system comparable to their settled counterparts.

In *Learning for Life: The White Paper on Adult Education (2000)*, equality and interculturalism are identified as two of the three core principles underpinning adult education (the third being a systemic approach). The nature and operation of these principles is defined as follows:

equality of access, participation and outcome for participants in adult education, with pro-active strategies to counteract barriers arising from differences of socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity and disability. A key priority in promoting an inclusive society is to target investment towards those most at risk;

inter-culturalism - the need to frame educational policy and practice in the context of serving a diverse population as opposed to a uniform one, and the development of curricula, materials, training and inservice, modes of assessment and delivery methods which accept such diversity as the norm. This refers not only to combating racism and encouraging participation of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in education, but also to a recognition that many minority groups such as travellers, people with disabilities, older adults, participants in disadvantaged areas have distinct needs and cultural patterns which must be respected and reflected in an educational context. It also envisages a more active role by adult educators in the promotion of the Irish language and culture. (p. 13)

Box 4.1

The Challenges of Inter-culturalism in Adult Education

From *Learning for Life: The White Paper on Adult Education (2000)*

- *recognition that many immigrants, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, have specific urgent requirements, from basic information through to language training;*
- *the fact that many refugees and asylum seekers may not have the requisite job market skills or may have difficulty in achieving recognition for qualifications;*
- *recognition that many minority groups, such as Travellers or people with disabilities, may also have distinct cultural patterns which must be acknowledged in an educational context;*
- *the need to develop mechanisms to support different groups in ways which are empathetic to and which respect their own heritage and cultural diversity;*
- *the need to provide specific tailored programmes and basic literacy and language education for all immigrants as an elementary part of provision;*
- *the acknowledgement that the indigenous population also needs educational support as it adapts to an inter-cultural context;*
- *recognition of awards and qualifications achieved in other countries;*
- *the need to provide mechanisms whereby all minority and marginalised groups have the possibility to influence policy and to shape interventions which have a bearing on them;*
- *the need to build structures which are predicated upon the requirements of a diverse population as opposed to a uniform one, and the development of educational curricula, resources and materials, training and inservice strategies, modes of assessment and delivery which accept such diversity as the norm. (p. 51)*

In catering for diversity, the White Paper acknowledges that uniform, nationally organised educational systems find it difficult to respond to the needs of particular sub-groups. The challenges the White Paper identifies in the area of inter-culturalism in adult education are summarised in Box 4.1.

In its current Strategic Plan 2005-2007 the DES places a priority on achieving inclusion and it identifies this as the second high level objective of its plan: "We will support, through education, a socially inclusive society with equal opportunity for all". Operationally this is addressed through six objectives that include targeted support programmes for children experiencing or at risk of educational disadvantage and early school leaving, developing a high quality inclusive further education and vocational training system for young people and adults, and promoting equity of access to third level education. Both Youthreach and STTCs are identified in the Strategic Plan 2005-2007 as programmes that are relevant and effective in meeting the needs of young early school leavers. They are specifically identified under Objective 2.2: "We will promote the development of a high quality inclusive further education and vocational training system for young people and adults, which is relevant to social and economic needs" (p. 27).

In its (*Action Plan for Educational Inclusion*) published in May 2005 the DES presents the actions it will take to address educational disadvantage, the latter being defined in the Education Act (1998) as: "...the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools". The two

core components of the Action Plan are: (i) a standardised system for identifying, and regularly reviewing, levels of disadvantage; and, (ii) a new integrated School Support Programme (SSP) which will bring together, and build upon, existing interventions for schools and school clusters / communities with a concentrated level of educational disadvantage. Approximately 600 primary and 150 second-level schools will be included in the SSP. In the context to the current measure study of Youthreach and STTCs it can be noted that, to the extent that the SSP is effective, it is likely to influence both the number and profile of needs among early school leavers. One possible effect is that to the extent that the package of measures comprising SSP is successful, it will reduce the annual flow of early unqualified leavers from the second-level system. However, a possible side effect is that to the extent that it is not capable of retaining certain young people within the second-level system, the profile of early school leavers will change.

In the *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy (2006)* a policy objective of achieving the educational inclusion of Travellers is identified. The term “inclusion” is central to the report and its recommendations and is defined as encompassing “the integration of Travellers in mainstream provision at all levels of the educational system, in a fully inclusive model of educational provision, thereby creating a positive environment for all the Traveller community” (p. 10). The specific recommendations of relevance to Measure 11B are framed with reference to the general objective that: “Travellers should have equality of access, equality of participation and equality of outcome in a fully inclusive further education system that respects Traveller identity and culture” (p. 68). While recognising the role that STTCs have played in respect of providing access to further education for members of the Traveller community, the report recommends that their role be reviewed (see Recommendation 5, p 69) particularly in the context of the report’s overall commitment to securing Traveller participation in all forms of mainstream education, including mainstream further education.

Given our observations on the number of young people leaving Measure 11B before completion of the programme later in this report, it is notable that one of the recommendations of the Traveller Education Strategy (i.e., Recommendation 10 in Further Education, p. 71) places a strong emphasis on the need to collect data on Travellers’ progression (or lack of progression) in the education and training system. Currently, it is very difficult to track the progression of participants between the various measures comprising the EHRDOP and, consequently, to determine the precise benefits of participation in targeted measures such as Measure 11B in terms of progression to mainstream measures within the programme or educational and training interventions not included in the EHRDOP.

5. Measure 11B: Early School Leavers and Travellers

Measure 11B falls within the Employability pillar of the EHRDOP. There are three specific objectives associated with the 22 measures included in this pillar: mobilisation of labour supply, preventive approach to unemployment, and social inclusion. Technically, Measure 11B is one of nine measures seeking “to minimise unemployment and prevent the drift into long-term unemployment by strengthening the preventive approach” (EHRDOP, p. 68).

Box 5.1

Actions to Incorporate Wider Equal Opportunities Principle in Measure 11B

- *in the further education sector, a working group commissioned a consultancy to develop modules in interculturalism for use across the sector. The modules have been approved at Foundation, Level 1 and Level 2 by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC);*
- *the Department has also issued an information booklet for schools on asylum seekers and has clarified by letter the entitlement to further and higher education of non-EU nationals;*
- *development of an accredited tutor training qualification on teaching ESOL;*
- *staff employed come from teaching, vocational, youthwork and welfare backgrounds;*
- *an annual inservice programme providing for skills exchange workshops, coordinators conferences, IT training and development, and focussing on a range of themes relevant to the programme (e.g., subject areas, progression, management, staff development, drama, linking with other agencies, health and safety etc etc.);*
- *development of a Certificate and Diploma courses in UL, DCU, UCG and Maynooth in the field of adult and continuing education; the fees of staff with no formal pedagogical training are paid to enable them to attend these programme on an inservice basis;*
- *centres are encouraged to develop referral networks and good linkages with local schools, youth, health and welfare, probation, juvenile liaison and employment services, area based partnerships, and FÁS.*

Source: Programme Complement Measure 11B, p. 5.

Three horizontal principles of the NDP/CSF apply to Measure 11B: the Gender Equality, Social Inclusion, and Wider Equal Opportunities Principles. Following on from the assessment of how the horizontal principles could be more effectively embedded in the operation of specific measures (undertaken by the NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit in 2003), Measure 11B was designated as one of 10 measures of the EHRDOP specifically required to identify actions relevant to securing the intent of the Wider Equal Opportunities Principle (see Annex 1 for list of measures). In its revised Programme Complement the actions relevant to the WEOP are presented (see Box 5.1). The actions being taken are located specifically with reference to commitments in the *White Paper on Adult Education - Learning for Life* (2000) in respect of equality and interculturalism.

5.1 Aim of Measure 11B Early School Leavers and Travellers

As stated in its Programme Complement, the aim of Measure 11B is: “To provide second chance education for early school leavers and Travellers, with minimal or no educational qualifications.” What is notable, however, is that there is variation in the formally stated aim of Measure 11B depending on the source of information. For example, as stated in the background documentation circulated for the purpose of the Expenditure Review of Measure 11B, its aim is stated as follows: “The aim of Youthreach and the Senior Travelling Training Centres is to provide participants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to successfully make the transition to work and adult life, and to participate in their communities.”

Examination of the programme documentation on both Youthreach and STTCs shows that there is a lack of consensus and specific operational definitions in respect of certain aspects of their stated aims, notably in respect of what constitutes “second-chance” education or the constituents of the “knowledge, skills and attitudes” that enable “transition to work and adult life”. Moreover, examination of other documentation on Measure 11B leads to other descriptions of its main aim. For example, in the Youthreach website the aim of the Youthreach strand of Measure 11B is described as follows: Youthreach “offers participants the opportunity to identify and pursue viable options within adult life, and provides them with opportunities to acquire certification”. In addition, local centres - both Youthreach and STTCs - adopt varying emphasis as to the main aim of the programmes they actually provide (see Box 5.2, page 27). This variation in stated aims is also reflected in variation in the specific forms of provision and in the target groups catered for by different centres.

One consequence of all of the above is that there is no “agreed” standard or indicator against which to objectively assess the performance of both Youthreach and STTCs. This matter is being addressed in the Expenditure Review of Measure 11B which will set out separate objectives for the Youthreach and STTCs strands of the measure.

Integral to both programmes is the provision of a Foundation Phase and a Progression Phase. The objectives of these two phases are defined as follows:

- The objective of the Foundation Phase is to enable participants to recognise and respond positively to their learning difficulties, to help overcome them, and develop self-confidence and the skills and competencies essential for further learning, for employment and adult life.
- The objective of the Progression Phase is to provide for more specific development through a range of education, training and work experience options which will complement and build on the Foundation Phase, and promote their access to mainstream education, training and employment opportunities.

These two phases are addressed within the first and second years of both Youthreach and STTCs. More recently, both Youthreach and STTCs point to the presence of an “induction” (STTC) or “engagement” phase prior to the Foundation Phase. The purpose of the induction / engagement phase is to support the development of a positive engagement with young people coming to the Centres and to identify their individual educational and other needs and tailor the response of the Centres to these needs.

Box 5.2

Aims of a Sample of Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres

<p>Youthreach Centre A aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide opportunities for the process of decision-making and empowering young people to influence the direction of their own lives; • promote a sense of independence and creativity among programme participants; • provide opportunities for the education and development of vulnerable young people in a safe environment, in a relationship-based programme. 	<p>STTC A aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enable Travellers to successfully participate in a wide range of quality education and training programmes using a person centred approach. • provide a safe and caring, holistic learning environment. • maintain the highest quality standards of programme delivery and administration within the centre. • provide participants with knowledge skills and attitudes for further progression (e.g. further education, training, employment). • encourage active citizenship. • address the specific cultural needs of the Traveller participants using an intercultural approach.
<p>Youthreach Centre B aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create responsible citizens through interaction and honest sharing of experience and skills, social and personal. • create an understanding of the reality of life, provide an atmosphere which is conducive to successful learning, benefit of teamwork, we aim to base our training programme around the needs of the trainees, the staff, the organisation and the community. 	<p>STTC B aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to enable Travellers to live the life of their choice to their fullest potential; • to help them overcome educational disadvantage by giving them the “tools of learning; and, • to encourage them to participate as full and active members of the community in which they live.
<p>Youthreach Centre C aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help trainees prepare in a positive way for their future personal and working life • build upon past experiences and skills • introduce trainees to new skills. 	<p>STTC C aims to:</p> <p>The aim of the centre is to improve Travellers’ education, vocational training and life skills (in short, a better life), but always with sensitivity to the Traveller culture and traditions.</p>
<p>Youthreach Centre D aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • empower young people to make informed decisions about their future by exploring and developing their talents and personalities in a supportive environment • encourage young people to become more involved in their community by forging links with local youth groups and voluntary associations. 	<p>STTC D aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a safe learning environment that is respectful of cultural differences and is neither prejudiced nor judgemental. • To work with the Travelling community to develop and provide educational courses that best serve the specific needs of that community, and to be participant led in the delivery of these courses.
<p>Youthreach Centre E aims to:</p> <p>educate young people so that they may join the workforce or go on to further education.</p>	<p>STTC E aims to:</p> <p>respond to the educational and developmental needs of all students from the Travelling and settled community.</p>

As can be seen from the specified objectives of the two phases presented above, there is an emphasis on “competencies essential for further learning” and promoting “access to mainstream education, training and employment” outcomes. These objectives suggest that possible operational indicators of the effectiveness of the Youthreach and STTCs lie in these areas. The extent to which the data on programme outcomes demonstrate outcomes in these areas will be examined in Section 6.

5.2 Target Groups and Eligibility Criteria

The target group for Youthreach is early school leavers. Currently, the DES defines eligibility in terms of being aged between 15 and 20 years and having left school early with either no qualifications or minimal qualifications (i.e., without sitting the Junior Certificate or having achieved less than five grade Ds in the Junior Certificate Examination). In practice, a small proportion - less than 3% - of participants in Youthreach are younger than 15 years with a similarly small proportion being aged 21 years.

Table 5.1
Educational Attainment of Entrants to Youthreach, 2005

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than basic literacy	156	11.8	88	6.2	244	8.9
Basic literacy	253	19.2	152	10.7	405	14.8
Less than Junior Certificate	431	32.6	472	33.3	903	33.0
Junior Certificate	424	32.1	567	40.0	991	36.2
Above Junior Certificate	57	4.3	139	9.8	196	7.1
Total	1,321	100.0	1,418	100.0	2,739	100.0

Source: Survey of Youthreach in 2005.

Table 5.2
Educational Attainment of Entrants to STTCs, 2005

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than basic literacy	48	25.8	154	16.9	202	18.4
Basic literacy	65	35.0	225	24.7	290	26.4
Less than Junior Certificate	50	26.9	344	37.7	394	35.9
Junior Certificate	17	9.1	123	13.5	140	12.7
Above Junior Certificate	6	3.2	66	7.2	72	6.6
Total	186	100.0	912	100.0	1,098	100.0

Source: Survey of STTCs in 2005.

Comparison of the educational attainment of entrants to Youthreach with the eligibility criteria for the programme show that Youthreach is catering, for the most part, for young people who have no formal educational qualifications (see Table 5.1, page 28). Over half (56.7%) of Youthreach participants have no formal qualifications with a substantial proportion of these being identified as possessing basic literacy or less than basic literacy levels. This is particularly the case among male participants in Youthreach, almost one third (31%) of whom are described as having reached at most basic literacy.

The target group for STTCs are members of the Traveller community aged 15 years and over. There is no upper age limit and given the educational profile of the Traveller population outlined earlier the majority of Travellers are eligible to participate. When STTCs were initially introduced there was an upper age limit of 25 years. As noted earlier, this is no longer the case as STTCs came to be seen as a means to encourage the parents of participants into addressing their own educational needs. Currently, over half of participants are aged 25 years and over, particularly among female participants (see Tables 6.3 and 6.4, page 39).

Comparison of the educational attainment of participants in STTCs (see Table 5.2, page 28) with that of their counterparts in Youthreach (see Table 5.1) shows that participants in STTCs have lower levels of educational attainment. Overall, less than one in five (19.3%) participants in STTCs have reached at least Junior Cycle level. As is the case in Youthreach, levels of educational attainment are lower among men than women.

5.3 Description of Programmes

In the documentation on Measure 11B a variety of descriptions of actual programme structure and content can be found. These descriptions vary depending on the organisation producing the documentation, the time at which the documentation was produced, and the function of the documents. The varying accounts of what is actually provided to participants also reflects the continual evolution of Measure 11B over time in a number of areas including the nature of certification provided, the availability of services such as guidance, the introduction of training for personnel in specialist areas (e.g., development of Individual Education Plans), and developments in the educational context in which the Measure 11B operates (e.g., the Education Act 1998, the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2000, the Education Welfare Act 2000, and the Children's Act 2001).

The core structure of both Youthreach and STTCs is the provision of a two year programme with the first year being designated as a Foundation Phase and the second year being designated as a Progression Phase. In individual instances the two-year programme can be extended. Both Youthreach and STTCs operate a 35 hour week. In the case of Youthreach, the programme operates for 48 weeks of the year while STTCs operate a 44 week year. In both instances the participants are effectively engaged on a 35 hour "working week" basis and are paid a training allowance while on the programme.

Youthreach Programme Content

The description of the programme content of Youthreach on the DES website states:

Basic skills training, practical work training and general education are features of the programme, and the application of new technology is integrated into all aspects of programme content. The programme provides a strong emphasis on personal development, on the core skills of literacy / numeracy, communications and IT, along with a choice of vocational options such as catering, hairdressing, computers, woodwork, photography, video, sports, art and craft, and a work experience programme.

It is clear from a number of other sources, including the Progress Reports on Measure 11B to the Monitoring Committee of the EHRDOP, that the programme content has evolved considerably over the past number of years. Factors that have contributed to developments in the nature and range of the curricula offered by Youthreach Centres include the Quality Framework Initiative (see Box 5.3) and developments following on from the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, in particular the establishment of the Further Education Training Awards Council (FETAC). In general terms there has been a movement from an earlier emphasis on “practical” subjects with certification being provided by the NVCA and City and Guilds to a more diverse set of options with certification being provided by FETAC. Also, increasingly guidance and health promotion activities are being integrated into the operations of Youthreach Centres.

Box 5.3

Overview of Quality Framework Initiative

The aim of the Quality Framework Initiative (QFI) is to develop and implement a quality assurance model that will underpin and lead to continuous improvement in the service provided by Youthreach and STTCs in a manner that meets the needs of learners, staff and management. The initiation of work on the development of the QFI resulted from the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 and the Youthreach and STTCs consultative processes undertaken in 2000 / 2001. It forms the basic structure of the quality assurance system and comprises four interconnected building blocks: Quality Standards (of which there are 29 identified), Centre Development Planning (CDP), Internal Centre Evaluation (ICE), and External Centre Evaluation (ECE). The Quality Standards, which include Equality (18) and Interculturalism (19), clarify what should be in place in centres while allowing for local flexibility in the way stakeholders chose to achieve standards. During 2005 the implementation of the Youthreach Quality Framework Initiative moved from pilot phase to national roll-out. By the end of 2005, 57 Centres had started to engage with the QFI (26 STTCs and 31 Youthreach Centres). It is anticipated that all Centres will have started to engage in quality processes either ICE-or CDP-by the end of 2006.

Source: Quality Framework Initiative for Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres (2004) and Progress Reports to Monitoring Committee of the EHRDOP.

From the overview of the FETAC modules provided in Youthreach Centres and STTCs (see Annex 2, page 65) it is clear that, in terms of the numbers of students taking specific modules, the following are among the most commonly provided: Computer Literacy, Communications, Mathematics, Personal Effectiveness, Art and Design, Food and Nutrition, Caring for Children, Food and Cookery, Personal and Interpersonal Skills, Preparation for Work, Woodcraft, Craft - Textiles, Health Related Fitness, IT Skills, and Craft - Wood.

In terms of its current operation, Youthreach offers a flexible and dynamic programme of integrated general education, vocational training and work experience. According to the description of programme content on the Youthreach website; “Learners set personal and educational goals that increase their self-esteem, skill and knowledge base and employability”. Essential course elements include Personal and Social Development, Vocational Skills, and Communication Skills”. The website also identifies the “12 building blocks” of Youthreach (see Box 5.4, page 32). Reflecting the changing composition of participants in Youthreach and the emphasis on interculturalism in Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education (2000), interculturalism is now also included as the thirteenth building block.

Box 5.4

The Twelve Building Blocks of Youthreach

Methodology - with an emphasis on starting with the learner, adopting a credit as opposed to a therapeutic approach, being inter-disciplinary, being less “formal” in interactions with participants (compared to more formal interaction in school settings) and providing an integrated experience.

Achievement - promoting participants’ sense of self-worth and emphasising achievement and a broad range of certification options.

Quality - this is being underpinned by the Quality Framework Initiative (see Box 5.3, page 30).

Structure - this responds to the unstable and difficult personal and family circumstances of many participants and is provided through the phases of engagement, foundation and progression described above.

Flexibility - this occurs at all levels including management, staffing and actual programme delivery. Young people are enabled to learn at their own pace.

Progression - this is achieved by enabling participants to pursue pathways in the spheres of education, training and employment.

Appropriate Certification - increasingly this is being delivered by FETAC. Emphasis is placed on providing recognition for participants’ achievements at whatever level by the development of flexible, standards-based qualifications.

Partnerships and networks - through this, emphasis is placed on local planning and inter-agency networking. Within this, acknowledgement of the cultural context of participants and of their communities is also addressed.

Inter-agency cohesion and continuity - emphasis here is on harnessing the benefits for participants of working with colleagues in other services relevant to their lives, such as services in the areas of health, justice, accommodation etc.

Innovation - throughout the history of Youthreach innovation in all areas of work relevant to the programme has been valued and pursued.

Supports - through annual allocations additional supports for participants are provided in terms of guidance, counselling and psychological services.

Information and Communications Technology - each Youthreach Centre works to develop the ICT skills of participants.

STTCs Programme Content

As is the case in Youthreach, there has been considerable evolution in the programme content in STTCs. The factors shaping this development are in some instances the same as those in Youthreach (e.g., Quality Framework Initiative and the establishment of FETAC) but also reflect other factors such as progress in increasing the participation rates of young members of the Traveller community in second-level education, the shift towards ensuring that Traveller

education takes place within mainstream settings, and developments in STTCs themselves relating to their role as educational providers for members of the Traveller community as well as their broader developmental role in relation to the Traveller community. Also of significance is that since the mid 1990s an increasing proportion of participants in STTCs are adults, particularly women aged 25 years and over (see Table 6.4, page 39). Thus, over the past 10 years, curricula and teaching methods have evolved from being exclusively oriented towards young Travellers to catering for a majority of participants who are adult learners.

Box 5.5

Extract from Inspectorate Report on Evaluation of Centres for Education (I)

X exudes Traveller culture, values and life-style. Traveller life, past and present, is reflected in the centre's décor, its artwork, religious icons and displays of Traveller crafts. Focus of activity in the centre is on the holistic development of the individual learner. Traveller needs are met by supports in areas as diverse as the preparation and provision of lunch, administrative support in explaining and calculating allowances, class allocation on the basis of a broad assessment of need and interest, and supportive programmes in areas of health and fitness. Given that three generations of a family may attend the centre, the identification of individual needs becomes obvious. A large group of learners volunteered to meet the inspectors at an early stage of the evaluation visits. Most stated that they were 'very happy' in the centre and expressed general satisfaction with the varied experiences afforded to them there. For many, attendance at the centre has a three-fold value: firstly, the social value of being able to 'get out of the house', to meet and discuss issues with a range of people, secondly being able to get practical help with their literacy difficulties, and, thirdly, the bonus of being able to access an allowance. Showing a high level of interest and involvement, they were unified in expressing regard for the way in which their self-esteem has been improved.

Within the Centres themselves there is a strong emphasis on valuing Traveller culture. This is given practical effect in a number of ways, including décor and artwork, the use of materials that are relevant to the lives of participants (where these are available), involving participants in the development of programme content, and supporting the involvement of participants in decision making regarding the Centres (see Box 5.5 for extract based on Evaluation of Centres for Education by the DES for illustrative comment related to this)⁷. More generally, the Centres - though they vary in the specific programme offered and in the composition of their participants - have developed a positive profile among Travellers in their localities and increasingly play a developmental role in relation to the lives and welfare of Travellers in their localities.

In terms of specific programme content there is a particular focus on addressing literacy and numeracy issues and though the specific methods used vary from Centre to Centre, all STTCs endeavour to ensure that the diverse range of literacy and numeracy needs found among participants is addressed in a manner that results in meaningful progress and achievements for participants (see Box 5.5 for illustrative comment on how literacy is addressed in one STTC).

⁷ The DES has recently begun to undertake evaluations of Youthreach Centres and STTCs as they were designated as "centres for education" in 2004 under the Education Act, 1998. The Act defines a centre for education as "a place, other than a school or place providing university or other third level education, where adult or continuing education or vocational education or training is provided and which is designated for that purpose under Section 10 (4)". The extracts presented are taken from two reports published in late 2006. The full reports are available on the website of the DES.

Box 5.6

Extract from Inspectorate Report on Evaluation of Centres for Education (2)

A breadth of relevant expertise was observed in the teaching carried out in the centre. This was particularly true in the practical work observed, especially in Home Economics/Cookery, in Upholstery and Horticulture, in all of which instruction was given by professionals in their respective fields. In each of these subjects, the learners are productively engaged and show interest and ability. This is also true in the areas of art and craft where very competent teaching was observed. In these areas, the learners' own ideas, interests and environment are used appropriately as starting points for learning activities. A history of successful participation in competitions at local and national level increases enthusiasm in the art and craft areas. Mathematics and CSPE are superbly taught. Lessons in these subjects are well planned, teaching methods are varied and interesting, appropriate resources are well used and learners are active participants. Lessons incorporate excellent review and documentation of achievement with material added to individual folders. Learners are taught IT skills in a number of programmes. While some learners cope well, others struggle with the pace and difficulty of the computer work. More thoughtful planning and differentiated practice would enable more learners to achieve greater benefit from these programmes. This is an area of the course where individual learning plans are needed.

The centre as a whole provides many good examples of practical supports in basic functional literacy. An excellent illustration of this – though not the only one – occurs in the way in which the contents of each of the kitchen cupboards are clearly displayed graphically alongside the relevant word. Paired reading exercises were seen to enhance the confidence of more competent readers, while offering on-going encouragement to the learner. For those slightly more advanced, skills associated with letter writing are taught in the context of fundraising for development of a small centre library. The broad acknowledgement of literacy needs is obvious from the fact that many of the centre's staff, in all subject areas, have undertaken training in literacy tutoring and many of these work quite effectively with the learners.

However, in a centre where all learners have some level of literacy deficiency, and some express their goal in terms of being able to identify and write their husband's or children's names, a more professional in-house capacity is called for. Even with current capacity, the literacy deficit calls for delivery of more carefully planned and progressive programmes, timetabled on a more frequent basis. One formal literacy class period per week is inadequate for those unable to read and write. The centre's literacy programme also needs to be supported by professional expertise so that appropriate strategies are employed in the classroom.

Traditionally there has been an emphasis on providing courses focused on the development of practical skills (see Box 5.6 for illustrative comment on provision of practical subjects). In some instances this has included a focus on traditional Traveller skills (e.g., copper work, wagon making) while in others a focus has developed on providing skills in areas where there are possibilities for Travellers to engage in self-employment (e.g., gardening, sewing, knitting). Cookery, as a skill area in its own right and an area within which health issues can be addressed, is a common programme area.

In addition to the above, STTCs also place a strong emphasis on the personal development of participants and, in many instances, this is linked with developing capacities to play a role in their local communities and society.

As in the case of Youthreach Centres, over the past number of years there has been an increase in the provision of modules accredited by FETAC on the part of STTCs. The data currently available on this do not permit the specific modules provided by STTCs to be identified but an indication of the wide range of modules provided across both Youthreach Centres and STTCs is presented in Annex 2 (page 65). The main modules in terms of the number of participants taking them have already been listed above in the context of describing provision under Youthreach.

5.4 Staffing and Resources

Each Youthreach Centre is managed by a co-ordinator. Management of STTCs is undertaken by a principal or director. Both posts carry wide ranging responsibilities which in addition to direct class or participant contact hours include supervision of other personnel, assessment and monitoring of participants' progress, financial management and planning, recruitment of participants and inter-agency work. They are also directly involved in the implementation of quality assurance procedures under the Quality Framework Initiative and in relation to FETAC certification.

The staffing model within Youthreach Centres is based on a full-time co-ordinator, a fulltime resource person and a pay provision of 4,200 tuition hours per group of 25 students. Based on the results of a survey undertaken by CHL Consulting in 2005 there were, on average, approximately 3 full-time personnel (including co-ordinator and resource person) and eight part-time personnel per Youthreach Centre (CHL, 2006). The level of part-time staffing varies widely from between 6 and 10 part-time personnel in two-thirds of Centres to over 10 part-time personnel in almost one-fifth of Centres. On average, and based on 4,200 hours per group of 25 participants, the staff complement in Youthreach is 2.6 full-time equivalent personnel per group of 25 participants, corresponding to a staff participant ratio of approximately 10 to 1.

The staffing model within STTCs is also based on the number of participant places: per group of 24 participants provision 5,250 hours are provided corresponding to 3.6 full-time equivalents and a staff participant ratio of approximately 7 to 1. The latter figure is inclusive of directors of STTCs.

Depending on the availability of resources, Youthreach Centres recruit personnel such as counsellors, guidance personnel, community workers, and other professional personnel to provide additional resources for participants. This has been facilitated by the allocation of 2 million euro in late 2006 to Youthreach Centres for a new Special Education Initiative. In announcing the funding, the Minister for Education and Science stated that the expected benefits arising from the employment of such personnel will be to enable greater attention to be paid to the individual assessment of learner needs, the development of individual education plans (IEPs), and establishing mentoring and inter-agency support systems. This initiative is

currently being piloted in 20 Youthreach Centres. In addition to the foregoing, there is also a network of “advocates” - 28 in 2005 - available to Youthreach Centres and STTCs to support the provision of a “tailor-made approach to career path planning to meet the specific guidance, training and work experience needs of disadvantaged young people who cannot be catered for within existing provision” (Tom Martin and Associates, 2006, p. 10). The advocacy service is funded by FÁS - 1.5 million euro in 2005 - and is also available to participants in Community Training Centres and FÁS / Department of Justice Workshops.

5.5 Allowances and Childcare

Participants in Youthreach Centres and STTCs are paid a training allowance and in addition, receive allowances in respect of meals and, if eligible, in respect of travel. The training allowance is age related and the allowances payable in 2006 are summarised in Table 5.3. Participants are also eligible for a training bonus of €31.80 a week if they: (i) have been on Jobseeker’s Benefit or Allowance (formerly Unemployment Benefit or Assistance) for 12 months or more; (ii) are progressing from at least 12 months on a Community Employment Programme or a Job Initiative Programme (both operated by FÁS); or (iii) have been involved in a combination of the above.

Table 5.3
Allowances Payable to Participants in Youthreach Centres and STTCs, 2006

	€ Per Week
Participants aged between 15 and 16 years	67.55
Participants aged 17 years	84.40
Participants aged 18 years and over	165.80

Table 5.4
Number of Participants Availing of Childcare Support, 2005

	Youthreach		STTCs	
	N	%	N	%
VEC crèche	122	52.1	42	22.6
Community crèche	35	15.0	29	15.6
Commercial crèche	15	6.4	16	8.6
Childminder	62	26.5	99	53.2
Total	234	100.0	186	100.0

A childcare allowance is provided for participants with children. Based on figures for 2005, 234 Youthreach participants were availing of childcare provision in respect of a total of 267 children. The comparable figures for participants in STTCs are 186 and 348 respectively. A breakdown of the types of childcare provision is presented in Table 5.4. The most notable difference between Youthreach and STTCs is that the major provider of childcare in the former are VEC crèches while in the latter it is childminders.

6. A Profile of Participants in Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres

The number of participants in Measure 1 IB in 2005 was just over 3,800 (see Table 6.1). Of these, the majority - 2,739 corresponding to 71.4% - were in Youthreach Centres. Over the three year period from 2003 to 2005 there was a 5.3% increase in the number of participants in Measure 1 IB. The level of increase in STTCs - at 11.9% - is over three times the corresponding increase in Youthreach Centres (3.2%). In both STTCs and Youthreach Centres the increase in the number of women participants from 2003 to 2005 considerably exceeded that of men. In the case of Youthreach the figures for men and women are 1.7% and 4.7% respectively. The corresponding figures for STTCs are 7.5% and 13.7%.

Table 6.1
Number of Participants on Measure 1 IB by Gender, 2003 to 2005

Youthreach Centres					
	Male	% Male	Female	% Female	Total
December 05	1,321	48.2	1,418	51.8	2,739
December 04	1,317	49.3	1,357	50.7	2,674
December 03	1,299	49.0	1,354	51.0	2,653
Senior Traveller Training Centres					
December 05	186	16.9	912	83.1	1,098
December 04	165	17.5	780	82.5	945
December 03	173	17.6	808	82.4	981
Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres					
December 05	1,507	39.3	2,330	60.7	3,837
December 04	1,482	41.0	2,137	59.0	3,619
December 03	1,472	40.5	2,162	59.5	3,634

Table 6.2
Number of Participants in the Foundation and Progression Years of Measure IIB, 2005

Youthreach						
	Male	% Male	Female	% Female	Total	%
Foundation	817	61.8	623	43.9	1,440	52.6
Progression	504	38.2	795	56.1	1,299	47.4
Total	1,321	100.0	1,418	100.0	2,739	100.0
Senior Traveller Training Centres						
Foundation	135	73.4	579	63.3	714	65.0
Progression	49	26.6	335	36.7	384	35.0
Total	184	100.0	914	100.0	1,098	100.0
Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres						
Foundation	952	63.3	1,202	51.5	2,154	56.1
Progression	553	36.7	1,130	48.5	1,683	43.9
Total	1,505	100.0	2,332	100.0	3,837	100.0

Within Youthreach the proportions of male and female participants are approximately equal: 48.2% and 51.8% respectively. The gender composition of STTCs over the past number of years has been constant with just over 80% of participants being female and just under 20% being male.

In both Youthreach and STTCs, the proportion of participants in the Foundation Year exceeds that in the Progression Year. The lower proportion of participants in the Progression Year indicates some attrition in participant numbers through drop-out between the two years of the programme, though the documentation to the Monitoring Committee of the EHRDOP does not quantify or comment on the actual level of drop-out. This issue is examined further in Section 7 below in the context of examining the outcomes from Measure IIB.

More detailed examination of the figures in Table 6.2 shows that the proportion of participants in the Progression Year in Youthreach at 47.4% is higher than the corresponding figure in STTCs at 35%. In both Youthreach and STTCs there are also higher proportions of women in the Progression Year than men. The latter figures suggest that fewer men than women progress from the Foundation to the Progression Year in both Youthreach and STTCs. This finding is consistent with the higher drop-out rates found among men than women in Youthreach and particularly in STTCs (see Table 7.1, page 44).

Table 6.3
Age Profile of Participants in Youthreach Centres, 2005

	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
< 15	45	3.4	21	1.5	66	2.4
15	308	23.3	177	12.5	485	17.7
16-17	627	47.5	563	39.7	1,190	43.4
18+	341	25.8	657	46.3	998	36.5
Total	1,321	100.0	1,418	100.0	2,739	100.0

Table 6.4
Age Profile of Participants in STTCs, 2005

	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
< 15	1	0.5	12	1.3	13	12
15	22	11.8	25	2.7	47	4.3
16-17	77	41.4	97	10.7	174	15.8
18-19	13	7.0	76	8.3	89	8.1
20-24	23	12.4	154	16.9	177	16.1
25-44	38	20.4	367	40.2	405	36.9
45-49	4	2.2	79	8.7	83	7.6
50+	8	4.3	102	11.2	110	10.0
Total	186	100.0	912	100.0	1,098	100.0

Reflecting the absence of an upper age limit for participants in STTCs, the age profile of participants in STTCs is very different from that in Youthreach (see Tables 6.3 and 6.4). Overall, over half (54.5%) of participants in STTCs are aged 25 years and over with the majority of these being in the 25 to 44 year age band. Almost one in five (17.6%) participants in STTCs are aged 45 years and over. In contrast, almost two thirds (63.5%) of participants in Youthreach are aged 17 years or under with the largest single grouping of participants being participants aged 16 to 17 years. Small proportions of participants in both Youthreach and STTCs are aged less than 15 years.

The age profiles of the men and women in both programmes are of particular note. First, within STTCs the majority (53.2%) of men are in the 15 to 17 year age range. The corresponding proportion among women is just 13.4%. The overall pattern of the gender and age composition of participants in STTCs strongly indicates that STTCs are predominantly catering for women aged 20 years and over with the largest single grouping of participants being women in the 25 to 44 year age band. This is particularly illustrated by noting that almost two thirds (63.9%) of participants in STTCs in 2005 were women aged 20 years and over. This trend has been noted in the Consultation Report on the Future of STTCs undertaken during 2000 / 2001 (*Consultation Report on the Future of Senior Traveller Training Centres, 2001*). Among the points noted there are the difficulties of attracting and

retaining young Traveller men (particularly marginalised young Traveller men), the preference for Traveller women to participate in Centres in which all participants are women (and hence the focus of some STTCs exclusively on Traveller women), and an observation that some young Travellers prefer to attend a Youthreach or other Centre that their mother is not attending. The low proportion of Traveller men aged 18 years and over participating in STTCs may also reflect the lack of a financial incentive to participate as the allowances payable are similar to jobseekers allowance.

There are some indications that the age profile of Traveller men and women in STTCs is getting older over time and that the proportion of participants in the younger age range is declining. In 2003, 65.3% of male participants were in the 15 to 17 year age range with the corresponding figure for 2005 being 53.2% - representing a decline of 12 percentage points. In the case of women, 20.6% were aged between 15 and 17 years in 2003 with the corresponding figure for 2005 being 13.4% - representing a decline of 7 percentage points.

In Youthreach, female participants tend to be older than male participants. Just over one quarter (26.7%) of male participants in Youthreach in 2005 were 15 years of age or younger. The corresponding proportion among female participants is 14.0%. This trend reflects a tendency for more young men than women to leave second-level education during the first year of the Junior Cycle. It may also reflect a more general difficulty of attracting and retaining young men aged 17 years and over into the programme. Again, the gender difference in the age profiles of participants in Youthreach has received little comment in documentation on Measure 11B.

When the gender and age compositions of Youthreach and STTCs are taken into consideration together with the growing numbers of young Travellers attending Youthreach Centres (see Table 6.5, page 41), one interesting finding is that the number of young (19 years and under) Traveller men in Youthreach Centres exceeds that in STTCs (159 and 113 respectively in 2005). In effect, this suggests that young Traveller men are currently more likely to attend a Youthreach Centre than a STTC. This is not the case among young Traveller women: 210 participated in a STTC in comparison to 172 who participated in a Youthreach Centre (figures for 2005). The latter may reflect the point noted above regarding the preference for Traveller women to participate at Centres where all or the majority of participants are Traveller women. More generally, when the figures for 2005 are compared with those for previous years there is evidence that the number of young Traveller men and women participating in STTCs is declining (despite an overall increase in the number of participants) while the number participating in Youthreach is increasing. As a result, in 2005 there were slightly more young Travellers (aged 19 or less) participating in Youthreach (331) than in STTCs (323). This may also reflect the wider geographic area covered by Youthreach Centres than STTCs.

Table 6.5
Categories of Participants in Youthreach, 2005

	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Lone Parent Allowance	9	0.7	317	22.4	326	11.9
Travellers in Youthreach	159	12.0	172	12.1	331	12.1
Refugees / Asylum Seekers	17	1.3	8	0.6	25	0.9
Homeless	22	1.7	12	0.8	34	1.2
In Care	36	2.7	48	3.4	84	3.1
Sub-total all of above	243	18.4	557	39.3	800	29.2
All other participants	1,078	81.6	861	60.7	1,939	70.8
Total	1,321	100.0	1,418	100.0	2,739	100.0

Table 6.5 shows the composition of participants in Youthreach in terms of five categories of participant. Combined, participants in these five categories account for almost one in three (29.2%) participants in Youthreach. The detailed figures in the table show that a substantial proportion (11.9%) of participants in Youthreach are lone parents. The vast majority of these participants are women. At 12.1%, the largest single category of participant identified are young members of the Traveller community. Smaller proportions of participants are identified as being refugees / asylum seekers, homeless, and young people in care.

One theme running through the documentation on both Youthreach and STTCs (particularly the former) and also in the views of the National Co-ordinators is the changing profile of participants in recent years. In this regard what is being signalled is that an increasing proportion of young participants - particularly in Youthreach - are experiencing a range of difficulties in addition to their low levels of educational attainment and lack of educational qualifications. The range and prevalence of these difficulties is illustrated in Table 6.6 (page 42). Noting that the assessment of the difficulties presented by participants is made by the staff of the Centres, it is nevertheless clear that substantial proportions of participants in Youthreach are identified as having “dysfunctional family backgrounds” needing “psychological support”, and / or are involved in “substance abuse”. The difficulties, experienced by participants in STTCs predominantly include “literacy and numeracy”. Among participants in both Youthreach and STTCs a substantial minority are identified as experiencing “poor physical health”. Overall, the data presented in Table 6.6 indicate that substantial proportions of participants are experiencing difficulties additional to, and likely to compound, their low levels of educational attainment.

Table 6.6
Assessments of the Nature of the Personal, Educational and Social Difficulties being Experienced by Participants in Measure 11B, 2005

	Youthreach %	Senior Traveller Training Centres %
Literacy and numeracy	31.5	44.4
Substance abuse	27.6	5.5
Need for psychological support	30.3	15.2
Specific learning needs	17.9	12.5
Physical disability	1.4	2.6
Intellectual disability	5.0	3.7
Poor physical health	17.1	13.4
Cautioned by Junior Liaison Officer	17.6	2.7
On probation	5.3	1.3
Dysfunctional family background	50.3	18.9
Accommodation problems	-	10.0
Two or more of above	25.7	20.6

The changing profile of participants in Youthreach Centres has also been commented on in a recent report commissioned by the Teachers' Union of Ireland:

The economic boom of recent years has resulted in a far greater availability of jobs, even for those with little educational qualification. Those young people who enter Youthreach therefore tend to be those who have difficulties obtaining employment due to personal and / or learning difficulties. A high proportion also have emotional problems. Furthermore, educational mainstreaming has led to a reduction in places in special schools and this has contributed to a growth in the number of young people with special educational needs applying to Youthreach centres. The National Coordinator estimates that 60% to 70% of Youthreach students have special educational needs, and this rises to at least 80% if behavioural and emotional needs are included (CHL, 2006, p. 5)

Arising from the range and prevalence of such difficulties among participants in Measure 11B is a growing emphasis on developing appropriate responses to the needs of young people within Centres and increased recognition of the need for effective linkages with the wide range of personnel and agencies providing services for such young people. In response to the former, for example, a sum of €1.1 Million Euro was allocated in 2005 for guidance, counselling and psychological services. Centres use this budget to prioritise needs ranging from initial orientation and guidance, through the provision of vocational information, to specialist psychological services. For this service a National Co-ordinator has been appointed from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) whose function is to:

- develop guidelines for Centres on the guidance, counselling and psychological services;
- advice on the delivery of guidance, counselling and psychological services locally;
- co-ordinate a programme of continuing professional development for trainers in front line counselling skills, initial assessment, vocational guidance, feedback, mentoring and progression;

- disseminate models of good practice on an ongoing basis; and,
- advise, monitor and report on the effectiveness of guidance, counselling and psychological services.

Also, the National Co-ordinator is delivering a programme of professional training for trainers in individual assessment, educational planning, guidance, review and mentoring, developing and disseminating materials supporting good practice in these areas for staff in centres, and advising the Department on future responses in relation to young people with special educational needs attending Youthreach Centres. A detailed review and discussion of this issue is presented by Gordon (2004).

Given the profiles of the personal, educational and social difficulties presented by participants on entry to the programme, it is also likely that the frequency with which participant experience stressful life events that are capable of disrupting their participation in education and training is higher than that among their peers in mainstream second level education. As has been shown by Brown (2005), the prevalence of stressful life events is high among participants in Youthreach and STTCs, and an effective response to this in terms of the development of capacities for crisis intervention is required in order to prevent such events precipitating disengagement and drop-out. This point should be kept in mind when considering the figures on drop-out from Measure 11B presented in the following section.

7. Outcomes among Participants in Youthreach Centres and Senior Traveller Training Centres

The previous section has shown the levels of participation in Youthreach and STTCs and identified the characteristics of participants. Given the aim of Measure 11B, and also the emphasis on access to lifelong learning in current educational policy, this section looks at the certification outcomes secured by participants before focusing on the progression outcomes secured by participants leaving or completing the measure. It should be noted that the data for the examination of both of these issues comes from surveys of Youthreach Centres / Coordinators and STTCs / Directors. In this regard it is notable that there is an absence of formal follow-up surveys of participants and a reliance on administrative sources to provide key data on programme performance. However, before presenting the outcomes from Measure 11B, this section begins by examining the issue of drop-out. As noted earlier, this is of significance because of the large number of participants leaving both Youthreach and STTCs without completing the programme and the likely impact of this on their subsequent educational and occupational careers.

7.1 Programme Completion and Drop-out

Actual figures on “early leavers” - defined as participants leaving before completing 75% of the programme - show that, in 2005, 1,038 participants left Youthreach and 286 participants left STTCs without completing 75% of the programme. When these absolute figures are expressed as drop-out rates, the drop-out rate for Youthreach is 21.6% and that for STTCs is 18.3%.⁸ Both these figures are high and, given the objectives of Measure 11B, indicate that a substantial proportion of the target group is not retained in the programme. These figures point to the need to further explore at what stage participants leave Youthreach and STTCs (e.g., during the Foundation or Progression Years), the composition of drop-outs, and the reasons for their leaving. Using available data for 2005, a number of these issues are briefly examined below.

Table 7.1
Early Leavers in Youthreach Centres and STTCs, 2005

	Male	% Early Leavers	Female	% Early Leavers	Total	% Early Leavers
YCs	544	23.1	494	20.2	1,038	21.6
STTCs	100	29.9	186	15.1	286	18.3
Measure 11B	644	23.9	680	18.5	1,324	20.8

⁸ These rates are based on the number of persons leaving Youthreach and STTCs, expressed as a percentage of all programme participants in 2005 (i.e., start-ups, carry-over, throughput and early leavers).

Table 7.2
Destinations of Early Leavers in Youthreach Centres and STTCs, 2005

	Youthreach			STTCs		
	Male %	Female %	All %	Male %	Female %	All %
Employment	31.6	23.5	27.7	17.0	5.9	9.8
Education	8.8	13.2	10.9	12.0	9.1	10.1
Training	7.7	7.1	7.4	6.0	5.4	5.6
Unemployment	18.6	18.4	18.5	37.0	44.1	41.6
Other	33.3	37.8	35.5	28.0	35.5	32.0
%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	544	494	1,038	100	186	286

Table 7.3
Reasons for Leaving among Unemployed and Other Early Leavers in Youthreach Centres and STTCs, 2005

	Youthreach			STTCs		
	Male %	Female %	All %	Male %	Female %	All %
Health / Personal	6.2	15.9	10.9	3.1	18.9	14.1
Unable to Commit	59.7	45.9	53.0	63.1	27.7	38.5
Expelled	10.0	2.2	6.3	10.8	1.4	4.2
Detention	3.1	0.4	1.8	7.7	1.4	3.3
Paternity / Pregnancy	0.7	16.3	8.2	0.0	18.9	13.2
Accommodation Change	10.3	11.9	11.1	4.6	8.8	7.5
Death	2.4	2.2	2.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.7	12.8	12.2
Not Known	7.6	5.2	6.4	0.0	10.1	7.0
%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	290	270	560	65	148	213

Based on available data on the composition of early leavers (see Table 7.1, page 44) there is evidence that young men are more likely to leave without completing the programme than young women. This is particularly the case among young Traveller men, 29.9% of whom leave without completing the programme, compared to 15.1% of Traveller women. When the labour market destinations of early leavers are examined, approximately one quarter (27.7%) of Youthreach early leavers and one in ten (9.8%) of STTC early leavers are found to be in employment (see Table 7.2). In the case of both Youthreach and STTCs, higher proportions of men than women enter employment. Other than this, there are no major gender differences in the labour market destinations of early leavers. Relatively few early leavers progress to either education or training: 18.3% in the case of Youthreach and 15.7% in the case of STTCs. The majority of early leavers are either unemployed or have their labour market status

designated as “other”, particularly among early leavers from STTCs. The most prevalent reason for leaving among early leavers who are unemployed or whose status is “other”, is being “unable to commit” to the programme (see Table 7.3). This is particularly the case in relation to Youthreach: over half (53.0%) of early leavers whose labour market destination is unemployed or “other” are identified by Youthreach personnel as leaving because they were “unable to commit” themselves to the programme. This suggests that many young people leaving Youthreach do so during their first year of participation. Examination of the figures relating to STTCs shows that 38.5% of participants whose labour market destination is unemployed or “other” are identified by STTC personnel as having left because they were “unable to commit” to the programme. Significantly, in the light of earlier comments on the difficulty of retaining young Traveller men in STTCs, this figure rises to 63.1% among male participants.

Overall, the pattern of the findings in relation to early leavers from both Youthreach and STTCs points to the presence of difficulties in relation to the retention of participants in both programmes. This is of particular significance given the stated emphasis in programme documentation on the role of Measure IIB in providing “second chance” education for early school leavers. Moreover, given our observation on the absence of a formal tracking system to establish the post-programme circumstances of participants leaving or completing Measure IIB, there is an absence of systematic data on the experiences and circumstances of early leavers and on the effects of recent developments in the provision of additional supports in the areas of counselling and crisis support in preventing drop-out. More generally, however, the figures in relation to drop-out raise issues concerning the capacity of Measure IIB - as currently constituted and resourced - to effectively provide second chance education for a significant proportion of its target group.

7.2 Certification Outcomes

Since their introduction, Youthreach Centres and STTCs have placed an emphasis on enabling participants to acquire qualifications that reflect their interests. Also, as noted in the section on programme content, providing participants with recognised certification is an important step in building self-confidence in relation to learning and in recognising the achievements of participants. The context within which the certification options provided by both Youthreach Centres and STTCs has changed significantly since the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority and FETAC and, as indicated below, there has been a substantial increase in both the number of Centres providing modules certified by FETAC and in the number of participants securing FETAC certification.

Examination of recent reports based on surveys of Youthreach Centres and STTCs shows that there has been a decrease in the number of Centres providing Junior Certificate Programmes and access to subjects at Leaving Certificate level (Griffin and Stokes, 2004, 2005). The former is illustrated by the decline from 47% of Centres offering a Junior Certificate Programme in 1999 to 21% in 2003. The main decline in relation to the Leaving Certificate is in relation to the provision of access to subjects within the “traditional” Leaving Certificate Programme. The proportion of Centres providing this declined from 10.5% in 2000 to 6.0% in 2003.

Approximately one quarter of Centres continue to offer the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme, mainly as an option in the Progression Year. All but one Centre providing a LCA programme surveyed in 2004 offered the subjects Maths Application, English, and Communications. Social Education is provided by 88% of centres (22 of the 25). All three along with a language and two vocational specialisms are necessary for the final LCA examination. Vocational preparation is provided by 76% of centres providing a LCA programme. The most popular vocational specialisms provided are as follows: IT (76% of centres providing LCA), Art and Craft (60%), Hotel and Catering (52%), and Construction (44%). In relation to languages the most popular languages provided by Centres offering a programme in the LCA are as follows: Irish (88% of centres) French (40%), Spanish (20%) and lastly German (16%).

Table 7.4
Number and Percentage of Centres Providing Programmes / Modules Leading to FETAC Qualifications, 2000 to 2003

Number of FETAC Programmes	2000		2001		2003	
	No. of Centres	% of Centres	No. of Centres	% of Centres	No. of Centres	% of Centres
1-5 subjects	19	23%	17	18%	8	9%
6-10 subjects	41	49%	48	51%	37	41%
11-15 subjects	21	25%	19	20%	31	34%
16-20 subjects	2	3%	7	7%	9	10%
21-30 subjects			3	3%	5	6%

The major change over recent years is the growth in the number of Centres offering programmes / modules leading to FETAC qualifications. There has also been a substantial increase in the number of subjects leading to FETAC qualifications offered to participants in Centres (see Table 7.4). By far the most popular modules based on the number of Centres actually offering these modules and on the number of participants taking them are, in order of importance: Computer Literacy, Communications, Mathematics, Personal Effectiveness, Art and Design, Food and Nutrition, Caring for Children, and Food and Cookery. In 2003 all of these modules were undertaken by at least 300 participants (see Annex 2, page 65, for details).

Table 7.5
Certification Outcomes among Youthreach Participants, 2005

Certification	Awarding Body	Trainees in 2005 Receiving Awards	
		No.	%
Record of Achievement (Various Levels)	FETAC	1,303	44.7
Full Award at NFQ Level 3	FETAC	543	18.6
Full Award at NFQ Level 4	FETAC	249	8.5
Full Award at NFQ Level 5	FETAC	206	7.1
Junior Certificate (Less than 5 subjects)	SEC ^a	60	2.1
Junior Certificate (At least 5 subjects)	SEC	137	4.7
Leaving Certificate Applied	SEC	151	5.2
Leaving Certificate	SEC	53	1.8
Other	Various	110	3.8
ECDL	ECDL	104	3.6
Total		2,916	100.0

a SEC = State Examinations Commission.

Table 7.6
Certification Outcomes among STTC Participants, 2005

Certification	Awarding Body	Trainees in 2005 Receiving Awards	
		No.	%
Record of Achievement (Various Levels)	FETAC	474	50.7
Full Award at NFQ Level 3	FETAC	237	25.4
Full Award at NFQ Level 4	FETAC	81	8.7
Full Award at NFQ Level 5	FETAC	40	4.3
Full Award NFQ Level 6	FETAC	1	0.1
Junior Certificate (Less than 5 subjects)	SEC	22	2.4
Junior Certificate (At least 5 subjects)	SEC	2	0.2
Leaving Certificate Applied	SEC	22	2.4
Leaving Certificate	SEC	1	0.1
Other	Various	54	5.8
Total		934	100.0

The data presented in Tables 7.5 and 7.6 (page 48) show the number and percentage of participants securing certification at various levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) in Youthreach Centres and STTCs in 2005. These data confirm the predominance of certification awarded by FETAC but also show the high proportion of participants that receive certification solely in the form of “Record of Achievement”. At 44.4% in Youthreach and 50.7% in STTCs, substantial proportions of participants do not receive the formal award of a certificate within the NFQ. These percentages, again, reflect the profile of participants entering Youthreach and STTCs with literacy and learning difficulties and the consequent challenge of enabling such participants to secure full awards within the NFQ. Excluding participants receiving certification at the level of record of achievement, the predominant level of award secured by participants is at NFQ Level 3 and its SEC equivalent the Junior Certificate. For participants who entered the Measure 11B without any formal qualifications, securing this level of certification can be seen as an achievement in its own right but also, potentially, as a bridge to further education and training. The extent of such progression is examined in the following section.

7.3 Progression Outcomes

The data presented in Tables 7.7 to 7.9 (page 51) are extracted from reports to the Monitoring Committee of the EHRDOP for the years indicated. Based on the reports of Youthreach Co-ordinators, the overall positive progression rate (i.e., to employment, education or training) among participants leaving Youthreach on completion of either the Foundation or Progression Phases just exceeds 70% in each of the years examined (Table 7.7). It should be noted, however, that with respect to all progression outcomes, the data available do not enable the sustainability of the outcomes or the timeframe within which they occur to be examined.

Table 7.7
Proportion of Participants Progressing to Employment, Education or Training in Youthreach and STTCs by Gender, 2000 to 2005

	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005
Youthreach %					
Male	82.5	77.2	77.9		75.2
Female	69.9	70.7	68.5		68.5
Total	76.2	74.0	72.8	72.0	71.8
STTCs %					
Male	72.1	68.5	70.6		52.2
Female	63.4	44.9	40.0		48.5
Total	65.5	51.2	56.1	49.0	49.4

In the most recent year for which figures are available - 2005 - the overall rate of progression to employment, education or training among participants completing either the Foundation or Progression Phases in STTCs is 49.4%. The figures with regard to this have been relatively stable over the past number of years but are below the level of 65.5% reported for 2000.

Moreover, prior to 2005, a substantially higher proportion of Traveller men than women progressed to education, training or employment following completion of either the Foundation or Progression Phases, whereas in 2005 these proportions were approximately equal. The possible reasons for this are not commented, however.

Table 7.8
Progression Outcomes among Foundation and Progression Participants in Youthreach, 2005

	Male	Female	Total
Youthreach Foundation %			
Employment	41.5	29.0	36.2
Education	12.3	15.3	13.5
FÁS	7.1	8.7	7.8
Apprenticeship	7.1	4.4	6.0
Other (Fáilte Ireland / Teagasc)	4.3	2.7	3.7
Unemployed	16.6	21.3	18.6
Other	6.7	15.9	10.5
Not known	4.4	2.7	3.7
%	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	253	183	436
Youthreach Progression %			
Employment	43.1	32.5	36.9
Education	15.7	23.4	20.2
FÁS	7.7	8.0	7.9
Apprenticeship	7.7	1.4	4.0
Other (Fáilte Ireland / Teagasc)	4.0	7.7	6.2
Unemployed	15.7	12.8	14.0
Other	1.2	9.1	5.8
Not known	4.9	5.1	5.0
%	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	248	351	599

Tables 7.8 and 7.9 (page 51) present more detailed data on the destinations of Youthreach and STTC participants leaving after completion of the Foundation and Progression Levels of the programmes. Among Youthreach participants the proportions progressing to employment from the Foundation and Progression Phases are virtually identical at just over 36%. A slightly higher rate of progression to education or training is found among participants leaving following the Progression Phase than the Foundation Phase: 38.3% and 31.0% respectively. With respect to both the Foundation and Progression Phases, men are more likely to be in employment than women and women are more likely to be in education or training than men.

Table 7.9
Progression Outcomes among Foundation and Progression Participants in STTCs,
2005

	Male	Female	Total
STTC Foundation %			
Employment	35.3	13.5	20.4
Education	11.7	10.8	11.1
FÁS	5.9	2.7	3.7
Apprenticeship	0.0	2.7	1.9
Other (Fáilte Ireland / Teagasc)	0.0	5.4	3.7
Unemployed	5.9	29.7	22.2
Other	35.3	35.2	35.2
Not known	5.9	0.0	1.8
%	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	17	37	54
STTC Progression %			
Employment	10.4	15.5	14.3
Education	3.4	11.4	9.5
FÁS	3.4	4.1	4.0
Apprenticeship	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other (Fáilte Ireland / Teagasc)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unemployed	62.1	27.8	35.7
Other	20.7	41.2	36.5
Not known	0.0	0.0	0.0
%	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	29	97	126

Among STTC participants, the proportion progressing to employment is slightly higher among participants leaving the Foundation than the Progression Phase of the programme (20.4% and 14.3% respectively). What is particularly notable, however, is that while the employment rate of Traveller men is almost three times that found among Traveller women following the Foundation Phase (35.3% and 13.5% respectively), the proportion of Traveller women in employment following the Progression Phase, at 15.5%, exceeds that of Traveller men, just 10.4% of whom are in employment. Overall, the progression rates to education or training among Foundation and Progression Phase participants are low; 20.4% following the Foundation Phase and just 13.5% in the case of the Progression Phase.

When taken in the context of the gender and age composition of participants in STTCs - that is mainly women who are at least 25 years of age - the figures on progression presented in Table 7.9 suggest that a considerable proportion of Traveller women do not seek access to either employment or further education or training following their participation in a STTC and that this contributes to the low overall rates of progression to either employment or further education or training found among STTC participants. Overall, the data indicate that

high proportions of Traveller women return to working in the home and parenting following their participation a STTC. The potential benefits of participation thus extend to the children of these women, particularly in so far as their participation has contributed to a more positive value being placed on educational participation in their households. The extent of this, however, requires empirical investigation.

Overall, the data on progression outcomes from both Youthreach and STTCs show that only a minority of participants progress to any form of further education or training. This finding is highlighted here in the context of the low levels of educational qualifications found among participants entering Youthreach and STTCs, the low levels of the certification outcomes secured by many participants, and current policy commitments to facilitating transfer and progression within the education and training system as defined by the National Qualifications Authority earlier in this report. More generally, it is not clear from the data available the extent to which, or in what particular ways, participation in either Youthreach or STTCs provides a foundation for access to lifelong learning which is a clear overarching goal of current educational policy in both Ireland and the EU.

8. Conclusions and Observations

This final section begins by summarising the findings of this study of Measure IIB concerning the composition of participants in Youthreach and STTCs in terms of the equality grounds of membership of the Traveller Community, disability, and membership of minority ethnic groups. The strengths and weaknesses of Measure IIB in terms of combating educational disadvantage and promoting equality of educational outcomes and access to lifelong learning are then discussed and the contemporary relevance of recasting the main aim of the measure in the area of supporting progression within the further education and training and higher education systems is advocated. The section concludes with a series of observations regarding the monitoring of and reporting on Measure IIB and identifies the need for a tracking system to address the current data gaps.

8.1 Summary of the Findings Related to Accommodating Diversity and Promoting Equality within Measure IIB

While Youthreach is designed to address the educational needs of early school-leavers and to cater for a target population based on a combination of their age and educational level, a substantial minority of participants are members of the Traveller community, young people with a disability, and - to a far lesser extent - young people with parents holding refugee status or who are in the process of seeking refugee status. The figures available for participants in Youthreach in 2005 show that 331 Youthreach participants were members of the Traveller Community (i.e., 12.1% of all participants), approximately 6% of participants were young people with a physical or intellectual disability, and just under 1% were young people who were refugees or asylum seekers. Significantly, in 2005, the number of young (i.e., aged 19 years or less) Travellers in Youthreach exceeded that in STTCs (331 versus 323). In the same year just under 12% of participants were lone parents, mainly women. Thus, in looking at Youthreach from an equality perspective, it is clear that there is a diversity of participants representing a number of the nine equality grounds present in the programme.

The representation of young Travellers in Youthreach has been increasing over recent years, in particular the participation of young Traveller men (in 2005 the number of young Traveller men in Youthreach Centres at 159 exceeded that in STTCs at 113). A variety of reasons have been suggested for this trend. They include the following: (i) greater access to Youthreach Centres based on the geographical proximity of such centres in comparison to STTCs and the absence of STTCs in some localities (i.e., 90 Youthreach Centres versus 33 STTCs nationally); (ii) related to the former, a number of Youthreach Centres cater substantially or predominantly for young Travellers; (iii) changes in the value placed on education and training among young Travellers and a greater motivation to participate in more mainstream educational settings; (iv) a perception among young Travellers that STTCs are for adult Travellers - a perception that reflects the age profile of participants in STTCs as discussed earlier in this report; and, (v) a desire on the part of some young Travellers to attend Centres where adult relatives are not present. It should be noted, however, that currently there is an absence of systematic data that would permit a more grounded assessment of the trend in respect of the participation of young Travellers in Youthreach.

The situation with respect to STTCs is different than Youthreach. These Centres were established to cater for members of the Traveller community and currently the vast majority

of participants are members of the Traveller community. A small minority - in the region of 6% - of participants in STTCs are Travellers with a disability. What is particularly notable in respect of STTCs is the changing gender and age composition of participants. Based on figures for 2005, 83.1% of participants in STTCs are women and over half (54.5%) of participants are adults (i.e., aged 25 years and over), with this proportion rising to 60.1% among women participants. Conversely, only a minority of participants are currently young Travellers, and the majority of these are young Traveller women.

An indication of the level of accommodation of members of the Traveller community in both Youthreach and STTCs is provided by a statistic based on the number of Travellers participating in these programmes in 2003 relative to the Traveller population in the 15 to 49 year age range (in Census 2002). At 11%, Youthreach and STTCs are catering, on an annual basis, for approximately one in ten members of the Traveller community aged between 15 and 49 years. What is also clear is that, despite progress in retaining young Travellers in mainstream second-level schools, Youthreach and STTCs combined cater for more young Travellers (i.e., aged 15 to 19 years) than are in mainstream second-level schools in third year classes and above (the actual figures for 2003 are 652 and 476 respectively). However, as has already been noted, the proportion of young Travellers in STTCs appears to be declining in the context of rising overall numbers and Traveller women are more likely to participate in STTCs than Traveller men. Finally, it should also be noted that a small proportion - less than 10% - of participants in STTCs are not members of the Traveller community and that these are mainly young people (i.e., under 18 years).

In Youthreach there is evidence of a growing diversity in the composition of participants on equality grounds. Responding to this diversity has involved increasing the capacity of the programme to accommodate the specific needs of young Travellers, young people with a disability, and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. It should also be emphasised that, to date, considerable effort has been made within the programme to respond to the range of personal and social difficulties presented by Youthreach participants. This illustrates the capacity of the programme to attract early school leavers, many of whom experience multiple and severe familial and social disadvantages in addition to their lack of formal educational qualifications. However, as reflected in the drop-out rates discussed earlier, it may not be possible for Youthreach to retain such participants with the reasons for this lying in a combination of the multiple and severe disadvantages experienced by them and the absence of relevant resources within the programme. Having said that, it should also be noted that identifying where and how the needs of these young people should be met within current educational provision is beyond the scope of this report. Given that there was a total of 1,038 early leavers in Youthreach and 286 in STTCs in 2005, it is clear that it is not an insignificant number in terms of the overall number of participants and consequently there is a need to examine this matter further, including the role of the advocacy service in supporting early leavers.

The situation in respect of STTCs has been examined in a consultative report on the operation of the Centres in 2000 / 2001 (Griffin and Harper, 2001) and has also been the subject of much recent discussion and comment (e.g., Pavee Point, 2006). One of the issues facing STTCs has been summarised in a presentation made at the National Association of Travellers'

Centres Conference in 2003: “the Centres should not become an alternative to second-level education for Travellers, nor should they become a false economic base”. The reference here is to the potential attraction of STTCs to some young Travellers as an alternative to remaining in second level education and the perception among some Travellers that participation in STTCs is a means of securing income and is often seen as the equivalent of a “job”.

A second key issue facing STTCs - particularly given recent developments in respect of educational provision for young Travellers aimed at supporting retention within mainstream second-level schools and the policy emphasis on mainstreaming in the recent *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy* - is the extent to which they can simultaneously be centres for adult education and playing a local / community development role in respect of the Traveller community and centres catering for young Travellers who have left second-level education with minimal or no educational qualifications. On the basis of the data presented in this report, the rationale for their continued role as centres for education catering for young members of the Traveller community is very weak, particularly given evidence of the increasing age profile of participants overall and the declining proportions of young Travellers participating in STTCs. Thus, in this regard, the findings of this report support the recommendation of the *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy* that access to STTCs should be confined to Travellers over the age of 18 years.

Given the positioning of the two strands of Measure 11B within the educational system and recognising existing patterns of participation and educational outcomes in the two strands, an over-riding issue is both how and the extent to which Youthreach and STTCs can provide a progression route to higher levels of further education and training. This issue is discussed in the following sections.

8.2 Strengths and Weaknesses of Measure 11B in Combating Educational Disadvantage and Inequality

It is clear from the profile of participants entering Measure 11B that they are severely educationally disadvantaged and that they experience substantial educational inequalities relative to their age peers who are not early school leavers. It is also clear that the level of educational disadvantage as defined by the Education Act, 1998 - the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in school - is severe in the case of the majority, if not all of participants. Among the factors present in the lives of participants in Measure 11B that present barriers to their deriving appropriate benefit from education are low self-esteem, unstable family backgrounds, involvement with the justice system, poor health, accommodation problems, a low value on the potential benefits of education and training, and low aspirations in respect of the outcome of participation in education and training. Compounding these social and economic impediments are the very low levels of literacy and numeracy found among many participants and the presence of a high incidence of learning disabilities among participants overall.

Table 8.1
Nine Key Factors that Support Access in Measure IIB

Location and local profile of Centres
Use of outreach approaches and period of engagement
Inter-agency work and referral
Difference of ethos, culture and operations from mainstream second-level schools and other more mainstream centres for further education and training
Level of personnel and other support resources
Familiarity of personnel with the learning needs and personal and social circumstances of participants
Relevant in-service training for personnel
Focus on individual learner needs
Flexible curricula, pedagogy and certification

Among the strengths of Measure IIB is the manner in which it engages and secures the participation of young people and Traveller adults (in the case of STTCs) and its focus on tackling the severe educational disadvantage experienced by them. As one of the objectives of this measure study is to identify the lessons for other programmes in respect of the groups accessing Measure IIB, it is important to identify the factors that underpin the capacity of both Youthreach Centres and STTCs to attract participants. To this end Table 8.1 identifies nine factors that, on the basis of this measure study, underpin the capacity of Measure IIB to engage with its target group. In particular, it is the combination of the nine factors identified in Table 8.1 that effectively creates what are clearly very different learning environments from traditional second-level schools or other centres for further education and training.

In reading the available documentation on Measure IIB and from the observations of National Co-ordinators and other personnel consulted during this measure study, it is clear that Youthreach and STTCs have established a positive profile among their target groups. That is, Youthreach Centres and STTCs are clearly perceived by their target groups as “different” from mainstream schooling. This positive profile together with outreach work, inter-agency referral, word of mouth, and the use of a period of engagement to identify the individual needs of learners is an important factor in attracting participants. What is also of importance during the initial period of engagement is that participants can quickly identify that the ethos and operations of the centres are clearly different from mainstream second-level schools. Building on this initial engagement is a focus on addressing the learning needs of individual participants and developing their capacity to learn. This process is supported by the presence of personnel experienced in working with the participants and who are familiar with their needs. Increasingly, centres are acquiring the resources to provide additional supports in the areas of guidance, counselling and personnel being supported through in-service training to develop the range of skills relevant to enabling participants engage effectively in learning. Finally, it is clear that considerable flexibility is exercised in respect of curricula, pedagogy and certification in a manner designed to cater for the needs of individual participants. This enables the centres to provide recognition for the achievements of participants.

Set against the evident strengths of Youthreach and STTCs to attract participants, there is also evidence of weaknesses in a number of areas. On the basis of the data reviewed in this report, the three weaknesses identified are: (i) the high level of early leaving / drop-out from the programmes; (ii) the low level qualifications secured by the majority of participants completing the programmes; and, (iii) the low rates of transfer and progression to further education and training following completion of the programmes. These are substantial issues in the context of one of the stated aims of Measure 11B, that is, the provision of “second chance education” and in the context of an overarching policy emphasis on promoting access to lifelong learning. Clearly, in this regard, among the issues arising are developing an operational definition of what constitutes second chance education in the context of provision for early school leavers (particularly given evidence of the multiple disadvantages experienced by them), defining appropriate indicators to assess the extent to which this is being delivered, and reviewing the capacity of the programmes provided in the light of progress with respect to such indicators. The data requirements in respect of these issues are presented in the concluding section of this report.

In considering the balance between the strengths and weaknesses of Youthreach and STTCs, a number of factors need to be taken into consideration. First, and perhaps most significantly, is the profile of entrants to the programmes. In addition to the disadvantaged social and economic circumstances of the majority of participants, substantial proportions of participants have very basic levels of literacy and numeracy, often compounded by the presence of learning disabilities and special educational needs. Second, there is evidence that in the case of many participants, their on-going participation in Youthreach and STTCs is threatened by events in their personal and family lives which in some instances resulted in them leaving the programmes. In their own right, both of these factors place limitations on the capacity of both Youthreach and STTCs - as currently constituted - to secure high levels of retention and higher levels of certification and qualifications. Third, there is the “attraction” of entering employment and securing an independent personal income and, in some cases, contributing to the household income. For participants who leave early as well as for participants completing Measure 11B the draw of employment - particularly when this can be obtained in the current buoyant labour market - rather than continuing in education or training should not be underestimated. What must be recognised in this regard is that participants in Youthreach and STTCs are disproportionately drawn from families with very low incomes and consequently they are not in a position to provide the personal finance to offset the draw of early entry to the labour market.

Fourth, and moving away from the characteristics of participants, there is a need to recognise limitations in the capacity of Youthreach and STTCs to systematically address the levels of educational and other disadvantages presented by participants. Of significance in this regard is the limited ability of centres to provide the full range of educational and other supports (e.g., psychological assessment, out of centre parental liaison, individual tuition) that are required to address the various and often individually based needs presented by participants. Also of note in this regard is that participants in Youthreach and STTCs currently do not have access to provisions in the new School Support Programme and specialist services that are provided by the NEPS, NEWB and NCSE.

Fifth, and specifically in relation to the issue of the low levels of progression observed among participants, it must be recognised that the reasons for this do not solely reside within Youthreach and STTCs. Difficulties in the area of progression also arise from weaknesses in the capacities of other programmes and providers in the area of further education and training to provide access and to accommodate participants leaving Youthreach. This issue is discussed further in the following section.

It is the simultaneous operation of all of the above factors that dramatically highlights the particular and very challenging circumstances within which Measure 11B operates.

8.3 Promoting Equality of Educational Outcomes through Progression

The available data show that many participants complete Measure 11B with qualifications that, on their own, provide limited opportunities for effective progression (i.e., as defined by the NQAI as the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another where each programme is of a higher level than the preceding programme).

A further consequence of the low levels of qualifications secured by participants completing Youthreach and STTCs is that the majority still experience inequalities in educational outcomes relative to their peers who did not leave school early. Thus, while the centres can be seen to be effective in attracting participants from very disadvantaged circumstances and in providing those who complete the programmes with basic levels of qualifications, it is at least questionable that - in the absence of such participants subsequently gaining further and higher qualifications - they are making a contribution to reducing the educational inequalities experienced by participants when viewed in this broader context. The key issues arising in this regard are indicated in Table 8.2.

**Table 8.2
Promoting Equality of Educational and Labour Market Outcomes in Measure 11B**

Equality of educational outcomes (over the life course)
Relevance of qualifications to educational progression and employment opportunities
Targets for progression to mainstream further education and training
Development of structured pathways to further education and training and higher education
Effective monitoring of progression outcomes

Noting the developments that are taking place in the certification options being provided by centres - particularly in respect of FETAC certification and the NFQ - and in the area of quality assurance through the Quality Framework Initiative, there is a need to review the role of the Centres in respect of the educational outcomes that result from participation and, related to this, the role of the centres in facilitating transfer and progression to further education and training. In stating this, it is acknowledged that while Youthreach and STTCs make a significant contribution to tackling the severe levels of educational disadvantage experienced by participants, they may not, and particularly not on their own, be capable of addressing all of the issues arising in relation to promoting equality of educational and labour market outcomes. This, in turn, points to the

importance of the issue of progression, and the role of the centres in promoting progression to further education and training that results in higher levels of qualifications as well as qualifications required to underpin successful careers in the current labour market. One specific aspect of this is ensuring the effective progression of participants from Youthreach and STTCs to other educational and vocational interventions providing access to higher level qualifications that fall within the provisions of the EHRDOP, particularly the PLC element of Measure 21 - Lifelong Learning. Also, the possible enhanced role of Measure 11B in promoting a return to educational participation within second level schools deserves further consideration. This is particularly relevant in the context of participants aged 16 years or under.

This emphasis on educational progression in Measure 11B and enabling participants to secure higher qualifications through developing and supporting participants to progress within the further education and training system and within higher education, is also consistent with current policy objectives in the area of supporting lifelong learning and combating inequalities in educational outcomes. In this regard, there is a need to question the continued relevance of the aim of Measure 11B in terms of its focus on “transition education” and facilitating access to the labour market. While that aim may have been relevant when Youthreach and STTCs were introduced, current trends in respect of the number of school leavers completing the Leaving Certificate and progressing to further and higher education, as well as developments in the labour market that place importance on the quality and relevance of qualifications for accessing jobs at the higher end, point to the greater relevance of explicitly locating the main aim of Measure 11B in the areas of enabling participants to overcome the impediments and barriers to learning they experience on entry to Youthreach and STTCs and acquiring qualifications that underpin effective progression within the further education and training as well as higher education systems. In effect, this would mean seeing one of the main objectives of Measure 11B as being a bridge from educational disadvantage to a capacity to progress within the educational system and to derive full benefit from that system, albeit within a longer timeframe. In pointing to this, the intention is not to support the creation of a “qualifications” driven approach within Measure 11B. Rather, what is being suggested is that greater attention needs to be paid to how Measure 11B interacts with other elements of the education and training system, particularly in respect of enabling participants to transfer to and progress within that system. As is clear from the observations made earlier in respect of factors that influence educational progression rates from Measure 11B, this is not an issue that can be addressed solely within Measure 11B. In this regard, the role and effectiveness of the advocacy service that is currently in place to support progression - though not available to all Youthreach and STTCs - should be considered. Current evidence suggests that the advocacy service where it is in place is supporting participants to secure greater progression.

8.4 Issues Relevant to Reporting on Measure 11B

The reporting on both strands of Measure 11B to the Monitoring Committee of the EHRDOP is relatively well developed though it also shows some shortcomings. A number of these shortcomings have been identified in previous sections of this report where it has also been noted that the absence of data on key issues prevents an accurate assessment of the performance of Measure 11B. In particular, on the basis of current data it is not possible to identify the characteristics of participants who secure positive benefits from their participation

(e.g., complete the programme, acquire certification, and secure positive progression outcomes) and those who do not (e.g., early leavers, participants who do not make positive transitions following completion of the programme). This is of importance because of the evident diversity of the profile of participants in terms of the variety and severity of impediments to learning they present, and in order to identify the types of responses and supports required to address the needs of early leavers and participants not securing a positive outcome from their participation. Particular attention was also drawn earlier in this report to the lack of data on the experiences and circumstances of early leavers and the necessity for such data to be available in order to identify how to effectively respond to the needs of this severely disadvantaged group.

Underlying many of the shortcomings identified in the current data collection and reporting system on Measure 11B is an over reliance on data collected from Youthreach Co-ordinators and Directors of STTCs and the absence of a tracking system that enables the progress of individual participants to be monitored both during and subsequent to their leaving or completing a Youthreach or STTC programme. In this regard, one of the recommendations of the NESF (2002) report on early school leavers was the need to be able to track over time the progress of early school leavers with a view to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the interventions in place. With regard to this it is notable that no longitudinal study of the outcomes of Youthreach or STTCs has been undertaken to date though, in respect of the former, case studies of the long-term benefits to participants have been prepared by Stokes (2006). Also, the recent *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy (2006)* explicitly recommends the collection of “data on Travellers progression through the education and training spectrum” (p. 71).

Central to addressing the data gaps in relation to Measure 11B is designing and putting in place a tracking system that will enable the collection of data on the outputs (e.g., completion rates and the characteristics of completers and early leavers), results (e.g., the precise nature and level of the certification obtained by participants completing a full programme in either a Youthreach Centre or STTC), and outcomes (e.g., progression to further education and training, employment, or unemployment) of the programme. An important element of this tracking system will be its capacity to systematically follow-up on and identify the educational and labour market status of participants in the year following their leaving or completion of Youthreach or STTC. Such follow-up surveys are undertaken in respect of other measures in the EHRDOP. Fáilte Ireland (2007) is an example of good practice in this area.

Given what is known about the profile of participants entering Youthreach and STTCs, the tracking system for Measure 11B should be capable of: (i) capturing the precise circumstances and learning needs of participants on entry to the programme; and (ii) including indicators that effectively track participant progress in areas such as personal and social development, literacy and numeracy, and capacity to learn and sustain learning. Among the reasons for this is that in the documentation on Measure 11B considerable attention is paid to the benefits of the measure in these areas, though currently these benefits are largely unquantifiable.

Finally, and noting the points made above regarding the importance of progression to further education and training as a means of enhancing the capacity of the measure to address the educational and labour market inequalities experienced by participants, it is important that the progression outcomes from Measure 11B be effectively monitored and reported on. This requires developing indicators that precisely capture the nature of the progression outcomes in terms of the level of the education or training course attended (e.g., using the 10 levels of the National Framework of Qualifications) and identifying the nature and sustainability of the progression outcomes secured within specified time periods. The reporting of progression on this basis should include breakdowns on the equality grounds of gender, family status, membership of the Traveller Community, disability, and membership of minority ethnic groups.

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Annex 1

The 10 Measures of EHRDOP to which the WEOP Specifically Applies		
Measure	Implementing Department	Implementing Agency
M3 Active Measure for the LTU and Socially Excluded	DETE	FÁS (with elements contracted to local bodies (e.g., in relation to implementing CE))
M4 Early Education	DES	St. Patricks and DIT (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education)
M9 Third Level Access	DES	HEA, Institutes of Technology, VECs
M11B Early School Leavers – Youthreach and Travellers	DES	VECs (in respect of out of school centres and Senior Traveller Training Centres)
M12B Sectoral Entry Training – Tourism	DAST	Fáilte Ireland
M13 Skills Training for the Unemployed and Redundant	DETE	FÁS
M15 Employment Support Services	DSFA	DSFA (Employment Support Service Unit with the DSFA)
M21 Lifelong Learning – Back to Education Initiative	DES	VECs, Non-VEC Schools, 0Community Groups
28B Training of Trainers	DETE	FÁS
32B Training ;’;Infrastructure	DETE	FÁS

Annex 2

Provision of FETAC Modules and Number of Trainees Completing Each Module in Youthreach Centres and STTCs (2003)

Module	No. and % of Centres Providing Module (Base=90)	No. of Trainees
Computer literacy	72 (80%)	777
Communications	70 (78%)	728
Mathematics	66 (73%)	606
Personal Effectiveness	45 (50%)	476
Art and Design	47 (52%)	475
Food and Nutrition	48 (53%)	366
Caring for Children	42 (47%)	328
Food and Cookery	38 (42%)	307
Personal and Interpersonal Skills	40 (44%)	283
Preparation for Work	33 (37%)	253
Woodcraft	22 (24%)	230
Craft – Textiles	30 (33%)	225
Health Related Fitness	22 (24%)	213
Information Technology Skills	27 (30%)	208
Craft Wood	30 (33%)	201
Work Experience	18 (20%)	168
Child Development and Play	21 (23%)	155
Computer Applications	18 (20%)	151
Drama	13 (14%)	135
Outdoor Pursuits	10 (11%)	122
Work Orientation	9 (10%)	120
Engineering Workshop Process	14 (16%)	103
Career Information	13 (14%)	103
Office Procedure	13 (14%)	103
Consumer Awareness	15 (17%)	92
Personal Care and Presentation*	11 (12%)	91
Metalwork	7 (8%)	83
Catering	7 (8%)	75
English	5 (6%)	70
Ceramics	11 (12%)	54
Drawing	13 (14%)	51
Painting	8 (9%)	22
Childcare	8 (9%)	68
Crafts	5 (6%)	55
Swimming	5 (6%)	52
Craft - Pyrography	6 (7%)	50
Graphic Communication	7 (8%)	47
Music Appreciation	6 (6%)	46
Craft - Upholstery	7 (8%)	44
Customer Service	1 (1%)	42
Craft - Leather	6 (7%)	41
Machine Knitting	3 (3%)	40
Craft - Glass	6 (7%)	39
Horticulture	7 (8%)	36

Module	No. and % of Centres Providing Module (Base=90)	No. of Trainees
Literacy	3 (3%)	34
Fast Food Catering	4 (4%)	32
Spreadsheet Methods	3 (3%)	32
Cultural Studies*	2 (2%)	26
Intercultural Awareness*	2 (2%)	26
Kayaking*	3 (3%)	25
Word Processing	3 (3%)	20
Text Production	1 (1%)	20
Internet	2 (2%)	20
Reception*	1 (1%)	20
Business Calculations	2 (2%)	18
Data Entry	4 (4%)	17
Bookkeeping and computers	1 (1%)	16
French*	2(2%)	15
Transnational Experience	3 (3%)	14
Information & Administration	2 (2%)	12
Aqua*	1 (1%)	12
Early Childhood Education	3 (3%)	11
Working in Childcare	4 (4%)	11
Business Administration	1 (1%)	10
Tourism Awareness*	1 (1%)	10
Safety and Health at Work*	1 (1%)	10
Metalwork Enamelling*	1 (1%)	10
Graphic Design	3 (3%)	9
Craft Puppetry	3 (3%)	8
Video Expression	1 (1%)	8
Arts and Crafts for Children	2 (2%)	6
Historical Studies*	1 (1%)	6
Colour and Light*	1 (1%)	6
Technical Drawing	1 (1%)	5
Occupational First Aid*	2 (2%)	5
Visual Arts Practice	1 (1%)	4
Craft Print	1 (1%)	4
Desk Top Publishing	1 (1%)	4
Water Safety	1 (1%)	4
Soccer*	1 (1%)	4
Haircare	1 (1%)	3
Security Industry*	1 (1%)	2
Sewing*	1 (1%)	2
Information Processing	1 (1%)	1
Database Methods	1 (1%)	1
Information Systems	1 (1%)	1
Combined Materials	1 (1%)	1
Everyday Science*	1 (1%)	1
Social Studies*	1 (1%)	1
Irish*	1 (1%)	1

Equality Studies Unit

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