Poverty, Social Exclusion and Holidaying: Towards Developing Policy in Ireland

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Abstract

This qualitative research investigates how promoting access to annual holidaying can help combat social exclusion for children and families experiencing poverty. It aims to stimulate debate on the need for developing social tourism policy. To this end, it discusses a range of policy rationales and reviews developments in policy and practice in other EU states. Specifically, its objectives include: to demonstrate how access to annual holidaying benefits people, particularly children, living in poverty; and to produce an evidence-based case to stimulate the development of government policy, and the investment of state and private sector resources, in the area.

The study found that extant provision in Ireland is predominantly dependent on NGOs. Public support is modest, ad-hoc and informal, while private sector involvement is rare. Extant provision is poorly integrated into the array of supports offered to children and families experiencing disadvantage.

The findings argue that access to an annual holiday generates benefits. Specifically it found that the structured, child-centred holidays studied broadened children's social horizons; created opportunities to learn and acquire new skills; offered exposure to positive role models and promoted positive behavioural change. In addition, further benefits were generated for guardians and the wider family unit. The policy implications of these findings are discussed.

Key words: poverty; social tourism; children

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Glossary of Terms

MEB	Minimum Essential Budgets
BITS	Bureau International du Tourisme Social / International Bureau of Social Tourism
CPA	Combat Poverty Agency
CSO	Central Statistics Office
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETC/ETB	English Tourism Council, formerly the English Tourist Board
EU-SILC	EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions
FHA	Family Holiday Association
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
NAPinclusion	National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007–2016
NAPS	National Anti-Poverty Strategy
NCS	National Children's Strategy
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OSI	Office for Social Inclusion
RAPID	Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development
SVdP	Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
UNWTO/ WTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation/ World Tourism Organisation
VVF	Village Vacances Familles (commonly referred to as VVF Vacances)

1   Introduction to the Study

This working paper seeks to make a case for developing government policy in the area of social tourism. 'Social tourism involves the extension of the benefits of holidays to economically marginal groups, such as the unemployed, single-parent families, pensioners and the handicapped' (Hall, 2005:152). Social tourism provision in Ireland, while in existence for some 80 years, is underdeveloped and significantly out of step with EU best practice. Extant provision is predominantly dependent on the efforts of NGOs, with public support modest, uneven, ad-hoc and informal in nature. Private sector involvement, meanwhile, is rare. While historical, socio-cultural and economic circumstances can be forwarded to explain the differing trajectories of social tourism in Ireland and elsewhere, the time is now opportune to develop policy in the area.

CSO statistics attest to the assertion that annual holiday-taking has now achieved normalcy in Irish society. The combined number of domestic and international holiday trips taken by Irish residents rose from 10.9 million in 2002 to 14.2 million in 2006 (CSO, 2007). Holidaying is now a standard lifestyle practice for a majority of the population. Yet, EU-SILC data (CSO, 2006) show that despite rapid economic advances in recent decades, 23 per cent of Irish citizens still cannot afford to take an annual holiday, for financial reasons. The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), (Government of Ireland, 1997, revised in 2002) states that 'people are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society'.

In this 'style of life' approach, access to leisure generally, and holidaying specifically, assumes a pivotal conceptual role (Townsend, 1979; Dawson, 1988). To be unable to access an annual holiday is to experience a form of social exclusion. Furthermore, an inability to participate in holidaying is to be denied a range of benefits that a growing academic and policy literature attribute to this lifestyle practice. These benefits are felt at personal, inter-personal and societal levels. Indeed, a suggestion in the literature is that a denial of these benefits can generate a set of social costs.

This study represents exploratory research in an Irish context. It begins by reviewing the international literature linking poverty, social exclusion and holidaying. Existing research on the benefits of holidaying is given particular attention, as are the various justifications and rationale employed to underpin policy and practice in the area. Attention then turns to policy

domains. Social tourism policy and practice in the EU is reviewed, with instances of best practice identified. The current situation in Ireland is then described and discussed.

Empirically, this study focuses on children. The National Children's Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2000) envisages an Ireland where children are respected as young citizens and have a voice of their own. This research aims to give voice to children experiencing disadvantage. In so doing, it implicitly advocates the value of adopting a highly qualitative methodology as a way of uncovering the lifestyle realities of people understood largely through poverty statistics. The objective is not to produce results that are generalisable to other populations, that are explanatory in relating causality or that generate replicable models. Rather the intention is to validate human experience, to demonstrate the impact that particular interventions can have on quality of life and to focus attention on an activity that has engaged and benefited thousands of Irish people for as long as 80 years with little acknowledgement or recognition.

Following an explanation of the methods employed in the study, the findings are presented and analysed. In essence, they are employed to generate a discussion on how participation in holidaying can help combat social exclusion, promote well-being and improve quality of life for children and families living in poverty. The final part of the paper considers the policy implications of the findings and sets out a series of conclusions.

2 Poverty, Social Exclusion and Holidaying

2.1 Conceptualising Poverty and Social Exclusion

According to Dawson (1988), the manner in which poverty is defined and measured impacts considerably on the way in which it is viewed by citizens and addressed by governments. Dawson notes that historical attempts to define and measure poverty focused on 'subsistence poverty', with little consideration of lifestyle or leisure, as these were not considered to be life sustaining. The belief that measuring poverty should acknowledge a person's right to exist in a socially meaningful way only gained credence in the latter part of the twentieth century. Researchers advocating this belief included Drewnowski and Scott (1968), Holman (1978), Townsend (1979) and Ross (1983). These researchers argued that appropriate measurements of poverty should identify conditions such as to permit a family to function socially as well as survive physically.

Townsend's (1979) work on 'style of life' poverty was influential in expanding definitions of poverty to incorporate concepts of social well-being, quality of life and needs that extend beyond the physical. He stressed the importance of acknowledging that people in any given society share, to a considerable extent, a range of social and cultural activities, customs and practices that make up a 'standard' style of living. If people are unable to participate in these socio-culturally defining activities and so are unable to meet 'standard' societal needs, then they are deprived and poor.

Subsequently, poverty has been conceived as a relative and social phenomenon, based on 'social adequacy' rather than subsistence, taking account of leisure and other needs (Dawson, 1988). As such, the 'poor' are considered in relation to overall society, and their degree of inequality highlighted relative to society (Blackwood and Lynch, 1994). This approach to poverty measures the extent to which certain groups are excluded from the customary way of life in a particular society.

The multi-dimensional nature of deprivation is now becoming increasingly recognised (de Haan, 1999; Whelan et al., 2003). The European Council, for example, defines the poor as those whose 'resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from a minimum acceptable way of life in the member state in which they live' (quoted in Micklewright and Stewart, 2001). In similar vein, the Canadian Council on Social

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Development (1984:10) states that income poverty is but one dimension of 'well-being', the others being psycho-social and political participation. Elsewhere, the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index aims 'to capture the multiple dimensions of poverty in a composite measure' (Micklewright and Stewart, 2001:105).

It is within this multi-dimensional, 'style of life' approach that leisure assumes a pivotal conceptual role (Townsend, 1979; Dawson, 1988). Deprivation is not just about lack of money but also about exclusion from the customs of society (Townsend, cited in Smith, 1998). Rather than referring to 'relative poverty', one refers to 'relative deprivation', thereby referring to 'objective conditions of existence which prevent participation in what is conventionally acknowledged as the "national style of living"'. According to Oppenheim (1990:3) 'poverty means going short materially, socially and emotionally. Poverty means staying at home, often being bored, not seeing friends, not going to the cinema, not going for a drink and not being able to take the children out for a treat, a trip or a holiday'.

Whether an item is an indicator of lifestyle deprivation depends on 'the degree of penetration of the item in society which is taken as an indication of that society's preferences and social values'. The higher the proportion of people who have an item, the more likely individuals will feel deprived if they want it, but are not able to afford it (Eurostat, 2005). Collins (2006) underscores the critical distinction between 'doing without something' and 'being deprived of something', with the former strongly related to tastes and preferences, while the latter represents 'enforced deprivation' as an individual is unable to afford a basic necessity which he/she desires (Layte et al., 2001:244, cited in Collins, 2006).

Research conducted by Gordon et al. (2000) on behalf of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) in the UK adopted a 'socially perceived necessities' approach to exploring poverty and social exclusion. It indicated that the general public holds ideas about the necessities of life which are more wide-ranging and multi-dimensional than is ordinarily represented in expert or political analysis (Collins, 2006, citing Pantzis et al., 2000). People 'do not restrict their interpretation of "necessities" to basic material needs of a subsistence diet, shelter, clothing and fuel – there are social customs, obligations and activities that substantial majorities of the population also identify as among the top necessities of life' (Gordon et al., 2000:16). According to Collins (2006), adopting a socially perceived necessities approach has a clear advantage for measuring deprivation since it is based on what society as a whole regards as necessities and also gives a more comprehensive picture of how people are doing relative to a basic socially identified benchmark of standard of living.

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2.1.1   Poverty and social exclusion in Ireland

Poverty and social exclusion are dynamic issues that are constantly shaped by developments in the broader economy and society. Despite Ireland's sustained economic growth in recent years, not all social groups or areas have benefited equally. Social inclusion, well-being and quality of life are firmly and explicitly on the Irish policy agenda and are key pillars of the National Development Plan 2007–2013 (Government of Ireland, 2007) and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007–2016 (NAPinclusion) (Office for Social Inclusion, 2007).

The multi-faceted nature of poverty, and the need for a multi-policy approach to address it, is recognised by the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), (Government of Ireland, 1997, revised in 2002), which has as its objective 'to reduce substantially and ideally eliminate poverty in Ireland to build a socially inclusive society'.[1] It states that 'people are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and other resources, people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society'. Policy design is mainly at the national level, and implementation is devolved to the local administrations who deliver services within the overall national policy framework. NAPinclusion 2007–2016 'places greater emphasis on services and activation as a means of tackling social exclusion' (p.13), rather than simply relying on the income support targets used in the past.

Despite recent economic advances, Ireland has one of the highest 'at risk of poverty'[2] rates in the EU, matched only by Portugal and the Slovak Republic. Between 2003 and 2005, those 'at risk of poverty' (at the 60 per cent threshold) dropped from 19.7 per cent to 18.5 per cent (CSO, 2006). The high rate of relative income poverty shows that while Ireland has become increasingly wealthy, it has also remained unequal (CPA, 2001a), with sharp differentiation between the vulnerable class and the rest of the population (Whelan et al., 2003).

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[1]   The Irish Government commitment under NAPinclusion 2007–2016 is to reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2 per cent and 4 per cent by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016. Consistent poverty identifies those people who are 'at risk of poverty' and who are deprived of certain items that people consider necessary to ensure a basic standard of living.

The consistent poverty measure in Ireland is based on indicators of low income and lifestyle deprivation. Recent decreases in consistent poverty levels in Ireland reflect the increase in living standards of all groups as real income levels rose significantly in excess of inflation. The EU-SILC results (CSO, 2006) indicate that those experiencing consistent poverty dropped from 8.8 per cent to 7 per cent between 2003 and 2005. However, the consistent poverty measure does not reflect the changing relativities in levels of incomes, as there was a more significant increase in the 60 per cent median income threshold (OSI, 2007).

The Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) (2001a: 4) highlighted that the growing gap between rich and poor is damaging to society: 'it is unjust and unfair, it leads to poor social cohesion and alienation and it limits choice, diversity and the ability of those on low incomes to participate in society'. A number of social costs are associated with high rates of poverty and social exclusion, including worsening health, education, skills in the changing labour market, relationships within the family, between ethnic groups and in society in general (Gordon et al., 2000). A recent report by the CPA (2005a) reiterates these costs, stating that people who live on low incomes are more likely to suffer poorer health, experience more psychological distress and generally lead shorter lives than those who are more affluent.

2.1.2   Deprivation indicators in Ireland

Deprivation occurs when people are deprived of 'basic necessities' for financial reasons (Collins, 2006) and tends to be found in geographic clusters, particularly in urban areas (Townsend, 1979; Mack and Lansley, 1985; Gordon et al., 2000, cited in Collins, 2006). Deprivation is also clustered among certain social groupings. For example, in examining the characteristics of those in poverty, lone parent households and households with four or more children are heavily concentrated in the lower rungs of income distribution (CPA, 2001b; 2005a). Lone parent households stand out starkly among the most 'at risk of poverty' (40.7 per cent as opposed to the national rate of 18.5 per cent in 2005). They also experienced the highest consistent poverty rate of 27 per cent in 2005 (as opposed to the national rate of 7 per cent). While relative poverty levels are lower in urban areas, the opposite is true of consistent poverty (CSO, 2005a).

Researchers at the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) recently reviewed the list of deprivation indicators employed in the Irish context for calculating consistent poverty. This

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[2]   Relative income poverty, or those 'at risk of poverty', refers to those with an income a certain percentage below the median income threshold for society as a whole. Sixty per cent is the standard relative income threshold applied across the EU.

review was undertaken to update the basic deprivation index of poverty and social exclusion in contemporary Irish society (Maître et al., 2006). As a result of this review, the ESRI proposed a list of 11 indicators to replace the previous 8-item index, providing more comprehensive coverage of social exclusion. The new index retained 6 items from the original list, while adding 5 new items that constitute either socially perceived necessities or, conversely, experiences that everyone should be able to avoid (Maître et al., 2006). As Ireland has experienced unprecedented economic growth, societal change and rising living standards in the past decade, revision of the specific items used in the consistent poverty measure was required to reflect changing expectations and perceptions regarding what is minimally adequate (Maître et al., 2006).

Initial analysis of the data identified 12 basic deprivation indicators, including 'the ability to afford a holiday away from home at least once a year'. One in four respondents to the study said they could not afford an annual holiday, almost twice the level of deprivation reported on any of the other items. However, this indicator was omitted from the final index (which has subsequently been adopted by the government in NAPinclusion 2007–2016) as it was felt that this indicator would unduly influence the calculation of consistent poverty levels. Nevertheless, this identification of the 'ability to afford an annual holiday' indicator is very significant in that it represents the first time that the issue of access to an annual holiday has appeared on the anti-poverty policy radar in Ireland.

2.1.3   Child poverty in Ireland

As the introduction to this paper has already mentioned, the research reported here is particularly preoccupied with children. This is because children have emerged as a cohort of particular concern in debates on poverty and social exclusion in Ireland. Deprivation levels in Ireland are highest among households with children (CSO, 2006). While child poverty rates have fallen in recent years, Ireland has one of the highest rates of child poverty in Europe (CPA, 2005b). According to the latest available figures, one in ten children in Ireland live in consistent poverty (10.2 per cent – up from 9.7 per cent in 2004), while almost one in four of those who are at risk of poverty are children (23.6 per cent) (EU-SILC data for 2005).

'Child poverty is a multi-dimensional problem, centred on inadequate income, but with knock-on exclusionary effects in terms of access to resources and participation in everyday activities' (End Child Poverty Coalition, 2005). Once children fall into poverty, they are likely to remain poor for longer periods than adults (Sweeney, 2002) and children are twice as likely as adults to be poor (End Child Poverty Coalition, 2005). Certain groups of children are

particularly vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion, particularly those from lone parent households (End Child Poverty Coalition, 2005).

The Irish approach to addressing child poverty focuses on income support measures for families with children. Ireland invests less in subsidised quality services for children than most European countries. Approximately two thirds of this income support expenditure is provided universally, rather than means-tested (CPA, 2006). Government intervention, however, can make a difference to child poverty, as displayed by Sweeney (2002) who notes that those OECD countries with the lowest rates of child poverty are also those that allocate the highest proportions of GNP to social expenditures.

This study's focus on children, and particularly its focus on children's well-being, draws on the fact that the rights and well-being of children have assumed greater prominence in recent years within broader policy contexts. The National Children's Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2000) is a major innovation for Irish social policy as it represents the first attempt to draw together policies and measures from many government departments into a coherent strategy for future action. Children in poverty are one of the priorities of this strategy which adopts a 'whole child perspective'. An important advance has been the development by the National Children's Office of a set of child well-being indicators that examine 'current well-being, such as play and recreation, in addition to well-becoming indicators that examine future well-being' (Hanafin and Brooks, 2005:5).

The National Children's Strategy envisages an Ireland 'where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they can enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential' (Government of Ireland, 2000:4). One of the national goals identified in the Strategy is that children will receive quality supports and services that promote all aspects of their development and support families and communities in supporting children. This approach includes both basic needs and additional needs. Basic needs include educational opportunities; experiences promoting optimum physical, mental and emotional well-being; and access to play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood. This is supported by the CPA's *Ending Child Poverty Policy* statement (2005c) which called for improved services for families with children in the area of early childhood education and development, health care, housing and family services.

NAPinclusion 2007–2016 and its predecessor, NAPS, recognise the crucial role of the family in ensuring child well-being. NAPS underscored the strengthening of supports available to

families with children as a key priority, as it has been claimed that children do not experience disadvantage on their own but in the context of their family (NESC, 2005). This study concurs with such an assertion and researches children not in isolation but in the context of their family unit.

2.2 Conceptualising Holidaying

The Oxford University Press dictionary (1974) defines a 'holiday' as 'a day of cessation from work or of recreation'. Tourism meanwhile is understood to be the broader societal phenomenon that comprises 'the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environments for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (WTO, quoted in Page 2003:7).

According to Hobson and Dietrich (1994, cited in Gilbert and Abdullah, 2002), there is an underlying assumption in modern society that holidays are beneficial in many ways. A growing body of international literature now supports this assertion. Generally speaking, holiday-taking is viewed as a mentally and physically healthy pursuit that increases quality of life. Richards (1998), for example, maintains that holidays are important not only because they provide an unbroken chunk of leisure time but also because the quality of time spent on holiday is different. Holidays offer relief from time and place, which are the key constraints of everyday life (Richards, 1998). Among the benefits of holiday-taking identified by researchers are escaping routine; relaxation; strengthening family bonds; social interaction; educational opportunity; and self-fulfilment (Lewis, 2001).

2.2.1   Benefits of holidaying for those experiencing disadvantage

While researchers like Hughes (1991:195) claim that 'holidays can perform real functions that are beneficial to both individuals and society', there remains a need for more research concerning the benefits of holidays for those experiencing social exclusion (Hazel 2005; Corlyon and La Placa, 2006). In particular, there is a lack of research on how children benefit from holidays and on holiday-taking among socially excluded young people (Lewis, 2001). That notwithstanding, a number of empirical studies on the benefits of holidays for those from disadvantaged backgrounds provide evidence as to the beneficial effects of holidays.

As far back as 1976, the English Tourist Board (ETB) was involved in a programme designed to give socially-deprived people in London boroughs an opportunity to go on holiday. The

value that the holidays provided in terms of social well-being and relief for caring relatives was emphasised by all the boroughs involved, as the holidays were found to provide an essential break for carers who suffered from emotional, mental and physiological stress. The study also revealed that anticipation prior to and memories after the holiday were considered to be almost as valuable as the holiday itself, a finding that is supported by Gilbert and Abdullah (2002) in their study on the impact of holiday expectation on an individual's sense of well-being.

Holidaying has also been found to positively affect health and physical well-being. The majority of GPs who participated in an English Tourism Council study (Voysey 2000) claimed that holidays were beneficial in alleviating the problems that stem from poverty, isolation, lack of family/community support, stress at work and living in an unsafe neighbourhood. They considered holidays to have a strong covert influence on health and well-being and on quality of life. They also considered that holiday participation mitigates against family or relationship breakdown. It is further suggested that the benefits of holiday-taking are felt more deeply by those for whom access to holiday-taking is most constrained (ETB, 1976, cited in Hazel, 2005; Hughes, 1991).

Elsewhere, analysing the effects of not going on holidays on children, Buin concluded that non-participation 'risks cutting these children off from others, who have developed this culture of travelling. When they grow up … the excluded child will develop more resentment towards his parents and his local environment, both of which are unable to provide him with the happiness others can enjoy … [if] … society as a whole … has no time for me, I have no time for them' (Buin, cited by Lauprêtre, 2006). According to Hazel (2005), the existing literature argues that holiday non-participation can lead to a feeling of deprivation and social exclusion in young people and others. A study by Lewis (2001), for example, revealed that 'young people in care were aware of their social exclusion and felt that they were missing out on holidays that other children were able to experience' (Hazel, 2005).

Similar work by Ridge (2002) in South-East England found that children from poor families can be made to feel different and unable to participate fully in life and school activities (trips, projects etc.) because of their family's lack of financial resources. The experience of the summer holidays can be one of heightened exclusion as the majority experience of holidays, events, activities and trips will be reflected in media images to which all children are exposed. Gill and Wellington (2003) note that for children in poverty, these activities are simply outside the resources of their families and the summer holidays become a time of

'survival', leading to a situation where the experience of low-income families in poorly resourced areas is one of heightened exclusion during the summer holidays.

2.2.2 Long-term benefits

There is evidence that the benefits of a holiday extend beyond the time-frame of the holiday itself. As discussed previously, anticipation of a holiday has been revealed to be a benefit, having a positive impact on well-being (ETB, 1976, cited in Hazel, 2005; Gilbert and Abdullah, 2002). Lewis (2001) reported that 67 per cent of carers claimed that a holiday had been of particular benefit to individuals and attributed lasting benefits to young people as a result of the holiday. Brimacombe (2003) similarly asserted that the benefits last longer than the holiday and helped to develop sustainable relationships. Wigfall (2004), meanwhile, in an evaluation of the Family Breaks pilot project (Family Holiday Association), concluded that many families experienced longer-term positive outcomes. The longer-term significance of a holiday was also a theme in Smith and Hughes' (1999) research, although neither the duration of these benefits nor the relative merits of a one-off holiday versus regular holidays were clear (Smith, 1998).

Both of these issues require much further investigation. For example, Corlyon and La Placa (2006) conclude that benefits are not dependent on the length of the break, positing that day trips are just as beneficial as longer holidays and in some instances may be a better option. However, this finding is at odds with that of the English Tourism Council (Voysey, 2000), which indicates that while GPs felt that the health benefits of a holiday could last some time (a month for a short break, two months for a longer break), there was less consensus among GPs regarding the benefits of day trips. Equally unclear are the relative merits of once-off versus regular holiday-taking. Crompton (1979) stated that long-term pressure could only be reduced by regular holidaying; however, this is an issue that requires further investigation.

2.2.3 Societal benefits

Research on the benefits of holidays has extended beyond the individual/family realm, with some researchers speculating that the benefits accruing to the individual and the family can contribute to financial and social benefits for society in general (Corlyon and La Placa, 2006; Hazel, 2005; Hughes, 1991). Hazel (2005) suggests that improved access to holidays could reduce the pressure on health and social services, citing the Canadian Council on Social Development (1984) which found that holiday participation improved relationships, reduced drug abuse and mitigated against youth crime. Benefits might also reduce the societal

burden of children becoming involved in drug abuse or youth crime (Stephenson, 2000; ETB, 1976, cited in Hazel, 2005). Research also suggests that these social and medical benefits are more likely to be felt by the poor and disadvantaged, who normally feel more stressed or isolated (ETB, 1976; Hughes, 1991, cited in Corlyon and La Placa, 2006).

A survey of GPs (ETC, 2000) demonstrated that significant savings in government spending and reduced social cost could result from more, or more frequent, holiday-taking. It argued that this would: reduce the burden on health and social care services, lower the costs to the economy through sickness, reduce the support and intervention required by social services, enable individuals to make better use of opportunities available to them and strengthen family and community ties.

Overall, there is a substantial and long-standing literature attesting to the benefits of holidaying. While there are several gaps in knowledge, there is little to refute Hughes' (1991:195) claim that 'holidays can perform real functions that are beneficial to both individuals and society'. A core societal problem, however, is that holidaying is not experienced equally. As the next section will discuss in detail, the benefits of holidaying are inequitably distributed across societal groups. Ghate and Hazel (2002) found that holidaying is the first essential item of family expenditure sacrificed in poverty. The problem is compounded by the suggestion in the literature that the lack of opportunity for certain groups to go on holiday may even exacerbate social deprivation and reinforce social problems. While Haukeland (1990) recognises that this suggestion is somewhat simplistic, the point remains that 'enforced deprivation' from holiday activities may have social welfare implications.

Equally, it may be that the benefits of a holiday might be more strongly felt by certain groups, including those from deprived/disadvantaged backgrounds, those who are isolated, stressed, dependent, ill or materially deprived, as they are most in need of a holiday (Hughes, 1991; Smith and Hughes, 1999). A study by the English Tourist Board (1976:5) concluded that 'it is a reflection of our (English) social policy that those who are most in need of the benefits that a holiday can bring are least able to take one'.

The benefits identified above provide support for Hughes (1991:196) who concluded that 'if there are real benefits to be derived from a holiday (especially for the disadvantaged), and a holiday is a "necessity", there may well be a good case for active financial intervention in order to bring holidays within reach of such deprived persons'. In Jolin's (2004) opinion, failure to include tourism in social policy is short-sighted; while Smith (1998) claims that the

benefits of holidays are similar to the benefits put forward in favour of increasing access to sport and leisure activities on behalf of disadvantaged groups. Following this argument, there would appear to be a legitimate argument for including access to holiday-taking as part of social policy if it can be shown to provide similar benefits.

2.3 Social Exclusion and Holidaying

Holiday participation rates refer to 'that section of the population that during a considered period of one year has gone on holiday at least once' (European Commission, 2001b:5). Holidaying has become an extremely important social phenomenon, involving millions of people throughout the world (EESC, 2003). Global tourism numbers continue to grow, with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) forecasting that international arrivals will rise to 1.56 billion by 2020. However, participation in tourism activities is by no means universal and relatively large proportions of people do not take holidays, for a variety of reasons (Shaw and Williams, 2002). Available Irish figures indicate that Irish residents made 7.3 million domestic trips and 6.9 million international trips in 2006 (CSO, 2007). Equivalent figures for 2002 were 6.4 million and 4.5 million. Despite this evident increase in holidaying, EU-SILC data (2005) show that 23 per cent of Irish residents could not afford to pay for a one-week annual holiday away from home in 2005.

Holiday participation is closely associated with socio-economic grouping (Coalter, 2001; Haukeland, 1990; Davidson, 1996; Smith, 1998). The British National Travel Survey (ETB, 1998) revealed that while those from social class groups D and E account for 33 per cent of the UK population, they account for 49 per cent of those adults who do not take a holiday of four or more nights away from home. Somewhat bleakly, Haukeland (1990) concluded that for many people no real choice exists. Holidays are beyond any practical considerations for some (Shaw and Williams, 2002), as variations in income, time availability, gender, race and nationality constrain and structure access to holiday time and travel opportunities (Davidson, 1996; Richards, 1998).

Of these constraints, it is economic constraints that are the single most important factor responsible for non-participation in holidaying (ETB, 1985; European Commission, 2001a; Eurobarometer, 1998; Haukeland, 1990; Hughes, 1991; Jolin, 2004). Other factors that prevent people from having a holiday include illness and disability (physiological and psychological), mobility and access, family circumstances, caring for dependants, problems associated with aging, and gender (ETB, 1989; Shaw and Williams, 2002). Many of these other constraining factors overlap with the economic variable in producing social marginality

and exclusion (Shaw and Williams, 2002; ETB, 1989; Van Raaji and Francken, 1984; Seaton, 1992; Temowetsky, 1983).

Some commentators argue that due to institutional changes in tourism, including cheaper air travel, package tours and holiday camps, access has been improved for large sectors of society (Pimlott, 1976; Thurot and Thurot, 1983). However, Baum (2006) suggests that the reduction of purely financial costs does not necessarily facilitate social inclusion and access. Meanwhile, a number of researchers have pointed out that in addition to financial means, certain skills are needed to be able to access a holiday (Gratton, 1990, cited in Shaw and Williams, 2002; Seaton, 1992). Corlyon and La Placa (2006), for example, describe how the actual process of taking a holiday for those with little holidaying experience can be a difficult and stressful experience.

Inequalities in holiday-taking among socio-economic groups are as much to do with the type of holiday taken as with participation rates (Shaw and Williams, 2002). The number of holidays varies directly with increasing socio-economic status, with short breaks in particular being associated with higher socio-economic groups (Seaton, 1992). Shaw and Williams (2002) cite Gratton (1990) who states that the growth in the short-break market is indicative of demands from an increasingly inner-directed group of consumers, who are involved in more skilled consumption than that associated with conventional holidaying.

2.3.1   Holidaying as a social necessity

Thus, a dilemma is apparent. Holidaying has become a widespread social practice in advanced economies, as economic prosperity has created a situation where leisure is now regarded as an essential part of individual and community well-being (Dawson, 1988). However, holidaying is a socially exclusionist activity, with obvious inequalities in holiday participation evident. An important implication here is that as holidays have now become a significant part of contemporary life, 'involuntary non-participation may be an indicator of poverty' (Hughes, 1991; Smith and Hughes, 1999) as it suggests an inability to 'participate in the commonly accepted style of life of the community' (Dawson, 1988).

Poverty researchers such as Mack and Lansley (1985) and Oppenheim (1990) have shown that for many, holidays are perceived as a necessity rather than a luxury. More recently, Gordon et al's (2000) UK research similarly found that 55 per cent of adults maintained that a holiday away from home once a year (not with relatives) was a 'necessity'. However, 18 per cent did not have a holiday, due to financial constraints. There is a paucity of data on what

children consider to be social necessities. However, according to Gordon et al. (2000), 63 per cent of parents in the UK considered a 'holiday away from home [for] at least one week a year' as a necessity for their children. Furthermore, the study found this to be the necessity that the largest proportion of children has to forego.

Significantly, the importance of taking an annual holiday away from home was recognised by the British Government in a new measure for assessing the extent of child poverty introduced in December 2003. This new measure incorporates the concepts of relative low income and material deprivation, the latter of which includes 'a holiday away from home at least once a year with his or her family' (Hazel, 2005). According to McDonald (2006), the need to go on holidays is deeply ingrained in the modern psyche and most of us see holidays as a necessity or a social right. Therefore the implications of missing out are significant. Precisely for this reason, limited access to leisure and/or holidays can be interpreted to mean exclusion from a common way of life. It can furthermore be interpreted as a social rights issue, if exclusion is defined in relation to a set of 'needs' that everyone has a right to have met in order to become a full citizen of one's society.

Internationally, the suggestion that access to holidaying opportunities is a social right dates to at least as early as 1948, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights underscored that 'every one has the right to rest and leisure' (1948, Art. 24), a right that is reiterated in the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966, Art. 7d), which noted the right to periodic holidays with pay (Shaw and Williams, 2002; Corlyon and La Placa, 2006; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006).

Furthermore, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child identifies the right of every child to rest and leisure and to engage in recreational activities. Specifically in the realm of tourism and access to holidays, the UNWTO has identified the individual's right to rest, leisure and holidays. The 1980 Manila Declaration states that 'tourism is considered an activity essential to the life of nations because of its direct effects on social, cultural, educational and economic sectors of societies' (UNWTO, 1983, cited in Shaw and Williams, 2002; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006). More recently, the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics (1999) echoed the basic premise of Haulot's concept of social tourism (Ryan, 2002) that all have the right to be tourists. Article 7 (3) states: 'social tourism, and in particular, associative tourism, which facilitates widespread access to leisure, travel and holidays, should be developed with the support of the public authorities'.

Out of this social rights idea has emerged the concept of social tourism. According to Haukeland (1990:178), social tourism means that 'everybody, regardless of economic or social situation, should have the opportunity to go on vacation'. For Hall (2005:152), 'social tourism involves the extension of the benefits of holidays to economically marginal groups, such as the unemployed, single-parent families, pensioners and the handicapped'. Implicit within this concept is the belief that travel is like any other social right whose social loss should be compensated by the welfare state.

2.4 Policy Context

Tourism policy formulation in general is encapsulated within the broader area of leisure, as tourism is understood to comprise one of the five major leisure sectors, alongside recreation, sport, culture and media (Bramham et al., 1996). The rationale for government intervention in leisure can vary and may include the following: political and organisational aspects of leisure behaviour (including social integration and citizenship through sport); economic significance (generation of tourism revenue); socio-cultural goals of government policy; time-spatial characteristics of leisure; and physical aspects (health).

Smith (1998) argues that, internationally, governments of different political persuasions have justified the incorporation of sport into social policy on the basis of both the psychological and physiological benefits accruing to individuals, in conjunction with the short- and long-term benefits to the State. These benefits range from beneficial effects on social behaviour to economic benefits resulting from the reduction in policing costs and repairs to vandalised property. Such thinking has not been applied to the practice of holidaying. Instead, tourism has been much more frequently incorporated into economic policy, with countries throughout the world valuing it for its economic potential.

In Ireland the development of leisure policy has not been a state priority. This notwithstanding, the state has gradually increased statutory rights to free time, a prerequisite for access to leisure. Beyond this, the acknowledgement that the state has responsibilities towards its citizens in respect of developing leisure is very recent. Progress has been made, most notably in respect of culture, but also in respect of sport, recreation and play. The latter is a case in point, with a national play policy being produced in 2004 by the National Children's Office. Tourism, however, has been an exception. In its long-standing engagement with tourism, the Irish State has viewed it entirely through economic lenses. While domestic market development, and thus the involvement of Irish citizens, has been a priority for decades, strategic objectives have related to ideas about wealth generation, job

creation and wealth dispersion as opposed to social rights, social welfare, well-being, health and personal development. The notion that the State might actively foster Irish citizens' participation in holidaying for reasons relating to the innate well-being of the citizen (as opposed to the health of the workforce or the economy at large) can be described as alien in the Irish context.

Equally, by extension, the fact that citizens are being excluded from accessing holidays has been barely acknowledged, much less problematised. The notable exception to this has been where exclusion relates to disability, an area where EU directives and initiatives have impacted upon developments within Ireland. Exclusion as determined by deprivation and disadvantaged living conditions, the focus of this study, has not been considered by the state. Thus, while the availability of free time, as provided and protected by Irish legislation, has promoted Irish people's participation in holidaying, it has been the prevailing market conditions and broad social changes that have underpinned the increasing propensity to holiday displayed by Irish citizens in recent decades.

2.4.1   Social tourism and policy rationale

Historically a variety of arguments has been employed to advocate social tourism in international arenas. The term 'social tourism' is used in those countries with the strongest traditions of practice. In Western Europe notable examples are France and Belgium. The underlying theory is that tourism should be accessible to all, without discrimination, and practised in solidarity with conditions compatible with sustainable development (Jolin, 2004, author's translation). Jolin (2004) goes on to state that a national tourism policy should lead to the democratisation of the phenomenon and to the growth of benefits. Definitions of the concept vary. According to the UK Family Holiday Association, social tourism is 'the inclusion of people living on a low income in holiday and leisure activities … designed to make travel accessible to the highest number of people, particularly the most underprivileged sectors of the population' (EESC, 2006:3).

The European Commission, meanwhile, notes that: 'social tourism, sometimes known as popular tourism is, in certain countries, organised by associations, cooperatives and trade unions and is designed to make travel more easily available to as many people as possible, particularly those from the most disadvantaged sections of the population (families, young people, the handicapped, those in retirement)'. More recent discussions have used the term 'Tourism for All' which was explicitly adopted by the English Tourist Board (1989) in order to 'avoid the downbeat implications of "social tourism"'. As Tonini (2006) notes, 'social tourism'

may have a negative image, which is marginalised and reduced to a simple 'tourism of the poor'.[3]

Economic rationale

The economic rationale that underpins tourism policy in general has been evident in social tourism policy thinking. This has been the case because, as Jolin (2004) asserts, social tourism is not the opposite of commercial tourism. In the social economy, economic added value and social added value can be achieved in tandem (Chauvin, cited in Jolin, 2004). There are economic benefits in broadening holiday-taking to people who were previously denied such opportunities. The UK 'Tourism for All' report (ETB, 1989), directed at the tourism industry, propounded the viewpoint that expanding access to holiday experiences to all makes good business sense. It is based on increasing business during off-peak times, e.g. government programme assisting pensioners to holiday out of season in, e.g. Spain, and in areas that may not otherwise attract tourists (French VVF Vacances). According to Jolin (2004), social tourism contributes to the creation of jobs and the local and economic development of regions that would not otherwise have many economic opportunities.

The economic contribution of social tourism has been recognised by the European Economic and Social Committee which states that social tourism is 'an effective way of including new groups of people in tourism-related activities, thus contributing to the growth of an economic sector which … has a direct impact on the creation of wealth and jobs in the interests of society as a whole … the industry itself must realise that such access, besides being a social responsibility, is a business opportunity and competitive advantage' (EESC,2003:15-16). While the EESC opinion focuses on access for those with disabilities, it also refers to access for those on low incomes.

An economic rationale is explicit in a variety of social tourism practices implemented in a number of EU countries. It is apparent, for example, in the new Polish government initiative which adopts the French system of subsidised 'chéques vacances' or 'holiday vouchers' aiming to boost domestic tourism and therefore the domestic economy (Corlyon and La Placa, 2006). Similarly, in Britain, initiatives by the Local Government Association are based on the premise that tourism can sustain valuable local services (Brimacombe, 2003).

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[3]   'Social tourism' is the term used through this report. It has been used for pragmatic reasons, as this is the term that has predominated in the literature to date. However, future discussions on policy development in this area would have to give due consideration to the terminology issues raised here.

Meanwhile, in the former Soviet countries of Eastern Europe, sustaining and reproducing a healthy labour force is a priority (Cser, 2006).

This rationale also explains many early social tourism initiatives by individual companies and the strong history of involvement of trade unions in social tourism across Europe. At a European level, Cser (2006) cites the Lisbon Strategy as providing support for this approach, stating that 'the engine of the economy of the EU is the healthy labour force'. Thus, this approach is based on the belief that there are implicit economic benefits to holiday-taking. Indeed, Lanquar (1996) insists that it is in the commercial sector's interest to assist in resolving social problems such as unemployment, exclusion and local development. This approach from industry is evidenced in a number of holiday companies in Britain such as First Choice and Airtours who, as part of a millennium project in 2000, offered 5,000 free or discounted holidays to children in local care through the Family Holiday Association Time2Care programme (FHA, 2007; Lewis, 2001).

Social rights rationale
A second and very prominent rationale forwarded in favour of social tourism has been the social rights argument. Haulot (1981) argues that: 'social tourism … finds justification in that its individual and collective objectives are consistent with the view that all measures taken by modern society should ensure more justice, more dignity and improved enjoyment of life for all citizens' (p.212, cited in Hall, 2005:152). The international declarations outlined earlier provide support for access to holidays on 'social rights' grounds and indicate a consensus at international level in this regard. More recently, European Commissioner Verheugen, in an address to the European Tourism Forum (2005) highlighting the competitiveness and job creation aims of tourism policy in the EU, acknowledged tourism as a 'right for all'.

Under the 'right to tourism' argument, Bélanger (1999) argues that the existence of social tourism is an ethical requirement and essentially constitutes an extension of the right to work and its corollaries: the right to rest, to paid holidays and therefore, to holiday taking. Thus, Bélanger (1999) firmly aligns the right to holiday with employment, while noting that the unemployed may not feel 'entitled' to leisure and holidays. Smith and Hughes (1999), however, conclude that holidays do have meaning for those who are unemployed, and this provides support for the social well-being rationale for social tourism.

Richards (1998:158) notes that the idea of tourism as a social right is still a 'contested' concept and its development is contingent upon economic and cultural circumstances. As Corlyon and La Placa (2006) explain, social democratic societies view access to holidays as

a 'basic social right of the individual, providing time for self-development and constituting an important element of quality of life' (p.151). In liberal societies, in contrast, access to holiday opportunities is subject to market forces and is not viewed as a social right. Meanwhile in corporatist societies, holidays are accepted as a social right in enabling the fulfilment of family and religious obligations.

Another contribution to the discussion on access to holidaying as a social right has come from Coalter (1996), who prefers to see leisure and tourism consumption from the perspective of citizenship rights (Richards, 1998). In this, Coalter draws on Marshall's (1973:72) three-strand concept of citizenship: civil, political and social, with social rights referring to the right 'to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in society'. He further contends that because notions of participation, choice, individual freedom and 'quality of life' are central to the concepts of social rights and leisure, commentators can view increased public provision for leisure as being part of an evolutionary process of the development of citizenship (1996:1).

Social inclusion

A further related argument employed to advocate for social tourism policy is social inclusion. Jolin (2004) asserts that social tourism, by its ambition to democratise tourism, contributes to the fight against inequality and exclusion and supports social cohesion. This is epitomised in the work of the Family Holiday Association, a UK charity that specialises in helping to provide holidays for families and children in need. This organisation works for 'a society in which the quality of family life is enhanced through equitable access to high value rest and recreation regardless of disadvantage or poverty' (FHA, 2007).

Social welfare

Social tourism is also advocated from a social welfare and well-being perspective. According to Hughes (1991:196), 'holidays cannot be dismissed lightly as a frivolous pursuit' but should be seen 'more as an investment in the well-being and social fabric' of society. The claim that non-participation in holidays is a social welfare issue with health and social care implications is particularly employed in the context of children and families (Haukeland, 1990, cited in Corlyon and La Placa, 2006). The value of leisure, as part of the individual and collective needs of a society, complementing work, reinforcing group or family relationships, providing therapy or even a preventative medicine to the pressure of everyday living is increasingly recognised by both governments and labour organisations (Shaw and Williams, 2002). As McDonald (2006) points out, social tourism is a key element in the social welfare policies of many countries in the EU.

3 Social Tourism Policy and Practice

3.1 European Social Tourism Policy and Practice

Social tourism emerged in the post World War II era, and the plurality of expression reflects the values and ethics of individual societies as well as the structures within which social tourism organisations have evolved (Lanquar, 1996).

Historical perspective

The roots of this practice go back to the earlier activities of paternalistic employers and labour associations. Teuscher (1983) credits Thomas Cook with laying the foundations of social tourism in 1841, when he offered a reduced fare on a train taking workers on a day trip to the British seaside. The subsequent role of trade unions, associations and community groups is reiterated by Jolin (2004), who maintains that measures put in place by the governments of different countries to encourage holiday-taking have resulted from the struggle and lobbying of these organisations.

Government involvement is more recent and can be traced to the 1930s with the introduction of annual paid holidays following the International Labour Organisation's 20th International Conference in Geneva in 1936 where a convention was passed on the desirability of an annual holiday (Hjalager, 2005). Government involvement is largely explained in terms of varying ideological and social attitudes (Richards 1992, cited in Smith, 1998). Reflecting Richards' arguments (1998), Froidure (1997) identified three dominant tourism models:

- Anglo-Saxon model. This model embodies actions aimed at facilitating access to holidays. These actions take the form of private or social assistance to the person and are carried out mainly by charity organisations. Under this model (which largely describes the situation in Ireland), the liberal economy aims to offer mass tourism at low prices, ignoring the notion of social tourism.
- Eastern model. This model consists of State social tourism in socialist economies. It describes the situation in the former Soviet bloc countries and has broken down following the transition of these economies as they have become more market-oriented.

- West European model. This model is characterised by the market economy accompanied by a vigorous social policy led by the authorities, in partnership with social associations and organisations.

While subvention in 'tourism for all' provision can take many forms, Hughes (1991) argues that, basically, there are two options available. The first involves enabling low-income consumers to pay market prices, while the second involves reducing prices for low-income consumers below the current market prices. Financial assistance from government could take the form of direct financial assistance to the individual in need or grants to organisations to make holidays available at affordable prices (Davidson, 1996). Jolin (2004) distinguishes between the two governmental approaches as 'programme l'aide a la pierre', consisting of investment in infrastructure, and 'programme l'aide a la personne', directed at the individual and consisting of, for example, holiday cheques and gift vouchers, grants and savings schemes.

The EU and social tourism

While commitment to the 'tourism for all' concept varies across EU states, since 2001 the EU as an institution has demonstrated increasing commitment to the idea of tourism as a right for all. The European Ministerial Conference 'Tourism for All' (2001), an initiative of the 2001 Belgian Presidency, declared the need to make tourism activities accessible to targeted beneficiaries including families living in poverty in order to achieve social inclusion. It recognised that each Member State should define its own way of implementing concepts, policies and initiatives underpinning 'social tourism' and 'tourism for all'. The Conference recognised that social tourism initiatives extend beyond the political competence of tourism or recreation to include social welfare, education, youth, employment, agriculture, transport, health, equal opportunities, culture and social affairs (European Commission, 2001a).

An investigation of 'tourism for all'/ social tourism practices operating across the then 15 EU Member States was a further initiative of the 2001 Belgian Presidency. Its findings are synopsised in a table at the end of Appendix 1. While this investigation was by no means exhaustive, it established that each of the Member States operated initiatives and incentives enabling children, youths and adults to participate in tourism. Initiatives and incentives varied from those targeting the total population, e.g. universal paid holiday entitlements, to measures specifically targeting underprivileged persons, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, the unemployed and young people (European Commission, 2001b). The investigation also established that provision varied significantly between countries, with some

countries, e.g. France, Belgium and Italy, being far more engaged than others, e.g. Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Since 2001 the issue of social tourism has been increasingly aired in EU fora. In 2003 a European Economic and Social Committee Opinion (p.3) recognised 'the range of intrinsic benefits of tourism to all citizens' and stated that 'tourism is of major benefit to society and should be within everyone's reach, with no sector of the community being excluded whatever their personal, social, economic or other circumstances' (EESC, 2003 15). The EESC also called for the establishment of 'social tourism programmes in all EU Member States under conditions making them financially accessible to everyone and conducive to the well-being of users, providing workers with all-year-round employment and underpinning the profitability of companies' (2003:13).

More recently, the EESC delivered an opinion on 'Social Tourism Policy for Europe' entitled the Barcelona Declaration (2006). It stated: 'Everyone has the right to rest on a daily, weekly and yearly basis, and the right to the leisure time that enables them to develop every aspect of their personality and their social integration'. In 2006 the European Commission hosted a conference entitled 'Tourism for All: State of Play and Existing Practice in the European Union'. It concluded that social tourism was a sector rich with possibilities but that financial and structural difficulties represent a real obstacle to holiday-taking. This was followed by a further conference in February 2007, focusing on social tourism as part of the 'European Year 2007 of Equal Opportunities' and within the context of the Lisbon Strategy.

The political emphasis on social inclusion and pan-European initiatives on 'tourism for all' currently provide an opportunity for the provision of holidays for families in need to be placed firmly on the social care agenda (Hazel, 2005). Hazel was writing in a UK context, but the assertion equally applies to Ireland. Developments at European level could have a profound impact on the concept of social tourism in a national context, especially in a country like Ireland where the concept is little known or understood. While the European Union does not have any direct competence in tourism, a number of European institutions are engaged in measures and actions that either affect tourism, given its horizontal nature, or that rely on tourism in order to achieve a range of EU objectives, such as sustainable development, employment, and economic and social cohesion. Thus the EU has an indirect influence on tourism as a means of ensuring a better quality of life for European citizens (EESC, 2003).

Learning from EU practice

In terms of learning from existing practice, there is significant potential to build on the varied initiatives and schemes that exist within EU Member States. There are many examples of effective practices, most of which are premised on partnership and rely heavily on intermediary organisations in service delivery. Some measures stem from a social inclusion perspective (e.g. holiday grants for those with economic and/or social difficulties in France; financial assistance for families on low income in the UK; government-subsidised holiday accommodation costs for underprivileged groups in Greece), while other measures promote well-being (e.g. family welfare payments for holidays in France; subsidised holidays and facilities in Finland) and adopt a rights/ equal opportunities rationale (e.g. preferential rates for accommodation in France). A number of measures are explicitly adopted in order to achieve economic objectives (e.g. seasonality in Spain; regional development in France; domestic economy in Poland). Two countries where 'social tourism' is interpreted broadly and receives strong policy attention are France and Belgium (Flanders).

France has an explicit social tourism policy which seeks to ensure access to holidays for all citizens: 'equal access for all, throughout life, to culture, sports, holidays and leisure constitutes a national objective' (Fight Against Exclusion law, 1998). In 2004, for example, 6.3 million French people benefited from the State-supported 'Holiday Cheque' scheme for people on very low incomes. Introduced voluntarily into businesses, the cheque enables an employee to build up holiday capital with a salary deduction combined with a bonus of approximately 35 per cent (tax-deductible) from his/her employer. The cheques can then be used in over 135,000 outlets including campsites, holiday parks and sports facilities. A version of this scheme has recently been adapted for use in Poland.

The social tourism mechanisms that exist in France are underpinned by law and exist to promote social cohesion and prevent social exclusion, ensure social justice and encourage and facilitate personal development by reinforcing social and family ties, independence and self-esteem and developing skills that are transferable to daily and work life (Conseil National du Tourisme, 2004).

Belgium also has led the development of social tourism policy and practice. In 2001 government support was underscored through the adoption by the Flemish Government of a social tourism policy called 'Tourism for All'. The policy seeks to promote tourism in and towards Flanders and Brussels in order to create more prosperity and well-being. The policy seeks to make sufficient financial resources available to ensure that holidays for persons on or under the poverty line are affordable and is funded by the Flemish Government, working

with 'intermediary organisations' who also collect charity funding. The Government pays up to 75 per cent of the major cost of holidays to those living in poverty.

Thus, in many EU states it is well-established that governments acknowledge the importance of holidaying when considering the economic and social well-being of its citizens. Direct government subsidies for annual holiday taking are provided, as a subsidy to either the consumer or the provider. However, there is no one form of social tourism provision common across EU member states or indeed within individual countries. Access to holidays is facilitated by a wide range of actors, including governments, public organisations, employers, trade unions/ work councils, social organisations and associations and the tourism industry itself, acting independently or in unison at national or regional level.

The exact nature of assistance varies from initiatives assisting the target group to participate in a holiday to initiatives that focus on the availability of facilities that can meet the needs of the target group (Hughes, 1991; Jolin, 2004). Intermediary organisations, many of which are voluntary in nature, play a key role in both driving and disseminating overall provision. This practice is in line with the opinion of the EESC (2003) that in increasing access to tourism public authorities should share the responsibility with private players in the sector. Appendix 1 contains further examples of European best practice in the area.

3.2 Irish Social Tourism Policy and Practice

In Ireland, debates on poverty, social exclusion and deprivation have yet to seriously consider the implications of an inability to access an annual holiday. The concept of social tourism is virtually unrecognised in policy-making domains. Mechanisms to promote participation in holidaying for those experiencing economic and social disadvantage have been employed in Ireland since at least the 1920s. However, these have largely stemmed from the initiatives and efforts of the voluntary/charity sector. Johnson (1981) argues that voluntary services are often the sole or main service providers where a new need has arisen which is not yet recognised by the State or where unpopular or unappealing groups are involved. The former assertion may apply in the case of Ireland.

Research elsewhere has shown that where voluntary organisations are the sole or main providers of services, distribution of resources is uneven both geographically and socially (e.g. Hadley and Hatch, 1981; Leat, 1981), and biased towards groups with popular appeal such as children and the disabled. Furthermore, standards of services tend to vary and the

supply of funds can be irregular and ad-hoc. All of these findings are applicable to the existing Irish situation.

In light of the possible disadvantages associated with dependence on voluntary sector provision alone, a number of commentators note that social needs are best met by a mixed approach involving a combination of informal, voluntary and statutory systems (Wolfenden Committee, 1978; Brenton, 1985; Johnson, 1990; Smith, 1998; EESC, 2003). A suggestion in the Report on the Consultation for the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2006–2008 is to strengthen the contribution of community and voluntary sectors by adequately supporting and resourcing their work. While acknowledging that this may change the nature and style of voluntary participation, the efforts to broaden access to holidays being undertaken in the voluntary sector constitute one area of activity where this policy suggestion could be usefully explored.

As already mentioned, there are universal measures facilitating access to holidaying in Ireland. Irish citizens have a paid holiday entitlement. Under Irish law, all full-time employees are entitled to 20 days per year of paid leave/ time off (or pro-rata equivalent for part-time/temporary employees). Those claiming job-seekers' allowance have a similar entitlement. In addition, in light of the public service nature of public transport, providers receive State subsidies complementing their commercial activities. This benefits the general public as a whole. Some groups receive a greater level of subsidisation, with discounts applying for children, young people and students, while senior citizens and those with disabilities have free access to public transport services.

3.2.1   Targeted measures facilitating access to holidaying in Ireland

In reality, social tourism is being practised in Ireland. However, it has no official acknowledgement and in a sense has not yet been named. During the course of this research it quickly became apparent that there was no convenient way of comprehensively detailing precisely what sort of provision exists. There is no overall agency encharged with work in this area and limited pertinent data are gathered. There is no agency (in either the public, private or NGO sectors) that exists solely to facilitate access to holidays for people experiencing disadvantage. Many agencies are involved in this activity, but all of them are simultaneously engaged in meeting broader objectives variously related to alleviating poverty and combating social exclusion. Because of this, comprehensively scoping and documenting the nature and extent of extant provision is extremely difficult.

This research project made an initial attempt to investigate the nature of extant provision, but there is a real need for further research to be undertaken. From its initial investigation, several observations can be noted. In the first instance, it would seem that a narrower range of actors is involved in social tourism provision than elsewhere in Europe. These actors are overwhelmingly in the NGO sector. The private sector is particularly notable for its absence from the area, in contrast to EU models. Although promoting access to holidays is not defined as a policy objective in any domain or national arena, and there are no specific government budgets, it would not be accurate to say that the State is not involved. It is involved, but its role can be described as minimal, informal, uneven, ad-hoc and at times virtually invisible. Furthermore, it is accurate to suggest that relevant Government Departments have not problematised the socially-exclusionist nature of holidaying in contemporary Irish society and have yet to consider how policy thinking in the area might further social welfare, education, health or even indeed economic policy goals.

Public sector involvement – national level

Governmental involvement, when evident, is manifest firstly through the public welfare sector. There are no budgets specifically provided through the social welfare system to assist people in accessing holidays. However, there can be local budget diversions, facilitated by a broad interpretation of the welfare remit by State employees on the ground, to enable individuals/groups engage in holidaying activities organised by the charity/voluntary sector. This sort of activity operates on a case-by-case basis. It is highly localised in nature, ad-hoc and uneven. The instances where State funds are used to promote access to holidays for those experiencing disadvantage do not stem from any over-arching policy approach or unified rationale. However, it might be said that there is an implicit State recognition of the benefits that annual holidaying can offer people experiencing disadvantage.

The state is also indirectly involved through a variety of subventions and interactions with a diverse array of charity and voluntary bodies that facilitate or provide holidays as one part of a much broader remit of activity. For example, the Wexford Centre,[4] a registered charity since 2001, offers, *inter alia*, holiday programmes developed specifically for families. It was initially founded by a group of social services and organisations working in the North-East Inner City of Dublin and is now funded by an array of different sources including the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism.

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[4]   See Appendix 2 for more detail.

Public sector – city level

While few public agencies are involved in facilitating holiday-taking, there are some examples. The City of Dublin Youth Services Board, for example, operates the Cavan Centre,[5] an education and care programme that takes the form of a five-day residential programme and in effect offers a form of holidaying. It is aimed at young people aged 15–20 years who have been identified as being 'at risk' due to social, educational, environmental and economic disadvantage. However, again, this type of activity operates in a policy vacuum.

Public agencies may also be indirectly involved in enabling social tourism practice in other ways. For example, Teenhols, an initiative of the Society of the Saint Vincent de Paul (SVdP), offers holidays to teenagers experiencing disadvantage. It organises its holidays at outdoor adventure centres operated by the Vocational Educational Committee at Baltinglass and Birr. Linkages of this nature may be as multiple as they are diverse and provide evidence of a public and NGO sector working in partnership to promote tourism for all. Again, however, these linkages serve particular, localised needs and operate largely without policy direction.

Table 1 overleaf lists the agencies identified during the course of this research as being engaged in facilitating access to, or providing, holidays to those experiencing disadvantage.[6] It is not a comprehensive listing of social tourism provision in Ireland. The majority of the agencies listed are NGOs. The organisations listed vary in their geographical sphere of operations. Some like the SVdP operate nationally, others are more localised, operating only within a city or within a city area. Similarly, they vary significantly on a number of other indicators including scale of operations, extent of funding, organisational objectives and structures.

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5   See Appendix 2 for more detail.
6   Further detail on the agencies listed can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 1: Social Tourism Provision in Ireland		
Classification	**Target groups**	**Agencies**
Provision aimed at those experiencing disadvantage	Lone parent families	▪ One Family ▪ Gingerbread Ireland
	Families Children Teenagers Mothers Elderly	▪ The Sunshine Fund ▪ Teenhols ▪ SVDP Holiday Centres/Homes
	Youth/Families (Community Projects)	▪ Darndale New Life Centre ▪ Wexford Centre Project ▪ Cavan Centre Project ▪ Belvedere Youth Club ▪ An Síol/Millennium Holiday home
	People with Disability/Special Needs	▪ Irish Wheelchair Association ▪ Daisychain Foundation ▪ Caring and Sharing Association ▪ Enable Ireland ▪ Rehab ▪ National Council for the Blind ▪ Camphill Communities Ireland ▪ Cheshire Ireland ▪ Central Remedial Centre Respite Care
	Elderly	▪ Friends of the Elderly
	Carers	▪ Carers Association
Children with Serious Illness	▪ Barretstown Gang Camp ▪ Share A Dream Foundation	
Mainstream Youth Organisations	▪ Catholic Youth Care ▪ Girl Guides/Brownies/Scouts	
Educational/Socially Focused Holidays	▪ VEC Outdoor Education Centres ▪ Glencree Centre for Reconciliation ▪ NICHS ▪ Irish Association for Gifted Children	

While some provision aims simply to provide an enjoyable break away from home for the target group, other provision forms part of ongoing projects/programmes and as such represents 'holidays with a purpose' (e.g. education/rehabilitation/recovery). Most provision focuses on specific target groups. Some target those experiencing economic and social disadvantage; others focus on people with a disability/ special needs, the elderly and/or sick, or on those experiencing difficulties that overlap with and contribute to economic and social disadvantage. Some of the organisations listed above (e.g. Catholic Youth Care and Girl Guides/Brownies/Scouts) target specific mainstream groups, e.g. young people. In so doing, they may support on an ad-hoc basis those who cannot participate in holidaying because of a lack of finances. The SVdP is a very significant NGO active in providing holidays to those experiencing disadvantage. It segments populations by age and offers holidays specifically to children, teenagers, families, mothers and the elderly.

Summary

While more research is needed into the workings of the sector, it would seem that much of the provision in Ireland focuses on taking children and young people away on group holidays, with family holidays receiving less support. This is unusual in a European context. Similarly, while social mixing and holidaying in mainstream resorts is a basic tenet of social tourism provision in other European countries, provision in Ireland largely consists of taking target groups/individuals to holiday facilities designated for that group.

It is clear that intermediary organisations in the NGO sector are key actors promoting social tourism in Ireland. While such intermediary organisations play a key role throughout Europe, in Ireland the role of this sector is fundamental in social tourism provision, given the comparatively modest engagement/ relative absence of the public and private sectors respectively. From one perspective the expertise and commitment of the NGO sector is a tremendous resource. However, European experiences would suggest that effective development requires partnership with both public and private sectors.

Local schemes in Britain and Ireland which organise holiday activities and trips are often oversubscribed and not everyone has access to them. In addition, local voluntary and community group organisers are themselves often dependent on very limited and uncertain funding. Furthermore, local provision can reflect ideologies and beliefs about childhood and deprivation, with the focus on containing or controlling anti-social behaviour, rather than offering a real opportunity to children to broaden their experiences, encourage personal development, facilitate a sense of community and give an opportunity of family closeness through enjoyable activities.

At present, the partnership evident in European models of social tourism delivery is at best underdeveloped and at worst absent in Ireland. More fundamentally, the joined-up thinking that brings an understanding of the value of holidaying into the centre of core policy-making arenas is very underdeveloped. Extant social tourism provision in Ireland is 'bottom up', piecemeal and ad-hoc.

It was in this context that the study set out to address its core research question: can access to holidaying improve quality of life and help combat social exclusion for families living in poverty? The next chapter details the study's methodological approach.

4 Study Background and Research Methods

4.1 Introduction

This research investigates how access to holidaying can improve quality of life and help combat social exclusion for families living in poverty. It studied children, and the guardians of children, who were given the opportunity to avail of a child-centred, structured group holiday organised by an NGO. It represents the first attempt to analyse social tourism provision in an Irish context and thus constitutes exploratory research. In methodological design, the research is interpretivist and highly qualitative in approach. The fact that the study involves children and individuals drawn from vulnerable sectors of society made it imperative that engagement with the study participants focused on ways of building trust, facilitating communication and encouraging articulation of views and opinions.

Throughout the study, researchers worked closely with three agencies involved in providing holidays to people (mainly children) who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to go on a holiday. The research methods were designed by the researchers following extensive consultation with these research partner organisations and in conjunction with the Dublin Institute of Technology Research Ethics Approval Committee and the funding agency, Combat Poverty Agency.

4.2 Research Aims and Objectives

Ultimately, the research seeks to begin to make a case for developing government policy in the area of social tourism. Specifically, the objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To analyse European models of social tourism policy in order to identify mechanisms that could be used for facilitating State and private sector involvement in social tourism in Ireland
2. To demonstrate how access to annual holidaying benefits people, particularly children, living in poverty

3. To map existing provision of social holiday practices, including agencies, population groups, geographical areas, and types of holidays involved.[7]

4. To produce an evidence-based case to stimulate the development of government policy, and the investment of State and private sector resources, in the area.

4.3 Ethical Issues

In designing and ultimately adopting the research approach outlined below, due regard has been given to child protection and ethical issues pertaining to conducting research with vulnerable groups. Being sensitive to the vulnerabilities and respectful of the dignity of all involved was a priority throughout the research. In practical terms, for the adult participants this meant asking them to choose the time and place of interview, being very flexible with the degree of structure imposed on the 'semi-structured' interview so as to enable them elaborate, in their own time, on issues not immediately apparent. Sometimes, for example, the nature of their relationship with the children in their care was not immediately apparent. Rather than asking for this to be explained, the researcher waited for the guardian to explain this in his/her own time. The number of people in the household, and the nature of their mutual relationships, were also sometimes unclear; so too was the nature of social welfare payments entering the household. Every effort was made to bring sensitivity to bear on the discussion of these issues.

Talking to children experiencing poverty and disadvantage is a sensitive area and raised a number of challenges and issues for the researchers. At all times the researchers were conscious of speaking with the children as children, both in choice of language, actions and demeanour, avoiding pre-labelling them as 'disadvantaged children'. The researchers at all times endeavoured to situate the discussion in the context of what the holiday experience meant to the children, without highlighting the relative disadvantages which were a reality of their lives or influencing the children's perceptions of their lives.

During the focus groups and interviews, the children frequently referred to everyday events in their lives (e.g. time spent caring for siblings, witnessing criminality), displaying limited awareness or acknowledgement that such events were not the norm for the majority of the population. This was particularly the case with the younger children and is highlighted by one

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[7]   As the research progressed and the complexities of extant provision became apparent, it was decided to scale back this objective and to focus instead on gathering what might be described as preliminary, overview data.

interview in particular where three young boys casually displayed a detailed knowledge of the evidence room at the local garda station.

Children, by and large, responded very enthusiastically to the research process. The issues that arose related in the first instance to their ability to communicate. For example, in the focus group setting, they sometimes responded too enthusiastically, and the initial focus groups were a challenge in terms of gaining children's attention and keeping the discussion focused on the topic in hand. Sometimes this meant keeping the focus group very short in order to prevent the discussion from descending into chaos. Some children needed assistance in completing the questionnaire surveys, as they had difficulties spelling out their answers.

The topic of holidays was something that the children were happy to talk about. Children were excited about the prospect of going on holidays and there was little sense that they were either aware or in any way embarrassed about the fact that the holidays were being organised for them because they experience disadvantage. They just looked forward to the fun that the holiday entailed. One child, for example, asked one of the researchers whether her own children would be going on one of the holidays and when told no, the child asked for an explanation and expressed disappointment on behalf of the researcher's children.

The semi-structured interviews with children in their home environments presented other issues. It was difficult to encourage the children to elaborate on their ideas and opinions, due in part to limited verbal literacy skills. Children were also less forthcoming in the presence of older siblings. The presence of other siblings was an issue that the researchers routinely encountered due to family and housing size. In general, one researcher spoke with the guardian in the kitchen while the other researcher spoke with the children in the sitting room or vice versa, leaving no other communal living area for other family members.

The critical importance of building a rapport with the children in the previous stages and familiarity with the children and their situation was apparent and enabled the researchers to deal sensitively with issues that arose at these interviews, during which children displayed the greatest openness to talking about issues in relation to their home environment, e.g. bullying on the street or in school.

In designing the methodology, the researchers consulted with the partner organisations, ensuring that the data collection methods employed were in line with the respective codes of practice and child care of these partners. The field research was conducted in line with

national and international research guidelines and codes of practice including: the *Declaration of Helsinki*, *ESOMAR World Research Codes and Guidelines*; *'Hearing Young Voices'*, guidelines prepared by the Children's Rights Alliance with the National Youth Council of Ireland; and *'Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children'* (Department of Health and Children, 1999). Prior to embarking on the primary data collection, the researchers sought and received approval from the Dublin Institute of Technology Research Ethics Approval Committee.

4.4 Secondary Methodologies Employed

Extensive desk research was conducted prior to going into the field. Following a comprehensive review of the academic literature, an analysis of existing policy and practice both in Ireland and throughout Europe was conducted. In addition to academic sources within the tourism and social science literatures, policy documents and data sources produced at European, national and organisational level were consulted. While this process identified substantial international policy material, it revealed a dearth of empirical research on holidaying and social exclusion in an Irish context. The secondary research addressed the study's first objective: to develop Irish policy and practice through learning from European experiences. It also familiarised the researchers with the nature and extent of extant holiday provision and led to the identification of three organisations that became involved in the research process. It also led to the identification of appropriate study areas.

4.5 Research Areas – Background and Context

Given the exploratory nature of this research, it was decided to focus the study on the Dublin area. Participants for this study were drawn from a cross-section of disadvantaged areas spread throughout the city. The six areas included two inner-city areas – one Northside, the other Southside. The remaining four were suburban areas – two Northern suburbs, one Western suburb and one Southern suburb. In addition to being geographically dispersed, each area was characterised by differing levels of social and economic disadvantage. Common across these areas was the presence of families whose living situation was such that they lacked the financial means to take part in regular holidaying activity. All of the areas studied had at least one NGO involved in providing holidays for people who might not otherwise have the opportunity to go on a holiday.

Of the six areas, three are designated disadvantaged areas under the RAPID programme, two areas were non-RAPID, while one was partially RAPID designated. RAPID (Revitalising

Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) is a focused Government initiative to target the 46 most disadvantaged urban areas and provincial towns in Ireland. The inclusion of the non-RAPID designated area was intended to reflect the reality that pockets of poverty exist within areas that do not qualify for RAPID designation. The social exclusionary effect of poverty for families in such areas may be compounded by the fact that they are unable to participate in the routine social activities of the relatively affluent community in which they live.

4.6 Research Participants – Background and Context

A multi-stage approach to data collection was used involving some 75 children and 35 guardians in the first stage and 27 children and 16 guardians in the subsequent stages. In total, 16 families participated in all stages of the research process. Of these, 10 comprised lone parent/carer families – 8 families were headed by lone mothers, with one household headed by a lone father and another by a lone grandmother. The remaining 6 households had two parents/carers, including one set of grandparents, although one of the fathers, for occupational reasons, was regularly away from home for extended periods. There were, on average, three to four children in each household, ranging in age from 8–15 years, with boys slightly outnumbering girls.

The majority of households relied on social welfare. Four households could be described as being 'low income', with one carer in three households in full-time paid employment, while in the fourth household, the carer was in part-time paid employment. The remaining households were wholly dependent on social welfare receipts, including: lone parents allowance (most common), job seekers' allowance, pension (disability, retirement) and orphans allowance. Three carers were employed part-time on Community Employment schemes. All households were in receipt of the universal children's allowance payment.

4.7 Primary Methodologies Employed

From the outset it was recognised that engaging with children posed certain methodological difficulties. Most of the extant empirical research investigating holidaying and social exclusion focuses on adults. This can be at least partly explained by the fact that it is easier to develop effective lines of communication with adults. Communicating with children, on the other hand, particularly with children experiencing disadvantage, is problematic because there can be learning difficulties, behavioural problems and trust issues involved.

Mindful of these potential difficulties, the research team sought access to the study population through three organisations well established in the practice of providing holidays to children experiencing disadvantage. The rapport already established between the NGOs and the families was in effect used as the starting point from which the researchers then began to engage with the study participants. The researchers used the NGOs' 'holiday preparation process' to select participants. All children and their guardians are required by the NGOs to attend pre-holiday meetings to learn details of the holidays and sign consent.

Prior to these meetings in 2006, the NGOs wrote to families explaining that a research project was in process and seeking interested participants. Those guardians who responded positively were invited to participate in the study. From the outset it was clear that some guardians were not willing to participate. No attempt was made in such cases to persuade them to do so. It was also clear that some guardians were uncertain about what becoming involved in the process might mean. The source of the uncertainties varied. One guardian, for example, had literacy problems and had her teenage daughter sign the necessary forms at the pre-holiday meetings – this included the consent form for this research. For others, the idea of participating in research was clearly an unfamiliar one, as was the idea of talking about holidays. To reduce these uncertainties, a multi-stage approach to data collection was used.

Stage 1 – Semi-structured interviews: The fieldwork began with a series of semi-structured interviews with individuals involved in the three organisations selected as gateways into the study population: The Sunshine Fund, Teenhols and the Darndale New Life Centre. These interviews were used to gain an initial understanding of the dynamics and characteristics of child-centred holiday provision to those experiencing disadvantage. While it is acknowledged that the involvement of a number of other holiday-providing organisations might have been sought in connection with this study, these three organisations were chosen because they broadly represent the type of child-centred holidays being offered by NGOs in Ireland – groups of children of mixed or broadly similar age-ranges, being taken either in segregated fashion to residential centres in Ireland or, on a mainstream basis, to destinations either in Ireland or abroad.

All three organisations[8] are Dublin-based but differ by length of existence, geographical reach, scale and nature of operations, age range and number of children involved. All of them were willing to give highly co-operative research access. In providing the holidays, all of

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[8]   A descriptive note on each organisation is provided in Appendix 2.

the organisations were simply aiming to offer the children/teenagers a period of time away from home in a safe and fun environment.

The holidays were not offered as part of an ongoing project/programme although the holiday initiatives all formed part of wider organisations that were variously involved in a range of anti-poverty strategies. They lasted either 5 or 7 days and targeted children within the age range of 8–18 years. The Sunshine Fund and Teenhols brought children and teenagers to residential centres in Dublin, Offaly and Wicklow, while the Darndale New Life Centre brought children to the UK and Lanzarote. The selection of these particular organisations was further informed by the following:

a. All organisations have detailed knowledge of the clientele that they serve and the delivery of holidays is highly structured. This facilitated the researchers with an opportunity to contact prospective study participants to request involvement, and gave an opportunity to meet with prospective participants before the holiday to explain in detail the research process to both children and guardians.

b. All organisations were willing to facilitate the research process in a variety of ways including facilitating access to pre-holiday meetings with children and guardians, facilitating access to liaison people in the study areas, distributing and facilitating the collection of research materials (e.g. cameras, art work, diaries and scrap books).

c. All are long-standing organisations with well-established reputations among the clientele they serve. Darndale New Life Centre is the youngest organisation, having provided holidays for the last eight years. All three organisations are associated with a degree of trust that made them effective points of contact for accessing a study population.

d. The Sunshine Fund and Teenhols have a city-wide remit. This gave researchers access to a study population drawn from both inner city and suburban areas. The Darndale New Life Centre, meanwhile, is an area-specific organisation.

e. In 2006 the Sunshine Fund and Teenhols offered multiple holidays to children throughout the summer months. The former organisation offered holidays to 1,100 children while the equivalent figure for Teenhols was 260. This meant that, pragmatically, it was relatively easy to access children from a variety of areas, on a number of different occasions. The third organisation provided holidays to 200 children in 2006.

Stage 2 – Pre-holiday focus discussion groups: Before the holidays, focus group discussions were organised with both children and guardians. At this stage, the purpose and nature of the research was clearly explained and written consent was obtained from all those willing to be involved. In addition, descriptive data pertaining to core research themes, e.g. the nature of the participants' living environments, lifestyles, holiday practices, holiday motivations and perceived holiday benefits, were identified and discussed. Separate focus groups were held with guardians and children. In total, 16 focus groups were conducted: 5 with guardians and 11 with children; involving a total of 35 guardians and 75 children. Thirteen of these were held in the participants' local areas while three were held in SVdP House in the city centre (see Table 2). This field-work was conducted from May to July 2006.

Stage 3 – Non-intrusive methods and observation during the holiday: Disposable cameras,[9] diaries and scrapbooks were distributed via the organisations to those children who agreed to keep a record of their holiday experiences. Art activities formed a part of the holiday programme for one organisation. The artwork from the holiday was made available to the researchers after the holiday. These assorted mechanisms proved useful in providing bases for discussion and for building trusting relationships between the researchers and the study participants. They helped children to articulate their feelings and ideas about their holiday experiences. Photographs taken of and by the children were particularly useful in enabling children to talk about particular elements of their experiences.

Observation: One researcher adopted the role of 'observer', working as a volunteer during a holiday organised by one of the participating NGOs. In addition, on the last day of holidays organised by the other two NGOs, researchers paid visits to the holiday location and spent some time observing and speaking with the children about their holiday, in order to generate a deeper understanding of the holiday experience itself. These observational interventions were important in building a relationship between the research team and the children, as well as developing the former's understanding of the holidays being offered. A number of the post-holiday questionnaires were completed with the younger children during these visits as were two semi-structured interviews conducted with older children. This field-work was carried out June–August 2006.

Stage 4 – Post-holiday data collection: Immediately after the holiday, almost half of the children completed a post-holiday questionnaire (some 35 in total). This data-collection

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[9]   The use of disposable cameras was strictly controlled. They were either distributed to the children by the holiday leaders and used under supervised conditions, or else used by the holiday leaders to take photos of children engaged in various holiday activities.

exercise was particularly targeted at younger children. Its purpose (mainly close-ended and attitudinal scale questions) was to encourage younger children to articulate their thoughts and feelings about the holiday, although it proved useful with some older children too. It also provided some quantitative data to validate the qualitative data that emerged later.

Within a two-month period following the holiday, semi-structured individual interviews were held with 27 children and 16 guardians. This represented one-third of the children involved in the original pre-holiday focus group. The objective of this data-collection exercise was to deepen the quality of the data being gathered and to generate rich, insightful data into what holidaying means for the participants. To this end, a cross-section of participants was selected on the basis of home location, household composition, household income (social welfare/salary), gender and age.

The levels of familiarity and trust built between the research team and the participants were other influencing factors. The researchers travelled to the participants' home environments and talked with them for 15 to 30 minutes in the case of the children and 30 to 45 minutes in the case of the guardians. In a majority of cases, the interviews took place in participants' actual homes. Meeting families in their homes provided useful insights into the general living conditions and lifestyle of the families. These insights informed the subsequent data analysis. Researchers worked in pairs when visiting participants' houses, typically simultaneously interviewing the carer and children in different rooms in the house. This field-work was completed by mid-September.

Table 2: Research Interventions			
	Pre-Holiday	**During Holiday**	**Post-Holiday**
Children	*Focus Group:* ▪ 11 focus groups ▪ 75 children in total ▪ 6–17 mins duration	▪ Cameras (36) ▪ Diaries (19) ▪ Artwork ▪ Observation	*Semi-structured Interview:* ▪ 27 children interviewed ▪ 15–30 mins duration *Questionnaires* ▪ 35 children
Guardians	*Focus Group:* ▪ 5 focus groups ▪ 35 guardians in total ▪ 8–25 mins duration		*Semi-structured Interviews:* ▪ 16 guardians interviewed ▪ 30–45 mins duration
Key Informants	*Semi-structured Interview* conducted throughout the period: ▪ 19 interviews ▪ 30 mins–2 hours duration e.g. Community Workers; Social Workers; Volunteers; Children's Rights Alliance; Dublin City Council; HSE; Parish Priest		

Stage 5 – Key informant interviews: The fifth stage in the field research involved a series of semi-structured interviews with key informants. With one exception, these were conducted face-to-face in a location of the interviewee's choosing. In total, 19 key informants were interviewed in 17 sessions. A number of other key informants were approached during the course of the research but were not interviewed as they indicated that while the idea of social tourism was of interest, it was not something they had considered or had any knowledge of in the context of poverty and social exclusion.

It is interesting to note that several interactions with various professionals involved in anti-poverty and tourism domains (at conferences and seminars, in phone and email interviews) revealed a simultaneous lack of knowledge, yet genuine interest, in the idea of debating holidaying in the context of social exclusion. Organisations communicated with in such contexts included Fáilte Ireland, the Office for Social Inclusion, the Swan Youth Service, the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, the Children's Research Centre, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, the University of Bath's Department of Social and Policy Sciences, TCD's School of Social Work and Social Policy, and the DIT's Centre for Social and Educational Research.

Consultation with key informants completed the primary data-collection process and forged the connection between experience, practice and policy. Key informants were drawn from the participating NGOs, those working on the ground in communities who came into regular contact with the participants, individuals working to tackle poverty and social exclusion in both the voluntary and public sector capacity, and individuals at local and national government/policy level. This interviewing process occurred throughout 2006 and was completed by December.

A list of the participating NGOs and key informants participating in the study can be found in Appendix 3. The questionnaires and protocols for the focus groups and semi-structured interviews can be found in Appendix 4.

4.8 Rationale

This approach to data collection was productive in a number of ways. Consulting with the children, carers and the key informants generated three layers of data which proved a rich data set. During analysis the researchers were able to compare and contrast the data set for each layer and, in the process, to verify and validate the research findings. Adopting a multi-

stage approach provided the researchers with *before*, *during* and *after* snapshots as appropriate for each layer.

This was beneficial in three ways: firstly, it is reflective of the holiday experience itself, which is not a discrete event but starts in the home environment with preparation (before), takes place in the holiday destination (during) and continues afterwards with the return to the home environment and recounting (after). Thus, this approach enabled the researchers to build up a picture of what the holiday experience means to the families in 'real-time'.

Secondly, previous stages fed into later stages and enabled the researchers to explore issues and themes as they emerged during the course of the research, by stage and layer.

Thirdly, it enabled the researchers to overcome a number of methodological issues that emerged during the course of the research. The multi-stage approach provided the researchers with an opportunity to build mutual trust with the participants, such that the post-holiday interviews generated greater usable data than the pre-holiday focus groups. This is in part due to the relationship that developed during the course of the research process as participants felt more comfortable in communicating with the researchers.

Trust is a major issue with this vulnerable group and is of paramount importance in conducting successful field research in this area. Literacy levels and the ability to express feelings and opinions, both verbal and written, were other barriers that were alleviated by the multi-stage approach, as the researchers and participants become mutually more familiar and were able to adapt the data-collection methods in order to encourage participants to express themselves.

4.9 Data Analysis

The vast bulk of the data generated by the study was generated through qualitative tools. The most substantive of these were the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. All of these were recorded and professionally transcribed. They were then analysed by the research team to identify emerging themes. The observation that occurred during visits to the holiday locations and that occurred during the visits to the participants' homes was also very important. Researchers took copious notes, mental and written, of observations that contributed to developing a fuller understanding of the issues being studied. The fact that most of this observation was undertaken by researchers working in pairs proved effective in that, immediately after the work, the researchers could note, verify and query issues arising.

At times, one interviewee, usually the child, was more open about certain issues, and so researchers were able to make greater sense of the data than had one interviewer and interviewee been involved.

The quantitative element of the study, the post-holiday survey, produced 35 questionnaires, which were coded and analysed using SPSS. Interpretation was limited to simple frequencies.

4.10 Limitations of the Research/Methodological Issues

The primary limitations of the research relate to the methodological issues encountered.

Building trust was one issue encountered, as the target group by nature was sceptical of speaking frankly with people who were unknown to them. The researchers were conscious of the need to build trust throughout the process and achieved this in a number of ways: being introduced to participants by individuals known to them; being open and frank about the nature and purpose of the study; assuring anonymity and confidentiality; having meetings/follow-up with participants over a period of time.

Access to participants was another limitation. This related in part to the issue of trust and to participants' willingness to participate, but it also related to broader lifestyle issues. The lifestyles of the target group were largely unstructured, making it difficult to arrange interviews in advance. On a number of occasions, researchers turned up at a participant's house, having arranged to do so a day or two in advance, to find the participant was out and no one aware of his/her whereabouts. Thus, the researchers had to rely on calling spontaneously and arranging same-day visits.

A further limitation is that in the North Inner City area, researchers were unsuccessful in arranging access to any carers post-holiday. On three separate occasions the researchers arranged to meet carers and each time the carer was absent when the researchers called to the house. Attempts to follow up with these carers were unsuccessful as the carers were reluctant to commit to further participation. In order to compensate for this, the researchers interviewed two women who were involved in the area on a voluntary basis, knew the families involved and had a deep knowledge of the issues facing the area.

5 Findings[10]

5.1 Introduction

This study's central research question was whether access to a holiday can improve quality of life for families, and particularly for children, experiencing disadvantage. This chapter presents the study's findings. It begins by giving some insights into the quality of life being experienced by the study participants in their home places. It then moves to identify and discuss the short-term benefits associated with holidaying both for the children themselves and for their families. Finally, it goes on to detail some of the longer-term benefits.

5.2 Quality of Life in the Home Environment

Section 4.5 in the methods chapter has described the study areas as disadvantaged. This study was largely concerned with summer-time living, a time which other researchers have described as being one of survival and of heightened exclusion (Gill and Wellington, 2003). The concept of 'disadvantage' was explored with the study's participants in this context. An early finding of the study was that, in the main, children and their guardians spoke negatively about their home environments. There were very few exceptions to this trend and the following section discusses the key themes that emerged.

5.2.1 Boredom – absence of recreational opportunities

Boredom was a universal theme in both the post-holiday questionnaire and interview data. The children's daily summer lives tended to be highly unstructured. Both children and guardians variously described their home place as having little for the children to do. Localities were labelled 'boring', as 'a kip', 'crap really' even as 'muck'. Children explained how: *'You don't do anything here, just sit around all day, that's all … you're real bored and all, you've nothing else to do'* (teenage girl, NI city) and said how they love:

> *'to get out of here … yeah, because we've nothing, nothing at all to do around here … you'd sit around and you'd get real fat from just sitting around here because you're going up to MacDonalds every day, that's what I do be like'* (teenage girl, NI city).

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[10]   Throughout this chapter the home areas of the study participants are cited as follows: NI city = North Inner City; SI city = South Inner City; NS1 and 2 = North suburb 1 and 2; WS = West suburb and SS= South suburb.

One young boy even described it as being worse than school:

> *'even though I hate school I prefer school … because when you're playing around here you're doing nothing and then when you're in school you're bored in there but you're learning something new everyday'* (young boy, NS1).

Children and guardians were again at one in considering their home environments to offer few facilities and few opportunities to engage in structured recreational activities. The daily routines reported by the study population contained little variety or structure. One teenage boy's day was: *'get up late, get ready for the day, then watch tv until a certain time, then knock around for a friend. Then that's it, then I go in'* (self-reported by teenage boy, NS2). Many of the routines and supports that structure families' lives during the school term are missing in summer-time and this creates a marked void. Missing too are many extra-curricular activities that run throughout term time but cease during the school holidays. In consequence, during the day-time, the children studied tended to engage in passive, indoor activities like watching television and playing on their playstations. They played football a lot, and simply 'hung around' inside their homes and out on the streets with their friends. Some children are out at night-time as well. As one young boy explained:

> *'yeah, in the day it's crap, at night it's good. People do be out all hours, and like we do be having a game of football or something 'til 4am. Sometimes at the weekend, eh like there would be fights and all, gangs and … but the odd robbed car now is good' (laughing)* (young boy, NS1).

The absence of activities for the children meant frustration for most guardians. As one mother (SI city) explained: *'there's nothing, there is literally nothing for them to do'.* Guardians also worry about their children being bullied on the streets or getting into trouble with others because being outside often meant *'getting into trouble with people on the road'.* Conflict with other children and with neighbours was a regular part of life: '*Because you get into trouble … His friends come behind you and all and boot you around … so that's why it's not nice'* (young boy, NS1).

For several guardians this constituted a *'nightmare … children running amuck'* (mother, NS1); *'hell absolute hell'* with *'young lads harassing them'.* One mother of four boys described how she *'lived for the dark evenings'* when the children leave the streets to go indoors earlier than in summer-time (NS2). The lack of local facilities and activities also puts pressure on parents to try to organise trips out of their area to the beach and to parks in adjacent areas.

5.2.2   Safety and security

Violence, conflict and aggression of varying scales were prevailing characteristics of the home environment. Without exception, children across the six study areas were exposed to such socially deviant practices as alcoholism, violence and bullying, drug taking and drug dealing, criminality of various kinds including stealing cars, burning cars and joyriding. These practices varied in their prevalence between areas, but some combination was evident in all. Sometimes these practices were so embedded as to be the norm, and children and guardians seemed not to perceive them as risk factors. This was most notably the case in the inner city areas studied where it was the key informants (including a Parish Priest, a community worker and two social workers) who highlighted the risks facing children on a recurring basis.

In areas outside of the inner city children were more likely to recognise and to comment on the fact that they were being exposed to these practices: *'the worst thing about* (NS1)*, there's too many robbed cars, yeah, too many drug dealers'* (young boy, NS1); *'robbed cars, every night there'd be a robbed car, you can't even sleep with it'* (young girl, NS1); *'up where I live there's always shootings and people killing each other'* (young girl, WS). Not surprisingly, it was the guardians who showed greatest awareness that these home environments did not constitute safe places for their children. For many, watching out for their children's safety was a constant endeavour:

> *'See that tent at the field (through the sitting room window), just actually junkies living in that and they're selling gear. (The children) see them going in there then getting into their cars and shooting up in the cars and all'* (mother, SI city).

5.2.3   Opportunities to leave/ propensity to holiday

One striking research finding concerned the extent to which the children's geographical worlds were very limited. They tended to move out of their home environments only infrequently. Their experience of other parts of Dublin, much less other parts of Ireland, was very modest. Even within their home place, which might have constituted a large sprawling housing estate, or a series of houses in rows, their association was with one street, one square, or one cul-de-sac, as opposed to the area in its entirety. Equally, their social worlds were very limited. There was a marked interaction with members of the extended family, many of whom lived in relative proximity to the families studied. However, beyond playing with their cousins and relatives, children seemed to play consistently with the children who lived in their immediate vicinity all the time. Thus for a majority of the children studied, their social environments were very unvaried.

The children's limited spatial worlds contrasted sharply with their virtual connectivity to other places. Many of the older children interviewed had multiple communication tools in the form of ipods, access to internet chat rooms, bebo, televisions, playstations and mobile phones. The prevalence of such sophisticated material possessions belies the disadvantaged conditions that can characterise these children's lives. As one key informant explained,

> *'some (children in the area) are in terrible circumstances. There is still a lot of poverty around. In the past, you know, specifically economic poverty, there was a shortage of money. Now there is a certain amount of that, but it's really the whole family structure has broken down, so that youngsters are in awful circumstances really'* (SI city).

Respite in the form of an annual family holiday was far from the norm. The children's main access to holidaying was through some form of voluntary-sector intervention and indeed a majority of the children interviewed had previously been away on a child-centred holiday with a voluntary agency. Just two of the families studied were in the habit of regularly taking a self-funded family holiday. These were both from the same area (NS1). The majority, however, were excluded from the regular practice of holidaying, for reasons of poverty. As discussed in an earlier stage of this paper, the socially exclusionist nature of holidaying needs to be understood in terms of the increasing prevalence of holiday-taking within Irish society in general. Taking holidays has become a normal part of lifestyle for a majority of Irish citizens in recent decades. It is in this context that the inability to access this normal lifestyle practice assumes greater significance.

Signs that the families studied were experiencing social pressure to take a holiday came through in a number of ways. It came from a small number of the children and guardians interviewed when they spoke about the importance of having a holiday experience to talk about with others at the end of summer and especially at the return to school period. However, it came through more strongly in the interviews with the practitioner key informants. A number of these spoke about how families in their areas sometimes borrow money to take foreign holidays.

One research query that arose at the outset of the research was whether the provision of holidays in the NGO sector would carry a social stigma for those being offered the holiday. Due to the nature of the research design, this study cannot definitively answer this question. However, its data show that amongst the children and guardians studied, the issue did not really seem to be a concern and arose on only one occasion. It arose more frequently in the data garnered through interviews with key informants. Two SVdP volunteers working in the north inner city study area reported how, while guardians' attitudes to the holidays provided

by the Sunshine Fund are largely positive, some guardians perceive it negatively. Their comments were echoed by a number of other practitioners working in other areas.

Clearly, these data demonstrate that routine home life for the children studied is beset with difficulties. The academic literature on the benefits of holidaying is consistent in highlighting the value of escaping, however temporarily, the mundane routine of daily living. Here, the daily struggles inherent in that routine are ever present, and the benefits that arise from being able to escape to a holiday environment would appear to be heightened for children such as these.

5.3   Benefits for Children

As discussed in the earlier literature review, the benefits that children derive from availing of child-focused holidays can be understood in the context of children's 'well-being' and in the context of their 'well-becoming'. Conscious of the fact that the National Children's Office produced a series of children's well-being indicators in 2005, this section is concerned with the former. It discusses how holiday-taking can ameliorate a child's present state of well-being. A number of indicators were identified.

5.3.1   'A break/respite from routine'

In the context of the foregoing, it is not surprising that an early and obvious finding identified related to the 'break' or 'respite' role played by the holiday. Widely mentioned by both children and guardians, the ability to get a temporary release from the routine home environment was unreservedly prized. Quite simply, going on holidays functions as a relief. Children like getting away (from their home place) for a while. As one young boy (SS) explained: *'ah I thought it was good. Getting out of (SS) for a while ... something else to do for a change on the summer holidays'.*

Negative conditions prevailing within the home environments created a series of push factors, encouraging the children to leave. This finding echoes existing research like that of Haukeland (1990) who highlighted the strong influence of push factors. These factors were largely rooted in core problems:*'because there's too much drugs and all around it, everybody, just too much trouble and all there is around'* (young boy, NS2*)*; *'all the drugs, there's too much on the street'* (young girl, NI city); because it means getting *'a bit of peace from everybody … the area, I don't like my area, don't like it, fights every night and everything, you can't get proper sleep, fights on the street and the train station and the trains*

go by and they rattle the house and all like that, love to just move away' (teenager, NS2). For guardians too, the need to give their children a break was widely acknowledged: *'get them off the road'* … *'get away from the flats'* ... *'anything is better than these flats'* … *'it got them out of this area, that's important'.*

Key informant interviews yielded a wealth of insights that helped develop an understanding of the daily realities for some of the children who participate in these holidays. One social worker working in a southern suburb explained how she had

> *'referred children last year who were in foster care and were finding things difficult and just needed a break away from hearing about courts. They needed a break from social workers, they needed a break from being in foster care, you know, they just needed to go and be children for a week and they wouldn't have another opportunity to have a holiday'.*

A key informant in another area (NS2) explained that over the years holidays have been very important for families who have experienced bereavement. In one case, all the children of a family were brought on holidays shortly after the death of their mother. The break from their routine of grieving allowed them considerable respite for a week and the informant believes it was of considerable help. In similar fashion, one child was observed on a holiday having recently experienced the loss of a close relative. The support of leaders and other holiday participants and the freedom to grieve would not have been possible in a home environment where this particular young person was the main carer for the younger siblings.

For the children, life on holiday was clearly different from life at home. While being at home in summer-time meant passing a great deal of time in unstructured and unvaried ways, holidays were action-packed, activity-filled and highly structured. This created a strong pull factor, strongly motivating the children to want to holiday. A recurring theme was that, on holidays, *'everything is different from home'*. For one child (young girl, WS), *'it's a lot different from home and you get to make new friends … they have plenty more things to do and you get to go to the beach everyday'*. Another (young girl, SI city) said, *'I would go every week … because it's very good down there. You would rather live down there than live up in these flats'*; her elder brother concurred, adding, *'I wish we lived down near Balbriggan'* (young boy, SI city). In a later stage in the interview, when asked whether they would like to go on a Sunshine Holiday again, the same siblings responded: Brother: *'Yeah, I want to go next year and the year after as well'*; Sister: *'I want to go for my whole life'*.

Unlike the wider home environment, which several guardians described as being out of control, with neighbouring children acting without parental supervision, and criminal activities

like car theft, joy riding, drug dealing and drug use prevalent, the holiday environment was highly regulated. Children are well cared for and fed at regular intervals. All of the holiday agencies had simple but strict rules pertaining to behaviour while on the holiday. These were clearly explained to all guardians as well as to all children before the holiday began.

The consequences of failing to abide by the rules were also made clear and culminated in being sent home. This fate befell a small minority of the children studied. Of the 75 children involved in the pre-holiday research stage, the research team identified approximately five who were sent home. While many of the children disliked the routine of having to get up early in the morning, in general they seemed to embrace without question the other structures imposed. The importance of routine and structures was alluded to by several key informants who spoke about how children:

> 'enjoy structure … and it's good for them, you know, just being on time and getting teams together … They got to go to the shops, they had a certain length of time ... and then they were back. They could have their mobile phones in the evenings to send a few texts but then they were taken back off them again' (social worker, NI city).

Because of these regulations, the holidays were perceived by parents to be safe, and to constitute an environment where some of the routine difficulties of home life, e.g. fighting amongst children and bullying, did not feature. This perception was at times not borne out in reality, yet it was a belief firmly held by many guardians. The finding points to a tendency to idealise the holiday among the population studied which emerged from interviews with both children and guardians. As one boy (teenage boy, NS2) put it: *'I like getting away from (NS2) because it would be raining here and you go away and you'd be in the sun and all'.* This idealisation of the holiday symbolises the marked difference that distinguishes home life and holiday life.

5.3.2   Allowing children to be children

A key element of difference that emerged very clearly was that holidays are great fun. The pre-holiday interviews with children identified the tremendous sense of anticipation with which children await the arrival of the letter announcing that they have a place on the holiday and again as they await their departure date. This echoes existing research findings such as those of Gilbert and Abdullah (2002) who wrote about the importance of anticipation. One mother (SS) explained how:

> *'there does be great excitement. They do wait on their card in the letter box and then they're running up the road, running down the road telling one another they got the card'.*[11]

All but one of the children interviewed/surveyed post-holiday claimed to have had thoroughly enjoyed the experience and there was a great deal of consistency in what was reported as being enjoyable. The provision of diverse and varied activities was enormously popular. For the older children these included abseiling, rock climbing, canoeing, horse-riding, sight-seeing and eating-out. Most of these activities were rarely if ever available outside of the holiday context. For the younger ones it meant going to the beach, to playgrounds and activity centres, crab hunting and sports tournaments. These activities facilitated simple opportunities for free play and fun, opportunities that some of these children have all too infrequently. Making friends was another hugely enjoyable part of the holidays. In the words of one young female from the north inner city (teenage girl, NI city), *'it was great it was, making new friends and doing stuff every day and doing things that you didn't do before, all that is great, trying new things'.*

A key argument made here is that the ability to have fun, in effect, to be a child, is an important contributor to a child's sense of well-being. The holidays create the conditions where children can be children, and these are typically in marked contrast to the reality of their routine lives. The data revealed the extent to which some of these children are routinely asked to assume responsibility beyond their years. Some act as carers of siblings, others worry about the welfare of their guardian, while others live with adult carers who are not always able to adequately attend to their needs. Some guardians acknowledged this, with one mother reporting how her son got upset going on the bus (to go on holiday):

> *'he was worried about me because his father was there so automatically he was sort of "ma, are you alright?", you know, he sort of tries to protect me even though he is only 11'* (mother, SI city).

Several others explained how the older children are expected to look out for the younger ones while outside the home: *'the little young fellow out playing and he (older brother) always watches him'* (mother, NS2). Some children were able to articulate what for them was a welcome change, and explained that going on holiday meant they could: *'Get away from your ma, from cleaning up'* (young girl, SI city), *'get a day without me nephew and niece'* (teenage girl, NI city), and didn't have *'to mind your little brother or your little sister'* (young girl, WS). Much of this was reinforced in the key informant interviews who frequently argued that the children in question are often forced to assume adult roles and take on a great deal at very

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[11]   The 'card' contained the confirmation that they had secured a holiday place.

young ages. When asked for her views on the benefits of one of the holidays being studied, a social worker (working in southern suburbs) who also acted as a holiday leader responded:

> *'they get to go and be children for a week, that they don't have those outside pressures, they don't have to worry about getting somebody else up for school in the morning, they don't have to worry about what their parents are or aren't doing. I suppose that they get a break from what are often really difficult home environments'.*

Another related finding, one that pertained particularly to young males, was that the holiday environment relieved young people of the pressures that they can routinely face to act out particular roles. One key informant, a Sunshine Fund volunteer, spoke of how the holiday context, by stimulating the children with age- and socially-appropriate activities and challenges, enables young boys to be themselves and curtails routinely felt pressures to live up to the image of being a 'hard man'. This suggestion was echoed by a community worker operating in NS1:

> *'lads, they have to be tough and rough maybe to survive with certain sections here, but when they go away (on holidays) that all dissipates, they relax … as the time is going on they're just becoming so relaxed in themselves'.*

Indeed, one holiday leader (NS1) noted the tendency (usually among young males) for some children's behaviour to disimprove on the last day of a holiday. This possibly results from the children trying to cope with the impending return to an unstructured or problematic home environment.

5.3.3   Broadening social horizons/ making friends

As previously mentioned, the children studied have limited social worlds. They tend to have little exposure to different people and so to different lifestyles. This was recognised as a problem by several guardians. As one mother put it: *'they kind of play with the same children all the time and if they're not in, they're sitting around waiting for them to come home and they won't go out'.* By going on holiday, they encounter other children from within their own area and from other parts of Dublin city. This engagement with children from different areas was warmly welcomed by guardians.

The importance of *'making new friends'* emerged strongly in the pre-holiday interviews with children who had already been on a holiday with the holiday organisation. They spoke of looking forward to making new friends and of hoping to re-connect with friends already made on previous holidays. It was also one of the strongest themes to emerge in the post-holiday questionnaires and interviews, with the vast majority of children citing *'making friends'* as

being one of the holiday's most enjoyable aspects. For several older children, an important outcome of the holiday was obtaining mobile phone numbers of fellow holiday-makers and keeping in contact through texting and meeting up post-holiday. In the words of one girl *'(I) made loads of new friends, we made friends with everyone down there … I got all their numbers and we're meeting up Saturday in town'* (teenage girl, NI city).

It is significant to note that often the new friends encountered on holiday actually live in relative proximity to each other, sometimes only a few kilometres away, yet it was only through the intervention of the holiday that children managed to attain this modest broadening of their social worlds. This is true even of children living in the same estate, who did not know each other very well before a holiday. One key informant, a holiday leader, reported how a number of children who developed friendships on holidays from being placed together in joint accommodation, or in groups for trips, have maintained these friendships long after the holiday.

5.3.4 Building self-esteem

The difficulties that children living in disadvantaged circumstances experience in terms of developing self-esteem and defining appropriate roles for themselves are well documented. In this study these difficulties were described consistently by key informants, drawing on their experiences in a variety of social, community and child-related policy domains. As already mentioned, bullying was found to be prevalent in these children's home environments. Multiple guardians referred to it as a problem, and some of the children articulated it.

In addition, some children were already well aware that they faced an uphill struggle in gaining affirmation from significant others. One young boy (teenage boy, NS2) explained his status in school: *'I should have got put into A4 but I got put into A2, that's the dumb class in my school and I can't get changed now … we're all dumb in my class'.* In this context, a significant finding of the study was to demonstrate the important role that the holidays play in affirming self-worth and developing self-esteem. In general the holidays provided a very positive environment for the children to test their abilities without fear of being humiliated. A marked emphasis was placed on praising children, acknowledging and rewarding effort and encouraging children to challenge themselves. Prizes were distributed on the basis of participation as much as success, and conscious efforts were made to ensure that all children won a prize. These prizes were highly valued by the children who often were very keen to report how they had won trophies, medals and prizes for sport, art, dancing, sand-castle building and other varied activities.

Frequently, post-holiday interviews with adults were interrupted by smaller children coming over to show off their prizes. The delight that children took in these rewards was obvious, and repeatedly guardians spoke about how their children loved getting them. The affirming role of prize-giving was emphasised frequently by guardians: *'Oh the trophies (laughing) that's all you hear about is the trophies, yeah'* (mother, WS). As interviewers, we often saw the trophies taking pride of place in the families' living spaces, thus continuing to re-affirm the children's pride in their achievements. Repeatedly the contrast with the home environment was highlighted, with guardians explaining how *'you never really hear her getting a trophy for anything'* and *'you wouldn't get anything like that up here'* (mother, WS).

In all of the holidays studied, a number of mechanisms were consistently employed to boost children's self-image. These included getting to know each child by name and using their names all the time, giving children individual attention, giving them scope to make choices and minor decisions, listing children's names as part of sports teams on boards, naming their achievements (e.g. inscribing names on trophies for the 'best person on holidays'), publicly praising the strengths and qualities of each young person, hanging children's paintings on the walls each evening, and videoing them at play/ in action for showing to all in the evenings. Boosting self-esteem was one of the key benefits identified by a majority of guardians. In the words of one mother, the holiday 'creates self-esteem and gives them courage to go out then with their friends instead of being bullied into the one place' (grandmother, SS).

Significantly, the holidays studied constantly challenged the children in appropriate ways. Very often this happened in a sporting arena: for young children it might have involved trying to swim, or taking responsibility for a team venture; for older children it might have been applying themselves to the task of horse-riding or abseiling for the first time. Rising to these challenges earned praise, admiration, reinforcement and encouragement from the holiday leaders. Frequently children spoke about liking 'trying new things'. The liking and trust that children developed towards the leaders (discussed in section 5.3.6 below) demonstrated that children, in the main, responded very well to this. Sometimes, particularly in one of the holiday organisations studied, opportunities were provided for older children to act as mentors for the younger cohort. This had the dual effect of boosting the self-confidence of the older child while at the same time offering a positive role model for younger children.

In addition, for some children at least, participating in the holiday functioned as an important social statement. It meant that on return home they were not excluded from the shared reporting of summer holiday activities that marks the return to school and the resumption of

term-time activities. For one boy (teenage boy, NS2) having the holiday meant *'so you can tell them about it … normally we would just be sitting there ... yeah, you want to be saying ah I did this …'* Social inclusion and its polar opposite, social exclusion, unfold in a multitude of modest ways in everyday contexts. The ability to participate in the sharing of holiday experiences, in a contemporary Irish society where holiday-taking is becoming the norm, is one important way of feeling included and thus socially valid.

5.3.5   Opportunities to learn new activities and acquire new skills

The holiday was found to provide a range of opportunities to try out new activities generally unavailable to the children in their home environment. The post-holiday data collected showed that this was central to the enjoyment of the holiday for a majority of the children. With very few exceptions they thoroughly enjoyed: *'doing stuff every day and doing things that you didn't do before, all that is great, trying new things'* (teenage girl, NI city); *'all the different things, rock climbing and canoeing, even though I can't swim, trying new things'* (teenage boy, NS2). Aside from the pure enjoyment that participating in these activities engendered, many of them also provided opportunities to take risks in controlled and appropriate contexts. The significance of this benefit lies in the fact that for many of the children studied, the home environments in which they find themselves can often promote tendencies to engage in inappropriate risk-taking behaviour.

On holidays children could challenge and test themselves. For example, one young girl (teenage girl, NI city) explained how she had been afraid to do abseiling on holidays the previous year but had managed to do it this year. Several children managed to try water-based activities like canoeing even though they couldn't swim. Another young girl (WS) pointed out that doing the plays in the evening-times helped children overcome stage fright.

Allied to this was the frequent suggestion from guardians that going on holidays encouraged children to develop a series of skills connected to self-reliance and independence. There was a general sense among many guardians that having time away on their own was positive. In explaining that she felt it was a good idea for her children to go on holiday one mother stated:

> *'Oh God, yes, yes, cause they've never been anywhere, you know what I mean, like, I can't afford to bring them away on a holiday and I think it's good for them, to have their own, you know, their own time away from parents, I think it gives them a lift to go on holiday'* (mother, WS).

Without exception, guardians thought that it was good for their children to go on holiday. They explained how the holiday helps children *'come out of themselves'*. One mother

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explained how she thought the holiday experience had helped one of her twin sons become more independent of his brother. Many spoke about how it helped develop self-reliance and responsibility: children had to pack their bags, take care of themselves in the absence of having recourse to their guardians, get along with different children and make new friends, adapt to a new set of domestic regulations and structures and manage their pocket money (a specific limit is set to the amount of spending money a child can bring, and while safety of money is ensured by the leaders, children have the freedom to spend what and when they want). Guardians thought that the holiday experience was useful in helping children to 'grow up', to develop maturity, to become more confident, to express themselves more clearly and to develop social interaction skills. One mother, whose daughter had been designated to act as a leader during the holiday, spoke of how the holiday had allowed her daughter to flourish, and to develop her innate leadership skills.

The value of the holidays in helping children develop coping mechanisms and greater independence, and to become more socially adept at mixing with new people and handling new social situations, was reinforced repeatedly in the interviews with key informants.

5.3.6   Quality relationships with 'significant' adults

Another key finding to emerge from the study was the quality of the relationships that children developed with the holiday leaders. The leaders frequently emerged as being central to the children's enjoyment of the holiday. This was the case for both boys and girls. Before the holidays, children spoke of looking forward to meeting them and hoped that particular leaders, familiar to them from previous holidays, would be there this year. They consistently spoke in positive terms about the leaders: *'they're real nice and they'd give you time to do something if you needed to do it, that's what I liked about them as well, they weren't cranky or anything'* (teenage girl, NI city); *'they were very nice, well, they just look after you well'* (teenage girl, NI city); *'got on well with the leaders, especially **, they do things with you. Will miss them'* (teenage boy, NS2); *'they are great because they get involved, they ask you do you want to do this or that, you get to choose instead of them choosing for you'* (teenage boy, NS2).

The extent to which the children connected with the leaders was reinforced in the interviews with guardians. One guardian spoke about how a leader had lent a mobile phone to her son. This she interpreted to be not only an act of kindness but also an act of trust and respect, something that was not lost on her son. It was quite common for children to develop a bond with particular leaders. These leaders would then figure prominently in children's stories

about the holiday. Some children reported missing the leaders after they went home. One guardian reported how her son had spent hours crying on his return from the previous holiday because he missed the leader so much. Some guardians seemed surprised at how their children developed a bond with the leaders, commenting on how *'they actually hug the leaders and all when they are leaving'* (mother, NS2).

The significance of this finding possibly lies in the fact that the leader figure may be filling a vacuum present in the children's home life. This was the view of a number of key informants. A majority of the children studied lived with the absence of one or both parents. If it was the case that one parent was absent, this was usually the father. However, in three cases, the mother was absent and the children were being cared for either by the father or by grand-parents. In this context, the leader acted as a significant adult who provided, albeit temporarily, social interaction, care, attention, interest and encouragement. In effect, the leader, if a male, sometimes constituted, as one boy put it, a *'letting on dad'*. One guardian spoke about her son's relationship with one particular leader:

> *'fantastic, made him feel special, with not being a man in the house it kind of gave him somebody that thought something of him, just constantly ma all the time so …'* (mother, NS2)

Another single mother explained how the leaders *'have so much time for them and I think they give them individual time … they just love it, really love it'* (mother, WS). In all cases, the leaders provided a strong positive role model who left an impression on the children. One of the guardians explained how her son *'took a shine to ** and now he wants to go to the school that ** went to and done his Leaving'* (mother, NS1). In the case of one of the holidays studied, the leaders were from the local community. This meant that children would continue to see them in the vicinity. For one guardian this was very positive as '*it's good for my sons to be around good local lads'* (mother, NS1).

5.3.7   Behavioural change

Many guardians reported some form of behavioural change in their children post-holiday, all of it positive. They used adjectives including *'happy'*, *'excited'* and *'animated'* to explain their children's mood on return home. Without exception, they thought the holiday had done their children a lot of good and considered their children to be '*in great form'*, *'more alive'*, to have '*come out of themselves'* and to be '*just full of themselves'*. The holidays were attributed with '*bringing them on a lot'* and with giving them *'rosy cheeks'* from all the activities. One child (young girl, WS) reported how '*I felt like much better like, healthier, Yeah I did … you're running around and all'*. It was reported that some children came home '*more relaxed'*; one

guardian found that the holiday had '*settled him* (her son) *down … he can be bold*' (mother, SS). A number of them reported that their children were acting more responsibly since they came back. Two guardians (SI city and NS1) reported that their sons were helping out more around the house in the aftermath of the holiday.

Interestingly, a few guardians acknowledged their own need to learn to give their children more independence. Due to a combination of circumstances including lone parenting and risks in the home environment, some parents may be overprotective of their children. There was acknowledgement that the provision of the holiday facilitated a healthy, controlled and temporary 'letting go' of their children, in a way that was mutually beneficial for both guardians and children.

A basic assertion made in this working paper is that holiday provision can be conceived of as one of the many interventions offered by the NGO sector to support disadvantaged families. In effect, it enables the latter access a service that they would not otherwise be able to avail of, for a variety of reasons. A key argument being forwarded here is that in providing access to this service, a genuine need is being met. The data presented above clearly support the argument that children experiencing disadvantage benefit from an opportunity to participate in an annual holiday. The extent to which these findings match existing research findings is marked. So too is the consistency in the findings reported by each of the three cohorts of participants: children, guardians and expert key informants, across all six study areas. In the views of these participants, these benefits are very real and tangible. The argument being advanced here is that the accumulative effects of the holidays served to enhance the children's well-being.

5.4 Benefits for the Wider Family

A further important finding of this study is that the benefits created by the holiday seemed to spread out into the wider family in the immediate post-holiday period. This was the case even though none of the families studied had managed to avail of a holiday for all of their children. Nevertheless, the fact that one or more of their children had had a break from the home seemed to reinvigorate the family as a whole. This must be viewed in the context whereby the guardians typically tended to prioritise the needs of their children above their own, and so when the children were happy, they were too.

A key finding to emerge in this respect related to the extent to which intra-family relationships had been strengthened by the separation. With a small number of exceptions, children had

missed their parents/guardians and siblings, and guardians had missed their children. The mutual recognition that each had been missed was significant in reaffirming the ties between them. This was especially the case for several children who seemed insecure about whether they would be missed or not. The recognition that guardians had indeed missed them was very significant. In a minority of cases, children believed that their guardians did not miss them, and indeed they claimed that they did not miss their guardians either: *'the best thing I won't miss is my parents'* (young boy, NS1). This was clear in at least one pre-holiday group discussion, when the children looked forward to getting away from their family, as much as from the home environment more generally.

Children reported a variety of feelings about being home again. Most were happy to be home: *'great, happy to be home, relaxed'* (teenage boy, NS2); *'happy because you're home, where you live'* (teenage boy, NS2). Others had more mixed feelings: *'relaxed, happy and sad. Sad that all my friends are not going to be around here and just happy that I'm back as well'* (teenage girl, NI city); *'happy but sad too, wanted to keep in touch with friends from holidays … will miss the leaders … will miss everything'* (teenage girl, NS2). A few were not happy to be back: *'I started crying and all, I missed down there and the coming home was real boring here. I was very sad and then the friends I met, I met them the next day in town'* (teenage girl, NI city); *'miss the enjoyment, miss the sun'* (young girl, NS1).

Irrespective of how the children felt, their return, generally speaking, reinvigorated the home environment. Guardians explained how they came home happy, with stories to tell and prizes to display. One mother thought that this helped parents see their children in a new light. This sense was reinforced by a social worker who saw a great benefit in

> *'the parents being able to see that they're (the children) capable of living apart from them and coming back with good feedback. When parents hear good things about their children they behave more positively towards them'* (key Informant, NI city).

Certainly, communication within the families was improved because of the flow of news generated by the holiday. There was a freshness to the relationship, and the communication was now being instigated by the child and responded to by the guardian, rather than vice-versa which is the more usual scenario. It was clear that guardians and children were better able to inter-relate more positively, having had a break from each other.

5.4.1   Benefits for the guardian

It was anticipated at the outset that the children's absence from the family home while on holidays would generate benefits for the well-being of their guardians. To an extent this proved to be the case.

The early pre-holiday focus discussions with guardians (N=35) suggested that the absence of the children meant a break for the guardians. There was quite a lot of light-hearted discussion about how guardians welcomed an opportunity '*to get rid of the children for a week'*, and how they enjoyed getting a break. Guardians acknowledged that '*it's as much a break for you as for them'*, that they had more '*time to themselves'*, and that they enjoyed the relative calm that prevailed. We heard how '*it was lovely and quiet because there were only two instead of four'* (mother, NS2). Many of them anticipated being freer to do something for themselves. Some reported how they would call to a friend for a chat, go to bingo in the evenings, and walk around the shopping centre without being hassled by their children. One mother (WS) explained how

> '*it was great, just not worrying about children and just time to myself … I could actually get into that bath and just lie there for an hour, rather than someone banging on the door'*.

Key informants acknowledged this benefit. One community worker (NS1) explained how

> '*it's a great break for their mums and they're delighted and they go off or they go out and have a good time and, you know, just sleep, a lot of them will tell you they rest, they sleep on in the morning and it's great'*.

However, very few of the guardians studied actually managed to have a break from all of their children at the same time. Most of them either had younger or older children at home while the others were away. In addition, in the post-holiday research stage, it became clear that several guardians also had other responsibilities. Two of them cared for their elderly parents, one of them looked after a nephew, while three of them worked outside the home. Thus, they were still constrained in terms of free time availability.

A significant finding was that a number of guardians acknowledged that in providing access to holidays the NGOs involved constituted a valuable support mechanism in helping them raise their children. One benefit related to the way in which the intervention of the holiday organisation functions to lessen the burden of responsibility guardians can feel in trying to adequately provide for their children's needs. One mother explained how it lessened her feeling of guilt: '*it's great (because) the children should be on the beach, they should be doing happy things, so you're not feeling as bad when you see them out there'*. The support

of the NGOs in this respect was much appreciated. This finding relates to a strong theme evident throughout much of the reported data: without exception, the guardians appeared to place their children's needs before their own. When their children were happy, they were happy. Guardians repeatedly stated this, and some of the key informants reinforced it, explaining how the knowledge of their child having a good time means a great deal to guardians.

For several guardians, the departure of their children was quite problematic. Some experienced marked degrees of worry. Others experienced loneliness and a sense of being lost/ unable to function normally without the children. The former was more pronounced among guardians whose children were going on holidays for the first time. However, loneliness was generally a prevalent theme. Most guardians missed their children. For most, the loneliness was moderate. One mother (NS2) explained how she '*was a bit lonely to be honest'*, but on the positive side, she had more time to spend caring for her mother by day and calling around to her friends in the evening. For others it was more overwhelming. As one mother (NS2) explained, '*I was at a loose end. The house was very strange without the two youngest'*. When asked was there anything she didn't like about the boys being away she replied '*the loneliness'*, and she would not have been happy to see her sons go away on holidays more frequently than once a year. Another mother (NS1) explained how she had been broken-hearted when they went off on the bus,

> '*cause I had nothing to do, nothing to do and nowhere to go ... I didn't know what to do with myself … I just sat there reading the newspaper, staring out the window. I thought home they would never get'.*

The data reveal that very few of the women did anything to actively take advantage of the fact that some of their children were being cared for outside of the home for a few days. Just one guardian took a one-night break in a friend's house. No other guardian took a break. Some of them spoke of how they were afraid to go away in case the holiday-providing organisation would contact them with a problem. Thus, overall, while many guardians were able to enjoy more free time, had more relaxation and had a reduced work-load while their children were away, the absence of the children also engendered mixed emotions.

5.5 Longer-Term Benefits

The key informants interviewed during the course of this study were at one in asserting that behavioural change cannot be affected through a holiday of five or seven days duration. Indeed, the agencies themselves were quite clear that behavioural change is not sought through the mechanism of short-term holiday provision. Equally, this study did not set out to

identify the long-term benefits of providing child-centred holidays to children experiencing disadvantage. Nevertheless it identified a number of indicators which suggest that the benefits of such holidays extend well beyond the duration of the holiday itself.

The first finding in this regard related to the sense of anticipation with which children view the holiday from one year to the next. Children, guardians and the holiday agency volunteers were at one in reporting how children looked forward to the break away. One mother (WS) related a conversation with the local SVdP volunteer:

> *'Mary, he said, I just want to ask you, are your children interested in going (on holidays) this year? Interested, I said, they haven't stopped talking about it since last year'.*

It was also clear that the holidays live on in the memories of the children long after the holiday is over. The guardians who participated in this study included a number who had experienced a Sunshine Holiday as children. All of these remembered and spoke fondly of these holidays. One of the social workers interviewed spoke about older children encountered in a HSE after-care facility and how the memory of their Sunshine Holiday was of a happy time in their lives. She went on to argue that for the children involved in the current study, longer-term benefits might include learning to value and maintain friendship, treating people well and positively, and not engaging in bullying.

5.6 Problems/Disbenefits

Overall, both children and guardians were extremely happy with the holiday experiences offered. Children rarely complained. If they did, it was usually about having to get up early in the morning. Guardians rarely complained, and while there were a few minor issues (e.g. the balance of sports activities provided, the location for the pick-up/drop-off point for the bus) no real problems were consistently articulated by the guardians.

However, some problems did emerge from an analysis of the various data strands. The most serious problem was bullying. As already mentioned, guardians tended to conceive of the holidays as safe environments: they trusted the organisations and personnel involved. This was especially the case for the longest established organisation, Sunshine Fund. Several of the parents had personal experience of holidaying in Sunshine House as children. One guardian had both holidayed there and returned as a leader. Familiarity with the organisation translated into trust among the group studied. One mother articulated this trust in respect of Sunshine Fund: *'they don't tolerate bullying so you know what I mean, it's just like a week without no fighting, no nothing'* (mother, WS). As already mentioned, however, the reality is

that some children are bullied while on holidays. Ironically, one of this mother's sons was so upset about bullying that he did not really enjoy his holiday, nor did he want to go on the holiday again next year. He had not told his mother about the bullying and it only came to light at the post-holiday interviews during a discussion about the photographs he had taken during the holiday as a participant in this study.

As already mentioned, a small minority of children involved in the study were sent home during the holiday for poor behaviour. It was further identified through interviews with key informants that a history of bad behaviour in previous years can eliminate children from the possibility of selection for holidays in subsequent years. This practice is understandable. As one leader explained, '*if children can't be kept safe or if they're ruining 20 other children's holidays then they must be sent home*'. However, as this leader also pointed out, the children who are unable to behave appropriately are possibly the ones most in need of the benefits that a holiday can generate. Yet, an NGO cannot be expected to meet their needs to the detriment of others. This situation constitutes just one piece of evidence illustrating that while many organisations are doing valuable work, the nature and level of current holiday provision available for children experiencing disadvantage falls far short of that required.

Clearly, the nature of much of the holiday provision being studied here is one marked by segregation or streaming as opposed to integration. The two city-wide operating NGOs studied here target children who come from broadly comparable backgrounds, all characterised by disadvantage. Thus, while they are designed to temporarily remove children from difficult environments and to improve their well-being (in ways that range from providing access to uncomplicated fun experiences, exposing them to new social contexts and actively providing positive, self-esteem enhancing environments), it can be argued that the resulting holiday environment actually bears a strong degree of similarity to the home environment.

On this basis, a number of guardians had concerns about allowing their children to participate in the holidays. One guardian expressed concern over her perception that her grandson would be mixing with children adept at criminality and told of how she tried to influence the composition of the group that travelled away with her grandson. Similar sentiments came through in interviews with key informants. One social worker reported a mother's concerns that her children could be exposed to drug-taking and enticed into smoking while on holiday.

5.7 Summary

The data overwhelmingly point to the benefits that children derive from participating in the structured, child-centred holidays provided by the three NGOs investigated. All of the data strands, involving children, guardians and 'expert' key informants, generated data that, broadly speaking, were mutually supportive in detailing an array of very real benefits. Guardians and the wider family unit also benefited in identifiable ways and it was clear that the guardians understood the NGO's intervention to be a support for them as guardians. All of the data align closely with existing findings reported in the international literature.

Being exploratory research, this study raises at least as many questions as it answers. Prominent among these are the relative merits of different types of holidays. This issue was not specifically addressed. Nevertheless, some relevant data were gathered. Some of the study participants, mainly children and key informants, volunteered opinions as to the relative merits of other types of holidays. Those mentioned included the structured, child-only holidays being studied, family holidays organised by voluntary agencies, and self-organised family holidays. While some of the foregoing discussion highlights the problems associated with child-centred holidays, the overwhelming thrust of unsolicited data on the topic indicated that they were preferable to self-organised family holidays.

This view was generally grounded in the assertion that self-organised family holidays often did not constitute appropriate holidays, as children were often consigned to quasi-parental roles while their guardians relaxed. The financial implications of such holidays were also spoken of negatively, the implication being that families can go into debt in order to pay for holidays. A similar criticism was levelled at the family holidays organised by voluntary agencies in that some of the specified holiday locations contained amusement arcades that created an adverse pressure on families' financial resources.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This study addresses the socially exclusionist nature of holidaying practices in Ireland. EU-SILC data show that 23 per cent of Irish citizens did not have access to an annual holiday in 2005, with this exclusion being founded on financial means, as distinct from other factors such as disability, age or gender. This study focuses on families whose living situation is such that they lack the financial means to take part in annual holidaying activity. That notwithstanding, it acknowledges that exclusion is complex and is defined on multiple grounds. A core tenet of this research is that an inability to holiday on an annual basis is problematic because holiday-taking is associated with a series of benefits experienced at personal and inter-personal levels.

Thus, it is argued, exclusion from the practice of holidaying means exclusion from a series of benefits enjoyed by a majority of the population. These benefits have a further impact on society at large, and the converse also holds true: uneven access to these benefits creates a series of social costs. At a time when engagement in annual holiday-taking is no longer regarded as a luxury but rather can be said to be perceived as a 'social necessity' (Collins 2006), this problem is exacerbated. The problems of exclusion are compounded by the suggestion that it may be those most in need of a holiday that experience exclusion (Hughes, 1991; Smith and Hughes, 1999).

While the social exclusivity associated with holidaying in Ireland is not a uniquely Irish phenomenon, it has two features of note. Firstly, international comparative data suggest that the degree of social exclusion associated with holidaying by Irish citizens is marked. Secondly, the extent to which the Irish State has failed to acknowledge or tackle this social exclusion appears exceptional in a mainland EU context.

This chapter lays out a series of conclusions. Its overall preoccupation is with stimulating debate on policy development in the area and as such begins with observations on the current deprivation index and its treatment of the 'access to annual holiday' indicator. The key contribution of this research is to demonstrate the value of holidaying to those experiencing disadvantage. Generating awareness of this value is a prerequisite to policy development in the area. The findings reported relate to a specific type of holiday: structured,

child-centred group holidays. To this end, the chapter then synopsises the study's key findings about the benefits of holidaying in the context of existing international literature. Attention is paid to identifying knowledge gaps and prioritising avenues for further research. A series of conclusions are then made as to the state and nature of extant social tourism practice and policy in Ireland.

6.2　Towards Policy Development

This paper argues that promoting participation in annual holidaying has a valid role to play in helping children, families and others to cope with the difficulties associated with disadvantage. It constitutes an innovative response that can complement a broader range of interventions designed to address the complex realities of poverty and social exclusion. This paper supports Oppenheim's 1990 definition of poverty as '*going short materially, socially and emotionally*' (p.3*)*, and concurs with NAPS 2002 when it states that *'people are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally'*. It also supports Collins (2006) in considering access to an annual holiday to be a perceived social necessity, one that could usefully be acknowledged in the definition of deprivation indicators. CSO figures support the assertion that annual holidaying has been rising noticeably in recent years and has now achieved social normalcy.

The researchers have been acutely aware from the outset that the study's core argument – that the ability to access an annual holiday can help children, families and others to combat the difficulties associated with living in disadvantage – is not part of the prevailing paradigm of social welfare thought in Ireland. Despite the longevity of the practice (NGOs have been providing holidays to those in poverty for almost 80 years) the lack of awareness and recognition accorded the practice is stark. Within the largely centralised social welfare support system, there is no official recognition that holiday provision has any valid role to play. Accordingly, the researchers envisage clear challenges in promoting acceptance of the following arguments:

- that access to an annual holiday is a perceived social necessity
- that enabling access to an annual holiday can generate a series of valuable benefits at personal, inter-personal and broader societal levels
- that an inability to access an annual holiday deprives people of benefits that a majority of the Irish people consider to be a normal part of contemporary living and thus constitutes social exclusion

- that the time is now opportune for Irish policy-makers to address the area of holiday provision for those experiencing disadvantage and to bring Irish policy and practice in line with the majority of its EU counterparts.

These challenges are not insurmountable. They have been overcome across EU Member States. Recent developments have even been made in the UK, where the historical trajectory of social tourism has been similar to that in Ireland, with developments being historically fostered by the efforts of the voluntary sector amidst relatively little State support. Here, the government recognised the ability to take an annual holiday as an indicator of social exclusion in measuring child poverty in 2003. This new measure incorporates the concepts of relative low income and material deprivation, the latter of which includes 'a holiday away from home at least once a year with his or her family' (Hazel, 2005). This leaves Ireland markedly out of step with EU practice.

6.2.1 'Access to an annual holiday' and deprivation indicators

It would seem that a critical early step in advancing policy development is acknowledging that an inability to participate in an annual holiday constitutes a meaningful indicator of deprivation. Irish deprivation indicators are informed by their broader EU context. At EU level, data on holidaying are gathered through the EU-Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). The survey contains a question asking: 'In the last 12 months, has your household paid for a week's holiday away from home? If no, was it because the household could not afford to or was there another reason?' The inclusion of questions about holidaying is clear recognition of the potential for access to annual holidaying to be an indicator of deprivation. As already discussed in the first section of this paper, 'the ability to afford a holiday away from home at least once a year' was not included in the revised 11-item list of deprivation indicators for Ireland produced by the ESRI in 2006. Ironically, this was because the level of deprivation reported on this indicator equated to almost twice that reported on any other item: one in four respondents said that they lacked the ability to take an annual holiday. Thus, the indicator was not used because its presence would have been unduly influential.

This situation is clearly unsatisfactory. It echoes existing international research findings indicating that the general public holds ideas about the necessities of life which are more wide-ranging and multi-dimensional than is ordinarily represented in expert or political analysis (Collins 2006, citing Pantzis et al., 2000). People do not restrict their interpretation of 'necessities' to basic material needs of a subsistence diet, shelter, clothing and fuel. There

are social customs, obligations and activities that substantial majorities of the population also identify as being among the top necessities of life (Gordon et al., 2000:16). In line with these critiques, it is argued that the current deprivation indicators do not accurately reflect the extent to which an annual holiday is publicly perceived to be a social necessity.

Undoubtedly there are political issues at play here. While CSO data attest to the fact that holidaying is an increasingly standard lifestyle practice in Ireland, it remains largely conceived of as a frivolous, light-weight activity. Holiday time is still popularly conceived of as non-work time and therefore as non-productive/unimportant time. Little value, beyond economic value, is attributed to the activity (as already discussed, tourism in Ireland has long been prized primarily for its economic value to the state, to the regions and to business). The idea of investing in tourism in order to further a social welfare/ social rights/health/education agenda is an alien concept because the potential benefits that tourism can deliver in these areas are ill-acknowledged. So long as this remains the case, State support for social tourism will remain politically unpopular. In this context, creating awareness and building recognition of the benefits of holidaying for those experiencing disadvantage is critical if holiday provision is to become an integral part of anti-poverty strategies.

However, the authors argue that what Smith (1998) refers to as the 'differential opportunity to take a holiday' is now on the brink of being problematised by Irish policy-makers. As the measurement of deprivation takes increasing cognisance of contemporary living standards and mainstream lifestyles in the context of promoting social inclusion, the validity of omitting the 'access to an annual holiday' indicator will become increasingly untenable. This argument is strengthened by reference to the EU arena where the movement to strengthen social tourism/ tourism for access is gathering momentum.

Recent Irish studies are beginning to consider annual holidays as a social necessity. Whelan et al. (2003) found that 'the persistently poor are clearly differentiated from all others in their exposure to basic deprivation of food, clothing, furniture, holidays and inability to make routine payments'. Daly and Leonard (2002) highlighted that exclusion from participation in leisure activities was found to be a problem for those on low incomes with young people in the household. Collins (2006) found that 42.6 per cent of those interviewed in a disadvantaged suburb of Dublin wanted but could not afford 'a holiday away from home once a year (not visiting relatives)'. This was second only to regular savings of at least €15 per month for rainy days or retirement (45.2 per cent), as a socially perceived necessity that was unattainable.

The identification of social necessities has been adopted by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (2006) in their development of Minimum Essential Budgets (MEB). Its MEB includes a one-week holiday as a social need indicator. Examples given as to what might constitute a holiday include a one-week stay in Tramore for families, staying in a mobile home and travelling by train, plus spending money for a week; and a holiday in Killarney for pensioners, staying in a hotel, full board.

6.2.2   Acknowledging the value of holidaying

If policy is to be developed in this area, it is critical that knowledge about the value of holidaying is generated and disseminated. This study builds on Hughes' (1991:152) claim that 'holidays can perform real functions that are beneficial to both individuals and society'. Its preoccupation has been with what is commonly referred to as social tourism but which has more recently been referred to as 'Tourism for All'. To reiterate: 'social tourism involves the extension of the benefits of holidays to economically marginal groups, such as the unemployed, single-parent families, pensioners and the handicapped' (Hall, 2005:152). In this case, the empirical work has been concerned with families, and particularly with children, marginalised by disadvantage. This study constitutes exploratory research in an Irish context and represents the first attempt to enquire into issues linking deprivation, poverty, social exclusion and holidaying in Ireland. As such, it seeks to contribute to a growing, yet still modest, international academic literature on the value of broadening access to holidaying to all sectors of society. Throughout, the conclusions point to the need for further research to further explore questions that have arisen in the course of the research.

As the literature review reported, a wide range of benefits is attributed to the practice of holiday-taking and the findings of this study attest to many of these. It is important to stress again that the findings reported here relate to one specific type of holiday: structured, child-centred group holidays. As discussed in chapter 5, different types of holidays may produce different outcomes and much further research is required on the issue.

All of the benefits listed in the table overleaf were identified in the course of this research, being reported by either children or guardians, or by both. The break from routine environments, opportunities for social interaction, increased self-esteem and confidence, and opportunities for self and skills development emerged particularly strongly. Existing research has consistently pointed to the benefits that emanate from a change of environment, and this study fully concurs. Children, guardians and key informants all attested to the importance of the break away from the routine home environment.

Table 3: Relationship Between Literature and Current Research Findings

Research Findings from Literature	Current study findings	
	Reported by Children	Reported by Guardians
A break from routine, relief from stress or monotony allowing rest, recuperation, reflection and a rebuilding of emotional strength (e.g. ETB 1976, DCMS 1999, Davidson 1996, Crompton 1979, Smith 1998, Lewis 2001, Wigfall 2003)	√	√
Increased life satisfaction and subjective well-being and enhanced quality of life (Gilbert and Abdullah 2004, Jolin 2004)	√	√
Opportunities for social interaction (ETB 1976, Brimacombe 2003, Wigfall 2003, Lewis 2001)	√	√
Improved mental and physical health (ETB 1976, Smith 1998, Ross 1983, Gump and Matthews 2000, ETC 2000, Wigfall 2003, Jolin 2004)	√	
Opportunities for self-development, skills-development (ETB 1976, Smith and Hughes 1999, Lewis 2001, Wigfall 2003)	√	
Increased self-esteem and confidence (Amundson et al. 1991, Lewis 2001, Winfree et al. 2002, Wigfall 2003)	√	√
Independence and strengthening of relationships (ETB 1976, Amundson et al. 1991, Davidson 1996, Lewis 2001, Brimacombe 2003, Wigfall 2003, Ghate and Hazel 2002).	√	√

To no small degree, this points to the extremely poor quality of the home environments in which these families live, as reported by the study participants themselves. Notable here is the fact that the holiday opportunities made available need not be international, exotic, luxurious or extravagant in nature. Neither need they be extensive in length. Their importance lies in the fact that they constitute an opportunity for people, in this case, for children, to leave their home environment and stay elsewhere, however briefly. The effects of this are multiple: the break is restorative, it creates opportunities to recuperate and relax, to be at ease, and to harness renewed energies to meet the challenges routinely felt at home. The extent to which the length of the break shapes the benefits accruing is an issue for further research and is not specifically addressed here.

During this break away from home, children were exposed to a series of opportunities to develop their social skills and make new friends, acquire confidence and develop personally, build self-esteem and learn new skills. A prominent finding was that children relished the opportunity to divest themselves of the responsibilities normally faced at home, often in the guise of caring for siblings, or acting out certain roles expected of them by their peers. On holiday, the conditions were such that children were allowed to relax, have fun and in effect, be children.

An argument evident in the literature is that the benefits of holiday-taking are felt more deeply by those for whom access to holidaying is most constrained (ETB, 1976; Hughes, 1991). While this study did not use a control group drawn from more mainstream socio-economic

backgrounds to test this assertion, the contrast that the holiday provided with the home in terms of providing an environment that was affirmative and supportive of children, safe and secure, aesthetically pleasing, spacious, socially dynamic and replete with recreational opportunities was stark. Taking into consideration the children's self-reported negative descriptions of their home environments, an overall conclusion is to support this argument while acknowledging that further research is needed.

6.2.2.1 The longer-benefits of holidays

As already mentioned, this research focused on well-being as opposed to well-becoming: the preoccupation was with the children's current experiences and current quality of life. The holiday providers studied do not aspire to effect long-term behavioural change; they simply want to give the children a holiday. This notwithstanding, the study pointed to a number of ways in which the benefits extend well beyond the actual duration of the holiday. In line with earlier research findings (ETB, 1976; Gilbert and Abdullah, 2002), anticipation prior to and memories after the holiday greatly enhanced the children's sense of well-being. The lead-in and follow-on periods in question could not be quantified in this study. They varied by child, yet they were nonetheless very real. Sometimes they merged together, as for repeat holiday-makers the memories of last year's holiday fuelled the anticipation of what lay ahead.

This finding was reported by children, but to a greater extent by guardians and key informants, who noted how children awaited the holiday excitedly, and afterwards prized their trophies, medals and photos and recounted stories about the holiday. Less obviously, the holiday constituted a time when children were routinely introduced to a set of ideas that challenged the behaviour patterns prevailing in their home environments. They were proactively exposed to ideas about positive human interaction, respect, self-reliance and leadership. Investigating how the holiday not only interrupts, but also stimulates, longer-term change in behaviour patterns is an obvious area for further research.

6.2.2.2 Benefits for guardians and wider family

The main conclusion of this research is that the children studied were found to have benefited from the experience of holidaying in a number of clearly identifiable ways. It further found that a series of benefits trickled out into the wider family. The guardians, in the first instance, benefited, in that the absence of one or more of their children constituted something of a break for them, even though very few of them actually were able to take advantage of the children's absence to take a short holiday themselves. Nonetheless, they had a reduced work-load, more time for themselves and more time to devote to other

responsibilities. In addition, the availability of the holiday was generally construed as a welcome support, and as a sharing of responsibility in rearing the children in their care. It supplemented their efforts to raise their children and reduced the sense of inadequacy that some of them felt for being unable to give their children what they would wish to give them.

The wider family was also found to benefit from the absence of one or more children. It tended to reduce the chaos that was found to sometimes characterise these families' lives. Meanwhile, the children's return was associated with a reinvigoration of the family unit, with improved two-way communication between children and guardians, an increase in mutual appreciation of the two parties and a reduction in the negativity that can prevail in routine intra-familial relationships.

6.2.2.3   Problematic aspects of current provision

The research found that the quality of the holidays provided was constrained by a number of factors. The biggest problem was bullying. This had been widely reported within the home environment. Indeed it had been described by some key informants as being endemic. Despite a keen awareness, and mechanisms to tackle the problem, the holiday providers did not manage to create an entirely safe environment in this respect. Bullying was too pervasive and a small number of children's holiday experiences were tarnished in consequence. In addition, the holiday posed the risk of introducing/exposing children to socially deviant behaviour. Despite the absence of corroborating evidence, this was a genuine fear expressed by some guardians who worried that their children would interact with other children better versed in such behaviours (e.g. smoking, drug-taking).

These findings problematise two concepts fundamentally underpinning the holiday provision studied. Firstly, they raise questions about the practice of children being taken out of the family unit in order to avail of a group holiday. The practice of taking children away from their family to holiday with other children is unusual in EU terms. As the findings discussed earlier showed, it creates problems for guardians and also for some children. Secondly, they raise issues about the segregation approach that currently prevails in holiday provision not only for children, but for families and other adults experiencing disadvantage.

This model of holiday provision – providing groups of children from disadvantaged backgrounds with holidays that occur, for the most part, in segregated holiday centres – has a number of implications: not least of these is that children overwhelmingly interact with children drawn from similarly disadvantaged backgrounds. In consequence, they tend to be routinely exposed to broadly similar problems and to readily identifiable behavioural patterns.

Many of the problematic aspects of the holiday identified in the research can be linked to the nature of this model. It is stressed that these difficulties clearly do not negate the tangible benefits that the holidays generated for the children studied. However, obvious questions arise including: Is this the best way of enabling children from disadvantaged backgrounds to access holidays? Might the quality of the holiday experience vary if other models were employed? Further research is needed to answer these questions.

The nature of extant social tourism practices also raises issues in relation to child protection. While the NGOs studied are required to meet State-imposed fire, health and safety regulations, by their own admission they are not subject to child protection regulations/inspections/controls. At present they are entirely self-regulated in respect of how they manage and protect the children in their care. This fact was brought to the researchers' attention, and in effect problematised, by one of the NGOs. It did not emerge at all as an issue in discussions with children, guardians or other key informants.

6.2.3   Generating awareness of extant social tourism practice

Building awareness of the activities, initiatives and services currently in place to facilitate access to annual holidaying is a prerequisite to policy development. A key finding of the study was that beyond those directly involved in providing and participating in the holidays, very little awareness exists of extant social tourism activities. Providers themselves had little awareness of other holiday-providing organisations, even those operating in the same area. Undoubtedly, the task of advancing policy in the area is severely curtailed by lack of awareness. As is clear from the section above, the work of the three NGOs investigated was found to be hugely beneficial for the children in receipt of holidays. These children and their families clearly benefit in numerous ways, and in the six areas studied there was a deep 'on the ground' awareness and appreciation of the long-standing work of these NGOs.

However, interactions with policy-makers, key opinion shapers in national agencies, State department officials (in welfare, children and tourism domains), and social policy researchers revealed extremely low levels of awareness of the ideas implicit in the concept of social tourism. Similarly, while the SVdP's Sunshine Fund and its residential centre Sunshine House in Balbriggan were found to be widely recognised in name, beyond this there was little understanding of its core practices or of other agencies active in the area.

If there was an awareness deficit evident between those agencies active in localised areas and those charged with informing and formulating decision-making in national arenas, there

was a further deficit evident between agencies on the ground. Even within particular geographic areas it was found that public and voluntary organisations, often working to achieve broadly similar anti-poverty objectives, were unaware of each other's existence and activities. Thus, NGOs were often uninformed of the activities of other NGOs; social workers and community workers had few/informal/ad-hoc links with agencies working to broaden access to holidaying; local authorities' sport and recreation services were often entirely uncoordinated, with the holiday opportunities being offered to the same cohort of children/teenagers leading to timetabling clashes, etc.

This lack of awareness is hugely problematic in terms of making advances in the area. It means a lack of coordination, integration, resource-sharing, mutual learning and networking. It clearly leads to a multiplicity of basic problems that are too many to list (key examples include over-use/under-use of resources, duplication of provision in some areas with little, if any, in others; inefficient use of local knowledge, mis-timing, conflicts between providers, etc.).

6.2.4   Justification and rationale for policy development

This research makes the case that facilitating access to an annual holiday for people experiencing disadvantage has value and can be justified on a number of bases. This case has been accepted in most EU domains, and currently Ireland is very much out of step with best practice in this respect. Justification for developing policy in the area can draw on a number of rationale including social welfare, economic and citizens' rights domains. In other EU countries, while an over-arching rationale may be evident, provision can serve to further a multiplicity of policy aims simultaneously. It should also be pointed out that in other EU countries, social tourism interventions designed to counter exclusion on financial grounds are not targeted simply at groups on social welfare, but also at low-income families and individuals. Empirically, this study researched both low-income and social-welfare-dependent families. Sometimes it appeared that the degree of social exclusion experienced by the former was the greater of the two.

Existing policy statements and documents dealing with related areas provide a basis for developing rationale. For example, specifically with respect to children, the National Play Policy 2004–2008 is pertinent in that it indirectly acknowledges the value of holidaying (as a form of recreation). However, an explicit policy on broadening access to holidaying for children is needed. Again in respect of children, a core aim of The National Children's Strategy is that children will receive quality supports and services that promote all aspects of

their development, and support families and communities in supporting children. Basic needs, as identified in the strategy, include educational opportunities and experiences promoting optimum physical, mental and emotional well-being.

The findings of this study demonstrate clearly how access to an annual holiday has a role to play in meeting these basic needs. Developing a justification for adults is perhaps less obvious. However, it has been acknowledged that children do not experience disadvantage on their own but in the context of their families (NESC, 2005). In this context, mechanisms that support the family also support the child, an assertion widely recognised in social tourism practices across the EU where the family is a core cohort targeted.

As already discussed, policy development can be underpinned by a number of rationale. The findings presented here make a case for advocating a social inclusion and a citizens' rights rationale. However, they do not preclude the use of an economic rationale. These rationale must not be conceived of as opposites but rather as complementary. Indeed it would seem that joined-up thinking across a number of policy domains could serve to further a number of diverse social welfare, education, health, regional development and economic objectives simultaneously. This has been the experience elsewhere in Europe.

6.2.5   A partnership approach to policy design and delivery

It is clear that a fundamental priority of policy development in this area is to consider how public and private intervention can work in tandem with voluntary supply to address gaps in provision, and improve and strengthen existing services. Advocating a partnership approach is in line with the EESC's (2006) Barcelona Declaration, which argues that subventions premised on partnership approaches are most apt. Existing anti-poverty strategies are multi-faceted, reflecting the multi-faceted nature of poverty itself and in terms of delivery comprise a range of equally diverse yet complementary services, supports and interventions. To be effective, social tourism provision must draw on the strengths of a number of partners located in public, voluntary and private sectors. As is clear from EU practices (e.g. in France and Poland), private companies in their capacity as employers of low-paid employees and in their capacity as suppliers in the tourism and transport sectors can contribute in a number of ways to this partnership process. Mutually beneficial ways of involving private companies in partnership with public and voluntary agencies have yet to be seriously explored in Ireland.

One of the most obvious findings of the study relates to the extant expertise and energy of NGOs working in localised areas to deliver holiday opportunities to marginalised groups. To

a large extent this work operates without any over-arching policy direction or guidance from national arenas. It goes largely unrecognised and certainly goes unrewarded beyond the appreciation shown by those directly affected. The existing infrastructure, expertise and status of NGOs working in holiday provision in local communities is a tremendous strength. There is a need to harness this resource and to preserve the distinctiveness of individual NGOs.

Yet, as discussed in previous sections, a singular or predominant reliance on voluntary efforts has a number of disadvantages (Hadley and Hatch, 1981; Leat, 1981). Existing provision is highly localised, uneven and many elements in its operation are inconsistent (e.g. ways of accessing and selecting children to go on holidays). There are indications that demand outstrips supply and that certain cohorts of children are being excluded from the holidays provided because they are perceived to place too much stress on the system. Ironically, it may be these children, those who exhibit marked behavioural problems, who are most in need of a break from their home routine in a holiday environment.

Equally problematic at present is the ad-hoc and informal way in which much of the public sector intervention is structured. Relationships between agencies vary from place to place. Too often linkages are dependent on individual local knowledge or connections. Yet the potential for both of these sectors to improve their services to their target groups through improved coordination, linkages and joined-up thinking is all too obvious. It seems clear that a partnership approach involving public and private actors in tandem with the voluntary agencies is potentially the most effective approach.

6.2.6   Prioritising an integrated approach to supply

An integrated approach to supply is critical. The issue of integration emerged as problematic in both intra- and inter-agency contexts. An important finding of the study is that all of the agencies identified as being active in promoting participation in annual holidaying were also involved in other anti-poverty services and supports. The study did not identify any agency that exists solely to provide holidays. In this, Ireland is unusual in an EU context.

A second important finding in this respect was that among the array of services and supports provided by the agencies (whether non-governmental or public), investment in the provision of holidays was accorded low priority. While it was clear that there is a professional acknowledgement of the value of holidaying, there was also a sense that this value was viewed as marginal. Key informants spoke of constantly having to make the case for

maintaining budgets and resources for holiday provision and while those directly involved were clear as to the logic for their agency's involvement, it often seemed that the contribution of annual holiday provision to the overall attainment of agencies' strategic objectives was less understood. Even among those agencies that provide holidays as an integral part of ongoing programmes/projects, there were issues as to how the holiday dimension contributed to the programme.

The problems identified within agencies were replicated in the wider environment. As an earlier section discussed, serious gaps in awareness about activity in holiday provision among actors and agencies on the ground were found.

This study argues that a need exists for actors and agencies to recognise the role that access to holidays can play as one part of a broader set of strategies devised to combat social exclusion. Equally, there is a need to identify ways of integrating holiday services and supports into overall and ongoing support provision for populations in need. In terms of policy development, these findings point to the need to consider ways of integrating and coordinating activities in a strategic manner.

6.2.7   The need for further research

There is an obvious need for further research to inform policy development in this area. This research has generated a certain amount of information about the agencies that operate in the field. However, the study addressed Dublin city only. It is known that activity exists in other cities and towns throughout Ireland, organised by agencies operating both locally and nationally. A much more detailed scoping exercise is needed to ascertain the full scale, nature and extent of social tourism practices in Ireland.

In addition, as sections 2.2 and 6.2.2 have detailed, there are many gaps in knowledge about the value of holidays. Greater understanding is needed, for example, about the relative merits of different types, different lengths and different frequencies of holidays. Little is known about the longer-term benefits of holidays, or about how they contribute to achieving the aims of ongoing anti-poverty programmes. More investigation of the varying types of partnerships that can deliver a range of different services within the holiday domain is needed. Given that this was the first study to touch upon any issues linking holidaying to poverty and social exclusion in an Irish context, there is tremendous scope for further research.

6.3 Concluding Observations

Some concluding observations that emerged from the research are now discussed.

6.3.1 The concept of 'social tourism' needs to be highlighted in Ireland

From the outset this research has been conceived of as exploratory. An initial task was to interrogate the meaning of the phrase 'social tourism' and to develop awareness of an area that is little understood in policy or practice contexts in Ireland. The data revealed generally low levels of awareness of the practice and a distinct lack of understanding of the value of this activity. The suggestion that holiday provision can form part of an array of valid interventions/supports to families experiencing poverty has yet to receive serious consideration. This situation needs to be addressed.

6.3.2 There is need to recognise tourism as a socially-exclusionist activity

There is little official acknowledgement of the fact that holidaying in Ireland is a socially-exclusionist activity. The fact that just less than one quarter of the Irish population is excluded from accessing holidaying services due to a lack of financial means is not problematised by Irish policy-makers in any policy domain, either in social welfare, health, tourism or elsewhere. Key informants were at times unsure what domain it might fit into. Yet this lack of awareness did not equate to negative attitudes towards the potential of such services to further various anti-poverty policy aims.

6.3.3 There is need for more qualitative and quantitative research to investigate this phenomenon

This paper has already identified a number of areas where further research is needed to advance understanding of policy and practice in the social tourism area. In the Irish context there are numerous possible avenues for further research. Not least of these is a fuller investigation of the scale and extent of social tourism provision, not just in Dublin, but in cities and rural areas across the country. Baseline data on, *inter alia*, the number of agencies involved, the degree and nature of linkages between organisations, the range of initiatives and interventions available, the type and number of people being assisted to go on holidays, the overall number of holiday nights provided, etc. are needed in order to further inform policy development in the area.

6.3.4   Ireland can learn from other European countries

This research began by reviewing international literature, and then focused specifically on the European context, to identify the existence of policies and mechanisms instituted to facilitate access to holidays for people experiencing disadvantage. In contrast to the Irish situation, it was found that many European States have long-standing records of engagement in the area. Their expertise can be harnessed in an Irish context.

6.3.5   The contribution of volunteer organisations/ NGOs needs to be recognised/acknowledged

The White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and the Voluntary Sector gives formal recognition to the partnership ethos that informs the working relationship between the public and volunteer sectors, while recognising the differences between them. It highlights the important role of NGOs with regard to policy implications and practice. However, the organisations examined in this project, and others identified through the research process, are almost exclusively funded and operated through fund-raising and volunteer support on a year-by-year basis. They often tailor their activities and holiday provision to the funding available. While the independent nature of their activities is important, some form of structured funding would assist in stabilising the provision of service by these groups.

6.3.6   There is need to support and link provision which is currently ad-hoc in nature

In social-welfare and child-care practice domains, there is evidence of a tacit recognition of the benefits of providing access to holidays. In fact, within the NGO sector, there is a well-established involvement dating back some 80 years. However, the practice has not been adequately conceptualised within the broad anti-poverty policy context. In consequence, extant practice is minimal relative to the scale of demand, relatively ad-hoc in its selection of people identified as being in need of holidaying, place specific in its provision, and lacking in an integrated, strategic approach to supply.

6.3.7   Holidays should be considered as an element of integrated service provision

It would seem that the organisations (NGO and public sector) involved in subventing holidays/ providing holiday services to people experiencing disadvantage are also heavily involved in providing other services to this constituency as well. The research team has not yet identified any agency entirely devoted to holiday provision. Thus, a simple, yet key finding

emerging from this study is that holiday services constitute just one of a series of services being offered by providing organisations. Within providing organisations, it seems clear that the holiday subvention dimension carries a low priority. Its profile, budget and presence within the broad landscape of public and NGO social welfare interventions is extremely modest. Similarly, there would seem to be little recognition of its value as one part of a wider set of interventions; neither does it seem to be encased within any strategic form of integrated provision. This criticism can be applied both to individual agencies engaged in holiday service provision and to the overall provision of social welfare services to people experiencing disadvantage.

6.3.8   Poverty, social exclusion and holidaying: final comments

As might be expected of an economy where average incomes are amongst the highest in the world, holidaying is now a standard lifestyle practice in Ireland. It is perceived, in effect, to be a social necessity. Yet, 23 per cent of Irish citizens claimed that they did not have the financial means to take an annual holiday in 2005. Meanwhile, Maître et al's (2006) revision of the deprivation index found the level of deprivation associated with the ability to afford an annual holiday indicator to be twice that recorded on any other of the items considered.

This working paper problematises this situation. It draws attention to the social exclusionist nature of holidaying in Ireland and argues that an inability to afford an annual holiday is an integral part of what is means to experience disadvantage and social exclusion in contemporary Ireland. To date few actors in Ireland, beyond a number of NGOs active in anti-poverty domains, recognise this to be a problem. This paper argues that a need exists for policy-makers and practitioners active within social welfare, economic, health, education and tourism domains to acknowledge that holiday participation can yield a series of benefits at personal, inter-personal and societal levels. By extension, there is a need for a fuller awareness of how social exclusion from holiday-taking creates a series of negative social, cultural and economic outcomes. Addressing this situation is important if, following Erikson (2007:265), policy-makers are interested to ensure that Ireland becomes 'not only a richer but also a better society to live in' while Irish society becomes a nation 'where people not only earn more but also have better lives'.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1 – European Best Practice

While there is a vast array of mechanisms and initiatives in existence at national and regional level throughout Europe, a number of recognised best practice initiatives are outlined below:

France: Holiday Cheques

ANCV is a national organisation established in 1982 which facilitates access to holidays for employees through the distribution of 'holiday cheques'. Employees are assisted in making regular savings for a holiday budget and these savings are supplemented by the employers and social organisations, thus maximising the holiday budget. The companies and social organisations benefit from reduced taxes and social contributions. The employee redeems the total value of the savings and supplementary contributions in the form of 'holiday cheques', which can be used on a wide variety of items including lodgings, dining, transport, leisure and culture. The economic impact of the holiday cheques is significant as it is estimated that total spending is four times more than the volume of cheques issued. Similar 'holiday cheques' schemes are available in Switzerland, Italy, Poland, Hungary and Cyprus.

ANCV provides assistance to individuals or families who suffer from economic, social or cultural difficulties via holiday grants in the form of holiday cheques. The value of expired holiday cheques are redirected to finance these grants. The maximum value of the grant is €300 per family. In 2003, 22,000 people benefited from a holiday grant from the ANCV for a family holiday. ANCV distributes this assistance via a network of intermediary organisations. Since 1987 ANCV has constructed a network of partners comprising social and charitable organisations throughout France which are in permanent contact with those who are deprived and are therefore in the best position to know their needs. ANCV provides funds to these organisations in the form of holiday cheques, in order for the organisations to develop holiday projects for those most in need. This ensures the provision of support before, during and after the holiday.

France: Bourse Solidarité Vacances/Holiday Solidarity Fund (BSV)

Established by the Ministry of Tourism in 1999, BSV operates in parallel with the ANCV holiday cheque scheme. BSV is specifically targeted at people on a low income, who would not otherwise be able to go on holidays or who find themselves in an 'at risk' situation.

This State-sponsored scheme operates via national charity and welfare organisations, local associations and tourism providers. Tourism providers make holidays available to BSV,

which it, in turn, makes available, at a marginal cost, to social organisations and associations. These organisations sign people up and help them prepare and support families until they leave and after their return from holiday. The organisations that distribute these offers are working on the ground with those who are most deprived. This scheme is funded by a number of Ministries and ANCV.

Both of these initiatives are offered throughout the country and guarantee equal access (Conseil National du Tourisme, 2004).

UK: Family Holiday Association

Established in 1975, the Family Holiday Association is a charity organisation that seeks to ensure the inclusion of families living on a low income in holiday and leisure activities. According the FHA, for families on a low income, an annual holiday builds stronger families, as it benefits intra-family relationships, and happier families, with improvements in mental health. FHA provides financial assistance to families in need who have not had a holiday in at least four years. The organisation relies entirely on voluntary donations and the number of holidays which it can offer is restricted by the funds it raises. Families are normally referred to FHA by social services, health authority staff and voluntary organisations.

Research conducted by the FHA shows that in the UK, government, policy0makers and the general public largely overlook the importance of holidays to families and do not realise the benefits to wider society. This is in contrast with other European countries that, under the banner of social tourism, actively support access to holidays.

The FHA's Family Breaks project was designed to contribute to the government's work in preventing the social exclusion of families. Specifically it aims to strengthen the ability of families to cope with their difficulties; strengthen their capacity to participate in and contribute to their community, and develop a model of holiday provision to families under stress that can be replicated in other areas of the UK. Up to one-third of British families do not take an annual holiday (Hazel, 2003)

The approach being developed by the FHA through this project promotes the idea of the 'family holiday' as a tool or mechanism for combating social exclusion. It thus seeks to place the practice of holidaying within the remit of the social care/ social welfare policy-makers.

Spain: Holiday Programme for the Elderly and for the Maintenance of Employment in Tourist Areas

This programme was established by the Institute for the Elderly and Social Services (IMSERSO) in 1985 and implemented the following year. IMSERSO is the Spanish social security management entity, associated with the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs through the Secretary of State of Social Services, Families and Disabilities.

The programme seeks to improve the quality of life of the elderly and also aims to address the seasonal phenomenon of the tourism sector that is relieved by the assistance of these groups during the 'off season'. The programme provides the elderly with the opportunity to access holiday spells in areas with a warm climate, undertaking cultural circuits and recreational activities through nature tourism. The programme is marketed through travel agencies by accredited companies following a tendering process. These agencies have equal access to a centralised computerised system, outlining the offers.

The programme is financed through contributions by beneficiaries (70 per cent in a single payment) and IMSERSO (30 per cent of cost). The State recuperates its contribution through cost savings (savings in benefits and subsidies) and earnings (e.g. income tax from economic activity generated, VAT, corporation tax, social security contributions). Due to the unique form of financing the programme which equally subsidises all travellers rather than in proportion to the cost of the trip, the amount the State recuperates in general exceeds the sum of its contribution. A Social Tourism conference organised by the European Commission in February 2007 considered the possibility of adopting the IMSERSO model of best practice at a pan-European level.

Table 4: Tourism for all provision in EU states in 2001

TABLE 4: MEASURES THAT CAN HAVE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON HOLIDAY PARTICIPATION IN TOURIST ACTIVITIES.

Beneficiary Measure		Group A (Potential) holidaymaker	Group B Tourist supply sector	Group C Intermediary Organisations (such as umbrellas)
1. Holiday voucher		M: F, It	-	-
2. Paid holiday		15 M	-	-
3. Extra holiday pay		M: A, B, DK, D, Fin, It, Nl, Port, Sw		
4. Financial support for target groups:	Youth	G: A, B, D, Fin, Lux, Nl, Port, Sw M: F, Gr, P: UK	G: F, Sw*	G: A, B, D, F, Fin, It, M: Lux, Port
	Senior citizens	M: Gr, G: Nl, Spain, Sw	G: Sw*	G: A, B, D, F, It M: Port
	Persons with a handicap	G: D, Fin, Sw M: Gr,		G: A, B, F, Fin, Port, It M: D
	Underprivileged	M: A, B G: D, Fin, Sw P: F, Nl, UK		G: A, B, F, Fin, It
	Unemployed	G: Gr, Sw		G: A, B, F, It
5. Financial support for operation and activities	Infrastructure		G: A, B, D, F, It, Nl, Port M: Ierl* M: Lux, Sw	G: A, B, D, F, Port M: Lux
	Animation		G: F, Lux	G: A, B, D, F, Port M: Lux
	Promotion		M: A, B, D, It, Port, Sw G: Lux	M: A, B, Lux, Port G: D, F, Nl
	Working costs		G: Lux, Port	G: A, B, F, Port M: Lux
	Personnel costs		G: Lux, Port M: Sw	G: A, B, D, F, Port M: Lux
	Education / training		G: D, F, Port M: It, Lux	G: A, B, D, F, Port M: It, Lux
6. Financial support transport		M: A, B, D, F, Fin, Gr, Lux, UK G: Ierl, It , Nl, Sw		M: Port
7. Financial support owing to**	Employer's organisations	P: A, B, D, F, Fin, Gr	P: F, B	P: B
	Mutual insurance systems/national health service	P: A, B, F M: D	M: D P: F	
	Charitable organisations	P: A, B, D, F, Nl	P: A, B	P: A, B, Ierl M: D
	Religious organisations	P: A, B, D, F, Nl		P: D
	Private-organisations	P: A, B, D, F, Fin, Nl	P: A, B, F	P: A, B, D, F

Legend: P = private-sector, G = government, M = mixed (government and private sector)

A = Austria	F= France	It= Italy	S= Spain
B = Belgium	Fin= Finland	Lux= Luxembourg	UK= United Kingdom
D= Germany	G= Greece	Nl= Netherlands	Sw= Sweden
DK= Denmark	Ierl= Ireland	Port= Portugal	

* own interpretation in processing of the survey data
** data for Luxembourg missing

[Source: Toerisme Vlaanderen 2001]

Appendix 2 – Case Studies of Agencies Involved in Social Tourism Provision in Ireland

Society of St Vincent de Paul

The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVdP – www.SVdP.ie) is a Christian voluntary organisation, working with poor and disadvantaged people. The Society, through its structure of 8,000 volunteers, organised in 'conferences', provides holiday breaks for individuals and families who are unable to access a holiday. Holidays are offered in SVdP owned holiday homes and centres for older people, families and groups. SVdP holiday centres are managed by members on a voluntary basis and are supported by professional staff. Two holiday programmes in particular target children (Sunshine Holidays) and young people (Teenhols).

SVdP Conferences also help finance day trips to, for example, Dublin Zoo and other attractions. Conferences help families by subsidising holidays in 'mainstream' domestic holiday resorts like Tramore and Salthill. Young people are taken on camping or An Óige holidays, and some make pilgrimages to, for example, Lourdes.

Sunshine Holiday Fund

*The job is simple. Give a good holiday, make as much fun as possible, and bring
a lot of summer happiness to the boys and girls lucky enough to visit*
(T.J. Fleming, President, the Sunshine Fund)

Allied to the St Vincent de Paul is the Sunshine Fund which has been operating Sunshine House, its Balbriggan holiday centre for children, for 70 years. Boys and girls aged between 7 and 11 are nominated for the holiday programme by the network of SVdP Conferences spread across the Greater Dublin area. Special holiday packages are also organised for children from outside this area. From time to time children are referred to Sunshine Holidays by social and community workers and organisations such as Traveller organisations, Focus Ireland etc. The holiday centre is purpose built and equipped to host over 1,300 children annually in a season of 16 week-long (Saturday to Saturday) holidays. The operation is managed by over 270 SVdP volunteers, in teams up to 20, supported by a paid catering and household staff of 20. Men and women from all walks of life and all ages offer seven days of their summer to care for each group of up to 100 children where they organise and supervise play, and of course have lots and lots of fun. The Sunshine Fund relies on donations and

fundraising activities to support the holidays, in addition to receiving contributions from other sources such as the Court Service.

Teenhols

Established in the early 1990s, Teenhols provides outdoor activity holidays for teenagers from 13-15 years of age. As with Sunshine Holidays, young people are nominated by SVdP Conferences in the Greater Dublin area. Teenhols also receives some referrals from social services in contact with the young people and their families. The holidays are 5 days in length (Tuesday–Saturday) and take place at outdoor adventure centres operated by the VEC in Baltinglass and Birr. In 2006 young people were accompanied by 56 volunteers and supported by paid VEC staff and professional activity instructors. Young people from Dublin are given the opportunity to challenge themselves and try new activities like abseiling, canoeing and horse-riding in a country setting. Similar to Sunshine Holidays, Teenhols rely on donations, contributions and fundraising to support their activities. In recent years, as the facilities are rented and professional instructors are hired, Teenhols have seen the weekly cost of the holidays soar.

Family Holidays

Some SVdP Conferences support families in need of a break in taking a one-week family holiday. Families are encouraged to make their own holiday arrangements and SVdP Conferences subsidise the cost of the accommodation and sometimes the transport (train/bus). Pebble Beach in Tramore is a popular destination, with families hiring mobile homes during the summer. The level of financial support provided for holidays varies as each SVdP Conference prioritises its spending, depending on the needs in the area. Families can also use the support to holiday in one of the SVDP-owned holiday centres/homes throughout Ireland.

SVDP Holiday Centres/Homes

Older People

Each year hundreds of senior citizens enjoy a weekly break at SVdP holiday homes – generally between May and September. These facilities are open to all senior citizens from all parts of the community to come and enjoy their hospitality and camaraderie. Some fund their own holiday while SVdP Conferences or social services sponsor others. SVdP

volunteers support the older people during their holiday and in some cases entertainment and activities are organised.

The following are SVdP holiday centres/homes:
- Clare Lodge Holiday Home, Newcastle, Co. Down
- Kerdiffstown House, Co. Kildare
- Knock Holiday Home, Co. Mayo
- Mornington Holiday Home, Co. Louth
- Newcastle Holiday Home, Co. Down
- Ballybunion Holiday Home, Co. Kerry
- Bundoran Holiday Home, Co. Donegal

Families

An example of a family centre is The Towers Friendship Centre, Ballybunion, Co, Kerry, which is situated in Sandhill Road, overlooking Ballybunion's famous Championship links Golf Course. The centre was built in 2000 by the SVdP and has accommodation for 35 persons. Over 800 people enjoy a holiday in Kerry every year at the centre. The season lasts from May until October and the centre keeps prices very reasonable so that it gives people on low incomes the chance of a holiday. The centre gets support from SVdP Conferences and also does its own fundraising. Most of the people who go to the centre come through SVDP Conferences in the Limerick and Kerry area. The centre provides entertainment and parties during the family's 6-day stay, but for most people the holiday is a chance to relax, get away from it all and have some company. Other family holiday centres include:
- Carne Holiday Centre, Wexford (also welcomes groups)
- Maria House, Skerries, Co. Dublin
- Bundoran Holiday Home, Co. Donegal

Community Projects – Youth/Family Services

Many community-based projects incorporate a holiday into their overall programmes, including youth clubs, summer projects and family support services. In general, these holidays represent 'holidays with a purpose' and form part of ongoing programmes in which people are engaged. The provision of these holidays can generally be characterised as a 'bottom-up' initiative, resulting from identification on the ground of the need for a 'break' from daily life and recognition of the value and benefits provided by an extended period away from

the home environment. The Darndale New Life Centre, the Wexford Centre and the Cavan Centre and Belvedere Youth Club are four such initiatives.

Darndale New Life Centre

The parish of Darndale/Belcamp in Dublin 17 is a deprived area in the city of Dublin. Unemployment rates are high, while dysfunctioning family units, drugs and other issues such as joy-riding are widespread. In an effort to tackle some of these problems, the parish, through the New Life Centre, runs clubs and courses for young people and adults of all ages where they undertake personal development work, art and crafts, and generally experience a safe and secure environment. The New Life Centre focuses on the needs of the community in whatever way possible.

For the last number of years the Centre has organised and run holidays for the children of the area (and some parents who travel as helpers). The numbers on these holidays has ranged from approximately 150 to almost 300. Holidays are mainly 5-7 days in duration to England or Wales, where affordable hostel-type accommodation can be arranged. Groups have also travelled to Northern France, Lourdes, and Lanzarote. Holiday participants make a financial contribution to the total cost of the holiday, which is subsidised by the New Life Centre. The New Life Centre liaises with other agencies working in the community and the welfare service to identify those most in need of a holiday. The New Life Centre is funded by fundraising activities/ other sources of funding.

Wexford Centre Project

In the early 1990s social services and organisations working in the North East Inner City of Dublin came together to establish the Wexford Centre. Initially run on a voluntary basis by the founding organisations, in 2001 the project attained registered charity status and currently employs one full-time director and one part-time site care-taker. The Centre is primarily used for short term residential work with young people and children. The Centre also offers holiday programmes that are developed specifically for families based on their needs. Families are accompanied by professional staff or volunteers who support the families during the holiday.

The Centre brings children and young people from Dublin, Wexford and Northern Ireland to live, play and work together, thus providing opportunities for them to encounter different perspectives and views and hopefully to lead to greater mutual understanding and tolerance. Another aim of the Centre is to help people through the medium of recreational, social and

educational programmes to realise their own potential, to understand one another and to explore the opportunities for action conducive to the common good which may emerge from such understanding. The projects seek to achieve the above objectives in a democratic manner, with as much as possible participation and involvement by the young people and families concerned.

The Wexford Centre receives funding from a number of different sources, including the Probation Service; City of Dublin Youth Service Board; Irish Youth Foundation; Young People's Facilities and Service Fund; Health Service Executive; Financial Service Centre; Poor Box Donations; Private Donations; Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism; and Dublin Docklands Development Authority.

Cavan Centre Project

The Cavan Centre is a City of Dublin Youth Services Board project. The Education and Care programme takes the form of a 5-day residential programme. It was set up to provide opportunities for young people between the age of 15 to 20 years who were identified as being 'at risk' due to social, educational, environmental and economic disadvantage. The programme endeavours to provide opportunities in a warm, caring and homely environment to enable adolescents to develop their full potential, i.e. their physical, social, spiritual, educational and emotional development in an atmosphere that encourages the taking of responsibility for their own development and welfare. The programme is delivered by way of modules, including the following: life and leisure skills; work skills including work ethics, catering and household; maintenance and jobsearch skills; office and secretarial skills; youth and community leadership. The programme, it is hoped, will provide opportunities for the clients to develop their self-esteem, confidence, employability, self-worth and general all-round character to enable them to make a positive transition from adolescence to adulthood.

The Cavan Centre is used by other community groups for their own use. For example, it has been used by the Aisling Project in Ballymun. The activities available at the Centre include: canoeing; hill-walking; orienteering; cycling; rock-climbing; archery; bivouacking; tennis; football; disco; and swimming. The Cavan Centre receives funding from the Eastern Health Board/ Health Service Executive, Dept of Education and Science, FÁS and the VEC.

Appendix 3 – List of Key Informants Interviewed and Agencies Involved in Research

Participating NGOs

- Sunshine Fund
- Teenhols
- Darndale New Life Centre

Key Informants Interviewed

Organisation	Name	Position
Sunshine Fund	T.J. Fleming	Volunteer
Sunshine Fund	Tom MacMahon	Volunteer
Sunshine Fund /HSE	Marie Gilmartin	Volunteer/ Social Worker
Sunshine Fund	Geraldine Gorham	Past volunteer
Teenhols	Mark McDonnell	Volunteer
Darndale New Life Centre	Sineád Griffin	Community Worker
Darndale New Life Centre	Fr Terry Murray	Centre Manager
St Vincent de Paul	Catherine & Mary	Volunteers
St Vincent de Paul	Mary McBride	Volunteer
Catholic Church	Fr Seán McArdle	Parish Priest
HSE	Liz Cahill	Community Welfare Worker
Dublin City Council	Phyllis Monaghan	Play Officer
YPAR	David Little	Community Welfare Worker
Wexford Centre	Pauline O'Kane	Project Director
One Family	Geraldine Brereton	Child Care Coordinator
Children's Rights Alliance	Jillian van Turnhout	Director
Office of the Minister for Children	Elizabeth Canavan	Principal Officer/ National Children Strategist

Appendix 4 – Focus Group Protocols, Questionnaires and Interview Schedules

Appendix 4A – Pre-Holiday Focus Group Protocols – Children's Focus Groups

A. Description of everyday/routine summer life in home place

1. What's it like living around here in the summer time?

2. What do you spend your time doing?

3. What would it be like if you weren't going away on holiday?

B. Organisation of holiday

1. Tell me about the Organisation that's bringing you away on holidays?

2. Have you been on holiday with them before?

3. What do you think about them and the holidays they organise?

C. Motivation/Anticipation and Preparation for Holiday

1. Why do you want to go on holiday?

2. Are you doing anything to get ready for the holiday?

3. Is there anything you are not looking forward to/ anything you'll miss about home?

D. Prior holiday experience

1. Have you been on holidays before?

2. Talk to me about your other holidays (Where to? What was it like? Who were you with?)

3. Are family holidays different to this group holiday that you're going on? How different?

E. Current holiday experience

1. What are you most looking forward to about this holiday you are about to go on?

2. How will you be spending your time?

3. What activities are you looking forward to doing?

4. Is there anything you think you won't like?

F. Difference between routine summer life and life on holiday

1. How do you think you'll feel when you come back home afterwards?

2. What is it that's different about being on holidays?

3. What will you miss about the holiday when you get back home?

Appendix 4B – Research Themes – Pre-Holiday Parent/Guardian Focus Groups

A. Description of everyday/ routine summer life in home place

1. What's it like living around here in the summer time?
2. What do you spend your time doing?
3. What difference does it make having the children go away on holidays with XXX?

B. Organisation of holiday

1. Tell me about the Organisation that's bringing them away on holidays?
2. Have your children been on holiday with them before?
3. What do you think about them and the holidays they organise?

C. Motivation/anticipation and preparation for holiday

1. Why do you think it's a good idea for your children to go on holiday?
2. Are you doing anything to get them ready for the holiday?
3. Are you looking forward to them going away? Why?
4. Is there anything you are not looking forward to about them going away? What?

D. Prior holiday experience

1. Have they been on holidays before?
2. Talk to me about their other holidays (Where to? What was it like? Who were they with?)
3. Have you been on holidays before? Tell me about that (how often, who with, where?)

E. Current holiday experience

1. What are you most looking forward to about your children going away on holidays?
2. Will their being away make any difference to how you spend your time?
3. What are you looking forward to doing?
4. Is there anything you think you won't like about them being away?

F. Difference between routine summer life and life on holiday

1. How do you think you'll feel when the children come back home?
2. What is it that's different for the children about being on holidays?
3. What do you think the children will miss about their holiday when they get back home?

Appendix 4C – Post-Holiday Questionnaire – Young People

First name _____ Age _____ Boy □   Girl □
Where did you go on holiday? _____

Q1. Did you enjoy your holiday?   □ A lot   □ A little   □ Not really

Q2. What did you like about your holiday? (pick as many as you like)

□   Doing activities   □   Being with old friends

□   Trying new things   □   Spending time with the leaders

□   Making new friends   □   Being in a different place

□   Being away from home

If there is something else you liked, tell me what it is:

_____

Q3. What didn't you like about the holiday? (pick as many as you like)

□   Doing activities   □   Being with old friends

□   Trying new things   □   Spending time with the leaders

□   Making new friends   □   Being in a different place

□   Being away from home

If there is something else you didn't like, tell me what it is:

Q4. How do you feel after your holiday? (pick as many as you like)

Tell me why you feel like that.

□ Happy   _____

□ Sad   _____

□ Tired   _____

□ Healthy   _____

□ Bored   _____

□ Relaxed   _____

□ Stressed   _____

□ Anything else?   _____

Q5. Do you think it is a good idea to go on holidays?   □ Yes   □ No

   Why _____

Q6. Do you think the holiday was good for you?   □ Yes   □ No

   Why do you think that? _____

Q7. Do you miss anything about your holiday now you are home?

   □ Yes   □ No

   What _____

Q8. What do you remember most about the holiday?

   _____

Q9. What have you been doing since you got back from holidays?

   _____

Q10. Is life at home different than before the holiday?   □ Yes □ No □ A bit

   How? _____

Q11a. What is the best thing about being home from holiday? _____

Q11b.   What   is   the   worst   thing   about   being   home   from   holiday?
_____

Q12. Would you like to go on this type of holiday again?   □ Yes   □ No

   Why _____

Q13. If you could change anything about the holiday, what would it be?
_____

Appendix 4D – Research Themes – Post-Holiday Protocol – Children's and Guardian's Interviews

A. Description of everyday/routine summer life in home place

B. Organisation of holiday

C. Motivation/anticipation and preparation for holiday

D. Prior holiday experience

E. Current holiday experience

F. Difference between routine summer life and life on holiday

G. Future

H. Background information and household composition

Appendix 4E – Key Individual Interview – Leader/Volunteer

A. Organisation of the Holiday

B. Involvement/motivation

C. Objectives/experiences/observations on holiday provision

D. Future