



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta
National Economic & Social Council

Moving from Welfare to Work:

Low Work Intensity Households and the Quality of Supportive Services

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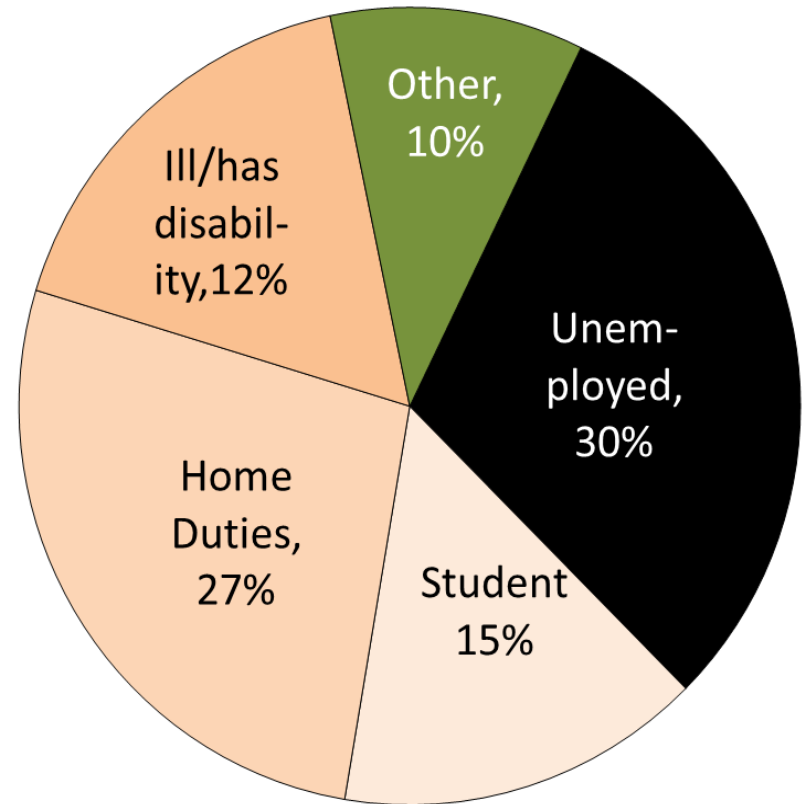
Presentation at Moving from Welfare to Work Seminar
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Pillar Room, Rotunda Hospital, Parnell Square

Why focus on jobless households?

- Jobless households are households where no-one is working or there is only marginal attachment to the labour force (sometimes referred to as low work intensity households)
- Household joblessness is high in Ireland
- People in jobless households have a high risk of poverty
- Household joblessness has a long and lasting impact on children
- Household joblessness is a significant cost to the state

Household Joblessness is distinct from Unemployment

2010, Ireland



- **Broader than unemployment**
- **Includes caring for home & family, people with disability, carers, lone parents**
- **Considers all the adults under 60 in a household**

NESC Study: in a Disadvantaged Suburb of Dublin

The area had characteristics of jobless households, which are:

- Higher levels of unemployment
- Lower education levels
- Households more likely to contain children
- More likely to be headed by a lone parent
- More likely to be in the manual social class
- Higher rates of disability
- More likely to be renting accommodation

NESC Study - 92 Interviews with:

- 33 jobless households (34 people)
- 16 local services
- 11 county/regional services
- 11 local employers
- 12 government departments / agencies
- 9 national stakeholders

Who are our household interviewees?



They were mostly in their 30s and 40s



18 married/cohabiting, 9 separated/divorced, 5 parenting alone



20 households had children U18, and 10 households were inter-generational



Education levels were well below the Dublin average – 9/34 had no qualifications and only 4/34 had a degree. But they attached high value to education



Housing – 6/7 who owned their home were in mortgage arrears. 11 in a council house. 3 homeless



Migrants – 5 Africans and 2 UK nationals. No Eastern Europeans

Household Interviewees & employment

Labour market experience

- None – 5 – refugees, Travellers, young people
- Low skilled jobs – 20
- Medium skilled jobs – 10
- High skilled jobs – 8
- 4 moved from low skill to high skill
- 4 (all African migrants) moved from high skill to low skill

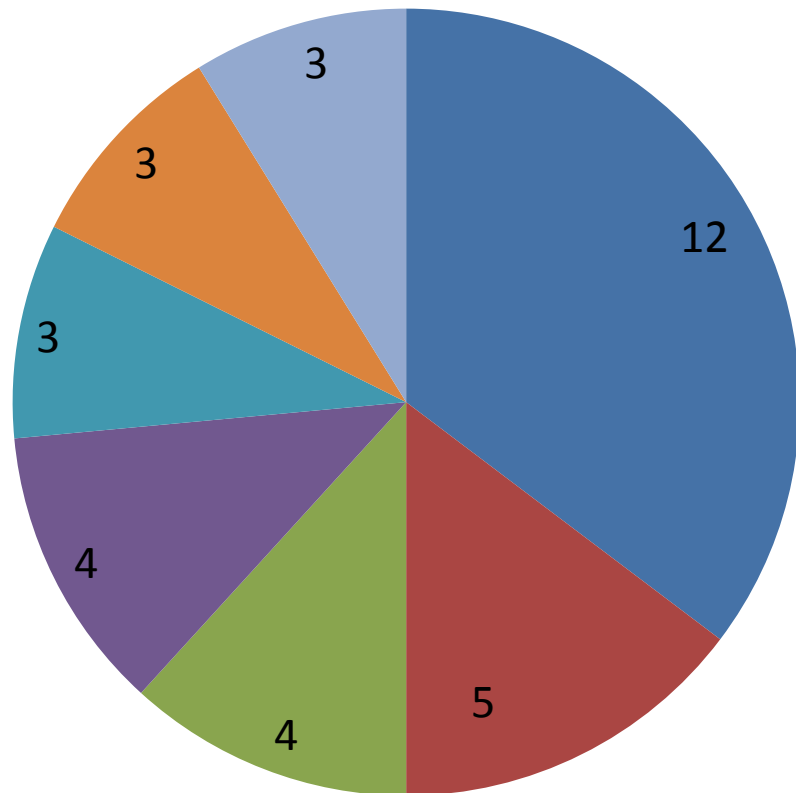


Reasons for unemployment

- The economic crash – 10
- Having children – 7 (all women)
- Ill health of self/family member – 6
- Other factors, including discrimination – 7 (Travellers/African migrants)
- More than 1 reason - 17



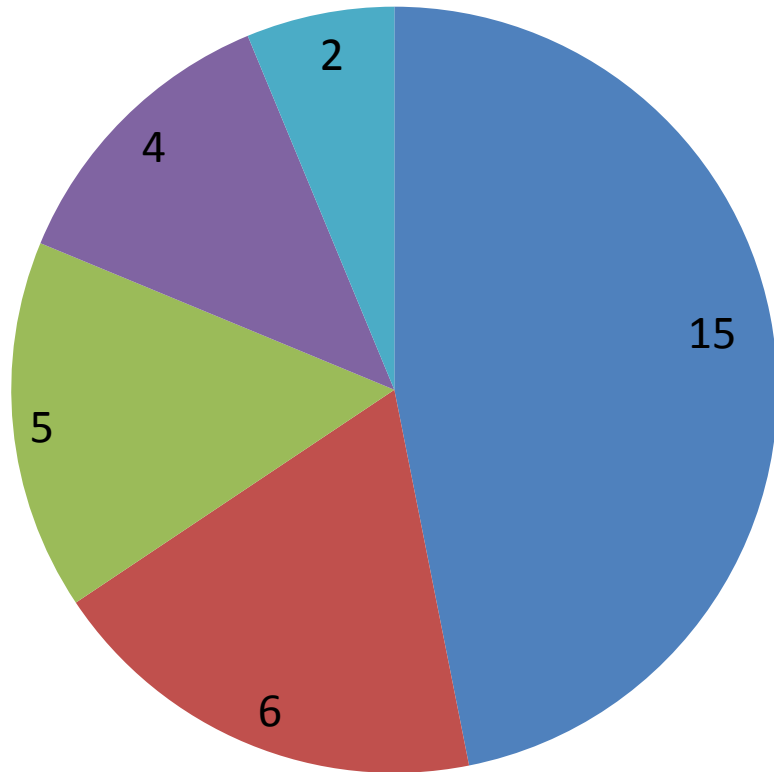
Social welfare payments



- Jobseekers Payment
- Unemployment Scheme
- Qualified adult*
- Disability/invalidity payment
- Carer's Allowance
- One Parent Family Payment/JST
- Other/unknown

* Qualified adult = the adult dependent of a person receiving a social welfare payment

Welfare payment and job search requirements

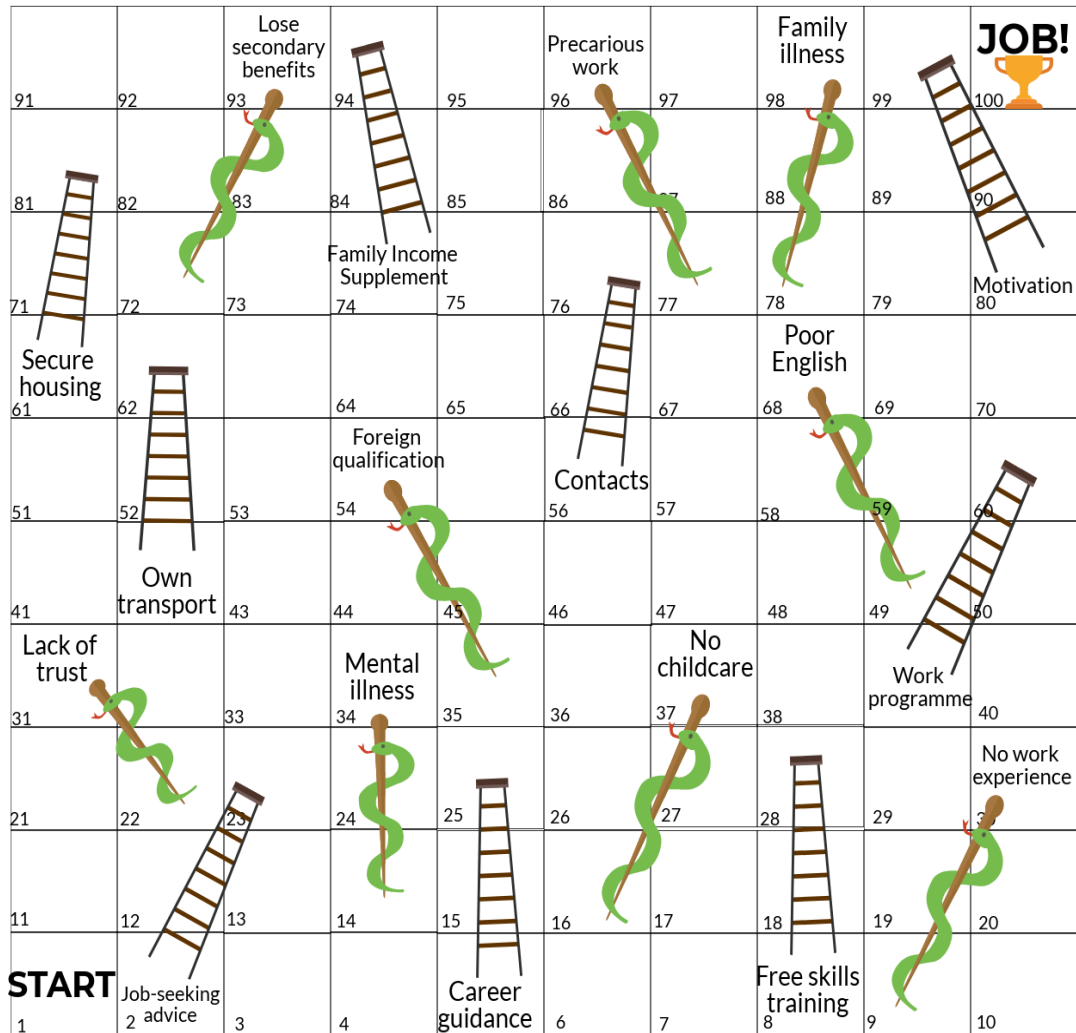


- Have to look & looking
- Don't have to look & not looking
- Don't have to look, but looking
- Don't have to look, but would like a job
- Have to look but given up

Household interviewees – Positive Aspects

- The vast majority wanted a paid job
- Benefits of some education and training courses
- The value of employment support schemes
- The support of family and friends, and the wider community
- The value of volunteering
- Resilience, ambition, hope were evident in many interviewees

Key Barriers and Enablers in Transitioning from Welfare to Work



Conclusions – Key Messages (1)

The social welfare system and employment support system is generally supportive:

- It keeps people out of income poverty
- It tries to understand the needs of jobseekers
- It is more benign than in some other countries

However:

- There is a lack of trust in Intreo
- People find it difficult to get information on the options open to them
- At times, people feel they have no choice on activation/training options offered
- It can be hard for vulnerable jobseekers to engage

Conclusions – Key Messages (2)

There is a need to:

Develop a stronger focus on households

- Continue work to expand activation supports to qualified adults, people with a disability & carers who wish to work, etc

Co-ordinate better

- Create better links between services, and to employers
- Provide resources for co-ordination

Increase the intensity of support

- Provide more intensive support (e.g. in literacy education)

Model of Activation



Supports required for vulnerable groups:

- Vulnerable groups include
 - lone parents
 - people with a disability
 - those with literacy difficulties, poor English, no work experience or contacts, a history of addiction or time in prison
- Vulnerable groups need supports ***tailored*** to their circumstances, e.g.
 - Activation into part-time work
 - Childcare, literacy supports
 - Actions to tackle discrimination
 - Particular supports for people with a disability

The critical role of case officers in Intreo:

- Case officers need time to engage with clients to foster trust
- The most disadvantaged clients are likely to benefit from working with the most experienced & qualified case officers
- Case officers need good training to ensure they are aware of all options for clients in a complex system
- Managers have a key role in informing and training their staff

Welfare to Work Supports



Supports exist to help people move from welfare to work, e.g. Working Family Payment (previously FIS), HAP, Affordable Childcare Scheme, etc.

However:

- For people with children, and/or in precarious employment, these **supports may not provide enough certainty** to take the risk of moving into work
- **Timely assessment and payment** of income supports and secondary benefits is crucial for those on low incomes with no savings
- It would be helpful to **award the Working Family Payment automatically** to eligible families moving from welfare to work

Training Pathways and Progression



- **Ensure disadvantaged groups can access training and education**
 - Provision of financial supports
 - Ensure new apprenticeships are accessible
- **Improve career guidance provision**
 - Ensure provision is more consistent
- **Focus on low skilled adults**
 - Upskill
 - Adult education approach
- **Ensure investment in education is effective**
 - Reduce early school leaving
 - Limit the ‘course carousel’
 - Provide alternatives to school-based education
 - Recognition of equivalent qualifications

Employment Schemes



Employment schemes provide a range of benefits, including work experience, and an increase in confidence.

However:

- All employment schemes should **incorporate training**, to upskill the disadvantaged groups taking part
- **Better links are needed between employment schemes and the labour market.** Participants could be given enhanced activation support, e.g. through JobPath, as their time on a scheme draws to a close
- The potential of **self-sustaining social enterprise** to address long-term unemployment should be promoted

Role of Employers



- **Engaging with employers**
 - By employment support and training agencies
- **Addressing labour shortages**
 - Long-term unemployed, etc are potential employees
 - Recognising the value of atypical CVs, volunteering
- **Precarious employment**
 - Concern about the use of precarious working practices
- **Self-employment**
 - Range of supports available
 - Lack of capital a key issue

Institutions and Service Provision



- **The importance of ethos**
 - Need for greater trust between service users and service providers
- **Flexibility**
 - Need for greater flexibility in eligibility criteria
- **Funding**
 - Adequate funding to address needs of disadvantaged groups / poor neighbourhoods
- **Assessing Outcomes**
 - Build evaluation into all programmes, and act on outcomes
 - Collect data to capture service outcomes, including ‘distance travelled’