



**DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMBAT POVERTY AGENCY'S  
STRATEGIC PLAN 2005-2007**

**CAPITA**  
CONSULTING

## Background

You have been invited to submit a questionnaire as part of the process to develop the Combat Poverty Agency's Strategic Plan for the three-year period 2005–2007. An essential part of the information gathering process includes seeking the views of the Combat Poverty Agency stakeholders.

The returned questionnaires will be analysed and the main findings will be used to inform the development of the Strategic Plan 2005-2007.

## The Questionnaire

The questionnaire is organised in three sections:

- *The context* in which the Combat Poverty Agency operates in Ireland.
- *The role* of the Combat Poverty Agency in Ireland.
- *Your relationship* with the Combat Poverty Agency.

Please use the space allocated for your responses. Supplementary sheets or additional materials will not be referred to in the analysis.

Please return completed questionnaires by **Monday 31<sup>st</sup> May** in the enclosed SAE to:

Vanya Sargent  
Capita Consulting Ireland  
3 Fitzwilliam Place  
Dublin 2

If you have any queries regarding the questionnaire, please contact:

Claire Shaw at Capita Tel: 048 90763910 or email [claire.shaw@capita.co.uk](mailto:claire.shaw@capita.co.uk)

*Thank-you for investing your time in this valuable work*

## SECTION ONE: The Context – Poverty in Ireland 2005 – 2007

What are the key issues for poverty in Ireland over the next three years?

Based on the nature and type of queries received by the network of Citizen Information Centres and documented in a CIC Survey Report from 2003 the top four categories of query are in the areas of:

<b>Social Welfare</b>	<b>30 %</b>
<b>Employment</b>	<b>13 %</b>
<b>Health Services</b>	<b>9 %</b>
<b>Health Board Payments</b>	<b>7 %</b>

Within the **Social Welfare** category there is considerable variation. In terms of distribution the 2003 survey found that the category with the highest incidence of queries was Invalidation/Disability payments accounting for 18% of social welfare queries. **Employment** related queries are predominantly concerned with some aspect of employment rights while issues relating to the medical card dominate **Health Services**. While housing accounted for 5% of all queries in 2003, it should be noted that 42% of **Health Board Payments** queries related to the Rent/Mortgage Supplement suggesting that housing and accommodation issues are in reality running at 8% of all queries.

As part of their work CICs also identify queries that have a policy feedback dimension. During 2003 CICs submitted 1,154 Social Policy Records to Comhairle. Of these over 38% related to social welfare issues (15% social assistance, 13% social insurance and the remainder general social welfare). Employment accounted for 19% of social policy returns followed by health at almost 7%.

The findings of a forthcoming Comhairle report *Private Troubles and Public Policy* researched by Michael Browne and based on 80 interviews with CIC clients considers the difficulties experienced by people in accessing public services and supports such as adequate income, appropriate housing and personal social services. The report indicates that 'despite the various social cohesion programmes and anti-poverty strategies in recent years, the position of people on the margins, whose access to services is already impaired by physical, psychological, educational, linguistic, socio-economic, cultural and technological factors, continues to be a cause for concern'. The importance of enabling citizens to access welfare rights and entitlements through the process of information, advice and advocacy remains paramount.

Extrapolating from CIC queries, social policy returns and research, Comhairle considers that the main issues for poverty in Ireland over the next 3 years include the continuing social exclusion of marginalised groups and the high risk of poverty among people with a disability. In relation to people with disabilities, access, housing, employment and a consideration of the costs of disability are necessary prerequisites to independent living and social inclusion. There is also a need for an integrated approach to care planning that takes account of personal support services, respite care and the costs of caring. In relation to employment the most significant problem relates to the actual enforcement of existing legislation and dealing with information deficits in regard to rights and entitlements in particular for migrant workers. The potential for poverty / unemployment traps and the disincentives to work created by the eligibility criteria attaching to the medical card and the rent supplement are of particular concern to CIC clients.

## SECTION TWO: The Role – Combat Poverty Agency 2005 – 2007

What do you see as the role of the Combat Poverty Agency in tackling poverty issues in Ireland?

- To keep poverty and social inclusion on the agenda and through research to continue to develop an understanding of poverty and social exclusion in order to inform and influence policy aimed at eliminating poverty.
- To work towards the full implementation of the National Anti Poverty Strategy (NAPS).
- To work to build capacity in the Community and Voluntary Sector and resource community activity around social inclusion measures.
- To work with both statutory and non-statutory agencies engaged in local development initiatives aimed at eliminating poverty.

What should the Combat Poverty Agency's key priorities be over the next three years? (i.e. where should CPA's resources (funding, time, people etc) be focused over the next three years?)

- County and City Development Strategies drafted by local authorities have identified aspects of poverty and social exclusion for consideration and action. The CPA should work with local authorities to combine resources and funding on initiatives aimed at eliminating poverty
- The CPA should seek to influence central government to ensure adequate resources and funding are allocated to local development initiatives aimed at eliminating poverty and social exclusion.
- Continued work with the Community and Voluntary sector to build capacity and promote linkages within this sector.
- To work with other key stakeholders engaged in shaping and influencing public policy with a view to developing partnership approaches in key policy areas.

### SECTION THREE: The Relationship – Combat Poverty Agency and its Stakeholders 2005 – 2007

What are the ways in which you and your organisation would like to/ need to interact with the CPA over the next three years?

As already stated, the importance of enabling citizens to access welfare rights and entitlements through the process of information, advice and advocacy remains extremely important in tackling poverty and social exclusion. Comhairle and CPA would benefit from interaction and information sharing in relation to information, advice and advocacy initiatives targeting marginalised groups. Current Comhairle funded initiatives include outreach services from CICs to hospitals, long stay institutions, travellers halting sites etc., the Refugee Information Service and the NAMHI advocacy project and negotiations with the Homeless Agency to develop targeted information for homeless people. Comhairle also publishes targeted information for people with disabilities, older people etc.

Comhairle is currently working with CPA and ADM in the ongoing development of the inter-agency database and participates in six monthly information exchange meetings.

In the area of social policy, interaction and joint work with CPA would be beneficial to avoid duplication of effort and increase effectiveness. Comhairle has a remit to “influence policy developments by highlighting the concerns of service users as to the effectiveness of social and civil services”. Through regular feedback from CICs in social policy returns, Comhairle has unique access to information on how social administration and public policy is affecting people in their daily lives. There may be areas where CPA research and Comhairle social policy feedback could be pooled to create more effective policy feedback to Government.

Comhairle works closely with the CPA through a network of social policy workers established in February 2003. The Network, which is made up of a number of agencies, meets on a quarterly basis providing a forum for the exchange of information. It also offers an opportunity to share experience and expertise about what works in terms of influencing policy and hear how other agencies approach their policy brief. Comhairle would wish to see this forum develop and the potential for partnership approaches to key policy areas further explored.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

If you would like to make any additional comments regarding the development of the Combat Poverty Agency's Strategic Plan, please write them here.